

The Financial Future of Wanaque Public Schools

Board of Education Presentation
October 15, 2026

Charles Seipp, Ed. D.

Mission Statement



The Wanaque Public School District, a unified community in partnership with students in grades PreK-8, parents, and staff, engages all students by providing an enriched academic and social foundation that fosters a love of learning, where all students achieve the New Jersey Student Learning Standards at all grade levels, thereby creating informed citizens ready to meet the varying challenges of a rapidly changing world.



Urgency of this conversation

The 2026–2027 budget bought time...

NJ State Aid Funding Formula (S2) - \$6.7 M in cumulative loss

**Operating costs continue to surge, outpacing revenue
(ex: Health Insurance, Utilities, Instructional Programs)**

**26-27 budget was balanced through one-time savings
(Health Insurance adjustment and staff reduction)**

We anticipate another significant increase in health insurance costs, with initial estimates indicating a 22% increase.

KEY TAKEAWAY | The need to address this issue is an absolute necessity to build a fiscally prudent budget for 27-28 and beyond.

2027 and Beyond



The 2026–2027 budget bought time...BUT we need to look over the horizon to create a sustainable future.

Currently, the 27-28 budget increase will be 2% or \$400,000.

The current health benefits cost is approximately \$3.5 million.

22% of that amount is over \$750,000...

...this does not include all other cost increases as a part of the district's budget development.

Because there is currently no clear information regarding a potential solution to this issue, we need to carefully consider all available options to ensure we make the most informed and responsible decision possible.

KEY TAKEAWAY | A temporary (one-time) patch will not solve this issue.



Three options

Each option carries a different financial, educational, and community tradeoff.

01

Second Question

Direct increase to tax levy on top of the 2% cap

02

Maintain K - 8 Schools

Preserve the current structure, reduce expenses

03

Reorganize Grade Levels

Revisit a historic conversation focused on sustainability

FEATURE AREA

Carefully examine the three options to balance the budget for 2027 and beyond

NEXT STEP

Consider the facts and forecasted implications of each scenario



01 - Second Question

Direct increase to tax levy over 2% to maintain positions

Vote on the March 2027 ballot (A special election would cost \$40,000).

Requires a majority of all participating voters to approve.

This would raise the tax levy above the allowable cap every year for the approved amount.

If APPROVED...it would support the 27-28 budget and beyond, but the year over year cost of the positions (salary and benefit increases) would outpace future budgets (2% increase).

If DEFEATED...the staffing or programs identified in the question cannot legally become part of the operating budget.

KEY TAKEAWAY | Creates revenue capacity, but depends on voter approval and does not remove cost-growth pressure.

01 - Second Question - UPDATE



- **Vote on the March 2027 ballot (A special election would cost \$40,000).**
- **Question would likely include seven (7) positions.**
 - **These positions would be valued at approx \$800,000 (including MA 6 salary and benefits).**
- **This increase would be on top of the allowable tax levy which is anticipated to be 2% plus approximately 2.74% (banked cap and health insurance adjustment).**
 - **\$187 annually for the average assessed home (\$229,475).**
- **An additional \$800,000 would represent an additional 4.19%.**
 - **The new total would be \$352 annually for the average assessed home (\$229,475).**
- **At the current health insurance growth, these positions will outpace tax levy growth in 28-29.**



02 - Maintain K - 8 Schools

Preserve the current structure, reduce expenses

The measures taken to balance the 26-27 budget leave almost no auxiliary or “luxury” positions. Meaning, there is virtually no position remaining that would not have a direct impact on current programs, class size, or district operational capacity.

In order to cover the difference in operational costs and insurance premiums, positions would again need to be evaluated.

This is another one year “solution”...it is likely we will have this conversation again for 28-29 if the insurance costs continue to grow at the current rates each subsequent year.

KEY TAKEAWAY | The current analysis raises serious concerns about 2027-2028 programming as well as 2028–29 sustainability.

02 - Maintain K - 8 Schools - UPDATE



- **Would likely need to eliminate seven (7) positions:**
 - **2 Special or General Education Teachers**
 - **1 Related Service Provider**
 - **4 Specials/Non-Core Teachers**
- **These positions would be valued at approximately \$800,000 (including salary and benefits).**
- **Impact:**
 - **Larger class sizes in specials**
 - **Potential reduction in elective opportunities**
 - **Reduced access to non-instructional support**
 - **Potential unanticipated costs (over-leveraging budget) if special education enrollment increases**
- **At current health benefit growth, we would need to have this conversation again for 28-29.**

03 - Reorganize Grade Levels



Revisit a historic conversation focused on efficiency

Consider consolidating grade levels into two separate buildings: one for PK-3 and one for grades 4-8.

Redundancies and schedule limitations (specifically MS and Special Ed.) would be resolved allowing positions to be examined based on the number of sections in the district.

Greater ability for professional growth and planning/instructional collaboration amongst staff which is currently significantly limited...directly impacting the teaching and learning experience.

We could utilize staff to expand our continuum of services, electives, and targeted intervention.

Transportation costs would increase slightly which would net against savings, but start times could be staggered to lower the impact of bus runs.

KEY TAKEAWAY | This scenario allows savings to be incremental and adjusted as needed saving positions, programs, and allowing potential program expansion.

03 - Reorganize Grade Levels - SWOT Analysis



- **Participation**
 - **Voluntary Survey**
 - 30% responses is typically considered reasonable participation
 - Below 10% presents a concern for non-response bias
 - **After introduction at September BOE meeting as well as an email and phone call to all school community members**
 - 5.7% of parents (accounting for each student once)
 - 2.8% of staff
 - 2 responses from “community members”
 - 58 total response

03 - Reorganize Grade Levels - SWOT Analysis



- **Transportation and Traffic**
 - **Met with WPD and it is not believed that there would be a significant impact on traffic, exclusive of variables beyond anyone's control (weather, accident, etc)**
 - **Recommended a traffic study which the district is coordinating**
 - **Additional crossing guard could be needed**
 - **Busing**
 - **If Wanaque is ES and Haskell is MS (27-28 ~160 additional students need transportation)**
 - **~\$258,000 increase with same start time**
 - **~\$173,000 increase with staggered start**
 - **If Haskell is ES and Wanaque is MS (27-28 ~180 additional students need transportation)**
 - **~\$343,000 increase with same start time**
 - **~\$173,000 increase with staggered start**
 - **Busing could have a positive impact on traffic due to a reduction in motor vehicle traffic**



03 - Reorganize Grade Levels - SWOT Analysis

- **School Identity and Relationships**
 - **Connections matter in each school**
 - **Fear of losing traditions and belonging**
 - **Siblings in different schools is more complicated**
 - **Potential to reduce/eliminate long standing division/inequity**
 - **Would allow educational transition experience**
 - **Eliminate potential age specific behavioral exposure**
- **Financial Stewardship**
 - **New costs vs. new savings as well as potential revenue**
- **Educational Programming**
 - **Special Education (continuum of services and programming impact)**
 - **Opportunity for staff collaboration and unification of educational experience**
 - **Latitude in scheduling (for staff and students)**
 - **Potential expansion of programming (electives, extracurriculars)**

03 - Reorganize Grade Levels - Considerations



Facilities

Bathrooms

*Lockers

Playgrounds

Related Services

Classroom Size

Staffing Redundancies

K-5: 3 FTE staff (maintain HR: K-1 18-20 & 2-5 22-25) current HR: 18-21

6-8: 2 FTE staff (maintain class sizes: 20-22)

Special Education: 6 FTE staff

Related Services and Electives: 2 FTE staff

External

Traffic (Motor Vehicle and Pedestrian)

Transportation

PTA Operations

Before/After Care

Teaching and Learning

Middle School Courses and Electives

Special Education Programming

Professional Collaboration

Financial Analysis



01 - Second Question

Approx 4.19% additional tax levy - annual growth with typical budget levy

Will be outpaced in 28-29

02 - Maintain K - 8

Need to cut approx \$750,000 (estimated to be seven positions)

Will need to revisit for 28-29

03 - Restructure Grades

Staff redundancies approx \$1.4 M

One time costs and recurring costs...may have impact on 28-29

One time costs

- Building work (bathrooms, lockers, playground)...dependant on location
- Packing and moving staff
- Traffic and Demographic Study

Recurring costs

- Transportation

Potential Revenue

- Van Transportation (off set)
- Expand Pre-School



Three options - SUMMARY

It is essential for our financial future that we consider facts...then gather perspectives

01

Second Question

Adds to the base budget forever, if approved, but not at the pace of cost increases

02

Maintain K - 8 Schools

Preserves historic formula, but will create staffing and programming limitations

03

Reorganize Grade Levels

Has the potential to create financial flexibility and education growth

FEATURE AREA

We cannot fully forecast the future...we need to work with the information we have in the present.

NEXT STEP

Consider the facts and forecasted implications of each scenario then collect feedback



A Deliberate Public Process

This is time sensitive, but critical so we need to be measured and thoughtful

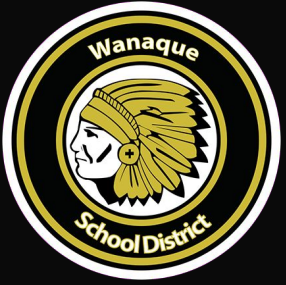
SWOT Survey (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats)

Intermediate Conversation - October 15, 2026 - Wanaque School Auditorium 6:00 PM

Follow Up Presentation - October 27 BOE Meeting

Timeline - Decision for December to support budget timeline, negotiations, and transition planning

KEY TAKEAWAY | This is an urgent conversation which deserves careful consideration.



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