



Clinton Public School

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March 14, 2011

To the Clinton Public School Community:

Spend responsibly. Control taxes. Maintain high standards and quality education. Those are the messages we took from your votes last year to defeat the school budget, the first failed budget for Clinton Public in over 20 years. It is also consistent with the words of President Obama who called for fiscal austerity in his budget and those at state and local levels, and from Governor Christie who outlined a process he called the "new normal" for budget development.

As you may be aware, the governor's budget provides every school district in the state of New Jersey an increase in state aid over last year. For CPS, we received a total increase in state aid of \$96,250. This money helps to offset the \$404,181 we lost in aid last year but still leaves us with \$307,931 less than we had two years ago.

Yet we were still able to account for that, and more, and are proposing a budget for 2011-12 that spends nearly \$200,000 less (2.6%) than we did during the 2009-10 school year. Our proposed budget does not spend all of the money allowed under the 2% cap, but instead returns to you approximately \$45,000 of that additional state aid.

We fully understand that receiving additional state aid does not equate to automatic increased spending. Although the option existed, we did not restore or increase any of the cuts that were made in last year's budget and we only spent where absolutely necessary to provide the quality of education that meets the standards you expect.

You may be asking how we were able to accomplish all of this. Well, we greatly benefitted by heeding another mission being heavily promoted: shared services and competitive bidding. State Senate President Stephen Sweeney recently proposed legislation to give a state commission power to take away state aid from towns, school districts and other government bodies that refuse to enter a recommended shared service arrangement. At CPS, we are not just exploring shared services; we have and are continuing to enter into numerous shared service agreements that have resulted in cost savings. We have also implemented competitive processes for contracted services such as insurance brokers, auditors, banking services, and attorneys that have resulted in additional significant savings.

Examples include saving over \$52,000 from a new custodial/maintenance contract and shared service agreement with Clinton Township for facility manager, reducing more than 50% of our curriculum writing costs through shared service writing with neighboring districts, growing shared service agreements for professional development to include in and out of county partnerships, and realizing major savings through competitive proposal and interview processes for contracted services mentioned earlier. We are not resting on these successes. While working to maintain and improve these services we are pursuing shared agreements in the areas of technology, special education, and additional facility and maintenance opportunities.

Our responsible and austere spending is allowing us to establish emergency and maintenance reserves to offset unanticipated out of district tuition costs and required maintenance of the facility, which can lead to future base budget reductions for facility maintenance. We also have been contributing each year to our capital reserve and have now raised the funds necessary to complete a badly needed roof replacement this summer. All of this is occurring in the face of continued rising costs and revenue losses in other areas.

Continued declining enrollment produced reductions of two teaching positions and one aide position in this budget; making a total of 10 full and part-time positions eliminated over the past two years. Class sizes throughout the school will be consistently in the low to mid 20's.

Despite these reductions, we are proud to say that we were able to maintain all of our academic and co-curricular programs. Further, we were able to include proposals for materials and programs that advance the educational experience. For example, we can now implement portions of our 3 year literacy plan (which was supposed to conclude this year) that were put off, purchase social studies materials for grades K-4 that support the new curriculum already in place, and update our science materials to provide resources for new curriculum in this area. We have aggressively worked to rewrite curriculum in all content areas but have not provided teachers with the resources and training necessary to successfully implement them. Now we can while still presenting a budget that stays under the cap.

The tax impact for the proposed budget breaks down as follows: The Clinton increase would be \$0.016 on \$100 assessed value or \$65 for the average home. The Glen Gardner increase would be \$0.057 on \$100 assessed value or \$113 for the average home. It is important to note that due to changes in assessed value and state mandated equalized valuation of taxes due to the district merger, a budget with flat tax revenue would result in an increase of \$39 in Clinton and \$83 in Glen Gardner on the average homes.

All things considered I believe that we created a budget that achieves our goal, and I hope yours, of ensuring educational progress while respecting and controlling the tax burden in our communities. I also strongly believe that we are positioning ourselves well for the future.

I encourage you to come out and hear firsthand about our budget and our process. Our public hearing will occur on March 22 at CPS. We will also be holding presentations at council meetings in Clinton (April 12) and Glen Gardner (April 5) at their respective town hall buildings.

Please always feel free to reach out to me if you have any questions or comments or would like to discuss our budget in greater detail.

Sincerely,

Dr. Richard Katz
Superintendent/Principal