Onondaga Central Schools

2026-2027 Budget and Public Hearing Questions and Answers

The budget is Onondaga Central School District's financial and operational roadmap for the 2026-2027 school year. It outlines strategic goals centered on student achievement and safety while highlighting budget priorities such as staffing retention and maintaining instructional technology. The proposed $27.7 million budget is broken down by its administrative, program, and capital components, supported primarily by state aid and local taxes. This year, residents are presented with four specific propositions, including the general fund, library support, and options for bus fleet upgrades. This communication serves as a summary for the public hearing and vote scheduled for May 2026. Consistent with our mission and vision, the district aims to sustain high educational standards and meet contractual obligations, despite rising costs in health insurance and energy, to mention a couple.

2026-2027 Budget Questions and Answers

Public Hearing Information

- When and where is the public hearing held? The public hearing will be held in the Jr/Sr High School Cafeteria on May 5, 2026, at 5:30 pm.
- Who is running for the Board of Education? You can meet the candidates at the public hearing.
- Where can I find more information on the proposed budget for 2026-2027? You can find more information on the proposed budget on the school website at this link.

General Voting Information

- When and where is the budget vote? The budget vote will be held on Tuesday, May 19, 2026, from 7:00 am to 9:00 pm. Voting locations are the Rockwell Elementary School gymnasium and the Jr. Sr. High School cafeteria entrance.

Propositions on the Ballot

- How many propositions are there? There are four propositions on the ballot:
    - Proposition I (Budget): Authorizes the proposed budget and the levy of necessary taxes.
    - Proposition II (Library): Requests $66,948 (a $1,950 increase) to support the Onondaga Free Library.
    - Proposition III (Gasoline Buses): Authorizes the purchase of two 66-passenger and one 30-passenger gasoline buses for a total not to exceed $453,500.
    - Proposition IV (Electric Buses): **Only if Proposition III fails** does this authorize the purchase of two 66-passenger and one 28-passenger electric buses for a total of $595,305 (after a $714,000 voucher is applied). **This proposition is required to be offered by NYS.**
- How many Board of Education seats are open? There are two open seats for the Board of Education.

Financial Overview and Revenues

- What is the total proposed budget? The proposed budget for 2026-2027 is $27,786,773, representing a 1.55% increase over the previous year.
- How is the budget funded? The District expects revenue from the following sources:
  - State Aid: $13,651,845 (49.13%)
  - Local Property Taxes: $11,698,380 (42.10%)
  - Reserves and Appropriated Fund Balance: $1,625,438 (5.85%)
  - Other Revenue: $811,110 (2.92%)
- Is the budget a literal list of everything the District will spend? No, it is a spending plan that provides a "not to exceed" amount based on estimates of contractual obligations and external pressures, such as rising health care and energy costs.
- What is the projected tax levy increase? The District is proposing a 2.50% tax levy increase, which amounts to $285,348 more than the 2025-2026 levy. This is well below the maximum allowable levy limit of $11,935,380.

Personnel and Staffing

- Are there any layoffs in this budget? **No**, the budget does not call for any employees to be laid off. However, some staff will be transferred between buildings to align with enrollment needs, specifically moving two teachers from Rockwell Elementary to Wheeler Elementary.
- Why does the Superintendent line show a 4% increase if a new one hasn't been hired? This increase reflects the contractual obligation applied to the previous year's expenses for budgeting purposes. The District is not hiring a new superintendent at a higher salary; the final contract for the new hire has not yet been established.
- How much does it cost the District to hire a new teacher? Based on base salary, Master's stipends, credit hours, and medical insurance, the District must budget nearly $90,000 for a first-year teacher. Over three years, a new hire costs an estimated $280,000, inclusive of contractual raises.
- Do all administrators receive the same percent increase each year? The instructional, non-instructional, and administrative bargaining units each negotiated a new contract for all of their members during the 2025-26 school year. Every member of each bargaining unit receives the same annual percentage increase as the other members in their unit.
- How is compensation determined for School Resource Officers (SROs)? Onondaga Central School District contracts with the Village of Marcellus for SROs. The District negotiates a contract with the village annually. In addition, each District is obligated to hold a public hearing and allow for public comment on the SRO contract before the Board of Education approves the contract. The District published a public notice in May 2025 and posted the 2025-26 SRO contract on the District website. The public hearing was held on June 10, 2025. The Board of Education approved the contract on June 24, 2025. The Public Hearing for the 2026-27 SRO contract is scheduled for June 2, 2026.

Facilities, Technology, and Student Programs

- Why is the District spending $65,000 on a new maintenance truck? The District has determined that a new truck is necessary for facility needs and has explored state contract pricing to ensure fiscal responsibility. Old buses cannot be used for this purpose because the District exhausts their useful life before replacing them.
- What are the major technology requests in this budget? The budget includes a district-wide Annual Technology Lease/Purchase Replacement Plan estimated at $150,000. This includes:
    - Rockwell Elementary: 115 Chromebooks, 2 laptops, and 3 interactive displays.
    - Wheeler Elementary: 65 Chromebooks, 13 laptops, and 3 interactive displays.
    - Jr/Sr High School: 20 Chromebooks, 8 laptops, and 4 interactive displays.
- How is the Pre-K program funded? Universal Pre-K (UPK) is federally funded through the Special Aid Fund. However, because expenses often exceed federal funding, the District supplements the program using the General Fund.
- What is being done to address large student cohorts? The District is maintaining its commitment to small class sizes by adding a fourth section in 6th grade to address enrollment needs. OCS Current & Projected Enrollment

What happens if the budget vote fails?

- If the proposed budget is defeated, the Board of Education has three options:
    - Resubmit the original budget for a second vote,
    - submit a revised budget, generally at a lower budget increase
    - or adopt a contingent budget.
        - A contingent budget is a "default" plan that ensures basic education and legal obligations are met but strips all discretionary spending, including public use of facilities, i.e., youth sports, new equipment purchases, field trips, and capital expenditures.

Questions from the 2026-27 Budget Public Hearing?

Why was there a decrease in the program component of the 3 part budget while there were increases to the administrative and capital components?

- It is typical that *all* three components increase from year to year primarily due to contractual obligations and inflationary pressures, however, one time planned expenses do lead to variances.
    - The primary cause for the .59% decrease in the proposed 2026-27 budget program component is due to the retirement incentive that was only offered for instructional staff. Four teachers utilized the retirement incentive and after a careful analysis of enrollment, the decision has been made to not fill three of the positions and to allocate resources where needed. Another contributing factor to

the decrease is one time expenses such as a new math curriculum budgeted for and expensed in 2025-26 but not included in the 2026-27 budget.

- The capital increase of 6.11% is primarily due to debt service related to the capital project which is offset by NYS Building Aid. Other drivers of the increase include contractual obligations, health insurance increases and a one-time expense for a maintenance truck.
- The administrative increase of 4.79% is primarily due to contractual obligations and health insurance increases.

	2025-26 Budget	2026-27 Proposed	Difference	Percent Change
Administration	$2,995,955	$3,139,312	$143,357	4.79%
Program	$18,057,252	$17,951,588	$(105,664)	-0.59%
Capital	$6,310,141	$6,695,873	$385,732	6.11%
	$27,363,348	$27,786,773	$423,425	1.55%