

Piscataway Board of Education Adopts Budget; Plans for the Future

The Board of Education has adopted the 2013-14 school budget, with a focus on maintaining programs and curriculum that support student achievement, and plan for the future.

The 2013-14 budget reflects changes in staff that align with trends in rising enrollment. According to a demographic report completed in January 2013, the district has seen an enrollment increase of approximately 5.5 percent over the past five years. Over the next five years, it is projected that the district will see a minimum of 309 students, or another 4 percent increase.

The budget also invests in long overdue upgrades in technology. Effective last month, Microsoft no longer supports Windows XP, the current operating system installed on most district computers. Additionally, mandated changes to student standardized testing, known as the PARCC (Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers) assessment, require all district computers to be upgraded to Windows 7 before the start of the 2014-15 school year, and for students to take PARCC assessments online.

“Once again, the Board and administration of the Piscataway School District have met the challenges of enrollment growth and unfunded state mandates, while keeping cost increases to a minimum.”

*Thomas Mosier, President
Board of Education*

“Once again, the Board and administration of the Piscataway School District have met the challenges of enrollment growth, and unfunded state mandates while keeping cost increases to a minimum.” said Thomas Mosier, president of the Board of Education. “I believe that we have accomplished this objective by capitalizing on new, alternative revenue sources, such as income generated by the installation of solar panels. The children of Piscataway deserve a foundation that will prepare them to become strong leaders tomorrow.”

Included in the 2013-14 district budget are the following initiatives and staff adjustments that support student achievement:

- Maintenance of a rigorous high school curriculum, including 17 Advanced Placement and 19 Honors courses, support programs such as Summer and Saturday Academies, and STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics) initiatives at the middle and high school grades.
- Three additional general education teachers to reduce class size if enrollment reaches or exceeds expected levels.
- Behavioral and Academic support specialists who continue to provide a high level of assistance to at-risk and struggling students in grades K – 12.

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James T. Finn, Senior Vice President at Brown & Brown Benefit Advisors, recently presented a donation to Piscataway School District Interim Superintendent Teresa M. Rafferty (right) and Assistant Superintendent for Curriculum, Carolyn Keck, in support of Piscataway READS, the district’s initiative designed to promote reading and enhancement of literacy. The donation, in the amount of \$6,000, supported the purchase of 900 books for use at all grade levels, and funded an author visit at the “PiscatawayREADS Together” program, held last month at Piscataway High School.

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Dollars and Cents: Holding the Line on Expenses

The Piscataway Board of Education makes efficiency a priority when it comes to the use of available funds.

District efforts at creative, long-term cost containment have resulted in major savings in the areas of health insurance, special education, transportation, energy, and personnel.



The 2013-14 Piscataway School District budget supports student achievement with learning initiatives such as the STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics) program, and additional teachers to reduce class size based on projected enrollment growth.

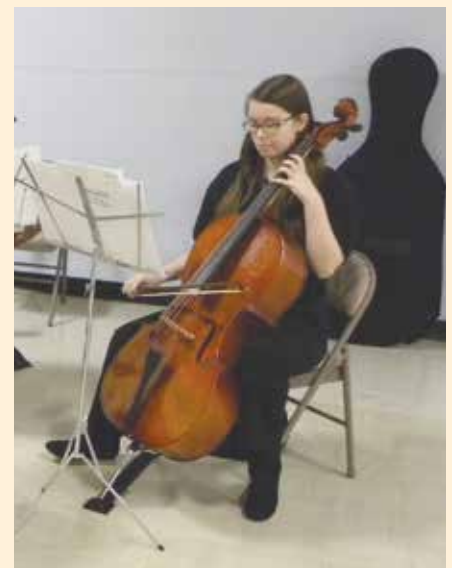
- **Health Insurance** - \$4.5 million savings in health insurance premiums has been saved over the past five years through the establishment of a self-insurance plan for medical, prescription and dental programs, and employee contributions resulting from Chapter 78 legislation, signed by Governor Christie in 2011.
- **Special Education** - \$4.5 million in savings over the past six years due to expanded in-district offerings, and reduction of expensive out-of-district placements. The combination allows Piscataway students to remain in their home district, and attracts tuition-based students from nearby districts.
- **Transportation** - \$2.2 million in transportation savings over the past five years as a result of efficient, tiered bus scheduling. By state standards, Piscataway is the third most efficient district in Middlesex County, and one of the most efficient districts state-wide.
- **Energy** - \$700,000 in energy savings has been realized over the past five years through the use of energy efficient lighting, boilers, faucets, and windows. Solar panel installations have resulted in a more efficient energy stream, in addition to revenue from the sale of SRECs.

- **Personnel** - \$1.1 million savings in wages and fringe benefits over the past three years through the outsourcing of substitute teachers, long-term instructional contracts, and classroom/bus aides.

Recent additions of solar energy panels on district school buildings have provided a new revenue source in the form of Solar Renewable Energy Credits, or SRECs, resulting in \$200,000 of new income. The district sells these credits, generated from solar energy production, to energy companies that are required to meet specific energy standards.

The school district also receives telecommunications and Web site services at a discount through E-Rate funding, a support program administered by the Federal Communications Commission.

For the 7th year in a row, the Piscataway Board of Education has been recognized with a Certificate of Excellence in Financial Reporting by the Association of School Business Officials International (ASBO). The award denotes a commitment to the highest level of school system financial reporting, as exhibited in the district's Comprehensive Annual Financial Report for the fiscal year 2012. 🍀



Piscataway students excel in the fine and performing arts, representing the school district in regional and state chorus, orchestra and band ensembles.

PISCATAWAY TOWNSHIP SCHOOLS

2013-14 GENERAL FUND BUDGET SUMMARY

You can examine the entire budget online at www.piscatawayschools.org or call 732-572-2289 x 2520 to review a copy.

EXPENDITURES

HOW THE DOLLARS ARE SPENT

Direct Instruction: Teachers, supplies and equipment for regular and special education programs	\$64,552,317	62.72%
Indirect Instruction: Counseling, nursing, and other pupil support services, instructional staff services, and principals	\$18,221,021	17.70%
Operations and Maintenance: Maintenance, operations, utilities and custodial services for all schools	\$9,480,041	9.21%
Central, Fiscal, Community and Internal Services: Fiscal and community services, county treasurer's fee, purchasing, warehouse, publications, research and assessment, planning and communication services, human resources and informational services	\$2,365,997	2.30%
Pupil Transportation: Bus transportation for students	\$6,105,362	5.93%
General Administration: Board of Education, executive administration, and instructional administration	\$2,203,778	2.14%
TOTAL:	\$102,928,516	100%

REVENUES

WHERE THE MONEY COMES FROM

Local Tax Levy	\$81,648,512
State Aid	16,412,804
Miscellaneous	1,242,200
Tuitions	475,000
Transportation Fees	300,000
Budgeted Fund Balance	2,850,000
TOTAL:	\$102,928,516

Tax Impact

For the average Piscataway home assessed at \$111,000, there will be a \$31 annual increase in the tax levy, or about \$2.58 per month. 🍷

Piscataway Continues to be Underfunded

Piscataway continues to be shortchanged when it comes to its entitled share of funding from the state. The state aid formula, recalculated last year by New Jersey Commissioner of Education Chris Cerf, entitles Piscataway to \$46 million in state aid. For the 2013-14 fiscal year, the district will only receive \$15.5 million, or 33 percent of its fair share of state aid. Thus, the district remains underfunded in the amount of \$30.5 million, resulting in an undue tax burden for local residents.

While Piscataway received an increase of \$403,600 in state aid for the coming year, the net increase is \$311,100 when you factor in the loss of \$92,500 from the state's default of its payment for the 2002 district referendum on school expansion and renovations. 🍷

Piscataway High School students participated in book discussions analyzing the serious moral issues raised in Unwind, a novel by Neal Shusterman.



BUDGET ADOPTED continued

- Two additional part-time Special Education positions.
- A new class, serving the district's autistic population, will be created at the middle school level.
- The establishment of a Middle School Cross Country team at no additional cost due to a reallocation of funds.
- The position of Supervisor for Visual and Performing Arts, previously eliminated for budget reasons, will be restored. The position of Assistant Athletic Director to provide oversight of the K-8 grade Physical Education/Health program will be restored.

The 2013-14 budget carries a 2¼ percent increase in the local tax levy, translating to an increase of \$31 per year, or \$2.58 per month, for the owner of the average home assessed at \$111,000. This increase is less than half of the local tax that was levied in 2012-13.

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\$92,500 from the state's default on its share of payments from our 2002 referendum.

Generally, local tax levies cannot increase more than 2 percent annually. However, because the Piscataway School District frequently presented budgets to voters that were well below this cap, the district has a "banked" cap waiver, which is available for use when it is necessary to exceed the 2 percent cap. The Board of Education has approved the use of \$200,000 of the banked waiver to fund staffing for projected increases in class size and the mandated technology expenditures mentioned earlier.

"The Board of Education remains sensitive to Piscataway residents," said Teresa M. Rafferty, Interim Superintendent. "This year, with additional state aid and the increased ratables derived from economic growth in the township, the Board is able to present a fiscally sound budget that keeps the tax increase to a minimum. The ultimate beneficiaries of the 2013-14 budget plan are the children of Piscataway."

Two major factors contributed to the

Board's ability to keep the 2013-14 tax levy to a minimum. For the first time in years, Piscataway Township saw a boost in ratables in the amount of \$32 million, decreasing the school tax rate that the district collects from the average homeowner. Additionally, Governor Christie signed legislation known as Chapter 78 in 2011 that requires public employees to contribute to the cost of their health insurance, reducing the district cost of staff member health benefits.

Based on demographic criteria, the 2013-14 Piscataway School District budget is \$18,432,290 below the amount calculated by a state formula that determines what each district should spend to educate its children. The formula includes such factors as student characteristics (low income, special education, English language learners), district size and character (urban, suburban, rural), staffing, and geographic cost differences. This is the sixth consecutive year that the district remains under "adequacy," according to the state formula. ♡



PISCATAWAY TOWNSHIP SCHOOLS

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