

Burlington School District 2019-2020 Budget FAQ

See below for a list of frequently asked questions. Have a question that hasn't been answered?

Check out the District [website](#) for more info, or send [BSD an email](#).



Don't forget to vote on March 5th!

Is the proposed budget an increase or decrease from Fiscal Year 2019?

The investments and reductions presented in the proposed budget result in a very small budget increase of 4.36%.

How much are we proposing to spend per student? How much did we spend last year?

The proposed budget equates to spending \$16,064.66 per equalized pupil. This projected spending per equalized pupil is 6.31% higher than spending for the current year.

How will my taxes be impacted?

The tax rate on those who pay on the basis of their property value is estimated to increase 4.86%. The tax rate on those who pay on the basis of their income is estimated to increase 0.43%.

What does the percentage mean for me in terms of dollars?

Taxes on a \$250,000 home will go up \$225 per year, or about \$18.75 a month

What if I pay based on my income instead of property value?

This year's income cap percentage will increase by 0.43% from last year. This means the tax on a \$50,000 household income will increase by \$5. Most Burlingtonians pay on income (are "income sensitized"), please ask your tax advisor which category you fall into.

Does your estimated tax impact ever change?

Yes. We use the most current data available from the AOE when completing tax impact estimates for Town Meeting Day. The tax impact can change as a result of new information from AOE, or as a result of changes in state law. *Last year we projected an increase close to 8% on Town Meeting Day but the actual impact was an increase of only 3.32%.*

What would a level-funded budget look like?

Due to increased general fund costs (wages, insurance, inflation, etc.) and increased debt service, we would have had to cut \$2.2 million in programmatic spending to have level funded this year's budget.

What would a budget with no tax increase look like?

In order to achieve a 0% tax impact, the Burlington School District would have had to make about \$1.7 million in programmatic cuts to the budget.

What about the recent high school and capital plan bonds? Is this in ADDITION to the budget increase?

No. The proposed budget includes the costs associated with borrowing for the capital plan and BHS ReEnvisioning for our planned spending on those projects next year.

I've heard that this budget is a mix of investments and reductions. What is being cut? What are the investments?

This year the Board put forth a proposed budget which includes about \$800,000 worth of reductions from centrally located operations and services, as well as much-needed additions that will support the District's priorities of reducing disparities and closing the achievement gap while raising the bar for all of our students.

Additions include continued support of our Pre-K programs, resources to better implement Restorative Practices, additional social workers in elementary schools, and a strategic decision to hire para-educators for a number of our Kindergarten classrooms. Reductions include a mix of non-instructional staff positions, the conclusion of some one-time projects, and realizing savings by using more in-house equipment and personnel.

Visit our website for a [complete list of additions and reductions](#).

Why does education cost so much?

Schools across the country, and in Vermont, are expected to offer more than just education. In Burlington, schools offer social services and counseling, a robust athletic program, transportation, support for students with additional needs, and multiple meals per day. The loss of federal and state funding for social services transfers some of those cost onto schools. In addition, a decade ago, the state stopped providing schools with construction funds, meaning that the burden of paying for overdue renovations to Burlington schools falls on local taxpayers.

How are schools in Burlington funded, anyway?

Local Sources: These are funds from private sources like grants, rental fees, and a small amount of reimbursement from the City of Burlington.

Federal Sources: The District receives federal grants for a variety of programs, including those programs intended to serve students from families living in poverty, English Learners, and students with learning disabilities. These sources have been decreasing and we expect the reductions to continue in future years.

The State of Vermont Education Fund which is made up of:

- Homestead property taxes and non-residential property taxes
- Sales & Use taxes
- Meals & Rooms taxes
- Purchase & Use taxes
- Lottery proceeds
- Certain other funds (such as Medicaid revenues and special tax revenues)

Who can I talk to at the state about my concerns with the high cost of education?

Please share your concerns with your state senators and representatives. Visit the [Vermont General Assembly](#) website to find your Representative's contact info.

How are my property taxes calculated? (Tell me the nitty gritty!)

Education taxes are based on our spending per equalized pupil. What's an "equalized pupil"? The number of students each community has is weighted by the state to account for additional services needed to educate some students such as those who are living in poverty, are English language learners, or who are in high school (secondary students cost more to educate). Because the student count is weighted this way, it means that the number of "equalized pupils" Burlington has is larger than the number of actual students.

The state determines the amount of funding per equalized pupil that can be supported by a property tax rate of \$1.00. This year, that number is \$10,666. Local communities then decide how much they want to spend per equalized pupil above that, if anything, which might add to the tax rate. This rate is then applied to your property taxes or your income, depending on which method of taxation you choose.

Because the property tax is based the value of your house and cities and towns do not conduct appraisals every year, a common level of appraisal is used to estimate the current market value of your house, increasing it by a set percentage. This amount is also built into the tax rate.

In recent years, the legislature has made changes to the Education Fund after Town Meeting Day (when towns vote on their education budgets) which has made it difficult to estimate the impact of budget increases. It is possible that legislative action will result in a tax rate increase that is less than the currently projected 4.86%.

If you would like more detail on how our education taxes are calculated, visit the Vermont Department of Taxes website [to read their "Education Tax Rates FAQ."](#)

Why don't I hear the School District or Superintendent Obeng telling people to vote for this?

Legally, the School District cannot suggest that voters approve or reject the budget. Superintendent Obeng has given many interviews, participated in meet and greets, and written community updates in which he states that he and the district believe the proposed budget includes "reductions from central office as well as much-needed additions that will support the District's priorities of reducing disparities and closing the achievement gap while raising the bar for all of our students."

What question will be on the ballot in March?

"Shall the voters of the school district approve the school board to expend \$88,706,132 which is the amount the school board has determined to be necessary for the ensuing fiscal year? It is estimated that this proposed budget, if approved, will result in education spending of \$16,064.66 per equalized pupil. This projected spending per equalized pupil is 6.31% higher than spending for the current year."

Where can I learn more?

Please visit the following links to learn more:

- BSD Budget Web Page: <https://www.bsdrv.org/district/budget/>
- Budget One-Pager with Complete List of Reductions/Additions: <https://www.bsdrv.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/01/FY-2020-Proposed-Budget-One-Pager.pdf>
- FY20 Board Approved Budget Summary: <https://www.bsdrv.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/01/20190128-Board-Approved-FY20-Budget-1.pdf>
- Board Approves Path Forward for FY '20 Budget: <https://www.bsdrv.org/2019/01/28/board-approves-path-forward-for-fy-20-budget/>