

March 26, 2026

New data released by the Connecticut State Department of Education indicates overall Connecticut public school spending increased in the 2024-25 school year. However, there is more to the story than the top-line trend.

Increases in spending were not uniform across the state and were largely driven by the rising costs of special education services. While spending increased statewide, increases were not enough to keep up with inflation, and for those districts receiving substantial federal COVID-relief funding, the increases were not enough to offset the ending of those funds. As a result, many of the state's largest, highest-need districts reported decreased spending on both a total and per-student basis.

Overall Takeaways

- During the 2024-25 school year, **\$12.2 billion was spent on Connecticut's public schools**, equaling \$22,721 per student.
- While statewide spending grew by \$250.5 million, it **increased at a slower rate (2.1%) than in recent years** and did not keep up with inflation.
 - When adjusted for inflation, **spending declined by \$60.9 million (0.5%)**.
- Although a majority of districts saw their per-student spending increase, many of the **state's largest districts experienced declines in their per-student spending**. This was largely due to the end of federal COVID-relief funding.
- Special education expenditures were the **primary driver of increased spending**, accounting for \$205.6 million (82.1%) of the total spending increase.

Statewide Spending

- **Statewide spending increased by \$250.5 million (2.1%)** from the 2023-24 school year to the 2024-25 school year.
 - \$205.6 million (82.1%) of that increase was attributable to **growth in special education expenditures**.
 - Despite increasing, **overall spending did not keep pace with inflation**. When adjusted for inflation, spending actually decreased by \$60.9 million (0.5%).
- **Total spending per student rose to \$22,721** — an increase of \$667 (3%).
- **Special education spending increased by \$205.6 million (6.7%)**, driven primarily by greater tuition costs (\$59.9 million) and teacher salaries (\$44.4 million).
- Salaries (+\$175.1 million or 2.6%) and benefits (+\$63.4 million or 3.3%) saw the **largest increases of any spending areas**, while instruction related support services experienced the largest decrease of \$47 million (9.6%).

District-Level Spending

- On average, district spending **increased \$1,092 per student**.
 - Changes ranged from a **decrease of \$3,439 per student** (Common Ground High School) to an **increase of \$16,481 per-student** (EASTCONN).¹
- Though overall spending grew statewide, not all school districts experienced increases and **4 of the state's 5 largest districts decreased their total spending**.²
- **26 districts reduced their total spending** with reductions ranging from \$12,066 (Milford) to \$45.8 million (Hartford).
 - When adjusted for inflation, **79 districts experienced decreases in spending**.
 - A significant portion of decreases can be attributed to declining revenue resulting from the **expiration of federal COVID-19 funding for education**.

General & Special Education Tuition Costs

- Total tuition expenditures for students attending school outside their resident district **increased by \$23.5 million or \$1,062 per student**.
 - This increase was **driven by growth in special education tuition** and occurred despite (1) a reduction in the number of students being educated in tuition settings and (2) the implementation of a cap on general education tuition charged by public school choice programs.
- The cap on general education tuition resulted in a **decrease of \$30.8 million (35.1%)** in tuition paid to interdistrict magnet programs.
 - Interdistrict magnet programs were **compensated via state funding** for the reduced general education tuition payments.
- Tuition paid to private, residential, or out-of-state facilities **increased by \$25.7 million (6.1%)** and the average tuition paid to these facilities rose to \$133,408 — an increase of \$8,832 per student.
- Other tuition paid similarly **increased by \$23.5 million (8.5%)**, rising to \$70,454 per student. This includes special education tuition not paid to private, residential, or out-of-state programs.

¹ Approximately 45.5% of EASTCONN's increase in expenditures was the result of a \$2.7 million capital improvement grant received for renovations. Without this grant, EASTCONN's per-student expenditure would have increased by approximately \$9,050, still the largest in the state. This increase is primarily driven by increased special education expenditures.

² These districts were Hartford, Bridgeport, New Haven, and Waterbury.