



SANFORD SCHOOL'S PROPOSED FY 27 ANNUAL SCHOOL BUDGET REFERENDUM

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INVESTING IN OUR STUDENTS' FUTURE

Dear Sanford/Springvale Community Members,

Following budget workshops in March, the Sanford City Council approved a combined city and school budget for fiscal year 2027 with a 5.2% increase, raising the mill rate from \$17.10 to \$17.99 (\$0.89 increase). The School Department's share is estimated at 44.8% — up slightly from last year's 42.8% but still well below the community average of 53.9% for school budgets. An increase in property valuation reduced our state subsidy by \$870,570. As of May 1, 2026, taxes on a \$300,000 home would increase by \$267 per year, though further valuation increases could reduce this.

The School Department's expenses are up 7.4% over last year, driven by rising wages, health insurance, state payroll tax, enrollment shifts, growing student support needs and facility needs. Importantly, 71.52% of our budget is state-funded — one of the highest rates among comparable Maine districts. Despite this, Sanford spends the least per student of any district in York and Cumberland counties (26th out of 26), while serving one of the region's highest-need populations. Our 3,200+ students are served by 184.4 FTE teachers — resulting in the highest student-to-teacher ratio among comparison districts (see chart on next page). Those differences in staffing and resources, translate directly into the numbers of teachers in a building, the availability of support staff, the sizes of classes and the resources available to students who need additional help.

This budget's priorities are to:

- Ensure a safe, engaging learning and working environment for students and staff*
- Connect academics with real-world applications while supporting students' social-emotional needs*
- Create welcoming, accessible learning environments that celebrate student diversity*
- Recruit and retain employees to remain competitive with surrounding schools*
- Restore and add positions to reduce class sizes & improve attendance, and fund facility needs*

I am proud of the dedication of our teachers, support staff, administrators and families who offer excellent academic programming and innovation, growing advanced learning opportunities, comprehensive support services for students and families, focus on pre-k and early learning, improving graduation rates, high-quality music, art and theater programs through the Sanford Performing Arts Center, extensive athletics and activities, exceptional Career and Technical Education at the Sanford Regional Technical Center, a thriving adult education program, strong community partnerships and more.

Our main goal is a budget that best meets the needs of our students while balancing our community's ability to support those needs — all in pursuit of our mission: Prepare all students with future-ready skills and knowledge to empower success in a rapidly-changing world. We are grateful for our engaged community members who support our schools in countless ways. Thank you.

*Sincerely,
Matt Nelson
Superintendent of Schools*

COMMUNITY COMPARISON — % OF TAX RATE FOR SCHOOLS (FY 2026)

Lebanon 84.0%	Westbrook 56.7%	Saco 52.6%
Acton 68.9%	Wells 56.1%	Newfield 50.0%
Arundel 66.7%	York 55.3%	Berwick 45.1%
Limerick 65.6%	Waterboro 54.7%	Parsonsfield 44.4%
Kennebunk 63.1%	South Berwick 54.1%	Sanford 42.8%
Buxton 62.4%	Alfred 54.0%	Lewiston 41.0%
Biddeford 61.7%	Eliot 53.3%	Old Orchard Beach 41.0%
		Maine avg. 53.9%

Cost Per Student Comparison

District	Cost Per Pupil	vs. State Average	
Yarmouth	\$22,208.48	\$3,736.22	
RSU 21	\$21,886.09	\$3,413.83	
Scarborough	\$20,421.11	\$1,948.85	
Westbrook	\$19,283.91	\$811.65	
State Average	\$18,472.26		
Saco	\$17,871.97	-\$600.29	Below State Average
MSAD 6	\$17,632.82	-\$839.44	Below State Average
MSAD 57	\$17,317.20	-\$1,155.06	Below State Average
Biddeford	\$16,466.78	-\$2,005.48	Below State Average
Sanford	\$15,066.38	-\$3,405.88	Below State Average



Teacher-to-Student Ratios

District	Students Per Teacher	Teachers Needed at That Ratio	If SSD Staffed at Their Ratio	FRL Rate(2024-2025)
RSU 23	10.37	309.0	+124.6	37.15%
York	11.09	288.9	+104.5	21.82%
Falmouth	11.67	274.6	+90.2	8.40%
Cape Elizabeth	12.25	261.6	+77.2	9.50%
Yarmouth	12.63	253.7	+69.3	15.58%
Scarborough	12.82	249.9	+65.5	20.64%
RSU 21	12.88	248.8	+64.4	18.18%
Brunswick	12.99	246.7	+62.3	36.50%
MSAD 51	12.98	246.8	+62.4	68.10%
Westbrook	13.28	241.3	+56.9	67.51%
Saco	13.49	237.5	+53.1	34.41%
Lewiston	13.92	230.2	+45.8	66.07%
RSU 14	14.56	220.0	+35.6	30.93%
MSAD 6	14.67	218.4	+34.4	41.13%
Biddeford	14.94	214.4	+30.0	64.29%
MSAD 57	15.10	212.2	+27.8	46.19%
Gorham	15.70	204.1	+19.7	21.91%
Augusta	16.77	191.0	+6.6	57.86%
Sanford	17.38	184.4	—	58.94%

Sanford's 3,200+ students are served by 141.2 full-time equivalent teachers, yielding a student-to-teacher ratio of 17.38. The table above shows ratios for 19 Maine districts. Sanford's free and reduced lunch rate is 58.94%, among the highest in this comparison group. Several districts with lower poverty rates maintain lower student-to-teacher ratios: York (11.09 students/teacher, 21.82% FRL), Falmouth (11.67, 8.40% FRL), and Yarmouth (12.63, 15.58% FRL).

Did you know?

- With over 3,200 students enrolled, Sanford is one of the Maine's largest school districts.
- The Sanford School Department provides an all-day Pre-K program for 128 children annually.
- Sanford High School offers 150 different courses across 12 disciplines, and 396 students are currently enrolled in Advanced Placement, dual enrollment, or early college courses – earning real college credit before graduation. Students can also choose from more than 30 co-curricular clubs and activities.
- Sanford School Department's graduation rate is at 92.14%, which is higher than the state average.
- Sanford's growing Pre-K-12 music program includes the high school marching band, which has won 4 straight state gold medals.
- Sanford High School and Sanford Middle School's growing theatre programs each offer a fall and spring production.
- Sanford Regional Technical Center offers 26 Career and Technical Education programs for 778 students, who can earn industry certifications and college credits while still in high school.
- The Sanford Performing Arts Center is one of the finest arts facilities in the state of Maine – hosting over 70 school concerts, performances, speakers, ceremonies, and more than 15 national and international touring performances.