

March 18, 2025

Dear Flemington-Raritan Regional School District Parents, Staff, and Community Members,

On March 11, our District held a special election to seek approval from voters to raise an additional \$2,388,749 above the tax levy for the 2025-2026 school budget. Unfortunately, the special question was not approved. Unofficial results published by the Hunterdon County Clerk's Office are linked [here](#).

Now, the District needs to finalize the 2025-2026 budget by working within the following parameters:

1. *Reducing Items on the Special Question* -- As a result of the vote, the District is required by legal New Jersey special election law to reduce all the specific positions listed on the special question. You may recall the special question requested to keep staff to maintain small class sizes in the elementary schools, teachers to support specialized reading programs such as reading recovery, a Class III Security Officer for each school in the District, STEM programs, and junior varsity sports at the middle school.

The agenda for the March 17 Board of Education meeting listed a reduction of 31 teaching positions, plus additional positions to move closer to closing the budget gap. For the 25-26 school year, junior varsity sports programs cannot be funded with District funds. The failure of the question also means that the District cannot partner with Raritan Township and Flemington Borough for six Class III Officers; five from Raritan Township and one from Flemington Borough. The District will continue to request Flemington Borough and Raritan Township to place Class III Officers in our schools at no cost to the District. At this time, the answer from both partners has been zero financial support for Class III Officers for our schools. It is anticipated that the District will request a Memorandum of Understanding with Raritan Township for at least one officer for the 25-26 school year.

2. *Budget Adjustments* -- The District was notified 48 hours after the Governor's February 25th address that we qualify for budget adjustments specifically for increased healthcare costs and increased student enrollment. The Board has selected to use an additional 2% budget adjustment. Our district will allocate \$376,300 for supplies and materials necessary for our additional students and \$818,075 of the allotted \$1,142,478, to address increased benefits costs.

Let me be clear. School districts do not know ahead of time if they are going to qualify for budget adjustment funding. Last year, the District did not qualify for either budget adjustment. For the 25-26 school year, the District was notified that we qualified for additional funding when we received preloaded budget software from the State of New Jersey for the 25-26 school year. This budget software is uploaded from the Department of Education *after* the Governor's Fiscal Address which occurred on Tuesday, February 25th. By law, school districts receive funding notification no later than 48 hours after the Governor's Fiscal Address.

3. *State Aid* -- For the first time in over 10 years, our District's state funding was deemed below adequacy according to the New Jersey Department of Education. Flemington-Raritan Regional School District is the only district in Hunterdon County with this designation. We are hopeful our state aid figures will be reevaluated and adjusted to provide additional funding to the District.
4. *Fixed Operating Budget* -- The Board's Operations Committee decided that the district's operating budget for the 2025-2026 school year will be set at \$70 million, that's a reduction of \$70,434,000. Additional reductions must be made to achieve this fixed figure. Building principals are working with Central Office to make final decisions and then will notify staff. Our principals and directors worked hard to reduce tools and instructional programs totaling over \$848,000. I greatly appreciate their fine work in this effort to stretch our nearly see-through dollar even thinner.

Strategic Goals:

Goal Area #1: The District will provide a comprehensive and rigorous educational experience that connects and expands students' knowledge while engaging and empowering all learners to synthesize and apply their skills and understandings in meaningful ways.

Goal Area #2: Develop a continuation of a multi-tiered system of support within the district to target the social, emotional, and mental health needs of students.

Goal Area #3: The district will create opportunities to foster unity between the community and the school district in order to strengthen partnerships and develop a shared responsibility for student success.

Goal Area #4: Create an enticing and competitive work environment to attract and retain high-quality candidates representative of students' diverse backgrounds in the Flemington Raritan Regional School District community.

Goal Area #5: Ensure the finance and facilities needs are budgeted to upkeep and meet the needs of the growing district.

Working within this framework, the District has abolished the following positions to close the budget gap.

- *January 23 Board Meeting* -- The District abolished 3 administrators: the Supervisor of Math/Science, the Supervisor of English Language Arts/Social Studies, and the Preschool Supervisor.
- *February 27 Board Meeting* -- The District abolished 7 positions: 4 elementary teachers, 2 school counselors and the Facilities Manager.
- *March 17 Board Meeting* -- The District abolished 40 positions; 34 certificated, and 6 non-certificated. The positions are as follows: 11 elementary teachers; 8 elementary reading recovery teachers; 6 support skills teachers (3 Math and 3 English Language Arts); 5 elementary STEM teachers; 4 10-month secretaries (2 full-time and 2 part-time); 2 administrative secretaries (1 Preschool and 1 Payroll); 2 school nurses, 1 art teacher, and 1 administrator - Supervisor of Special Education.

In addition to the elimination of over 50 positions for next year, contracts will not be renewed for a Class III Officer in each school next year. Furthermore, junior varsity sports will not be offered at J.P. Case Middle School. Due to the failing of the special election, these important positions and extracurricular activities will not be provided unless alternate funding is secured from funds outside the district.

Yes, these cuts are deep. Indeed, the impact is catastrophic. Of course, we are devastated by our losses. Our hearts are heavy every time we let go of a valuable member of our FRSD family, all of whom we hired because they showed promise in our community's future for our students. But we can no longer afford to keep everyone we have. It is not possible.

Building Principals will continue to be in touch with staff and faculty members to lean in and hear suggestions about possible additional reductions in instructional tools and materials. We appreciate everyone's collective thinking on this serious challenge. Every reduction must be made with careful consideration of financial constraints and our educational mission while remaining mindful of the impact on both students and taxpayers.

At the March 17 Board of Education meeting, the Board approved the preliminary budget as follows:

| | General Fund | Capital Reserve | Special Revenues | Debt Service | Total |
|-------------------------------------|--------------|-----------------|------------------|--------------|--------------|
| 2025-2026 Total Expenditures | \$70,000,000 | \$0 | \$4,676,830 | \$5,941,820 | \$80,618,650 |
| Less: Anticipated Revenues | \$ 7,892,518 | \$0 | \$4,676,830 | \$900,223 | \$13,469,571 |
| Taxes to be Raised | \$62,107,482 | \$0 | \$0 | \$5,041,597 | \$67,149,079 |

The final budget will be presented at a public hearing on May 1 at 7 PM at J.P. Case Middle School.

Collectively, we have significant work ahead of us. Together, we need to prepare for the coming school year with far fewer staff members and resources. We will rise again to the challenge as we are dedicated to continuing to deliver impactful instruction while supporting every student, every day at every opportunity.

Sincerely,
Kari McGann, Ed.D.
Superintendent of Schools

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