

BURLINGTON TOWNSHIP SCHOOLS

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Open Letter to Burlington Township Families regarding the 2022-2023 Burlington Township Schools Budget

The Burlington Township Board of Education will be holding the public hearing on the 2022-2023 budget on Wednesday, April 27, 2022 at 7:00 p.m. The [presentation of the 2022-2023 budget](#) is available on our [webpage dedicated to the budget process](#).

Some Highlights

After working for many years on advocating for our schools, the district was finally recognized by the NJDOE as being underfunded by the state's funding formula. Additional funding was received for the 2018-2019, 2019-2020, 2020-2021, 2021-2022, and 2022-2023 budgets.

The Budget Process

The budget process is not just an early spring activity. The budget begins in the fall on a zero-based budgeting basis. This means we construct the proposed expenditures per account for the budget year instead of applying a percentage increase from the current year. The Board receives and analyzes the impacts from the prior budget process in December or January, once the district is able to reflect on the impact of budget changes to student achievement and effectiveness of operations.

During the budget development, the Board held multiple meetings in public. The Board has insisted on transparency and, as such, [every document](#) that is shared with the Board is provided on the district budget website as well. The Administration provides a means to answer questions submitted and the Board was prepared to hear from our community members regarding various matters. The Board appreciates input and works to weigh information received from all sources.

The Board engaged the community in two meetings in March 2022 prior to the submission of the initial budget to the Department of Education. The public hearing is the last step in the process. With the adoption at the public hearing, the 2022-2023 budget will be finalized.

Budget Overview and Revisions

The 2022-2023 budget maintains all the programs, services, and positions included in the previous budget. The budget includes all the current positions, although as with every year, we review the positions and the enrollment and academic needs and make adjustments as needed. This coming year we will provide additional preschool rooms, redistrict second grade by moving it to Fountain Woods School, offer the required Civics course in middle

school and offer Engineering at the high school.

We continue to support the success of our students through the careful allocation of financial resources of the District. This year, the details include a tab on the federal COVID funding expenditures as well as those for the 2022-2023 budget. Please see the [Proposed Budget 2022-2023](#) document for a full summary.

2022-2023 Budget

The 2022-2023 budget General Fund totals \$72,010,839 with a tax levy of \$44,244,298. The General Fund is the operating fund of the district. The cost of staff salaries, maintenance, transportation, supplies, athletics and all other operating expenses are accounted for in the General Fund.

The 2022-2023 budget contains \$4,472,114 of anticipated Special Revenue Fund receipts from federal sources such as IDEA and ESSA. These funds support particular programs in special education, professional development, and at risk students. Preschool Expansion Aid, which the district first received in 2019-2020 and will receive a significant increase in 2022-2023, is also part of the Special Revenue Fund.

The final piece of the 2022-2023 budget is the Debt Service Fund which represents the mortgages we owe on the buildings and renovations undertaken over the last couple of decades. This fund totals \$2,961,630. The state provides assistance for the repayment of approximately 1/6 of this amount and \$2,472,790 is to be raised in tax levy. Debt Service refinancing was completed and the bonds sold for the December 2015 referendum were financed at 1.79% for 10 years.

Property Tax Impact

In order to compare the increase year over year, we are assuming steady ratables of \$2,388,380,581 and a steady average assessed home value of \$235,252. Keeping the ratables and average assessment the same, the increase in the school district budget will result in an increase of approximately \$48 per year on the average home in Burlington Township. The portion of this attributable to the general fund is an increase of approximately \$51 per year and a decrease of approximately \$3 per year for the debt service fund. However, due to an approximately \$23.8 million increase in ratables, the averaged assessed home in Burlington Township will actually see a net flat dollar increase. The decrease attributable to the increase in ratables may have been seen in the August 2021 tax bills because the Township operates on a different fiscal year than the school district. The overall tax rate in support of the schools went from 1.9551 to 1.9560.

State and Local Funding

Burlington Township was on the forefront of the funding issue. We began holding meetings with the Commissioner of Education as early as 2012 to discuss our concerns. We

continued to raise our concerns by communicating again in 2014. We believe that our actions, along with other underfunded districts, changed the outcome of our funding and our district received additional funding for the last five budget years.

Planning for the Future

The Burlington Township School District is closely watching how to provide resources to our students while balancing the revenues available. This requires the district to balance the budget using the 2% property tax cap. In a district like Burlington Township, the 2% property tax cap results in an increase of about 1.67% because property tax controllable by the Board is only $\frac{2}{3}$ the budget with the other $\frac{1}{3}$ of the budget being state aid and not controlled by the Board. The Board and Administration are aware of the fiscal constraints and are working to lessen the impact as much as possible.

Planning for the Future and Protecting our Investments

The taxpayers of Burlington Township invested in their children's future by supporting the construction and development of Fountain Woods School, the Middle School, the Performing Arts Center, the D wing of the High School, and the F wing at Young School; the redesign of the High School kitchen and cafeteria; and the installation of air conditioning in all classrooms, gyms, and cafeterias across the District. These investments were funded by various referendums from the early 2000's through the most recent, 2015 referendum. The debt from these referendums have been expiring and will continue to do so. With this extinguishment of debt, the taxpayers will see a reduction in this portion of their tax bill. In order to continue to maintain the investment in our buildings and our students, the District will be seeking another referendum in the next two years. The District will be able to offer both a reduction in the overall taxes while raising the funds needed to continue to maintain safe and instructionally sound schools for our children.

What the Future Holds

Burlington Township's future is bright! We are reflective in our practices by taking the time and effort to simply listen to our families and community about our programs, offerings and the district. We highlight our committed and engaged staff and never lose focus on our students - the reason for our very being!

We have been asked by the Board to consider how we can continue to provide the best instructional programs while ensuring the safest schools. We believe there is a direct correlation between the upkeep of our buildings and student pride. According to security experts, this translates to safer schools. We are pleased that our relationship with the Township and Police Department will continue the funding of four School Resource Officers, one for each building in our district. This support emphasizes the importance of safety in our schools. The District will continue its work on safety by supporting the mental health and physical security measures currently underway.

Burlington Township is always striving to provide the best programs for our students while operating the most efficient district in the safest schools and maintaining a highly engaged community.

Sincerely,

Mary Ann Bell

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Superintendent of Schools

Nicholas Bice

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School Business Administrator

[Budget Presentation 2022-2023](#)
