



Meriden
Children First



2010 Guide to the Meriden School Budget

This guide has been developed to provide information that will help parents and others understand the education budget and what is in it.

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Why it's important to understand the education budget

It is important that we understand how education funding is spent in our schools, and how much money comes in from the City, State, and Federal governments to finance the education of our children. Parents and other citizens can then influence how the education money is spent to benefit our children.

Parents and caretakers must be deeply involved in our children's education. Each of us should help our child with their homework, be in contact with our children's teachers, and participate in school activities.

Become involved in the education budget-setting process to help ensure that our children are getting the education we want for them — the education that is necessary for them to become successful in life.

What is involved with the budget process

Each year, the education budget is prepared by school officials, reviewed, modified and approved by the Board of Education. It is then forwarded to City Hall for action. The City Council gives final approval on the total budget request — although not on specific budget items within the education budget — as part of the overall city budget. The city budget also includes other important services such as public safety, health, parks and recreation, and public works.

The education budget details the activities and priorities of the Meriden school system. With this information, citizens can become involved in the budget process, and in doing so, become full participants in establishing educational priorities for our children.



Where school funding comes from

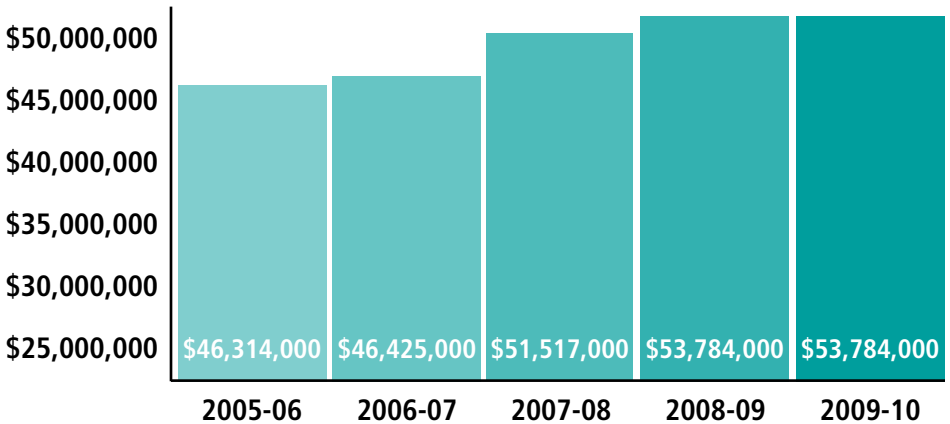
Funding for the education budget comes primarily from three sources:

- City of Meriden tax revenues
- State funding
- Federal funding

Putting together an education budget is a difficult task and often requires many revisions. When school officials first develop the budget, they don't know how much money will come in from the City, State and Federal governments. A final budget must wait until all of these budgets are passed.

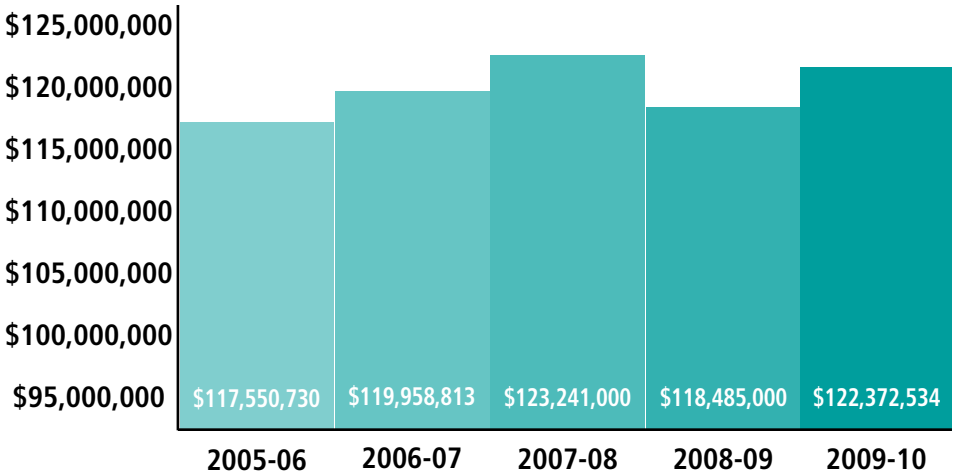
Each year, cities and towns in Connecticut receive state aid for education through the **Educational Cost Sharing (ECS)** grant. The ECS grant is based on a formula that recognizes the high needs of Connecticut students, especially those who live in urban areas.

Meriden's Educational Cost Sharing Grant from State of Connecticut, by year



The following shows Meriden's total education budget for each of the past five years. These figures include local revenue, in-kind supports, health insurance, grants and the State's 'Educational Cost Sharing' grant to Meriden (see chart next page):

Total School Budget (from all funding sources including ECS and City of Meriden)



City of Meriden contribution to schools:
 2007-2008 – \$97,048,901; 2008-2009 – \$98,164,522; 2009-2010 – \$99,608,340.

In addition, the State provides education funding for:

- Transportation
- Special education
- Bilingual education

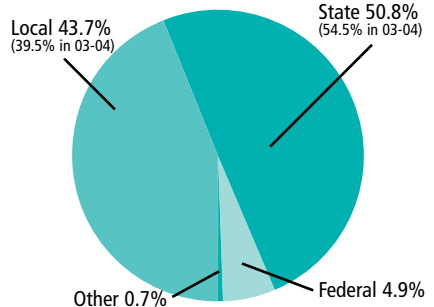
In 2009-10, Meriden Public Schools also received \$14,352,900. This amount is about \$3 million more than the previous year due to the significant increases from the Federal Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA).

These grants are used to supplement city funds and state aid. ***If any of these state or federal funds are cut, other revenue must be found locally to prevent corresponding reductions in the education budget. Local sources could come in the way of increased property taxes, diminished public services, or both.***

The pie chart above demonstrates how much the Meriden education budget depends on state and federal funding (without school construction).

2008-09 Board of Education Funding Sources

(not including school construction funding)



Note: 'Other' funding sources include tuitions. 'State' includes ECS, excess cost for placements (such as Department of Children and Families), transportation and services for the blind.

Meriden Public Schools Grant Funding

	2007-08	2008-09	2009-10
Federal Sources			
ARRA Title I	\$ 0	\$ 0	\$ 1,742,167
Title I	\$ 2,329,677	\$ 3,141,237	\$ 3,212,487
Title II Teachers/class size	\$ 487,919	\$ 525,647	\$ 525,168
Title IV Safe and Drug Free Schools	\$ 40,390	\$ 20,691	\$ 85,929
IDEA Part B	\$ 1,967,724	\$ 2,062,142	\$ 2,209,454
ARRA IDEA Part B Sec 611	\$ 0	\$ 0	\$ 2,376,468
Perkins Vocational/Technical	\$ 163,950	\$ 187,181	\$ 190,266
21st Century Community Learning Centers	\$ 190,000	\$ 185,194	\$ 224,255
State Sources			
Priority School District	\$ 1,443,677	\$ 1,441,383	\$ 1,422,170
Technology, early reading intervention			
Bilingual	\$ 75,292	\$ 96,636	\$ 94,690
Summer School	\$ 196,770	\$ 198,714	\$ 198,518
Early Reading Success	\$ 810,114	\$ 0	\$ 0
Extended School Hours	\$ 166,640	\$ 168,508	\$ 179,925
Young parents	\$ 16,380	\$ 15,853	\$ 0
Family Resource Centers	\$ 204,800	\$ 194,200	\$ 184,650
Total of all Grants (including those not noted above):	\$ 10,076,264	\$11,184,054	\$14,352,900

ARRA: American Resource and Recovery Act funding available only for 2009-2010 and 2010-2011 school years.

Vocational: Career guidance at the high schools, business education, health magnet classes, cooperative work experience.

Title I: Bilingual, remedial reading and math, aids for kindergarten - grade 2, parent support, education at group homes.

Title VI Safe and Drug Free Schools: Program enhancement, education media and equipment supplement.

Priority School: Extended day kindergarten, drop out prevention, parent involvement, early reading, extended school programs.

IDEA Part B: Special education, guidance, preschoolers with disabilities.



What we spend on education in Meriden

Did you know that the City of Meriden cooperates with Meriden schools in other ways?

- **Health Insurance budget for 2009-10 \$12,920,411**
(\$12,381,662 in 2007-08, \$12,161,393 in 2006-07).
- **Cost of School Crossing Guards with benefits 2008-09**
\$306,066 (\$381,650 in 2007-08; \$756,983 in 2006-07).
- **Cost of School Resource Officers with benefits 2008-09**
\$403,589 (\$381,650 in 2007-08; \$756,983 in 2006-07).
- The City of Meriden Health Department provides **nursing and other health services** for the Meriden Public Schools. This amounts to \$1,005,479 (\$916,604 in 2008/09) a year for 1 medical doctor, 15 nurses, 5 health aides, 1 clerk and medical supplies.

For Meriden Parochial Schools, \$264,485 (\$597,161 in 2008/09) supports 1 social worker, 1 speech pathologist, and 1 psychologist.

- The City of Meriden also supports Meriden's non-public schools, providing technology, text book loans, and bus transportation.



In 2009, there were 8,614 (8,815 in 2008/09) children in Meriden public schools, including 594 at Edison Middle School; an additional 580 attended private/parochial schools (down from four years ago).

Despite the relatively stable student enrollment numbers over the past several years, there have been concerns about class size. From 2001 to 2004, the number of Meriden elementary classes with more than 25 students rose from 6 to 21 classrooms. In 2005, with the hiring of additional teachers, there were 15 classes with more than 25 students. For 2006, there were 7 elementary classes with more than 25 students. In October 2008, 9 classes had more than 25 students. In October 2009, 21 classes had more than 25 students.

This table shows that Meriden is spending more money per student each year, but less than other Connecticut towns similar to Meriden.

Meriden per-pupil expenses table*

	Meriden District	Other Districts like Meriden(DRG)**
2008-09	\$11,977	\$13,078
2007-08	\$11,501	\$12,324
2006-07	\$11,048	\$11,888
2005-06	\$10,264	\$11,354
2004-05	\$10,720	\$10,593

*Does not include school construction or adult education.

****DRG** = District Reference Group, including towns of Meriden, Ansonia, Danbury, Derby, East Hartford, Norwalk, Norwich, Stamford, and West Haven.

DRG is a classification of districts whose students' families are similar in education, income, occupation, and in need, and that have roughly similar enrollment.

Next we take a closer look at how the money is spent. In the table that follows are the answers to many of the questions parents ask about how education funds are used. Not all budget items are included. Source: Meriden Strategic School Profile, 2009.



Expenditures

	Total 2005-06	Total 2006-07	Total 2007-08	+/- % from 06-07
Teachers	\$ 58,433,000	\$59,152,000	\$ 61,105,000	+3.2
Instructional supplies and equipment	\$ 1,953,000	\$ 2,034,000	\$ 1,869,000	-0.1
Improvement of instruction and educational media services	\$ 1,408,000	\$ 1,459,000	\$ 1,446,000	-0.1
Student support services	\$ 7,563,000	\$ 7,882,000	\$ 8,162,000	+3.4
Admin. and Support Services	\$ 10,152,000	\$11,118,000	\$ 11,856,000	+6.2
Building operation and maintenance	\$ 10,941,000	\$12,501,000	\$ 12,398,000	-0.1
Transportation	\$ 4,357,000	\$ 4,675,000	\$ 4,734,000	+0.1
Costs for student tuitioned out (mostly Edison)	\$ 10,152,000	\$11,171,000	\$12,886,000	+13.3
Other	\$ 681,000	\$ 806,000	\$ 784,000	-2.9
TOTAL	\$106,470,000	\$110,786,000	\$115,240,000	+3.9%
<u>Additional expenditures</u>				
Land, buildings, and debt service	\$ 4,762,000	\$ 4,536,000	\$ 3,425,000	
Adult Education	\$ 1,673,000	\$ 1,659,174	\$ 1,836,000	



Our education dollars go to...

No Child Left Behind (NCLB) continues to impact the Meriden Public School's ability to manage federal funding (Title One). Traditionally Title One funding has been used to provide enhancements to the instructional program. However, under NCLB Meriden is now required to hold back up to twenty percent of the Title One monies allocated to the school system to fund mandated programs such as school choice and supplemental educational services. These programs are not offered district-wide but are required to be offered at schools that have not made adequate yearly progress (AYP).

The following is a partial list of curriculum, instruction and support programs:

Math Literacy Teachers:

All students at the elementary level work on a weekly basis with teachers who have been trained to incorporate the use of computer technology into math and literacy lessons. Meriden's children are learning how to use computer technology to enhance their own learning and to better communicate important information to others. Reports from the middle schools indicate that students are demonstrating higher levels of computer proficiency.

Reading Department:

Each elementary school has a team of reading specialists who work with both students and classroom teachers to ensure that all children are receiving excellent literacy instruction. The members of the reading department work directly with the district supervisors of Language Arts and are required to attend monthly training sessions designed to ensure that they are incorporating the most recent knowledge and developments in reading instruction.

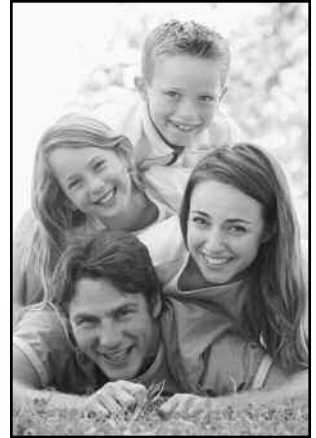


Positive Behavior Supports (PBS)

PBS, also referred to as PBIS, is the development of a school-wide system of support that includes proactive strategies for defining, teaching, and supporting appropriate student behaviors to create positive school environments. The PBS approach uses a systemic approach rather than relying on a patchwork of individual behavioral management plans. PBS identifies a continuum of positive behavior support for all students within a school and is implemented in all areas, including classroom and non-classroom settings.

Meriden currently has eight elementary schools and two middle schools that are trained in and are implementing the PBS system. Implementation of PBS is beginning in the high schools.

National research consistently demonstrates that complete implementation of PBS within K-8 schools has a dramatic positive impact on the school climate, demonstrated by the number of disciplinary referrals filled out, the number of serious disciplinary consequences issued (e.g. suspensions) and the completion of several school climate surveys



(e.g. Effective Behavior Support [EBS] and the Survey and School-Wide Evaluation Tool [SET]). Read more about PBS at the national web page, www.pbis.org.

Instrumental Music

Children who play an instrument tend to have enhanced academic achievement. National research also shows that music-makers are more likely to go on to college and other higher education than their non-music peers. Also, music-makers watch less TV and are more optimistic about their futures.

In 2002, an elementary instrumental music program was started. Today, more than 200 fourth- and fifth-graders are participating. The children are said to be very enthusiastic and motivated. Ninety-five percent of 4th graders in the program want to participate again next year, with the same instrument. That will lead to a very solid base of musicians in middle school.

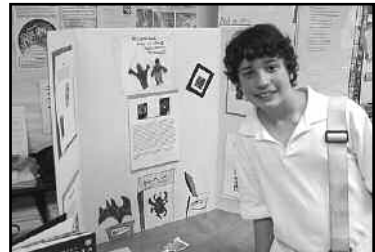
Venture Program

Venture is a special education program for middle and high school students. Teachers and clinical staff have been hired to support behavior intervention and mental health services. In 2002, the program capacity was expanded by 50%, thus eliminating delays in having students placed. There is a cost savings to keeping youth in town vs. out-placing, although that figure is not available.



School-based health services

Starting in 2007, the Community Health Center began providing school-based dental and mental health services in several Meriden elementary schools. The funding comes from a grant from the State of Connecticut.



Snapshot of Meriden Public Schools

School Poverty Rate

Meriden elementary schools have shown a general increase in poverty over the past several years

■ **Percent (%) students eligible for free/reduced price meals***

	Meriden K-6 Schools	State K-6 Schools
2002-03	55.1%	28.8%
2003-04	56.6%	29.2%
2004-05	56.3%	28.1%
2005-06	58.6%	27.6%
2006-07	60.2%	27.7%
2007-08	59.1%	33.1%
2008-09	62.5%	34.2%

*Note: % students eligible for free/reduced price meals is considered an accurate indicator of poverty.

Preschool Experience

Quality preschool experience is critical to school readiness. Children entering kindergarten who have the benefit of preschool do better in reading and math than do their non-preschool peers.

- **75.2% of Meriden children entering kindergarten in September, 2008 attended a formal preschool program (83% in 2004) [This number may not reflect actual preschool experience as data are from parent reporting]**

Not Fluent in English

Children living in homes where English is not the primary language bring richly diverse cultural experiences to Meriden schools. At the same time, these children may also face greater challenges in achieving school readiness and in-school performance

- **In 2008-09, 13.9% of elementary students are not fluent in English, more than double the State rate of 5.2%**

Students Receiving Special Education Services

Students identified as being in need of special education services, in general, are often in need of intensive support services to succeed. The number of students receiving special education services indicates a school district's relative financial and resource burden, as local districts bear a significant portion of service costs

- **Overall, 13.7% of Meriden school children received special education services in 2008-09, slightly less than the previous school year.**
- **33.9% of Meriden children who received special education services in 2008-09 were categorized as learning disabled.**

Physical Fitness Test — 4th Grade

Fewer than 1 in 4 Meriden 4th graders passed all four physical fitness tests

	Meriden	State
2003-04	27.9%	32.6%
2004-05	24.2%	33.3%
2005-06	23.5%	33.6%
2006-07	23.6%	33.5%
2007-08	22.2%	33.8%
2008-09	17.2%	33.6%

Connecticut Mastery Test (CMT) Goal Achievement

The Connecticut Mastery Test (CMT), administered annually since 1985, was developed to measure essential skills in reading, writing and mathematics. Statewide goal standards are set to reflect expectations for grade level academic achievement. Reading at goal in fourth grade is a strong indicator of later school performance. Each school has a “No Child Left Behind” report card. Visit www.sde.ct.gov and click on “NCLB” to access.

- In 2008, 43.2% of Meriden fourth graders met or exceeded the state goal for reading on the 4th grade CMT — below the 1999 rate of 44%, and below the 2008 state average of 60.7%.
-

High School Graduation Rate

Education level is tied to a person’s future income. Adults without a high school diploma face particular economic challenges in the state’s “new economy” – as noted earlier, Connecticut adults with less than a high school education saw their incomes, adjusted for inflation, decline by nearly one-quarter since 1979.

- Meriden’s high school class of 2008 had a ‘persistence’ rate of 7.2%. This means that 7.2% of the graduating class either took more than four years to complete high school, dropped out, or moved without notifying the school. This compares to the state rate of 6.6%.
-

Technology in Meriden Public Schools

Technology can enhance a child’s learning experience as a complement to the core curriculum. Meriden’s school technology compares very well with the rest of the Connecticut. Over the past several years, Meriden has made important investments in technology resulting in all computers having moderate or higher power, internet access, and filtering software.

A Brief Overview of Taxes and School Funding

Education and other city services are paid for from resources collected from local, state and Federal tax payers. Everyone pays property taxes, whether or not you own a home.

In 2007, the City of Meriden conducted a state-mandated revaluation of local property. As a result of the revaluation and the budget setting process, there was a shift in tax burden to residential property. For many, tax bills went up even though overall City spending did not increase dramatically over the prior year.

In 2008, the year after the tax revaluation, the City Council passed a local budget that did not increase property taxes. The Council did approve a 1.27% increase in school spending, an amount that was several million dollars less than what the Board of Education requested. To reduce expenses, the Board eliminated more than two dozen teaching and paraprofessional positions.

In both 2009 and 2010, a global recession of historic proportions had and will have a significant impact on state and local budgets. This will certainly mean less State and local funding available for Meriden schools. A huge State budget deficit and a flat local grand list (the value of all property in Meriden), will force the Board of Education – and our community – to make difficult choices on how best to spend ever-scarce resources. Significant increases in Federal support for education will help for now, but will create major challenges when that funding is no longer available in 2011.



What We Can Do as Parents and Taxpayers

We as parents and others who care about the well being of Meriden's children have an important role in our children's education. The more we know about our schools, the more we can make an impact on that education. And the more we know about the school budget, the more we can influence educational priorities.

This report provides the tools we need to better understand Meriden's education budget and to enable us to become involved in shaping that budget. We urge all parents, caregivers and taxpayers to join together to ensure that our children may receive a quality education designed to prepare them for the future demands of jobs, family, and community life.

Your City Manager and elected leaders pay attention to the concerns of parents and voters. If you have a question for them or an idea on how you'd like to have your tax dollars spent, you can find contact information for the Mayor, City Council, Board of Education and our state officials at:

www.meridenchildrenfirst.org or www.cityofmeriden.org



October/November

Meriden: School officials start to develop a budget based on their best estimates of needs and revenues.

December/January

Meriden: The school budget is presented to the Board of Education members for approval.

Meriden: A request is made by the Board of Education to the City Council for a specific amount of tax revenues to support the education budget.

February

Meriden: The City Manager recommends to the City Council a dollar amount for the Board of Education

State: The Governor presents budget to the State Legislature. The Governor's budget includes a projected amount for all state education funding as well as a formula for the Educational Cost Sharing (ECS) grants. This ECS formula determines the amount of state funding assistance for the local school districts in each of the 169 towns and cities in Connecticut.

March

Meriden: The Board of Education and the Superintendent present the budget request to the City Council's Finance Committee and the general public

State: The Legislature's Education Committee discusses and approves the Educational Cost Sharing Formula and other educational grant programs. Public hearings are held on proposed legislation before the committee.

April

Meriden: Public hearings are held on the entire city budget, including education

State: The Legislature's Appropriations Committee discusses and approves the state budget which includes state funding for education and aid for local school districts. It also discusses any necessary implementing legislation.

May

Meriden: By mid-May, the City Council approves the school budget as part of the overall city budget.

State: Both the State Senate and House of Representatives discuss and approve a state budget which includes state funding for education and aid for local school districts as well as any necessary implementing legislation.

In June, the Meriden Board of Education makes any adjustments to the Meriden educational program and teaching staff to fit within the funding approved by City Hall.

2010 Directory of Meriden Educational Services

Preschool

School Readiness Program . . .630-4236
Easter Seals Head Start . . .238-9166

Public Schools

School Superintendent . . .630-4171

Elementary Schools

John Barry237-8831
Benjamin Franklin235-7997
Nathan Hale237-7486
Hanover235-6359
Thomas Hooker237-8839
Casimir Pulaski238-1273
Israel Putnam237-8493
Roger Sherman238-1286

Middle Schools

Lincoln238-2381
Washington235-6606
Edison639-8403

High Schools

Maloney238-2334
Platt235-7962

Parochial Schools

St. Joseph237-6800
St. Stanislaus237-1005
Our Lady of Mt. Carmel . . .235-2959
St. Mary237-2931

Adult, Career, and Continuing

Education630-4190
www.meridenadulted.org

Director of Pupil Personnel and Special Education programs

.630-4177

Meriden Children First Initiative

105 Miller Street
Meriden, CT 06450
203-630-3566
www.meridenchildrenfirst.org

Also visit:

Meriden Public Schools
www.meriden.k12.ct.us

City of Meriden
www.cityofmeriden.org

Meriden Chamber of Commerce
www.meridenchamber.com

Graustein Memorial Fund
www.wcgmf.org

CT Voices for Children
www.ctkidslink.org

CT Commission on Children
www.cga.state.ct.us/coc





**Meriden
Children First**

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www.meridenchildrenfirst.org**

The Meriden Children First Initiative, founded in 1995, is committed to improving the well-being of Meriden's children through a program combining research, parent leadership training, advocacy, and community education and outreach.

Numerous people across the city contributed to the development of this Guide.

Thanks to the many readers who help strengthen this Guide, and to the Bridgeport Child Advocacy Coalition for the idea.

A downloadable copy of this Guide is available at www.meridenchildrenfirst.org. For questions or ideas on how to improve this Guide, contact Meriden Children First.

Data sources for this guide include the City of Meriden, Meriden Strategic School Profiles and the Meriden Public School System.