

Scarsdale Middle School PTA Executive Committee and Budget Study Statement on Scarsdale Schools' Budget 2022-23

March 28, 2022

The Scarsdale Middle School PTA Executive Committee, Budget Study Chairs and Legislative Advocacy Chair support the preliminary proposed Scarsdale Schools' Budget 2022-23 (the "Budget"). Highlights of the Budget as related to SMS include: additional mental health staffing and a Computer Science teacher; needs identified by Principal Troy at the January 10 Board of Education meeting.¹ This Budget provides a Psychologist and Special Education teacher in order to create an Emotional Support Program and allocates funds for an in-house Social Worker. Furthermore, the addition of a Computer Science teacher will fulfill the need to have a five-day per week computer science quarterly class.

Rationale for the mental health staffing requests was discussed by the District throughout the Budget process, in response to PTC questions and was reiterated again at the League of Women Voters Scarsdale Information Session on the Budget. As per the District:

The trend of increasing mental health needs predates the pandemic. The pandemic has been a catalyst for these requests. As we move forward, the increased focus both on specific interventions with students and the ongoing positive psychology and wellness work across the District should address many of these needs. We do feel these additional resources will be sufficient for the foreseeable future.²

As Principal Troy explained at the January 10 staffing recommendation presentation, "we have seen a rise in the number of students managing depression, anxiety and other mental health issues, which limits a student's ability to access an equal education."³ The proposed creation of a Middle School Emotional Support Program will aim to give students who are struggling to access the general education curriculum due to emotional difficulties, the support necessary to succeed.

An in-house Social Worker was requested by the Middle School as a result of the significant rise in students currently struggling with mental health issues. Through this in-house staff member, the Middle School would be able to foster a more consistent touch point, a greater familiarity and continuity for both students and families. This year

¹ January 10 [Staffing Recommendation Presentation](#).

² [PTC Budget Study Questions and District Responses](#), January 10.

³ January 10 [Staffing Recommendation Presentation](#).

our students require more mental health staff time and support than is currently available to them. The SMS PTA EC, Budget Study Chairs and Legislative Advocacy Chair strongly support the addition of this staff member in order to meet the student needs that are currently not being met.

Thank you to the Board and Administration for the immense time, work and community engagement that is part of your annual Budget process.

Sincerely,

SMS PTA Executive Committee:

Leah Dembitzer, President
Deborah Lichtenstein, President-Elect
Ophira Cukierman, Treasurer
Samantha Carter, Secretary
Stephanie Klingsberg, VP Programming
Lori Harrison, VP School Events and Initiatives
Yi Yang, VP Membership and Directory

SMS PTA Budget Study Chairs:

Irena Turner and Julia Liu

SMS PTA Legislative Advocacy Chair:

Christine Weston