

SUPERINTENDENT’S BUDGET MESSAGE

As Superintendent of Schools for the past seven years, I have worked collaboratively to develop budgets that provide ample resources to improve teaching and learning, facilitate innovation, promote authentic and relevant learning experiences, meet the needs of all students, and adhere to community expectations for fiscal responsibility.

Beginning with the 2012 – 2013 budget, I presented the Board of Education with annual operating budgets that fell below the Allowable Tax Levy Limit, saving taxpayers close to \$14 million dollars of additional tax levy.

To deliver a 2017- 2018 District Budget that advances the mission of our public school system, aligns with the Board of Education’s goals to promote student engagement and achievement, enhances school climate, and prepares students to thrive in a rapidly-changing world, it is necessary to recommend a budget that is above the District’s 1.04% approved allowable tax levy limit.

The decision to propose a budget requiring an override and approval by 60% of voters stems from my responsibility as Chief Education Officer to appropriately and adequately invest in staffing, resources, and educational programs to perpetuate excellence and avoid eroding the unique qualities and fabric that defines the Mamaroneck Union Free School District as a high-performing public school system.

Where We Are Headed: Invest, Improve, Innovate

The annual budget represents a financial articulation of what we value and aim to accomplish across the spectrum of learning experiences that define a Mamaroneck UFSD education. We “dream big and think creatively” and are committed to reimagining classroom learning to provide authentic and relevant learning experiences K - 12. A continuing area of focus will be Science, Technology, Engineering, Art, and Mathematics. The budget includes funding to purchase science curriculum materials that support the development of new science units of study in connection with the recently-adopted New York State Science Learning Standards. We expect to expand our vibrant partnership with Sheldrake Environment Center to anchor elementary science education in authentic field work. Through the generosity of the Mamaroneck Schools Foundation, we will formalize an elementary robotics curriculum and further develop grades 2 – 12 computer science instruction. At the middle school, computer and family consumer science students will focus on “smart-design” combining the art of fashion with technology solutions. At the high school, we will continue to formalize elective pathways to further expand the multi-year design, engineering, computer science, and culinary arts programs.

Building on our commitment to deep inquiry, we will continue to refine the fifth and eighth grade Capstone Projects. In the area of civic engagement, we will pilot an Original Civic Research and Action Program designed to help students gain an understanding of civic responsibility and community engagement by partnering with a mentor to develop and implement an action plan designed to address community needs or solve important problems.

District Multi-Year Stretch Goals

Thinking beyond our commitment to make annual progress, earlier this year the Board of Education adopted three aspirational goals that will transform our school system and enhance our broader community. We are well on our way to ensure that by 2018-019 *all students will read capably and voluminously across genres for a variety of meaningful purposes*. This budget provides classroom library resources and funding for the District’s word study curriculum to support our multi-year literacy goal. At the same time, we plan to organize inter-school academic projects at the elementary level to *foster community connectedness and ensure that students, families, and staff engage in meaningful, authentic interactions* that taps the strengths of our diverse community. Finally, we are poised to develop virtual and physical resources that will serve to *empower each and every family to support their child’s learning* including web-based tutorials, home visitations, and parent workshops.

Enrollment Trends, Projections, and Staffing

The steady annual increase in student enrollment since 2010 is one of the primary factors influencing budget growth. The annual increase in student enrollment growth as compared to budget-to-budget increases has resulted in declining per pupil expenditures for three consecutive years. While the most recent five-year average enrollment growth was 7.30%, our District's enrollment growth since 2010 is 12%. This represents an additional 587 students K – 12. Elementary growth has increased the last two years at the rate of 3.5% and 2.6%, respectively. We are encouraged by the large number of new elementary students and families joining the district. As we realize the upward movement of large elementary grade-level cohorts into the middle and high school, we anticipate the need to hire additional staff to meet middle school section enrollment requirements and course selection interest at the high school in future years.

We estimate the need to add three elementary grade-level sections based on enrollment projections and Board of Education elementary class size guidelines. Consistent with past budgets, we have included two contingency teaching positions to address enrollment changes that may occur after the budget is approved by voters. At Mamaroneck High School, we expect to add several part-time teaching positions for world language, computer science, physical education, and original science research to meet course enrollment demand. We continue to identify staffing efficiencies while maximizing the number of certified and classified staff assigned to classrooms and school buildings. Therefore, we expect to maintain the same level of staff/student interaction while reducing total certified staff by 3.50 FTE districtwide after considering staffing additions and reductions.

We are reinstating the Assistant Superintendent for Student Support Services position to meet the expansive scope of Student Support Services both within and outside the realm of special education, and to maintain the highest level of supervision of 100+ employees associated with the individual learning programs of more than 1,000 students. This restructuring, which reestablishes the Assistant Superintendent and two Directors of Special Education positions is cost effective and also benefits students receiving early intervention services and those in general and special education programs.

In its fifth year the District's Dual Language elementary program will welcome a new kindergarten cohort as we move closer to a fully-developing the K – 5 program. The budget also supports the redesign of the APPLE Program (a school-within-a-school program for 46 students) for the purposes of delivering a more flexible and individualized academic and therapeutic support to a growing number of high school students who struggle with a range of emotional, academic, and/or familial challenges. The redesign will include the hiring of a full-time academic liaison and school psychologist and continues the part-time social worker assigned to returning APPLE students and other high school students who would benefit from a focused academic/therapeutic support team.

Budget Summary

The Proposed Budget adopted by the Board of Education for the 2017 – 2018 academic year is \$135,103,791. It amounts to a \$1,944,628 or 1.46% budget-to-budget increase. The 2017 – 2018 Proposed Budget requires raising the tax levy 2.25%, exceeding the District's Allowable Tax Levy Limit of 1.04%. The Budget represents the administration's focused effort to engage students and teachers in relevant, rigorous, and authentic learning experiences. We continue to adhere to a philosophy of sound fiscal management, strategic use of resources, and a continuing investment in public education.

Respectfully,

Dr. Robert Shaps

