

Saddle River School District



2026–2027 Budget Presentation

Building Excellence. Investing in Our Future.

Jennifer Macones Ed.D.

Superintendent / Principal

Thomas O'Hern

Business Administrator

Our Foundation

Saddle River School District



PreK–5 District of Excellence
Building strong early learning foundations.



Community Partnership
Families and staff working together.



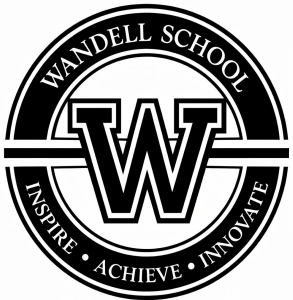
Strong Academic Tradition
High standards across every classroom.



Strategic Class Sizes
Personalized attention for every student.



Send/Receive Relationships
Connected pathways beyond our d



← CHOICE →





Where We Are Today



ACADEMIC EXCELLENCE

- NJSLS Curriculum
- Rigorous, standards-aligned instruction
- Strong student outcomes
- Departmentalized Grades 4–5 (subject-specific instruction)



STUDENT SUPPORT & INCLUSION

- RTI Framework (Tier 1, 2, 3 support)
- Inclusion Model
- Implementation of Wonder
- Strong special education supports



INNOVATION & ENRICHMENT

- New Autonomous Music Lab
- iSTEAM Program
- TREPS (Entrepreneurship)
- Gifted & Talented



WELLNESS & SCHOOL CULTURE

- Positive, engaging school environment
- New outdoor playground
- Monthly SEL assemblies
- SEL Family Night



COMMUNITY & IDENTITY

- Pre-K–Grade 5, ~150 students
- Close-knit school community
- After-school clubs & enrichment
- Accelerated reading & theater program



FAMILY & COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS

- Strong PAWS organization
- Education Foundation support
- Field trips, grants, and special events

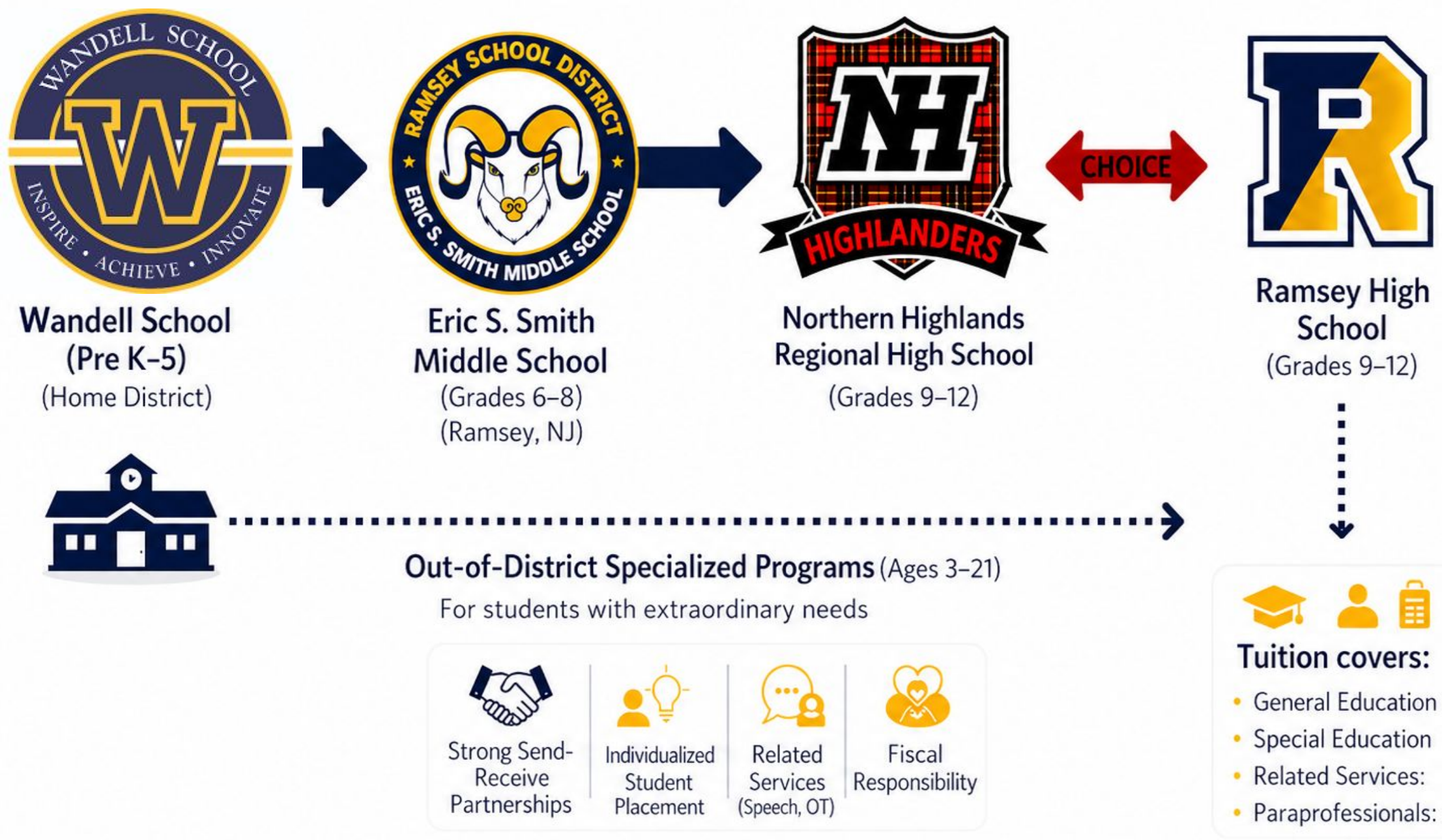


TOGETHER, EMPOWERING EVERY STUDENT TO LEARN, GROW, AND THRIVE.



Student Pathways & Tuition Overview

Saddle River School District



Enrollment Comparison: 2024-25 School Year vs. 2025-26 School Year

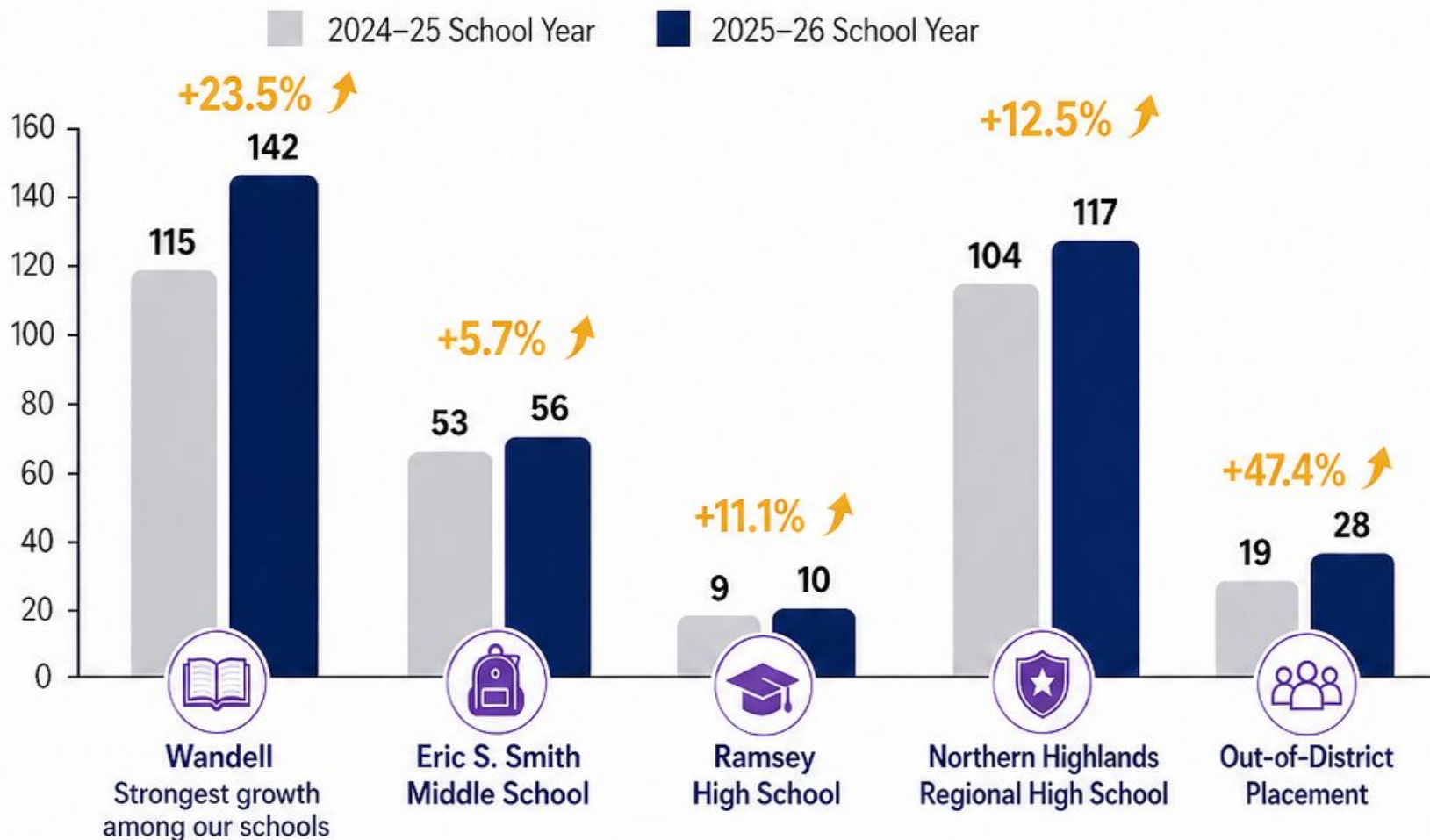
A Glance at Two Years



+17.7%

Overall District Growth

300 → 353 students (+53 students)



WANDELL GROWTH
+23.5%

Strongest growth among our schools.



OUT-OF-DISTRICT
+47.4%

Largest increase across all categories.



DISTRICT MOMENTUM
Continued enrollment growth across all schools and placements.

Out-of-District Placement



11 STUDENTS

Bergen Academies & Technology



17 STUDENTS

Special Education Programming (Out-of-District)



28 STUDENTS TOTAL





Enrollment Growth & Future Development

Ongoing residential development and the arrival of new families have driven a measurable increase in student enrollment across the district.

BY THE NUMBERS

23.5%

Wandell School Enrollment
Growth (Pre-K-5)

17.7%

District-Wide Growth
(Pre-K-12)

Driven by new residential development and community expansion



NEW RESIDENTIAL DEVELOPMENTS On Their Way

Avalon Bay 275 units

New Rental Housing
Community

Scheduled for Future
Development

Toll Brothers 100 units

New Family Townhome
Community

Scheduled for Future
Development

Continued construction activity signals sustained enrollment growth ahead

❏ Strategic Planning in Progress | Supporting Every Student, Every Stage of Growth



Growth Has a Cost

More Homes → More Students → Budget Impact



- Students in grades **6–12** attending send-receive schools generate tuition costs
- At Wandell (Pre-K–5), class sizes are approaching **20–22** students per class
- Continued growth may require hiring additional teachers
- Each new teacher costs approximately **\$80,000–\$140,000** (salary + benefits)
- New paraprofessionals can cost anywhere between **\$19,000–\$29,000**

Growth impacts both tuition expenses and in-district staffing needs

The Cost of Tuition-Based Students



Where Students Attend

- Smith Middle School
- Ramsey High School
- Northern Highlands Regional High School



Cost Per Student (General Education)

Estimated around
\$20,000 per student



Special Education / Out-of-District

Ranges from **\$22,000** to
\$120,000 per student

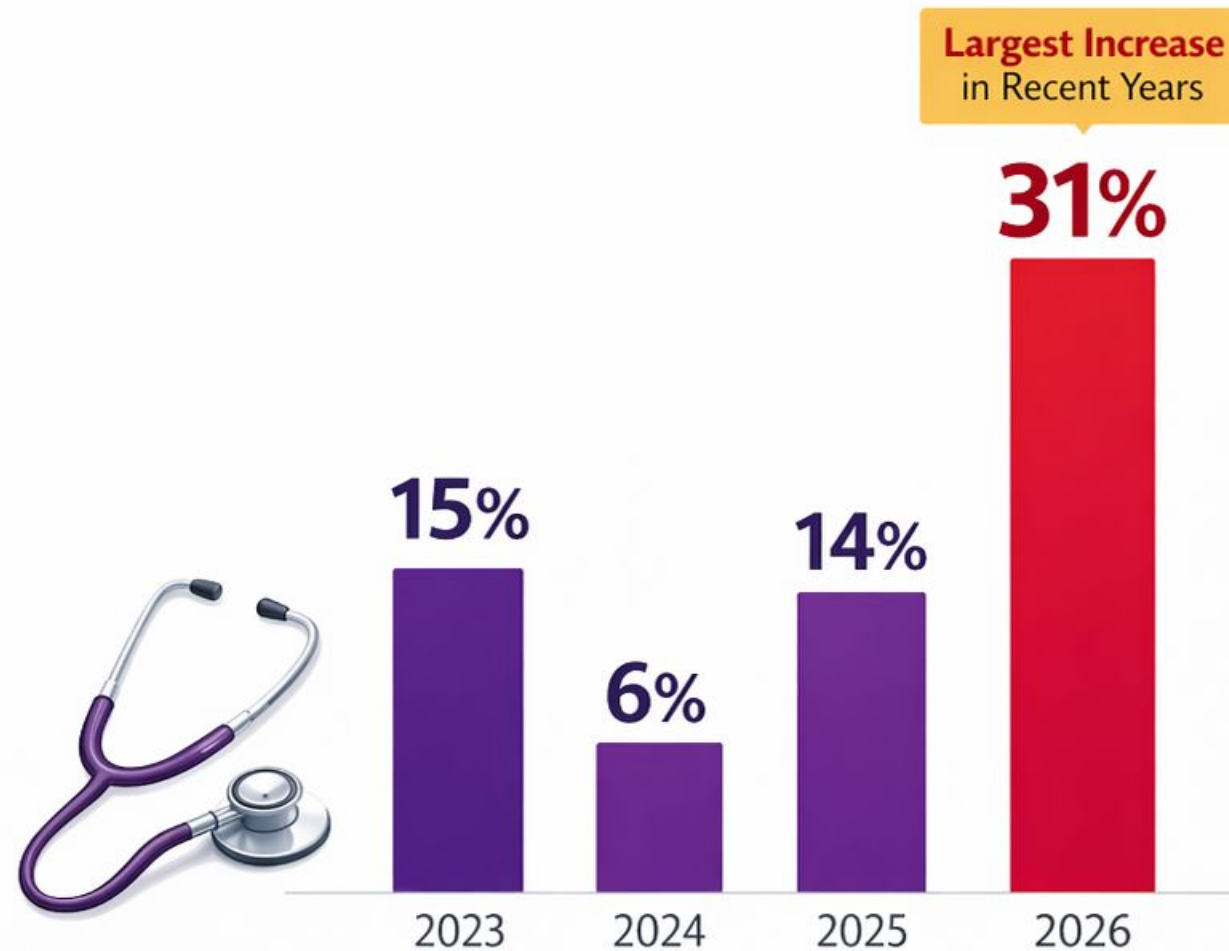
Key Takeaways

- One of the largest drivers of our *district budget*
- Grades 6–12 tuition (*send/receive*)
- Specialized *placements for ages 3–21*
- Significant *financial impact*

Understanding these costs helps provide transparency and informs responsible budget planning.



Rising Healthcare Costs: A Significant Budget Impact

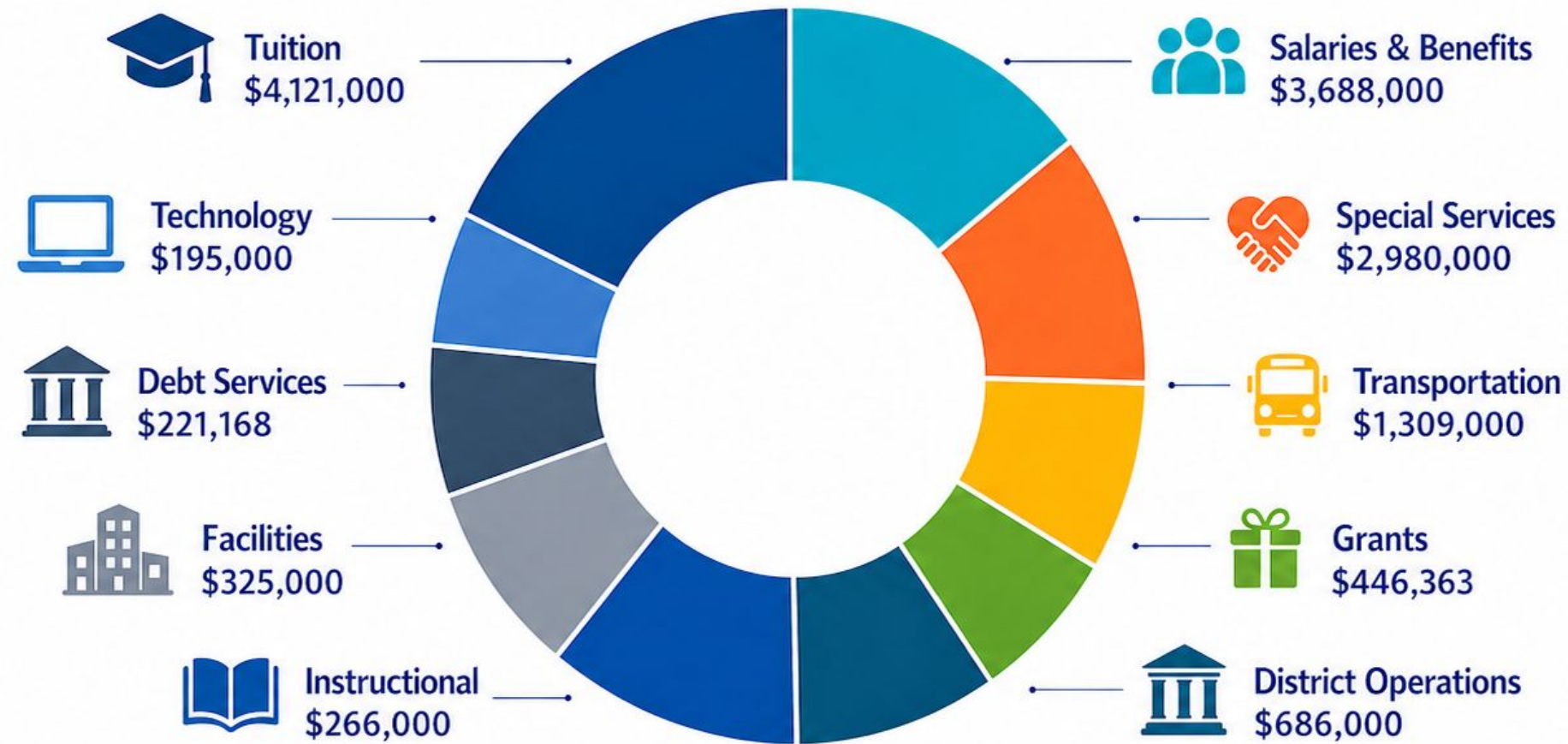


- Healthcare costs have risen steadily over the past two years.
- In 2026, the district experienced a dramatic and unprecedented **31% increase**.
- This sharp rise significantly impacted the overall budget and reflects a *broader trend* across New Jersey public schools.

This increase was substantially higher than anticipated and required careful financial planning and the use of allowable budget adjustments.

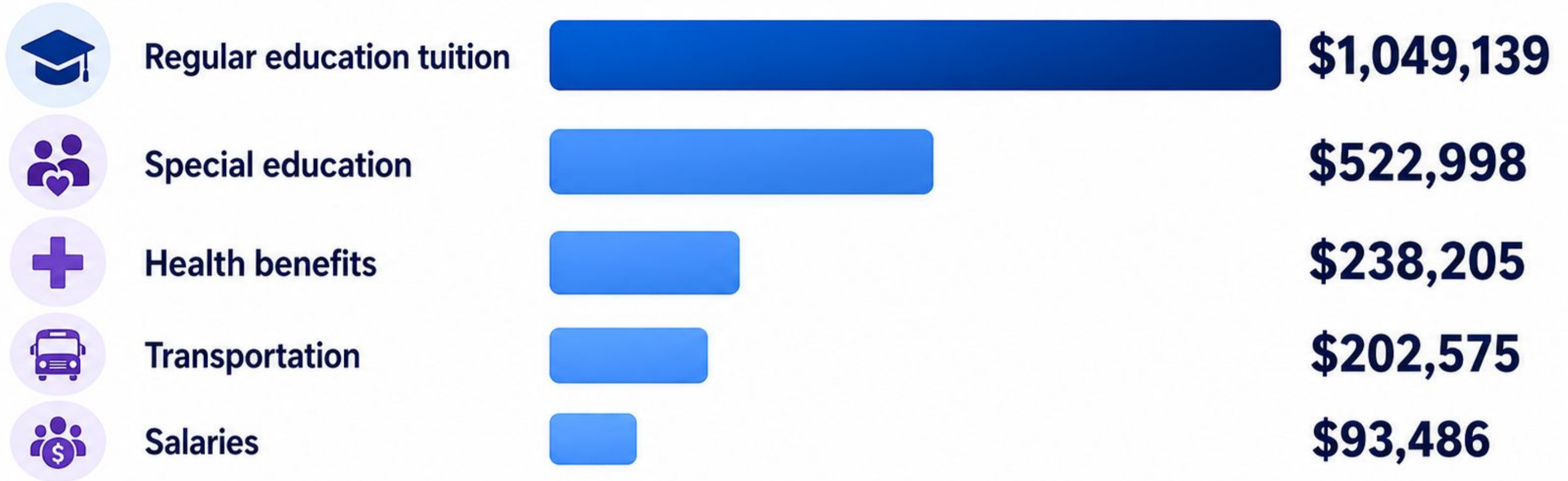
Where Our Investment Goes

2026–2027 Budget Overview



Total Investment: \$14,573,442

Budget Increases: Main Drivers



2% tax levy increase —
\$200,700



Gap to balance the budget —
\$2,106,403



District Revenue Sources

Where our revenue comes from

	Base Tax Levy	\$10,235,729
	Appropriation from Surplus	\$1,555,537
	State & Federal Aid	\$1,281,155
	Enrollment Adjustment	\$714,357
	Miscellaneous Revenue	\$356,287
	Debt Services	\$221,168
	Health Benefit Waiver	\$209,209



2026

Tax Levy Increase: **6.1%**



Estimated Yearly Tax Impact



— **\$465** —

Estimated yearly tax impact



Based on an average assessed home value of **\$1,924,865**



Historical Budget Trends & Statewide

1.9%

23-24

2.0%

25-26



BREAKING THE 2% CAP

2.2%

24-25

6.1%

26-27

❑ The 2% budget cap is not keeping pace with costs that are outside of district control.

Since 2012, school budget increases remained around 2% to eliminate a budget vote. Prior to 2012, every school voted on budgets yearly.

- Rising operational costs such as utilities, transportation and liability insurance are far exceeding the 2% budget cap.
- In 2020, a law was passed that transferred the majority of health benefit increases to the District.
- This trend is expected to continue, impacting schools statewide, often causing extensive cuts to programs.

This is not isolated to Saddle River. This is a statewide challenge across New Jersey.



Responsible Budget Planning



Strategic Resources



Purposeful allocation
aligned to district goals

Expenditure Monitoring



Carefully tracking
all budget lines

Shared Services



Leveraging partnerships
for efficiency

Goal Alignment



Every dollar tied
to district priorities

Fiscal Stability



Maintaining balance
during enrollment growth

Smart planning ensures sustainability, efficiency, and student success



Investing in Our Future at **Wandell School**

Supporting Exceptional Opportunities, Facilities, and Academic Excellence in Saddle River



After-School Clubs

Robotics • iSTEAM • Hands-On Learning



Performing Arts

Student Participation in School
Plays & Musical Productions



High Academic Achievement

Strong NJSLA Scores in Math & ELA
(Grades 3–5)



State-of-the-Art Music Lab

Autonomous Learning for All Students
Pre-K – 5



Expanded Special Education

W.O.N.D.E.R. Program (Pre-K – 5)



Beautiful Facilities

New Playground • Modern Learning Spaces



A school community full of opportunity, innovation, and pride.



The Heart of Saddle River

Exceptional Students

The heart of everything we do

Dedicated Staff

Committed professionals who inspire daily

Community Partnerships

Stronger together

Innovative Learning

Environments built for tomorrow

**TOGETHER WE make
Saddle River EXTRAORDINARY!**

