



Tewksbury Township Board of Education

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www.tewksburyschools.org

April 30, 2018

Dear Tewksbury Township residents,

Over the past several months, district administration and the Board of Education have worked together preparing the 2018–2019 academic year budget, formally adopted on April 26, 2018. As our district grapples with the challenges of limited funding, increasing expenses, and declining student enrollment, creating a budget capable of supporting our educational priorities remains a difficult balancing act.

The 2018-2019 budget maintains existing academic and co-curricular programming, without sacrificing class size. Average class size remains 18, with a student teacher ratio of 7 to 1. In addition to core academic subjects, students receive instruction in the fine and performing arts, Spanish, STEM, and problem based learning. Extracurricular opportunities include a robust array of sports teams, after school clubs and activities, and experiential learning field trips. Maximizing student achievement, while developing well rounded students is the overarching District goal.

2017–2018 academic year highlights:

1. Curriculum: Expansion of STEM programs through 5th grade and implementation of state mandated next generation science standards. Introduction of social-emotional programs in both schools. Differentiated instruction for accelerated learners, as well as those requiring supplementary support. Student PARCC scores continue to exceed state averages.
2. Technology: Device and infrastructure upgrades enabling a 1:1 student to Chromebook initiative in grades 3 through 8. Chromebook “take home” program implemented for middle school students. Continuation of the shared IT services agreement with Readington School District.
3. Personnel: Extensive and ongoing professional development opportunities for staff, as well as tuition reimbursement for higher education credits. Interim Superintendent and Interim Middle School Principal hired, each for a two-year assignment.
4. Facilities: Ongoing physical plant maintenance including enhanced building security, upgrades to the septic and HVAC systems, along with three new school buses.
5. Finance: Completed bond refinance resulting in savings of \$340k over the remaining bond life.

In the coming school year, fixed costs such as a 3% contractual salary increase and a 12% increase in healthcare premiums, are not matched by corresponding revenue increases. State aide remains virtually unchanged, increasing only \$37k over last year. Revenues from other sources such as the School Choice program and the bond refinance program, are simply not sufficient to offset the rise in expenses.

In order to fund next year’s budget, the school tax levy will increase 1.69%, down from last year’s increase of 3.9%. In addition, staffing needs have been reassessed as enrollment continues to trend downward. The equivalent of 3.5 full time staff positions will be eliminated next year, some due to attrition. The Board of Education and district administration remain committed to providing a quality education tempered by fiscal responsibility to the community. The 2018-2019 budget enables us to continue providing a high quality education, in well maintained and safe facilities, without sacrificing any existing programming.

2018-2019 Budget Highlights	
Total Operating Budget:	\$15,778,062
Total Tax Levy:	\$12,545,871
Increase over 2017-2018 operating budget:	\$1,176,679
Increase on average home assessed at \$545k:	\$65 per year

Additional budget details are posted on the district website at www.tewksburyschools.org. The Board meets twice per month and the community is encouraged to attend BOE meetings. Meeting dates are posted on the district calendar online.

Next year the Board will address several key initiatives facing our district. Paramount of these is defining a sustainable administrative structure. Future budgets will unlikely be able to fund the existing team of five administrators. Community input regarding educational leadership priorities will be solicited in the fall. Monitoring the move of 5th grade to TES, negotiating a new contract with the teachers’ union, and keeping pace with security enhancements are additional areas of focus for the Board of Education.

In the words of Ben Franklin, “an investment in knowledge pays the best interest.” The Tewksbury Township Board of Education thanks you for supporting our schools.

Respectfully,

The Tewksbury Township Board of Education