



## FAIRHAVEN SCHOOL COMMITTEE MINUTES March 12, 2025

MEMBERS PRESENT: Brian Monroe, Stephanie Pickup, Nicole Pacheco, Brendalee Smith, Erik Andersen

MEMBERS ABSENT: Colin Veitch

STAFF PRESENT: Superintendent Tara Kohler, Assistant Superintendent Mark Balestracci, School Business Manager Nicole Potter

The meeting was called to order by Mr. Monroe at 6:30 pm

### ***Delegations, Visitors, Etc:***

Fairhaven Educators Association (FEA) President, Melissa Duarte was in attendance with members from the Unit A (Teachers) Union.

### ***Approval of Minutes:***

Motion to approve regular session minutes from February 5, 2025 made by Mrs. Pickup, seconded by Mrs. Pacheco, approved with one abstention of Mr. Monroe (4-0).

Motion to approve executive session minutes from February 5, 2025, for content only, made by Mr. Andersen, seconded by Mrs. Pacheco, approved with one abstention of Mr. Monroe (4-0).

Motion to approve regular session minutes from February 12, 2025 made by Mr. Andersen, seconded by Mrs. Pacheco, approved with one abstention of Mr. Monroe (4-0).

Motion to approve executive session minutes from February 12, 2025, for content only, made by Mr. Andersen, seconded by Mrs. Pacheco, approved with one abstention of Mr. Monroe (4-0).

Motion to approve policy subcommittee open session minutes made by Mrs. Pickup, seconded by Mr. Andersen, approved (2-0).

### ***Report of the Student Advisory Committee:***

Student Advisory member Fin Reynolds spoke about the Fairhaven High School (FHS) day of service, the athletics programs, noting FHS has two girls playing on the Bishop Stang ice hockey team, and they will be going to play at the TD Garden. He also spoke about the Drama Club's upcoming musical, clubs, and PTO fundraising.

### ***Public Comment:***

FEA President, Melissa Duarte thanked the Committee for their dedication to the students, educators, and school communities during the challenging budget season. She stated that the union members understand budgeting for a School District is complex and appreciates the time and effort the Committee has put into it. She read a quote, "Teaching is like gardening because success depends less on the seeds and more on creating the right conditions." Mrs. Duarte continued to inform the Committee of the needs of the teachers in the District so they can continue to provide a safe and inclusive space where every child has the opportunity to succeed. Stating, Fairhaven teachers and staff work tirelessly to keep Fairhaven schools among the best, but noted they are the least paid in the South Coast, which results in challenges with recruiting and retaining talented teachers. The Committee thanked the FEA Unit A teachers for being there and let them know they are supported, appreciated, and acknowledged they do a lot with a little. Mr. Monroe stated the Committee needs their support at the Town Meeting in May to help get the budget they need.

### ***Reports and Recommendations of the Superintendent:***

#### ***NEASC Update:***

Superintendent Kohler announced the exciting news that the Fairhaven Public School District (FPSD) has received District accreditation from the New England Association of Schools and Colleges (NEASC). FPSD is the first District in the Commonwealth to be a fully accredited District. Assistant Superintendent Balestracci then presented the Committee highlights of the Commendations and Recommendations given to the District by NEASC (attachment A).

#### ***Budget & Federal Grants Update:***

Superintendent Kohler stated she was in meetings all day regarding budget, the future of the Town, and the future of the Town Administrator and the entire message she shared was respect and fund education, stating they are part of the same team whether talking about a shed or the school budget. She stated we are wasting unnecessary money fighting with each other using the example of what would have been a \$1,200,000 million dollar project and got it down to \$300,000, and now it is probably twice that in legal fees, which she takes offense to. She shared this sentiment with the people searching for the new Town Administrator and noted that

there are a lot of great department leads in this Town and a lot of people are frustrated. She believes the value statement should be that we care about education and that is first and foremost, understanding there are other resources and hard decisions will have to be made about cuts. She stated she will also continue to look inward, as they always start with a zero based budget and are responsible with it. Superintendent Kohler then presented the most recent budget information to the Committee (attachment B), touching upon enrollment, Chapter 70 funding, Per Pupil Spending, Net School spending (NSS) requirements and compliance. She added to the presentation the prediction of the reduction in Federal Funding that will affect Title I as well as SPED IDEA, and that we already lost a food service grant for \$21,000. Superintendent Kohler showed the Committee we are one of the lowest Districts in the Commonwealth in regards to NSS as well as Per Pupil Spending. She reiterated our FY26 NSS requirement is \$25,777,688, the Town placeholder as of now is FY26 Town Placeholder: \$25,256,166 which is \$521,522 below Net School Spending. The Committee continued to discuss possibilities of cuts and possible solutions.

*Receive Meal Charge Policy EFC for the First Read:*

Assistant Superintendent Balestracci presented the Meal Charge Policy to the Committee for the first read. This will be added to the next agenda for discussion and vote to be accepted.

*Receive Update on Phase I FHS Project Timeline:*

School Business Manager Nicole Potter reminded the Committee of the bidding timeline and construction schedule presented by RTA back in February (attachment C), and then informed the Committee the general bid deadline had to be pushed out two weeks in order to clarify some questions that came forward.

*Discuss School Building Feasibility Study:*

Superintendent Kohler updated the Committee that they will be working on bringing all the feasibility studies from the different schools together in order to understand what they need and what to get ahead, having a five year plan of projected costs.

*Upcoming Events:*

Next School Committee meeting will be held March 26, 2025.

*New Business:*

Motion made by Mr. Andersen to allow the Superintendent to negotiate and execute a lease agreement with Southeastern Massachusetts Educational Collaborative (SMEC) for a five year period at the Tripp School, seconded by Mrs. Pacheco, approved (5-0).

Motion made by Mr. Andersen to accept a \$50 donation from Ricciardi's Fairhaven for the Family Center Hardship Fund, seconded by Mrs. Pacheco, approved (5-0).

Motion made by Mr. Andersen to increase the adult meal price from \$4.50 to \$5.50. Mrs. Potter informed the Committee we were out of compliance by the State and need to increase the cost to \$5.50. The motion was seconded by Mrs. Pacheco, approved (5-0).

Motion made by Mrs. Pacheco to approve a \$2000 donation from Fairhaven Alumni Association for the Fairhaven Alumni Contingency Account, seconded by Mrs. Pickup, approved (5-0).

Motion made by Mrs. Pacheco to approve the 2025 - 2026 school year calendar, seconded by Mr. Andersen, approved (5-0).

*Questions From Individual Committee Members:*

Mrs. Pickup asked if exit interviews were conducted when an employee leaves the District. Superintendent Kohler acknowledged that they are.

Mr. Monroe expressed his frustration with the Town and asked for help and support of the teachers union.

Mrs. Pickup addressed the FEA Unit A members, telling them the lines of communication to the Committee are open. Superintendent Kohler asked, and Mr. Monroe reiterated, for the members to follow the chain of command if in need of something.

A motion to adjourn and go into Executive Session to discuss strategy with respect to collective bargaining or litigation if an open meeting may have a detrimental effect on the bargaining or litigation position of the public body and the chair so declares made by Mr. Andersen, seconded by Mrs. Pacheco, roll call vote, approved unanimously, (5-0),

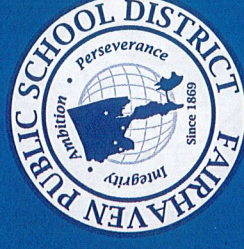
Adjourned at 7:51 pm.

Sheri Souza  
Secretary to the Fairhaven School Committee



# Fairhaven Public Schools

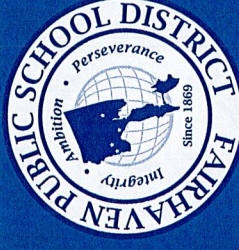
## District Accreditation Update



March 12, 2025



# Current Accreditation Status

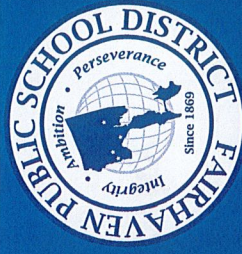


On March 10, 2025, the NEASC Accreditation visiting team chair informed Superintendent Kohler that we have been awarded a full District Accreditation.

**FPS is the first public school district in Massachusetts to receive such a recognition.**

We are grateful to the district and school teams, faculty and staff, students, and families, the community, and our School Committee for their hard work, effort, and dedication to making this accreditation a reality.





# Commendations and Recommendations

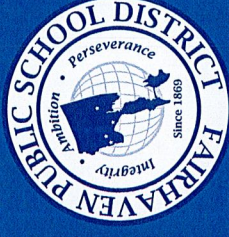
As part of the process, the NEASC visiting team provides feedback on all accreditation standards, indicators, and foundational elements for our schools.

Feedback is on the form of **Commendations** and **Recommendations**

FPS received a total of: **45 Commendations** and **8 recommendations**



# Highlighted Commendations



- The strong relationship between teachers and students.
- The caring and concern for students that is the basis for decision-making.
- The security measures in place to provide a physically safe learning environment for students and staff.
- Strong vertical alignment of the Profile of the Learner across all grades
- The quality and extent of professional development for curriculum development
- The commitment of the district to providing resources to address priority areas.



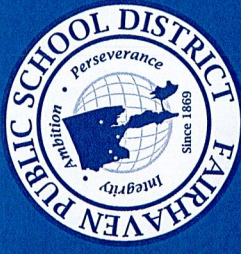
# Commendations:



- The integration of SEL and POL into daily taught curriculum.
- The multiple and coordinated efforts to support the academic, social, and emotional needs of students as a foundation for enhancing learning that are beginning to show impactful and positive results.
- The targeted, data-driven small group instruction for elementary students during the WIN Block.
- The use of MyCAP at the high school to support students to prepare for college, career, and civic readiness



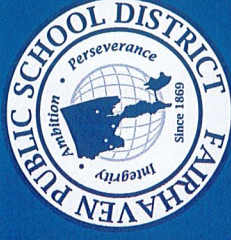
# Commendations:



- The carefully planned and purposeful professional development provided to staff to support learning for all.
- The ongoing reflections and assessment of initiatives to guide planning.
- The individualized and engaging lessons at the elementary level.
- The varied instructional groupings at the middle school level.
- The student-driven learning in many elective classes at the high school level.



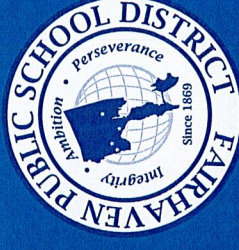
# Recommendations:



- Continue to...
- Increase opportunities for student to exercise voice and choice in learning.
- Diversify instructional strategies
- Involve students and families in decision-making at the school level
- Provide opportunities for high school student leadership, including student government and career and technical student organizations to bolster student voice and agency.



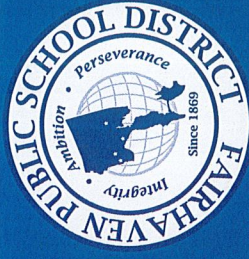
# Next Steps



- FPS will continue to work toward all of our current priority areas and to address the recommendations shared by the visiting team.
- FPS will continue to work to provide students with the most innovative and authentic learning experiences in all schools across all grade levels.
- Share the NEASC Accreditation Report with all stakeholders.
- Complete an Update on any substantial change to programming, staffing, conditions, etc. in October of 2025.

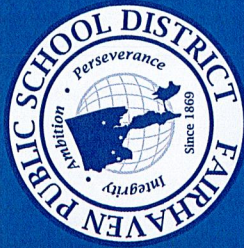


**A Job Well Done**

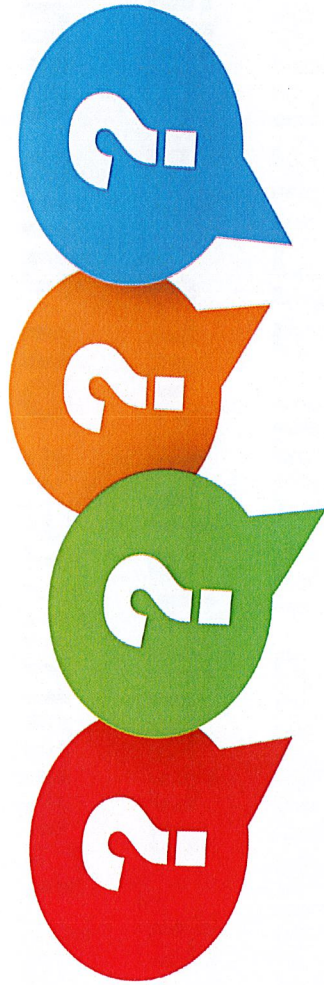


**Congratulations to our students, faculty  
and staff, administrators, families, and  
School Committee on this amazing  
accomplishment!**





Questions?





FAIRHAVEN PUBLIC SCHOOLS

# FY26 Budget Presentation



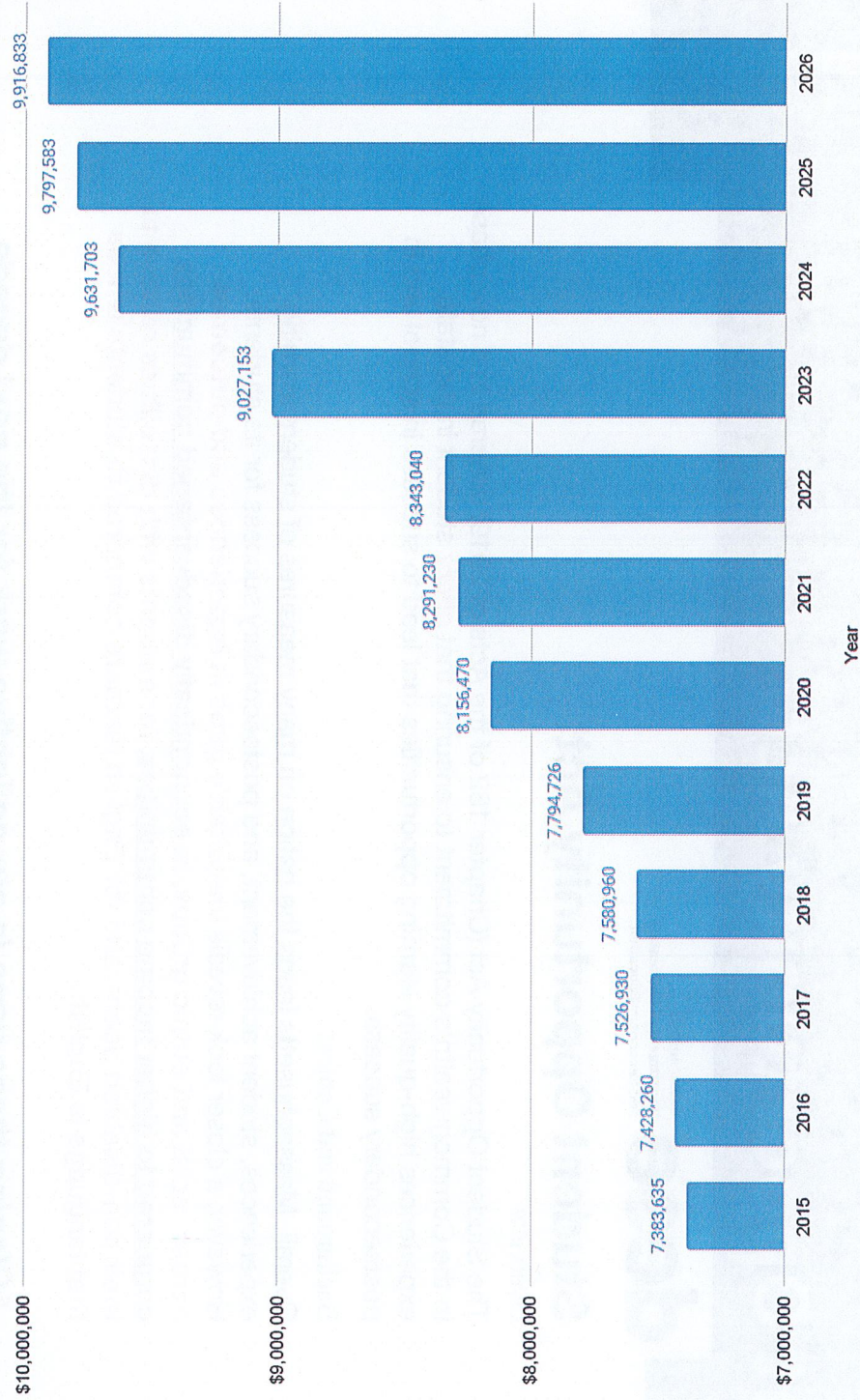


# Student Enrollment by Year





# Chapter 70 (State) Funding by Year





# Student Opportunity Act



## Student Opportunity Act

### Overview

The Student Opportunity Act (Chapter 132 of the Acts of 2019) ushered in a new phase in the Commonwealth's commitment to ensuring that **every** student in the state experiences high-quality learning opportunities that lead to success in school and in postsecondary success.

### Background and Context

Overall, Massachusetts leads the nation on many measures of student learning experiences, student achievement, and postsecondary success for its students. However, a closer look reveals **inequitable gaps in experiences and outcomes across racial and ethnic groups, in economically disadvantaged communities compared to higher income communities, for students with disabilities relative to their non-disabled peers, and for English learners compared to students whose first language is English.**

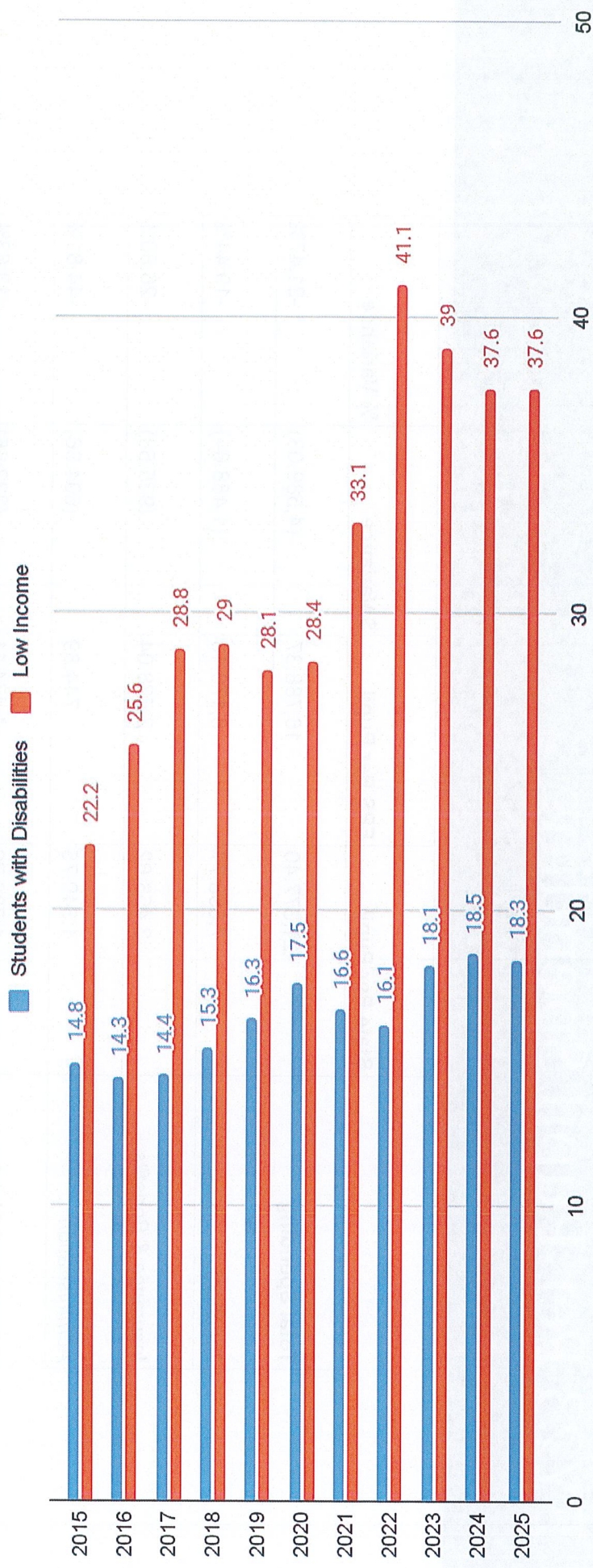
***"Closing these gaps is our collective work for the next decade, and the SOA will fuel our efforts to ensure all students achieve at high levels and are prepared for success after high school."***

**— Commissioner Jeffrey C. Riley**





# Selected Student Population % - 10 Year Picture





# FY23 Per Pupil Spending

	State Per Pupil	FPS Per Pupil	\$ Variance	% Variance
<b>Total Spending</b>	21,377.40	16,788.37	(4,589.03)	-21.47%
<i>Teachers</i>	7,658.77	6,170.13	(1,488.64)	-19.44%
<i>Insurance &amp; Benefits</i>	3,453.62	2,528.04	(925.58)	-26.80%
<i>Administration</i>	1,349.75	744.89	(604.86)	-44.81%
<i>Operations &amp; Maint</i>	1,706.76	1,474.11	(232.65)	-13.63%
<i>Pupil Services</i>	2,206.59	1,879.34	(327.25)	-14.83%

Source: MA DESE FY23 Per-Pupil Spending



## Per Pupil Spending - Need to update ?

**State Avg 2023: \$21,116**

**Fairhaven 2023: \$16,788**

**Difference: \$4,328**

**1,830 Students = \$7,900,000**





# FY26 Net School Spending

Required Net School Spending = Local Contribution + Ch 70 Aid

Required Net School Spending > = Foundation Budget

FY26 Required Net School Spending: \$25,777,688

Increase from FY25 Required NSS: \$1,090,675

FY26 Town Placeholder: \$25,256,166

**\$521,522 below Net School Spending**





## FY26 Net School Spending Requirement

**\$25,777,688**



# 12 Year Average

Year	School Budget Request	Town Meeting Appropriation	% increase	
FY2013		17,655,049.00		
FY2014		17,978,499.00	1.83%	
FY2015		18,348,083.00	2.06%	
FY2016		18,737,194.00	2.12%	
FY2017		19,385,787.00	3.46%	
FY2018	19,783,472.00	19,783,472.00	2.05%	
FY2019	20,383,354.00	20,383,354.00	3.03%	
FY2020	21,524,763.00	21,302,516.00	4.51%	
FY2021	21,946,426.00	21,546,426.00	1.14%	
FY2022	22,379,840.00	22,179,843.00	2.94%	
FY2023	22,968,638.00	22,910,638.00	3.29%	
FY2024	23,953,641.00	23,753,641.00	3.68% *	
FY2025	25,149,917.00	24,820,213.00	4.49%	12 yr Avg
			34.61%	2.88%



# Compliance with Net School Spending

Failure to comply with this requirement may result in non-approval of a municipality's tax rate, enforcement action by the Attorney General, or loss of state aid

MASC quote

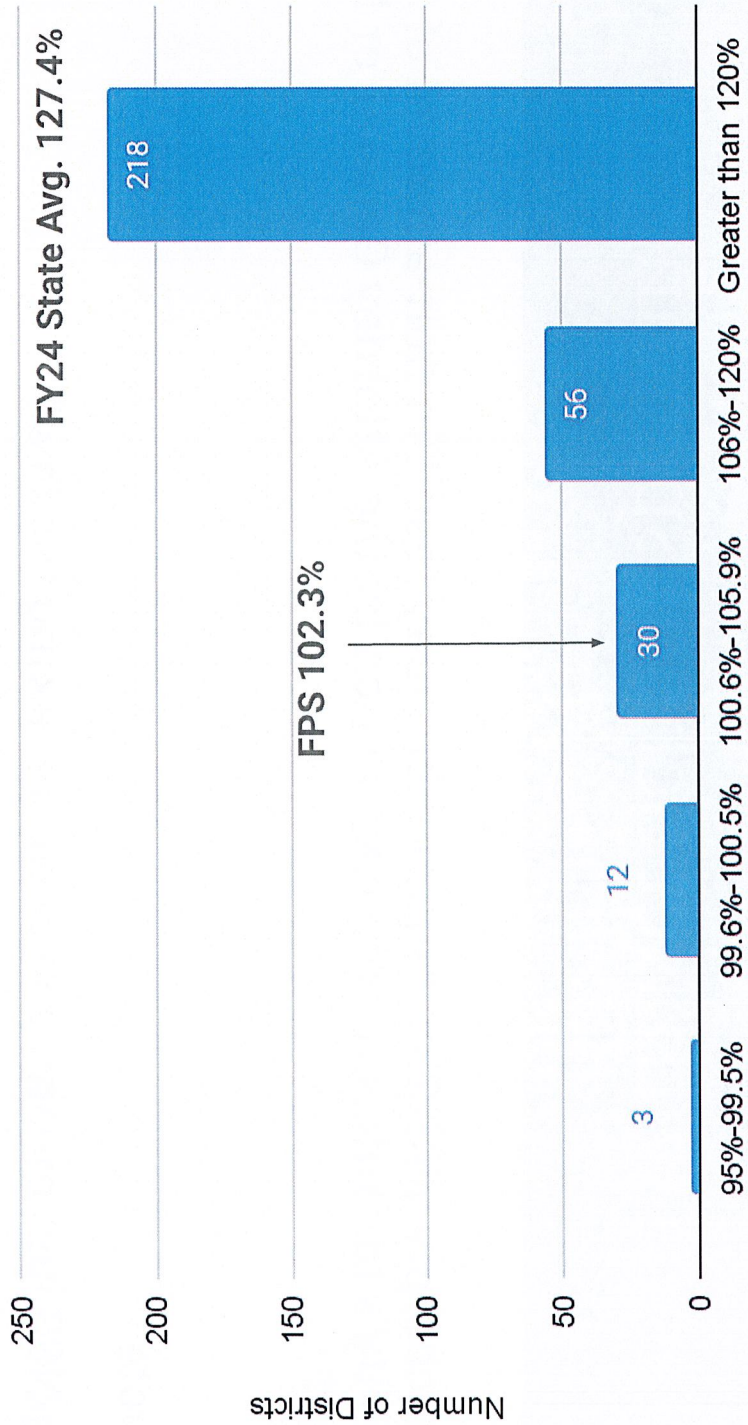
"Meeting NSS just means you aren't breaking the law"





# FPS Net School Spending vs. State

## Most Districts Spend in Excess of Net School Spending





# 30 School Districts 100.6%-105.9%

Assabet Valley
Attleboro
Bristol Plymouth
Chelsea
Chicopee
Fairhaven
Fall River
Greater Fall River
Greater Lawrence
Greater New Bedford
Haverhill
Holbrook
Holyoke
Lawrence

Lowell
Marlborough
Methuen
Nashoba Valley
New Bedford
Northampton Smith
Northeast Metropolitan
Northern Berkshire
Revere
Southbridge
Taunton
Tri County
Upper Cape Cod
West Springfield
Whittier
Winchendon



# Predicting a Reduction in Federal Funding

## Title I Part A:

### Grant supports:

- Assistant Principal for Teaching and Learning (1)
- WIN Paraprofessionals/District Interventionist (5)
- WIN Consultant and program

## SPED IDEA

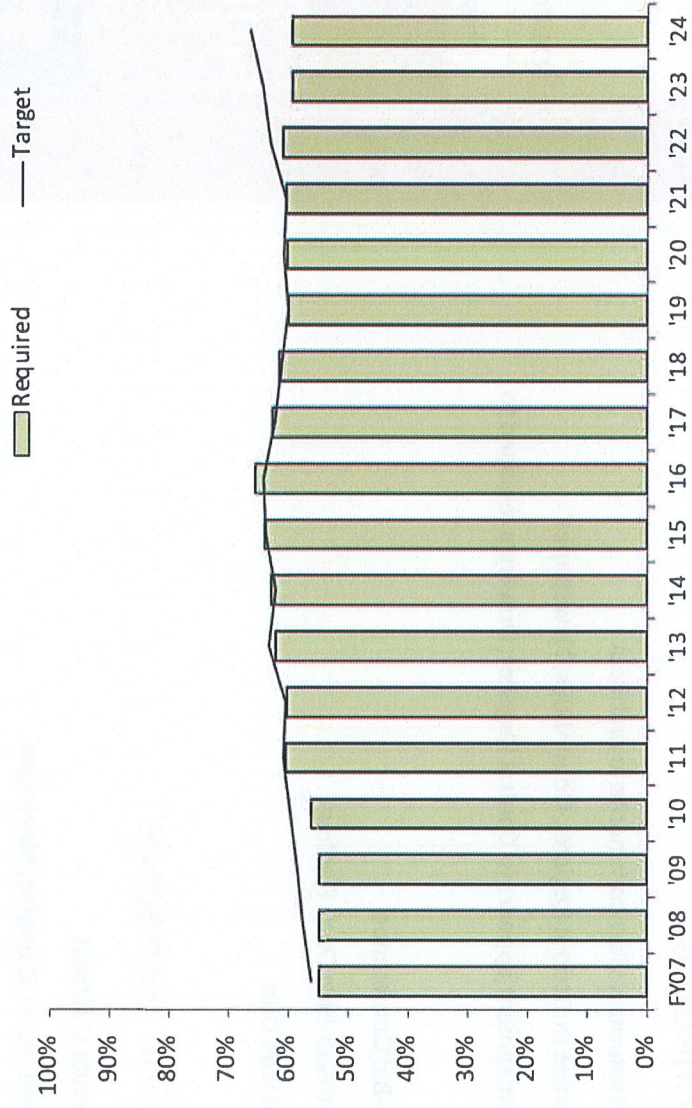
### Grant supports:

- Special Education Teachers (4)
- School Psychologist (1)
- Special Education Clerk (1)
- Early Childhood Para (1)



94 Fairhaven

Target and Required Local Contribution Percentages





## Bidding Schedule

January 24 OPM returns review comments to architect  
January 30 Advertise in Central Register, Commbuys, Newspaper  
February 5 Advertisement appears in Central Register; Drawings released to Bidders

February 12 Pre-Bid Conference

February 19 Filed Sub-bids Due : Roofing

March 5 General bids Due

## Construction Schedule

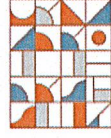
Early March Execute Contract

March - April Submittals, Samples, Mock-ups

May - July Auditorium Gables and Adjacent Roofs

July - August Southeast Gable

September - October Punchlist and Close-out



Spencer Preservation  
Group  
PRESERVATION ARCHITECTS

## CONSTRUCTION AND BIDDING SCHEDULE

**RTA**  
ARCHITECTS + OPM



# FAIRHAVEN PUBLIC SCHOOLS

August/September 2025 (23 days)				
M	T	W	T	F
25	26	27	28	29
1	2	3	4	5
8	9	10	11	12
15	16	17	18	19
22/29	23	24	25	26

October 2025 (21 days)				
M	T	W	T	F
		1	2	3
6	7	8	9	10
13	14	15	16	17
20	21	22	23	24
27	28	29	30	31

November 2025 (17 days)				
M	T	W	T	F
3	4	5	6	7
10	11	12	13	14
17	18	19	20	21
24	25	26	27	28

December 2025 (17 days)				
M	T	W	T	F
1	2	3	4	5
8	9	10	11	12
15	16	17	18	19
22	23	24	25	26
29	30	31		

January 2026 (18 days)				
M	T	W	T	F
			1	2
5	6	7	8	9
12	13	14	15	16
19	20	21	22	23
26	27	28	29	30

February 2026 (15 days)				
M	T	W	T	F
2	3	4	5	6
9	10	11	12	13
16	17	18	19	20
23	24	25	26	27

March 2026 (22 days)				
M	T	W	T	F
2	3	4	5	6
9	10	11	12	13
16	17	18	19	20
23	24	25	26	27
30	31			

April 2026 (16 days)				
M	T	W	T	F
		1	2	3
6	7	8	9	10
13	14	15	16	17
20	21	22	23	24
27	28	29	30	

May 2026 (20 days)				
M	T	W	T	F
				1
4	5	6	7	8
11	12	13	14	15
18	19	20	21	22
25	26	27	28	29

June 2026 (11 days)				
M	T	W	T	F
GRADUATION May 31				
1	2	3	4	5
8	9	10	11	12
15	16	17	18	19
22	23	24	25	26

## 2025 - 2026

IMPORTANT DATES	
August 25 & 26	Teacher Orientation Days / No School for Students
August 27	First Day Students / Grades 1 - 12
August 29	First Day Students / Grade K
September 1	Labor Day
September 2	First Day Students/ PreK
October 3	PD Day / No School for Students
October 9	PD Day / Early Release for Students
October 13	Columbus Day
November 11	Veteran's Day
November 24 & 25	Early Release / Elementary Students Only
November 26	Early Release
November 27 & 28	Thanksgiving Break
December 18	PD Day / Early Release for Students
December 23	Early Release for Students and Staff
December 24 - January 2	Christmas Vacation
January 19	Martin Luther King Jr. Day
January 20	PD Day / No School for Students
February 12	PD Day / Early Release for Students
February 16 - February 20	Winter Vacation
March 12	PD Day / Early Release for Students
April 17	Good Friday
April 20-24	Spring Vacation
May 25	Memorial Day
May 29	FHS Junior Day
May 31	FHS Class of 2026 Graduation
June 15	180 <sup>th</sup> Day
June 19	Juneteenth
June 23	185 <sup>th</sup> Day



180 school days are mandatory.

We note the 185<sup>th</sup> day so you may plan to be available for additional school days due to possible school closures.

Please be advised, the school calendar is subject to change due to emergency closing, inclement weather, and other unforeseen occurrences which may require the rescheduling of the established student attendance days.

Parents and staff should plan accordingly.

School Calendar

Adopted by School Committee: March 12, 2025