

MERSD FY26 Budget Contingency Plan

Although the School Committee has adopted the budget, *three critical steps remain for it to become official.*

The budget must be approved at both the Essex and Manchester Town Meetings, and in Essex, it will require an override ballot vote for final approval.

If the budget is not approved by early June, a contingency plan will be implemented to address the \$2 million shortfall between available resources and the cost of the FY26 carry-forward level services budget. This would fundamentally alter the district's direction and jeopardize the quality of education we can offer.

MERSD FY26 Budget Contingency Plan

Approval Process & Next Steps

The FY 26 Budget has been adopted by the School Committee, but there are still key steps for it to become final...

Approval at Essex and Manchester Town Meetings:

- Manchester Town Meeting – April 28th, 6:30 PM @ Memorial Elementary School
- Essex Town Meeting – May 5th, 6:30 PM @ Essex Elementary School

In Essex, an override ballot vote will be required for final approval:

- May 12th, 7:00 AM – 8:00 PM @ Essex Public Safety Facility

MERSD FY26 Budget Contingency Plan

What Happens If the MERSD Budget Does Not Pass?

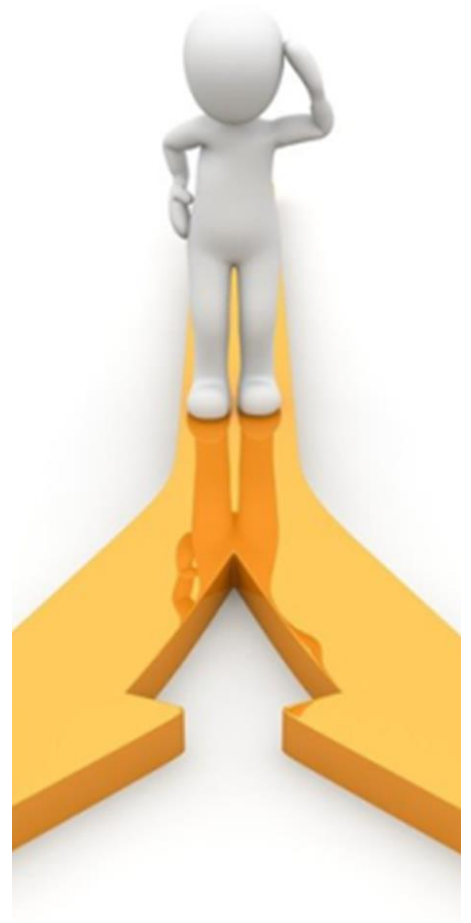
If the proposed MERSD budget is rejected at the first round of town meetings and the override vote, the following process will take place:

- **Budget Review and Amendment:** The Regional School District Committee will have 30 days to review, amend, and resubmit the budget based on concerns raised during the meetings and elections.
- **Second Round of Votes:** A second round of town meetings will be held to vote on the reconsidered budget, with each town holding their meeting within 45 days of receiving the revised budget.
- **Final Approval:** If both towns approve the reconsidered budget, it becomes final. If the reconsidered budget is rejected again, a special district-wide meeting will be held for all registered voters from both towns to vote on the budget.
- **State Intervention:** If no budget is approved by December 1, the state takes control of the district's finances and sets a state-imposed budget, ensuring school operations continue under a 1/12 monthly budget allocation.
- **Contingency Plan & Level-Funded Operations:** If the budget is unresolved by June, MERSD will need to enact its contingency plan. If the new fiscal year begins on July 1 without an approved budget, MERSD will operate under a level-funded assumption, maintaining current services without any new funding increases until a budget is agreed upon.

MERSD FY26 Budget Contingency Plan

MERSD is at a crossroad

- \$2 million budget reduction necessitates significant adjustments across MERSD's operations.
- This shift will impact the district's capacity to deliver quality education.
- Impacts are broad, long-term, and systemic
- Structural reductions affect all schools and grade levels
- This is not a temporary disruption—it's a shift in the district's capacity and mode of operations



MERSD FY26 Budget Contingency Plan

Impact Summary

Academic Quality Declines: Larger classes, fewer courses, and loss of instructional staff limit student choice and instructional depth.

Student Support Reduced: Cuts to counseling and mental health services weaken critical student support systems.

Growth Stalls: Deferrals in professional development, curriculum work, and tech investments slow progress.

Barriers to Participation: New fees for music, Chromebooks, and athletics combined with moving more activities outside the day create barriers to participation.

Instruction Suffers: The loss of 22+ FTEs increases workloads, reduces planning time, and makes recruitment and retention of high-quality staff more difficult.

MERSD Override Contingency Plan to Reduce FY26 Budget by \$2M

Professional Staff

Location	Position	FTE	Savings
Distirct	ELL Teacher	0.5	\$56,328
Elem	Elementary Instructional Coaches	2	\$227,565
Elem	Elementary Music	0.7	\$51,512
Elem	Elementary PE*	0.9	\$66,683
Elem	Elementary Reading (MTSS)	0.6	\$51,000
Elem	Essex Classroom	1	\$96,887
Elem	Memorial Classrom	1	\$83,142
HS	HS BRIDGE Counselor / Restructure	1	\$83,541
HS	HS Content (WL, English,SS/Art)	3.5	\$303,255
MS	MS Academy	1	\$114,909
MS	MS ACE	1	\$75,120
MS	MS Health/Wellness	1	\$100,035
MS	MS Principal	1	\$100,000
MS	MS Reading Specialist	1	\$75,120

Administrative/Administrative Support

Location	Position	FTE	Savings
District	CO Admin Ast Restructuring (Clerk)	1	\$56,375
District	Computer Technician	1	\$67,306
Elem	K TAs	2	\$71,530
Elem	Library TA	1	\$31,882
HS	BRIDGE TA	1	\$36,451
HS	HS Admin Ast Restructuring	0.5	\$31,332

Expenditures / Contracted Service / Fees

Location	Position	FTE	Savings
District	Eliminate Crossing Guards		\$1,500
District	Facilities Small Cap		\$50,000
District	North Shore Consortium Wrap Around Services		\$27,500
District	Prof Dev Reduction		\$6,750
District	Reduce a Bus Run		\$75,000
HS	HS Genral User Fee		TBD
MHS	Athletics		\$39,000
MHS	SRO - 50% Reduction		\$32,500
MS	Eliminate MS Chromebooks - FY27		\$38,000
MS	Instructional Software		\$15,000

Systems Wide Reorganization

Elem	K-5 Every Wednesday Early Release *		\$25,000
Elem	SAIL Returns to Essex		

Total FTE Eliminate	22.7	\$2,090,222	
Total FTE Impacted	25	\$2,077,628	Target Reduction

Notes

	Est. Unempl Liability	Est. Health Care Savings	Unfunded Unempl Liability
Health Care Savings to Offset Unempl Costs	\$849,500	\$463,873	\$385,628 Reserves

MERSD Override Contingency Plan to Reduce FY26 Budget by \$2M

Reduction Impact Summary

Professional Staff

- **ELL Teacher (0.5 FTE) – \$56,328**
May result in non-compliance with mandated services for English Learners. Reduced staff may not be able to meet state mandated testing, screening, and monitoring requirements. A stipend or tutorial model may be needed to maintain basic coverage.
- **Elementary Instructional Coaches (2 FTE) – \$227,565**
Eliminates the embedded instructional coaching model that supports teachers in improving core instruction. This removes job-embedded professional development to improve instructional practices and instructional support for onboarding new teachers. This also eliminates in-house training and implementation support for new curriculum materials and current research-based instructional practices.
- **Elementary Music (0.7 FTE) – \$51,512**
General music will continue (shared between EES and MMES), but instrumental lessons will shift to a fee-for-service model. Chorus, concert band, and rock band will move to after-school, stipend-based activities.
- **Elementary PE (0.9 FTE) – \$66,683**
Reduces physical education to once per week, limiting regular physical activity and health instruction for elementary students. Can't meet contractual prep time requirements. *See System Wide Adjustments / K-5 Wednesday Early Release.*
- **Elementary Reading – MTSS (0.6 FTE) – \$51,000**
Reduces literacy intervention capacity by approximately 13%. Decreasing our literacy specialists on the elementary Multitiered Systems of Support (MTSS) team decreases intervention time and support available to students K-5.
- **Essex Classroom (1 FTE) – \$96,887**
May result in multi-grade classrooms and grade-level shifts each year as this cohort progresses, affecting continuity and social-emotional learning. Reduces capacity for new enrollments and school choice.
- **Memorial Classroom (1 FTE) – \$83,142**
Reduction may increase class sizes and limit flexibility to address enrollment shifts.
- **HS BRIDGE Counselor (1 FTE) – \$83,541**
Eliminates dedicated counselor for students transitioning back from hospitalization. Responsibilities will shift to school adjustment counselors within the academic center, reducing individualized support.
- **HS Content Teachers (3.5 FTE) – \$303,255**
Reduces the number of course sections (by 17.5), leading to larger class sizes and fewer scheduling options for students.
- **MS Academy (1 FTE) – \$114,909**
MS Academy will be eliminated. Grade 6 will be divided into four sections, with each teacher working with their team to provide a trimester of interdisciplinary, project-based learning experiences for students. This will reduce grade-wide academic support in the areas of reading, writing, and math, increase class sizes, and weaken the ability to provide MTSS to Grade 6 students.

- **MS ACE Teacher (1 FTE) – \$75,120**
Reduces specialized instruction and support for highest-need middle school students, despite anticipated enrollment growth in the program.
- **MS Health/Wellness (1 FTE) – \$100,035**
One teacher will teach both content areas (PE and health) reducing dedicated instructional time in both health and wellness and increasing class sizes for all middle school exploratory content areas.
- **MS Principal Position (1 FTE) – \$100,000**
Restructure will reallocate \$40K for reorganizing administrative roles to support both middle and high school operations. This will result in a decrease in specialized leadership focus at both the middle and high school levels.
- **MS Reading Specialist (1 FTE) – \$75,120**
Reduces reading intervention and support services by 60% for middle school students.

Administrative/Support Staff

- **Central Office Admin Assistant (1 FTE) – \$56,375**
Restructuring will reduce business office capacity, limiting administrative support.
- **Computer Technician (1 FTE) – \$67,306**
Reduces technology support and maintenance capacity across the district.
- **Kindergarten Teaching Assistants (2 FTE) – \$71,530**
Less classroom support for our youngest K-5 students who are transitioning to elementary school. Lead teachers will have less support to aid in student behavior, student needs, and supervision/safety.
- **Library TA (1 FTE) – \$31,882**
Reduces support for elementary library operations and coverage to building where librarian isn't assigned on a given day.
- **HS BRIDGE TA (1 FTE) – \$36,451**
Position eliminated; coverage will be shifted to main office administrative assistant duties.
- **HS Admin Assistant (0.5 FTE) – \$31,332**
Reduction in guidance administrative support.

Expenditures / Contracted Services

- **Crossing Guards – \$1,500**
Elimination of service; safety coverage may be reduced.
- **Facilities Small Capital Plan – \$50,000**
Capital plan frozen; stabilization funds will cover urgent annual maintenance needs.
- **North Shore Consortium Connections Program – \$27,500**

Eliminates access to wrap around support for high need families coping with children's mental health and behavioral needs, school refusal, and risk and safety issues. Counselors from Connections work with these families on a short-term basis to deliver individualized parent training and consultation, counseling, and connection to community resources.

- **Professional Development Reduction – \$6,750**
Reduces our flexibility and range of providing necessary professional learning to staff across all roles, departments and levels. Limits PD to high-priority strategic initiatives only and eliminates opportunities for external conference participation.
- **Reduce a Bus Run – \$75,000**
Consolidates Manchester bus routes, increasing travel time for some students.
- **Athletics – \$39,000**
User fee increase of 8%. Elimination of JV2 Basketball, 1 MS Golf, 1MS Field Hockey, MS Boys Basketball, and HS Strength & Conditioning. Introduction of uniform/sock fee. Middle school students may play on HS teams under a unified principal.
- **School Resource Officer (50% Reduction) – \$32,500**
SRO will be part-time at MHS. Reduces daily safety oversight and emergency readiness.
- **Eliminate MS Chromebooks (effective FY27) – \$38,000**
Starting Spring 2026, families of incoming Grade 6 students will lease devices instead of receiving school-issued Chromebooks. This could impact the technology department's ability to effectively manage and oversee student devices for developmentally appropriate access and ensure students are complying with the Middle School Chromebook Contract.
- **Instructional Software – \$15,000**
Reduction in supplemental software (e.g., IXL, i-Ready MyPath), limiting supplemental targeted, adaptive online practice and content application in the areas of math and reading in K-8. Core instruction not affected.
- **HS General User Fee – \$TBD**
User fee structure to be adjusted; details pending.

System Wide Adjustments

- **K-5 Early Release Every Wednesday – \$25,000**
Necessary to accommodate PE staffing cuts. Teaching assistants' hours reduced by 1 hour weekly.
- **SAIL Program Relocated to Essex – \$N/A**
Program predominantly serves Essex students. Staff will be reassigned to Essex Elementary School. Provide additional adult presence to assist with building coverage

MERSD History of Budget Reductions & Right Sizing

Position Cut History FY19 - FY24

Enrollment Related Teacher Position Reductions FY19-FY23				
FY19-FY23	Elem	Elementary Librarian	1	Position Elimination/Shared Elementary
FY19-FY23	Elem	Elementary World Lang Prog.	1	Elim Program
FY19-FY23	MS	6th Grade World Lang	0.6	Elim Program
FY19-FY23	Elem	Elementary Art	0.5	Position Elimination/Shared Elementary
FY19-FY23	Elem	Elementary Tech Teacher	1	Multi Year Reorg / Dig Lrng. Sp.
FY19-FY23	Memorial	Elementary Classroom	3	Classroom Section Elimination
FY19-FY23	Elem	Psychologist	1	Position Elimination/Shared Elementary
FY19-FY23	Memorial	Elementary PE	0.4	Position Elimination
FY19-FY23	HS	Art	0.4	Section Reduction
FY19-FY23	Essex	Gen Ed Reading Teaching Assistants	1.2	Intervention Program Reorganization
FY19-FY23		Position FTE Reduction Total	8.9	
FY19-FY23		Teaching Assistant FTE Reduction Total	1.2	

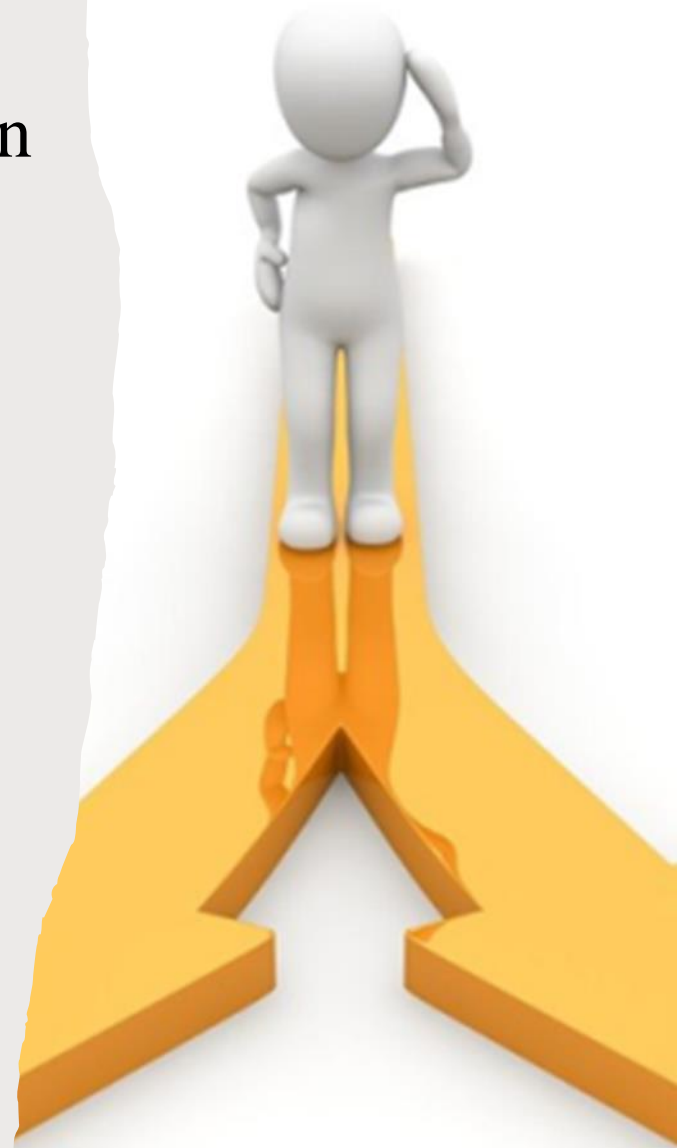
Teacher Position Reductions FY24 Budget Proposal - Compromise Version 6.6.23				
FY24	Essex	Elementary Classroom	1	Classroom Section Elimination
FY24	MS	Special Education Liaison	1	Position Elimination
FY24	HS	HS Math	1	Position Elimination
FY24	Memorial	Special Education Specialized Prg.	1	Position Elimination / Program Service Restructure
FY24	HS	Music	0.95	Position Elimination / Attrition / Defer Performing Arts Coordinator
FY24	HS	Science	1	Position Elimination
FY24	Memorial	Elementary Classroom	1	Classroom Section Elimination
FY24	Districtwide	Paraprofessionals / Teaching Assistants	4.6	Intervention Program Reorganization
FY24		FY24 Teacher FTE Reduction Total	6.95	
FY24		Teaching Assistant FTE Reduction Total	4.6	

FY19-24 Position FTE Reduction Total			15.85	
FY19-24 Teaching Assistant FTE Reduction Total			5.8	

MERSD FY26 Budget Contingency Plan

MERSD is at a crossroad

- Plan implementation impacts the district's capacity to deliver quality education.
- This is not a temporary disruption—it is a shift in the district's capacity and mode of operations
- Impacts are broad, long-term, and systemic
- Structural reductions affect all schools and grade levels
- The FY26 Adopted Budget is essential to protect MERSD's mission and core strengths.
 - Strong academics
 - Inclusion and comprehensive support
 - Breadth and scope of programing
 - Opportunity for all students





MERSD FY26 Budget Contingency Plan

For More Information Visit

- [MERSD Budget & Finance Page](#)
- [MERSD Budget FAQ](#)