
**BUDGET COMMITTEE MEETING
TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 17, 2026
NHS NORTH BOARD ROOM**

A Budget meeting of the Board of Education was held at the NHS North Board Room on Tuesday, February 17, 2026. Ms. Lamphier called the meeting to order at 6:01 pm.

Present: Ms. Giglio, Ms. Prinn, Mr. Johnson, Ms. Raymond, Ms. Lewis, Mr. Salvi, Ms. Lamphier, Ms. Lopez (by phone), and Ms. Bishop

Also Present: Dr. Andrade, Mr. Poska, Dr. Scarpati, and Ms. De Gray. Also attending are department directors.

The presentation can be found on the district website at <https://www.nashua.edu/Page/2322>.

During the Budget Committee meeting on February 17, 2026, Dr. Andrade and Ms. De Gray presented, along with our department directors, the FY27 budget overview.

Strategic Plan and Vision Statement

- Dr. Andrade discussed the district's vision statement, focusing on community, curiosity, and valuing every learner. He highlighted the need for community engagement and the four focus areas in the strategic plan: climate, culture, community engagement, operational efficiencies, and innovate research and design.
- Dr. Andrade stressed the importance of asking bold questions and having open-minded discussions about the district's future.
- He presented high-level academic highlights, including growth in ELL students, exiting ATSI status, and recognition of Sunset Heights as a nationally Distinguished School.

District Demographics and Enrollment Trends

- Dr. Andrade provided an overview of Nashua's student demographics, including the total number of students, budget, average class size, and staff members.
- He discussed the decline in student enrollment from 11,500 in 2014 to 9,500 in 2026, with a projected further decline to 9,000 by 2032.
- Dr. Andrade detailed the changes in student enrollment by demographic groups, including ELL and special education students.
- He highlighted the district's investment in ELL teachers, noting the increase from 27 in 2014 to 52 in 2025.

Special Education

- Ms. De Gray introduced the topic of special education funding, explaining the different sources, including federal grants, state revenue, and competitive grants. She emphasized the importance of not exhausting the special revenue and trust fund accounts, which are meant for emergency use.
- Mr. Beer, Interim Director of Special Education, outlined the guiding principles and top priorities for the department, including behavioral supports, differentiated curriculum, and mental health initiatives.
- He discussed the challenges of staff recruitment and retention, rising costs of contracted services, and the impact of out-of-district placements.

ELL

- Mr. Cioppa, Director of the English Language Learner Program, provided an overview of the ELL program, including the number of active and monitored students, explaining the different types of ELL learners, including typically progressing, newcomers, students with limited formal education, and long-term English language learners.
- Mr. Cioppa discussed the challenges of providing adequate service minutes for different proficiency levels, identifying students with learning disabilities and the importance of providing appropriate support, and the impact of the DOJ settlement agreement.
- He highlighted the focus on improving literacy skills at all levels to reduce the need for special education services and shorten the time in the ELL program.
 - Ms. Raymond inquired about the process of identifying ELL students and the role of the Home Language Survey.
- Mr. Cioppa explained the screening and assessment process for ELL students, including the use of the ACCESS test and the parent's right to accept or decline services.
 - Ms. Lamphier asked about the number of dually-identified students, and Mr. Cioppa confirmed there are around 400.
 - Ms. Raymond asked about the involvement of ELL students in extracurricular activities and mentorship programs.
- Mr. Cioppa explained the role of Family Engagement Coordinators in connecting families with community resources and supporting students in extracurricular activities.
- Dr. Andrade mentioned the high participation rate in extracurriculars since pre-COVID, indicating a positive trend.

Plant Operations and Capital Projects

- Mr. Smith, Director of Plant Operations, presented the budget for maintaining and repairing school buildings and grounds, including supply lines, HVAC, and elevator maintenance.
- He highlighted the need for replacing the maintenance software and increasing the security system storage capabilities.
- Mr. Smith discussed the capital projects for deferred maintenance, including roof repairs, resurfacing tennis courts, and replacing intercom systems. He emphasizes the importance of advocating for increased deferred maintenance funding to address critical needs in school buildings.
 - Ms. Raymond raised concerns about the condition of playgrounds and the need for equitable investment in playgrounds across schools.
- Dr. Andrade suggested discussing the priority of playgrounds in the budget and the trade-offs involved in allocating funds.
- Ms. De Gray clarified that safety concerns related to playgrounds can be addressed through the deferred maintenance trust fund.
- Mr. Smith explained the flooding issue at Ledge Street playground, which is on park land but affects the playground.
 - Ms. Lamphier asks about the feasibility of replacing the roof at Bicentennial with deferred maintenance funds.
- Mr. Smith explained that the funds would be used to address the worst parts of the roof, providing a temporary solution. He also identified other schools that need roof replacements in the next five years, including Fairgrounds, Ledge Street, and Charlotte Avenue.

Athletics

- Ms. Gingras, Director Athletics, emphasized the importance of athletic programs as an integral part of comprehensive education and explained the role of athletic programs in preparing students for college, career, or military.
- Ms. Gingras discussed the inclusion of special education and ELL students in athletic programs.

- Ms. Gingras provided participation statistics for last year, showing increased involvement in athletics.
- Ms. Gingras discusses the challenges of middle school programs due to physical limitations and financial constraints.
 - Ms. Lewis asked about the availability of wrestling teams for middle school students.
- Ms. Gingras mentioned the need for B teams and middle school lacrosse and wrestling programs and elaborated on the historical context of wrestling programs and the lack of physical space in middle schools.
 - Ms. Lamphier asked about the impact of open enrollment on athletic programs.

Technology

- Dr. Rodriguez, Director of Information Technology, discussed the core switch project and its importance for the district's internet infrastructure.
- Dr. Rodriguez explained the E-Rate discount for schools and libraries and its impact on the budget.
- Dr. Rodriguez outlined the laptop refresh plan, the challenges of increasing hardware costs, the support for Chromebooks, and the need for a renewal process.
- Dr. Rodriguez highlighted the importance of software support for various departments and the need for updates and the shift to subscription-based software and its impact on the budget, including the potential for cost savings through cloud-based solutions.
- Dr. Andrade mentioned the need for updated software for budgeting and other operations including Human Resources.
 - Ms. Raymond questioned the shift to subscription services and the potential for cost savings.
- Dr. Rodriguez explained the limitations of owning software and the benefits of subscription-based models.

Curriculum and Professional Development

- Dr. Scarpati outlined the core K-12 curriculum and the need for renewal of licenses and supplies.
- Dr. Scarpati discussed the shift from Lexia to Boost for literacy intervention programs.
- Dr. Scarpati highlighted the importance of professional development for teachers.
- Mr. Poska emphasized the need for consistency in curriculum and the role of data in informing instruction.
 - Ms. Lamphier asks about the support for differentiation in curriculum programs.

Transportation

- Ms. De Gray provided an overview of transportation costs and the impact of tiering scheduling.
- Ms. De Gray explained the increase in transportation costs (Year 2 of the approved contract with First Student) and the additional expenses for late buses, midday buses, and shuttle buses.
 - Ms. Raymond asked about the responsibility for transporting students under open enrollment and McKinney Vento.
- Dr. Andrade mentioned advocacy for regulation on third-party transportation costs.
 - Mr. Salvi asked about studies to reduce transportation costs and the possibility of collecting data on ridership.
- Ms. De Gray explained the challenges of reducing busing without impacting students' ride time.
- Dr. Andrade explained the logistical challenges of using city buses for high school students, the city's RFP for transportation, and the limited routes covered by the Nashua Transit Authority.
 - Ms. Raymond mentioned that high school students have to pay for bus passes, which does not cover the full cost.
- Ms. De Gray noted that it has been several years since the bus pass cost was increased and suggested revisiting it.
 - Ms. Lamphier inquired about the collaboration with charter schools to reduce bus stops.

- Dr. Andrade confirmed it has not been successful but we continue to have ongoing discussions with charter schools to improve transportation efficiency.

Budget Priorities

- Following department overviews, Dr. Andrade outlined the district's budget priorities, including federal and state mandates, special education, ELL staffing, and transportation. Dr. Andrade emphasized the need for the district to plan for potential increases in special education costs and the importance of state adequacy aid.
- Ms. De Gray discussed major increases in the budget, including the special education staffing services.
 - Ms. Raymond asked about the impact of increased special education costs and the potential for state reimbursement, which Dr. Andrade explained is limited.

Food Service

- Ms. De Gray highlighted the \$5,000 meal debt in the district and the \$3.1 million cost of providing free lunch for all students.
- Dr. Andrade praised the proactive approach of building-level staff in engaging with families to address meal debt.
- Ms. De Gray raised concerns about the declining fund balance in the food service account and the need to address increasing costs. She suggested potential solutions, including increasing food prices, reducing staff, or including food service expenses in the operating budget.
- Dr. Andrade acknowledged the importance of the food service account's self-sustaining nature and the need for careful financial management.

Ms. De Gray provided an overview of the district's federal grant revenue, totaling \$12.8 million for the current year, highlighting the importance of federal grants in supporting the district's operations and the need for accurate estimates in budgeting.

Dr. Andrade and Ms. De Gray discussed the next steps in finalizing budget proposals and presenting them to the board for approval.

Ms. Raymond moved, seconded by Ms. Prinn, to adjourn at 9:35 pm. Motion passes 8-0.

Submitted by Tara C. Kinsella