Franklin West Supervisory Union

Community Update

Fairfax • December 23, 2025

As we approach holiday break and the end of the calendar year, I want to take a moment to reflect on the joy that I witness each time I visit our schools. Some days, it's the interactions with our youngest learners where they ask me whatever question is on their mind, or point out their new shoes, or tell me about a new pet. Other times it's watching our middle school band perform, or a student presentation in a classroom, or just watching a student read a book or solve a math problem. More often than not, it's just a simple smile and hello as we pass in a hallway. All of these moments keep the purpose of my work front and center, particularly when a day is not going as smoothly as I'd imagined. Making sure that, no matter what, we meet the needs of each one of our learners is my priority. The instances of joy are abundant and a reflection of each of our community's values and hopes. I continue to appreciate every day that I get to work in Franklin West schools.

Another reason for joy is the fine group of educators who work tirelessly with our learners. This month, we recognized a group of educators nominated by their peers and community for their outstanding work. We are pleased to recognize:

- Kim Heller, ES Teacher
- Karen Witalec-Krupa, ES Academic Coach
- Jeff Smith, FWSU I.T. Director
- Jessica Collins, PreK Teacher
- Shannon Arnzen, MS Special Educator
- Rebecca Hotaling, MS Paraeducator
- Nicole Clokey, ES Teacher
- Lisa Sweet, Kindergarten Teacher
- Anita Wimmette, ES Paraeducator
- Mat Heald, HS Global Citizenship Teacher
- Ariana Belfield, ES Music Teacher
- Peter Taylor, ES PE Teacher
- Jesse Gaudette, Flexible Pathways Coordinator

Join me in congratulating these excellent educators. Remember that you can nominate an educator by clicking on this form.

Working with school boards is another part of my job that brings me joy. The dedicated work of these community volunteers to provide guidance and direction for our schools is admirable. The Fairfax Board has been working with the administration to develop a budget for the 2026-27 school year. At this point, the proposal is for a "level services" budget- no added positions or services, only increases due to contracts and inflation. There is the addition of a 0.7FTE para position for PreK to meet our legal obligation. The current proposal represents a 6.69% increase in expenses. Shifts in student count that are used to determine our "per pupil" cost resulted in a 0.22% increase in our per pupil cost. Fairfax continues to be one of the lowest spending towns in the state. The ultimate tax increase associated with the proposed budget is 8.34% or about a $428 increase on a $400,000 home. Over the past five years, the average annual increase on a $400,000 home in Fairfax has been around $260. We recognize that this is not an insignificant amount. The board and I have been vocal with our legislators to push for sustainable change to stabilize tax rates. In order to be ready for a Town Meeting Day vote, the board needs to approve a budget by the end of January. Plan to attend the board meeting on January 12 at 6 PM to express your comments, suggestions, or support. You can always send questions to me or your board members.

I'll close this month as I began- thanking you for the opportunity to prepare our learners for their future. The work is made easier because of the partnership between community members, your school board, and our educators, all working together for our students. I value your continued support and am happy to listen to your comments, suggestions, and questions. Have a wonderful holiday. We'll see you in 2026.

Sincerely,

John T. Tague

Superintendent