

Mendham Township School District

2024-2025 Budget FAQs

The Mendham Township School District is proposing a \$26.6 million budget for the 2024-25 school year. The budget prioritizes funding improvement and expansion of instructional programs in the areas of early literacy and mathematics, as well as special education and counseling for students in need of social and emotional support. This matches the district's goal of ensuring *every* student meets grade-level standards.

The budget is the result of collaboration and hard work between the MTSD administration and Board of Education, which each year works to present a fiscally responsible budget that bolsters educational offerings for Mendham Township's children. By growing sustainable revenue and finding creative ways to share services, the district again can offer a budget that decreases taxes for township residents, even as costs like healthcare benefits continue to increase and federal COVID-19 funding ends.

The public is invited to learn about the proposed budget at open houses on April 29 and through the MTSD website and [social media](#). The Board will consider the final adoption at its April 30 meeting.

Join us to learn more:

Week of April 22 - Advertised School Budget appears in local paper

Monday, April 29 - Budget Open House (10 a.m. and 6 p.m. at MTES Cafeteria)

Thursday, May 2 - Budget Public Hearing (7:30 p.m. at the Board of Education Meeting)

How much is the proposed budget?

The proposed total operating budget for the 2024-25 school year is \$26,648,000. This represents a \$2,579,597 expenditure increase over last year's budget.

What is banked cap and how will it be used?

New Jersey allows school districts to raise the tax levy up to 2% each year. If a district doesn't raise the tax levy the full amount in a particular year, they can save or "bank" the difference to use in future years when they may need to exceed the 2% cap.

Because of the district's strategy of being fiscally conservative in previous years, MTSD has banked cap available, some of which will expire if it isn't used. The district is eligible to use this banked cap in two categories: enrollment adjustment (because MTSD's enrollment has grown at

a higher rate than the state's weighted rate) and health care adjustment (based on health care costs being below the anticipated rate). MTSD will therefore use banked cap (\$926,974) and the 2% allowable increase (\$356,051) to raise the tax levy by 6.85%.

How much state aid will the district receive?

State aid will cover approximately \$1,471,555 of the schools' expenses in fiscal year 2025. This is a 15% increase from last year.

While the state aid increase is welcome news for Mendham Township, the district was surprised to receive a negative \$148,060 adjustment for not enrolling in the state's Chapter 44 health care plan for educators. MTSD was penalized by the state for continuing to offer an employee health plan that has better benefits for employees and costs the district less.

It is also important to note that federal COVID-19 funding has ended. This funding was used to combat learning loss and social and emotional learning issues that resulted from the pandemic. Those needs, however, remain and the district has worked to find creative ways to support those areas.

How will my taxes be impacted?

Residents will see a decrease in the school portion of their tax bills, even though the proposed budget increases the local tax levy.

A home assessed at Mendham Township's average of \$1,145,145 can expect to see a \$869 decrease over a year. Another way to think about the tax impact is that for every \$100,000 of assessed home value, you can expect to see a decrease of \$76 per year. Check the assessed value of your home [here](#).

This decrease is possible because:

1. The township went through a reassessment in 2022, which increased the total ratables by \$168 million.
2. The bond referendum that voters approved in 2022 allowed the district to access even more state aid. In fact, the state committed to pay \$7.4 million of the \$19.9 million toward those specific projects over the life of the bonds.

Will additional faculty or support staff be hired?

The priority remains to maintain our existing staff so we can continue to offer small class sizes with a low student/teacher ratio and enhanced programming. The 2024-25 budget would also fund:

- MTES math basic skills

- MTES reading specialist
- Additional guidance support at MTES and MTMS
- Increased music instruction at MTMS
- Additional special education teacher (inclusion) at MTES
- Additional special education teacher (inclusion) at MTMS

What strategies is the district using to contain costs?

Some rising costs are non-discretionary, meaning they are required by law. The administration and Board of Education proactively control costs to reduce the tax burden for township residents. Strategies include:

- Growing revenue by providing busing services to surrounding school districts. Transportation revenue grew by \$180,000 from last year and is used to fund educational priorities in our schools.
- Collecting tuition for pre-kindergarten and special education services. Pre-kindergarten revenue grew by \$64,000 from last year.
- Using shared service agreements in areas such as pooled health insurance, recycling/waste management, special education, cooperative purchasing, etc.
- Partnering with Education Staffing Solutions (ESS) to manage support staff.

What happens next in the budget process?

The budget process occurs over several months and lays the foundation for the following school year's success. The Board of Education tentatively approved the budget at its March 12 meeting, and the budget was sent to the New Jersey Department of Education for review.

The district invites the public to learn more and ask questions about the budget at two open houses on Monday, April 29 at 10 a.m. and 6 p.m. at the MTES Cafeteria. The Board of Education will consider the final adoption of the budget the following night on Thursday, May 2 at its regularly scheduled meeting.

Are there tax assistance programs available for residents in New Jersey?

Yes, New Jersey offers several tax assistance programs to provide tax relief or reimbursement for senior citizens and residents with disabilities. Each program has different deadlines and income and age requirements:

- [NJ Senior Freeze for Property Tax Reimbursement](#)
- [NJ \\$250 Senior Citizen Property Tax Deduction](#)
- [Stay NJ \(proposed program for 2026 at earliest\)](#)

- [Affordable New Jersey Communities for Homeowners and Renters \(ANCHOR\) \(new program that replaced Homestead Act\)](#)

Thank you to the Board of Education, especially the Operations and Finance Committee, for their commitment to Mendham Township's children through this budget process.