

**FLEMINGTON-RARITAN  
REGIONAL SCHOOL DISTRICT**



# **2025-2026 BUDGET SUPERINTENDENT'S TOWN HALL MEETING**

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**FEBRUARY 26, 2025**







# OUR STORY

The Flemington-Raritan Regional Public School District is a comprehensive, Pre-K through Grade 8 school district focused on every student, every day, every opportunity.



The District serves 3 and 4-year-old children at three offsite preschool locations. Students in preschool through grade four are provided a high-quality, thorough education at four elementary schools. Our 5th and 6th grade students receive their education at our intermediate school and 7th and 8th grade students attend school at our middle school.

Our vibrant, diverse, and growing school community is home to motivated students. Our district boasts unique programs that take students around the world, learning about other cultures and competing in academic and extracurricular competitions, while winning championships and earning awards locally.







# OUR STORY

Since every learner is different, the district prides itself on offering a wide array of services and programs to meet the needs to each and every student, every day.



In addition to our educational programs, the Flemington-Raritan Regional School District supports multilingual learners at every school in the district. Many middle school students take advanced level math courses such as Algebra 1 and Geometry. Our students have the opportunity to begin learning a foreign language in elementary school and continue through the 8th grade.

Our district provides in-class and pull-out resource, self-contained, preschool disabilities, and transition/life skills classes for students with special needs. Reading specialists, and child study team members (comprised of school psychologists, school social workers, and LDT-Cs) work with learners in need of support.





# SUPPORTING STUDENTS

- The Flemington-Raritan Regional School District has full-time nurses and guidance counselors in every school to support students' physical, social, and emotional needs.
- Our students are supported both in and out of the classroom.
- In an effort to develop the whole child, the Flemington-Raritan Regional School District provides robust co- and extra-curricular programs such as science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) courses.
- From strings to orchestra and theatre, to band and chorus, our students have many opportunities to show their creative sides. On the athletic fields they shine, competing in a multitude of sports. Their participation in clubs and afterschool programs allow students to explore their passions and interests.
- Investing in our schools make all of this a reality. Help us make even more possible for our students, for our district, and for our community.

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# FRSD AT-A-GLANCE



**3,311**

## Current Enrollment

Our District has 3,311 students with six schools. We are the largest school district in Hunterdon County. Enrollment continues to grow.

**682+**

## Faculty & Staff

The District employs close to 682 employees including faculty and staff members. The number of faculty & staff has continued to grow to meet the needs of our students.

**+125%**

## What's Changed?

The student population has changed over the past six years, becoming more diverse with a 125% increase in multilingual learners from 2018 to 2024.

The national teacher shortage required that the district adjust recruiting & hiring practices to fill vacancies.



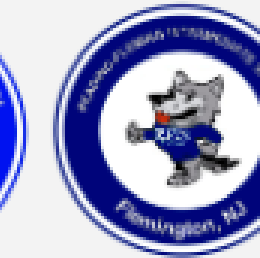
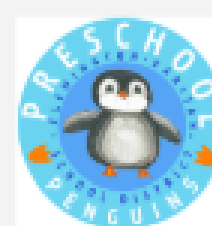


# DEMOGRAPHICS

<b>ASSA October 15, 2024</b>	<b>Total Population Oct 2024</b>	<b>Economically Disadvantaged Oct 2024</b>	<b>Total Special Education Oct 2024</b>	<b>Special Ed. w/o Speech-only Oct 2024</b>	<b>English Learners Oct 2024</b>
<b>BS</b>	376	17.6%	19.4%	14.1%	8.0%
<b>CH</b>	577	21.5%	26.9%	20.3%	5.7%
<b>FAD</b>	422	45.3%	15.6%	10.9%	23.9%
<b>RH</b>	406	22.7%	18.7%	12.8%	10.1%
<b>RFIS</b>	721	26.4%	18.3%	15.5%	5.8%
<b>JPC</b>	731	20.5%	18.5%	16.7%	3.6%
<b>Totals</b>	3233	25.1%	19.7%	15.5%	8.4%



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# STAFF GROWTH



*This isn't just about taxes—  
it's about our values and our vision for the  
future. When we invest in our schools, we  
are investing in our entire community.*

To assist with the national teaching shortage, the District selected to build a “Grow Your Own (GYO) model, as recommended in the report, “Educator Recruitment and Retention Committee,” the district has transitioned to hiring teacher assistants and paraprofessionals directly, rather than outsourcing these positions as was done in the past. The District’s teachers’ assistants are highly valuable members of the professional organization. The GYO model has allowed the District to hire six (6) teachers for 2024-2025 who were previously teacher assistants. This transition occurred in the 2022-23 school year. While this strategy has proved to be effective in training our assistants to become teachers in our district, we have not achieved the cost savings anticipated by our previous interim business administrator.

The FREA memorandum of agreement (MOA) is through the year 2027. The percentage increase is 3.25% for the remainder of the MOA. The first two years of the MOA was 3.5%, There are other contracts with negotiated percentage increases, such as the Flemington-Raritan Administrators Association. The MOA is also through 2027 and the percentage increase is 3%.





# 1 Before 2010

FRSD budget voted on annually by registered voters. Average tax levy increase was 6.35% from 2004-2010.



# 2 2011

State of New Jersey significantly reduces state aid for all districts. FRSD reduced personnel and operating costs to have a 0% increase in the tax levy.



# 5 2016-2023

Less than 3% tax levy increases, with costs exceeding 2%, continue to expand the financial deficit, requiring the District to use savings from the previous year to balance the budget.



# 3 2012-2021

The State places a 2% cap, with eligible waivers, on tax levy for districts opting out of community budget vote.



# 4 2016-2025

For years, FRSD's expenditures outpaced revenues. From 2016-2025, average tax levy increase is only 2.5%



# 6 September 2024

On September 4, 2024, the State passed new laws eliminating vote on school budgets in April elections except for separate proposals to spend above the cap.

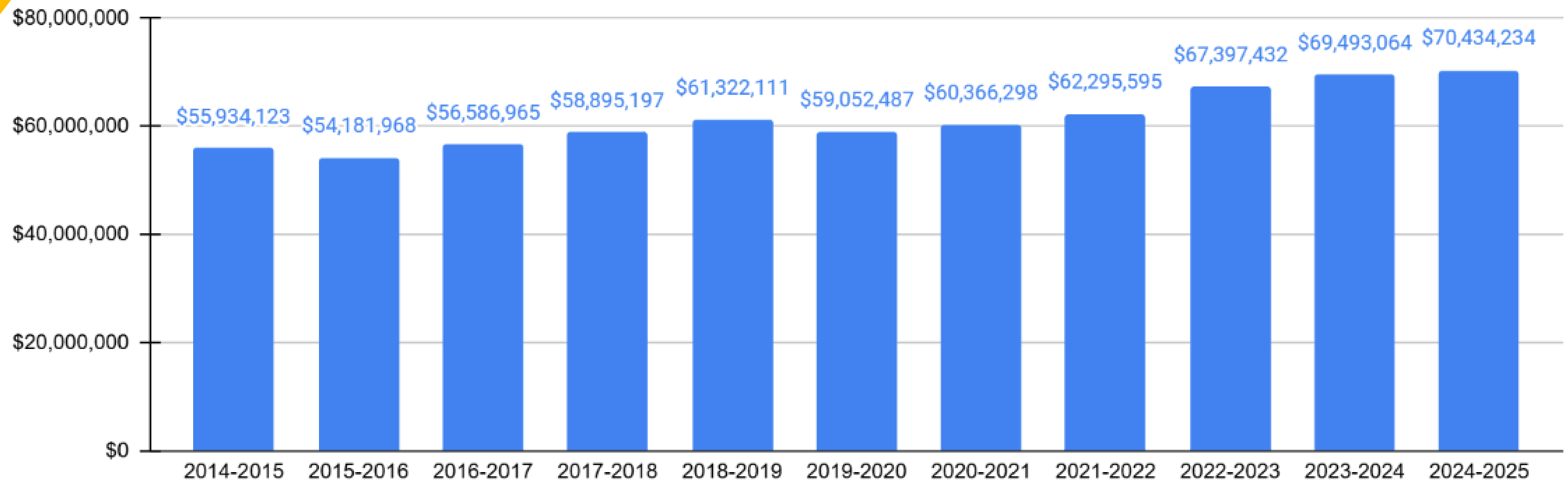


## Flemington-Raritan BUDGET ROADMAP





# TOTAL OPERATING BUDGET PER AUDIT



In 2014-2015, the District enrolled 3,339 students. Currently, the District educates 3,311 students.

The total operating budget in 2014-2015 was \$55,934,123. In 2024-2025, the operating budget is \$70,434,234. Yes, it costs more in 2024 to educate students than ten years ago in 2014 as it is for schools across the state.





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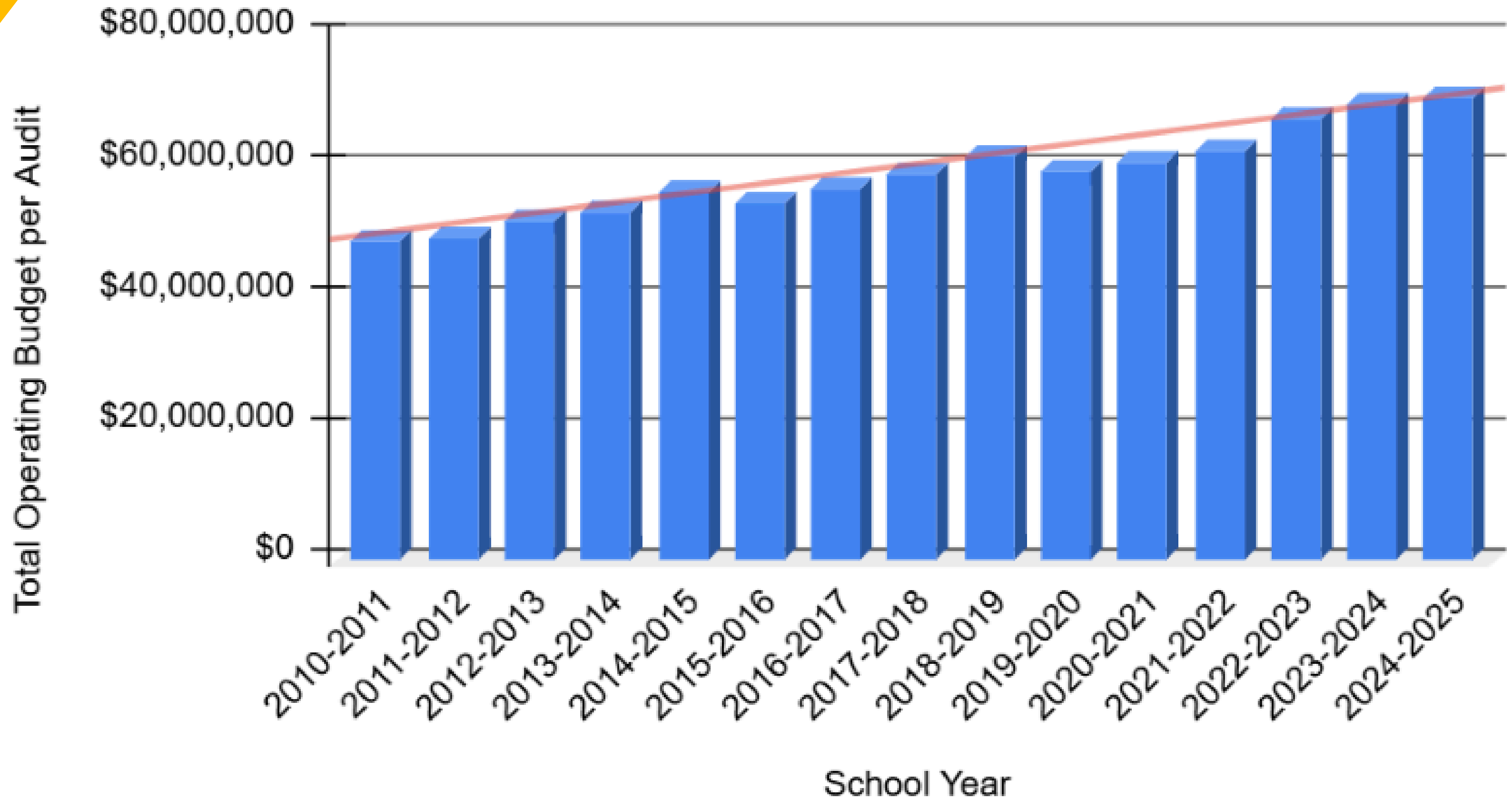
	Total Operating Budget per Audit	Operating Budget Percent Increase from Previous Year	State Aid Difference From Previous Year	Total Aid
2010-2011	\$48,457,983			4,584,624
2011-2012	\$48,943,192	1.00%	1,026,504	5,611,128
2012-2013	\$51,506,354	5.24%	450,291	6,061,419
2013-2014	\$53,096,468	3.09%	0	6,061,420
2014-2015	\$55,934,123	5.34%	0	6,126,350
2015-2016	\$54,181,968	-3.13%	0	6,126,350
2016-2017	\$56,586,965	4.44%	33,017	6,159,367
2017-2018	\$58,895,197	4.08%	0	6,159,367
2018-2019	\$61,322,111	4.12%	-112,109	6,047,258
2019-2020	\$59,052,487	-3.70%	-225,571	5,821,687
2020-2021	\$60,366,298	2.22%	-261,037	5,560,650
2021-2022	\$62,295,595	3.20%	-447,150	5,113,500
2022-2023	\$67,397,432	8.19%	595,368	5,708,868
2023-2024	\$69,493,064	3.11%	-162,226	5,546,642
2024-2025	\$70,434,234	1.35%	549,199	6,095,841
2025-2026			?	



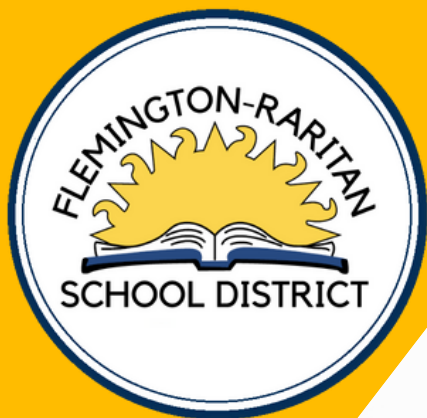




# Total Operating Budget per Audit vs. School Year



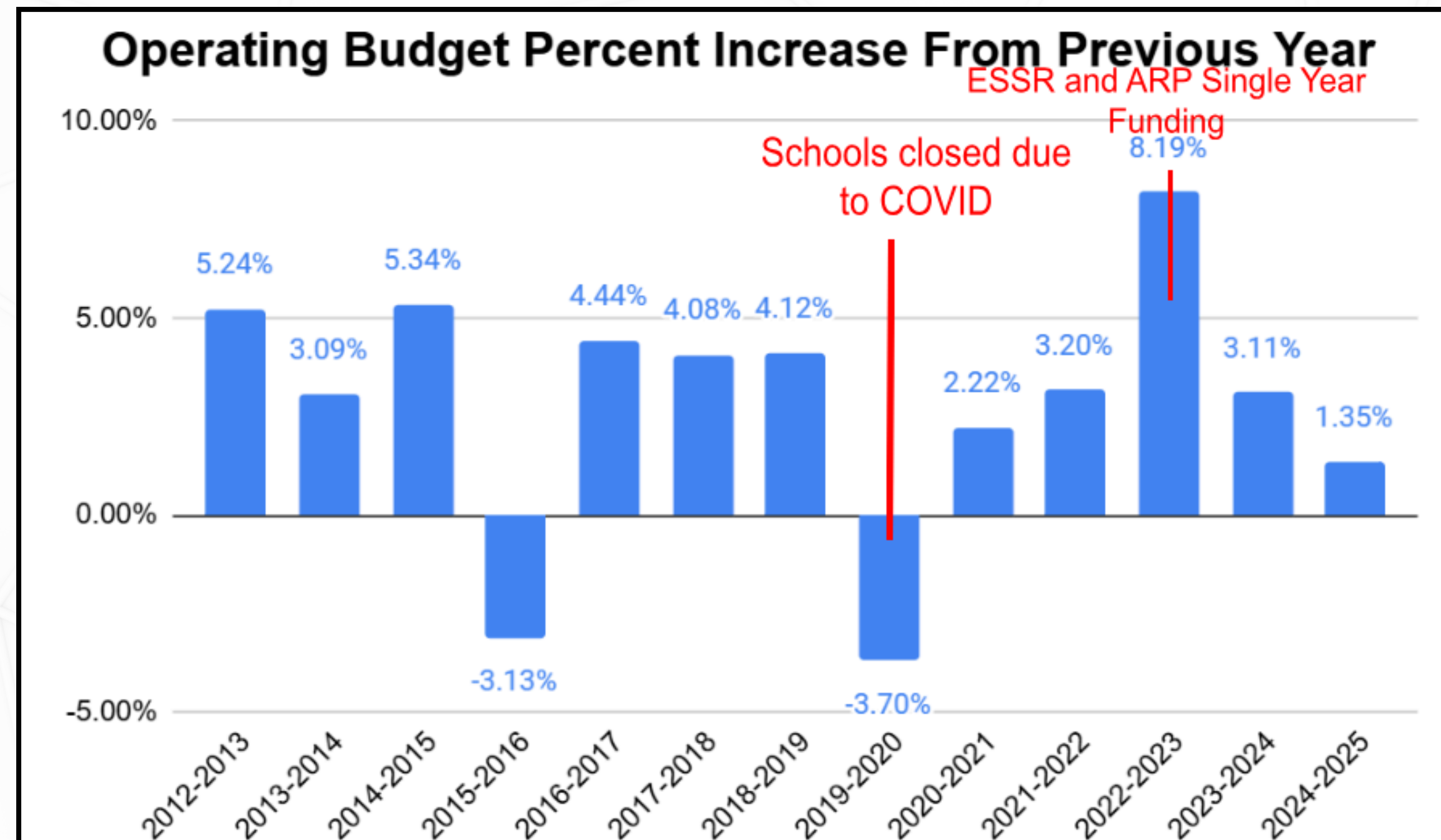




The district's budget consists of three funds: the General Fund, Special Revenue (Grant) Fund, and Debt Service Fund.



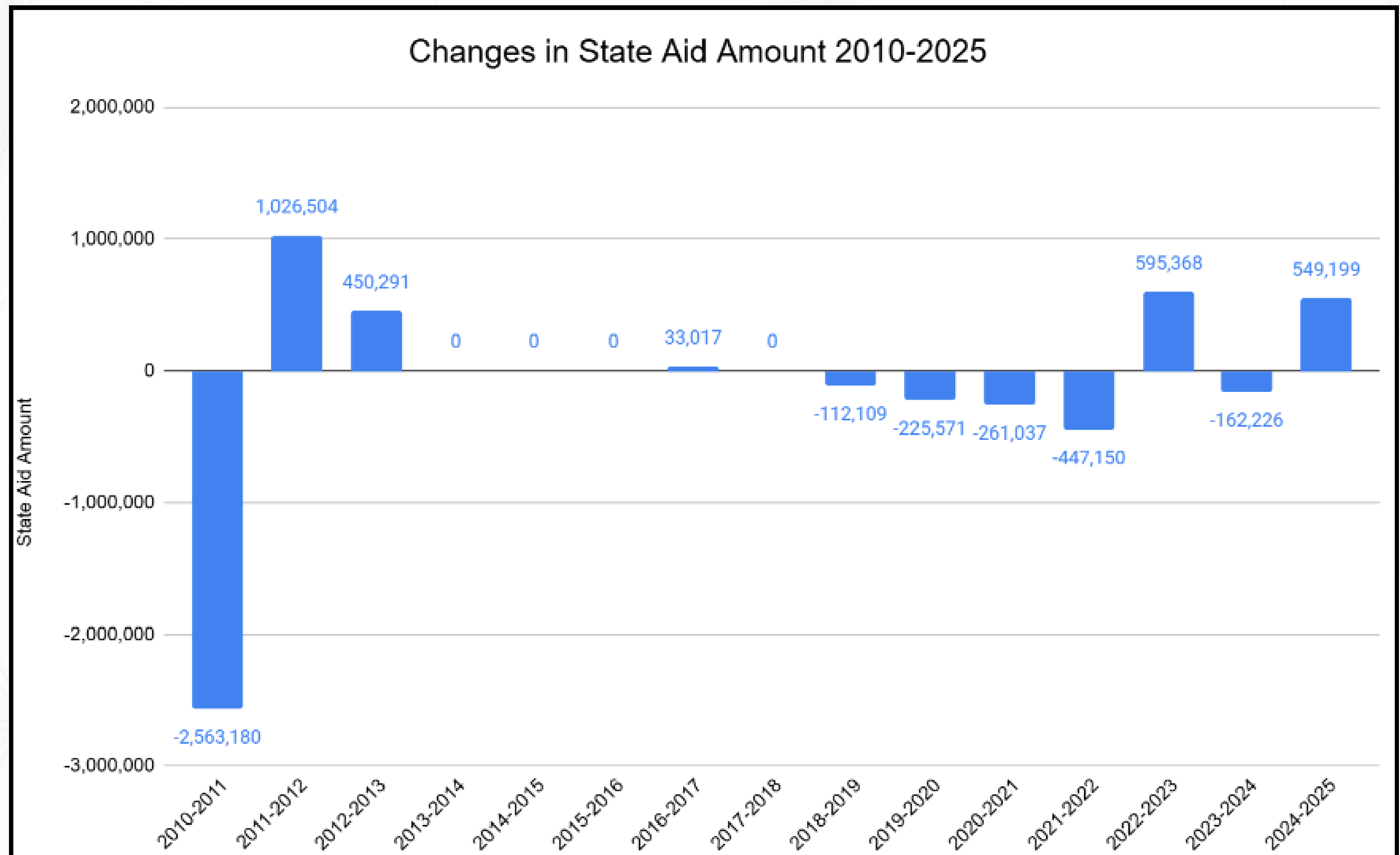
Each year, the Special Revenue Fund, or Grant Fund, consistently exceeds the budgeted amount.



The District follows guidance from the NJDOE, which typically suggests budgeting for grants at 75%-85% of the previous year's allocation. However, grant allocations are often finalized after the budget is submitted. Additionally, the NJDOE may offer other grants, either available for application or awarded after the budget has already been approved. This trend of the Special Revenue Fund exceeding expectations has been consistent not only for the past six years but also prior to 2018.

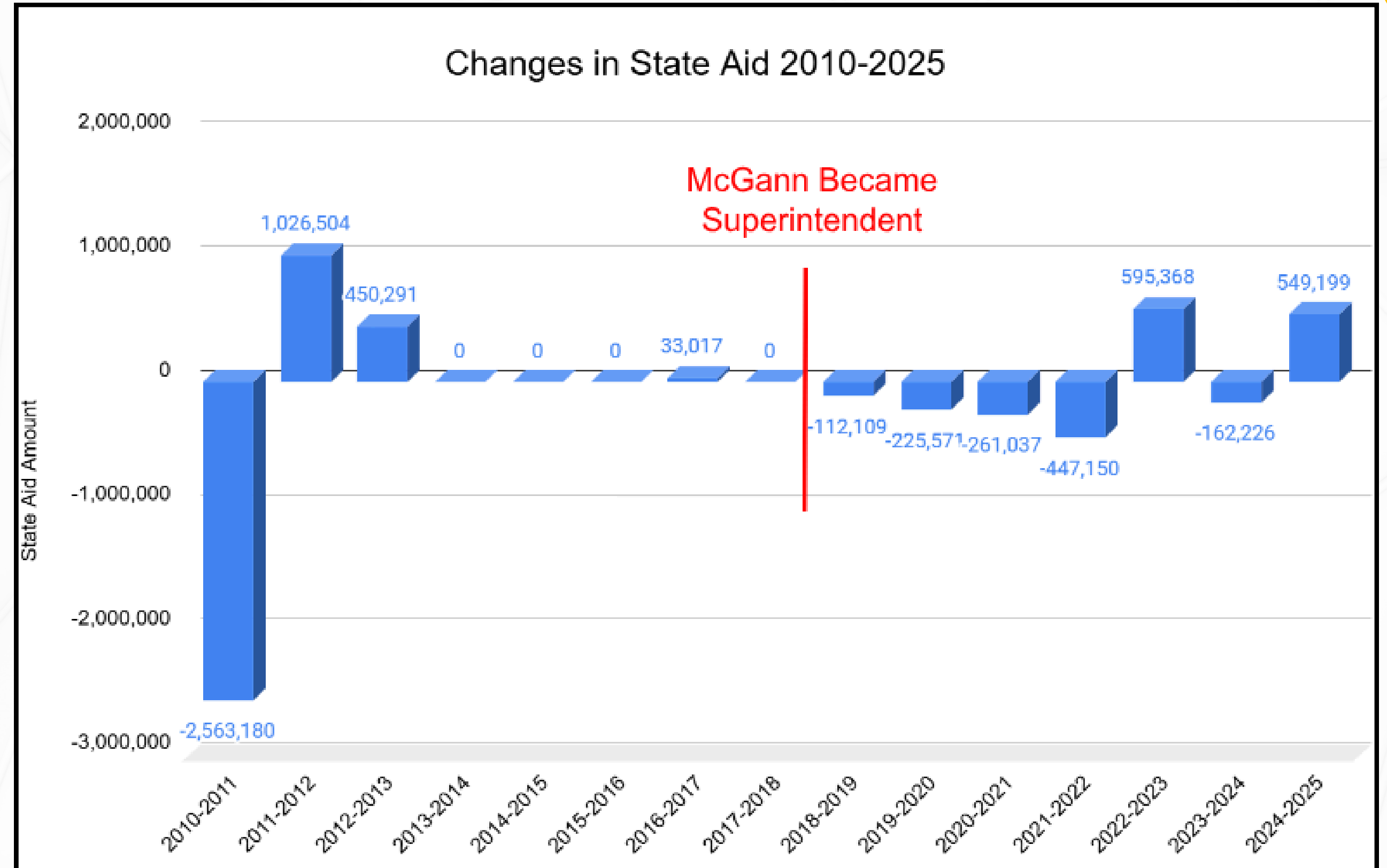
General Fund expenditures have varied not only over the past six years but prior to 2018, with some years spending less than anticipated and others surpassing the original budget. The district does plan for unexpected expenses by reviewing past trends but there are instances where actual costs are higher than projected, or where expenditures exceed the contingency set aside in the budget. Although the district strives to account for as many unforeseen costs as possible, some are unavoidable as we must meet the needs of our students. The district has not ended a school year in the red, thanks to the ability to maintain "savings" in the form of a 2% fund balance. This allowable fund balance has been crucial in balancing the budget each year. However, the district recognizes that this trend cannot continue indefinitely, as the fund balance will eventually be depleted. While the district is requesting a higher tax rate for the 2025-26 school year, it is also making reductions in its expenditures to ensure a more sustainable budget in the future.





Flemington-Raritan Regional School has lost funding year after year and FRSD isn't the only one. Hunterdon County, as a whole, continues to lose state aid. State funding for the 2023-2024 school years showed that Hunterdon County School Districts lost a combined 2.1 million in state funding. The loss of state funding year after year negatively impacts the Flemington-Raritan Regional School District and our students. The data is clear. Flemington-Raritan state aid amounts from 2010-2025 show a combined loss of 2,563,180. In fact, state leaders agree; that overhauling New Jersey's school funding formula is necessary as evidenced by multiple articles written in NJ Spotlight News, New Jersey School Boards Association, and authored by the Hunterdon County Commissioner's Office. In 2022-2023, the COVID-19 pandemic led to temporary funding boosts for all school districts, except this one-time funding was required to be spent by the end of the 2024 school year. This special funding supported purchases of materials and programs to open up school doors full-time after the COVID-19 pandemic.



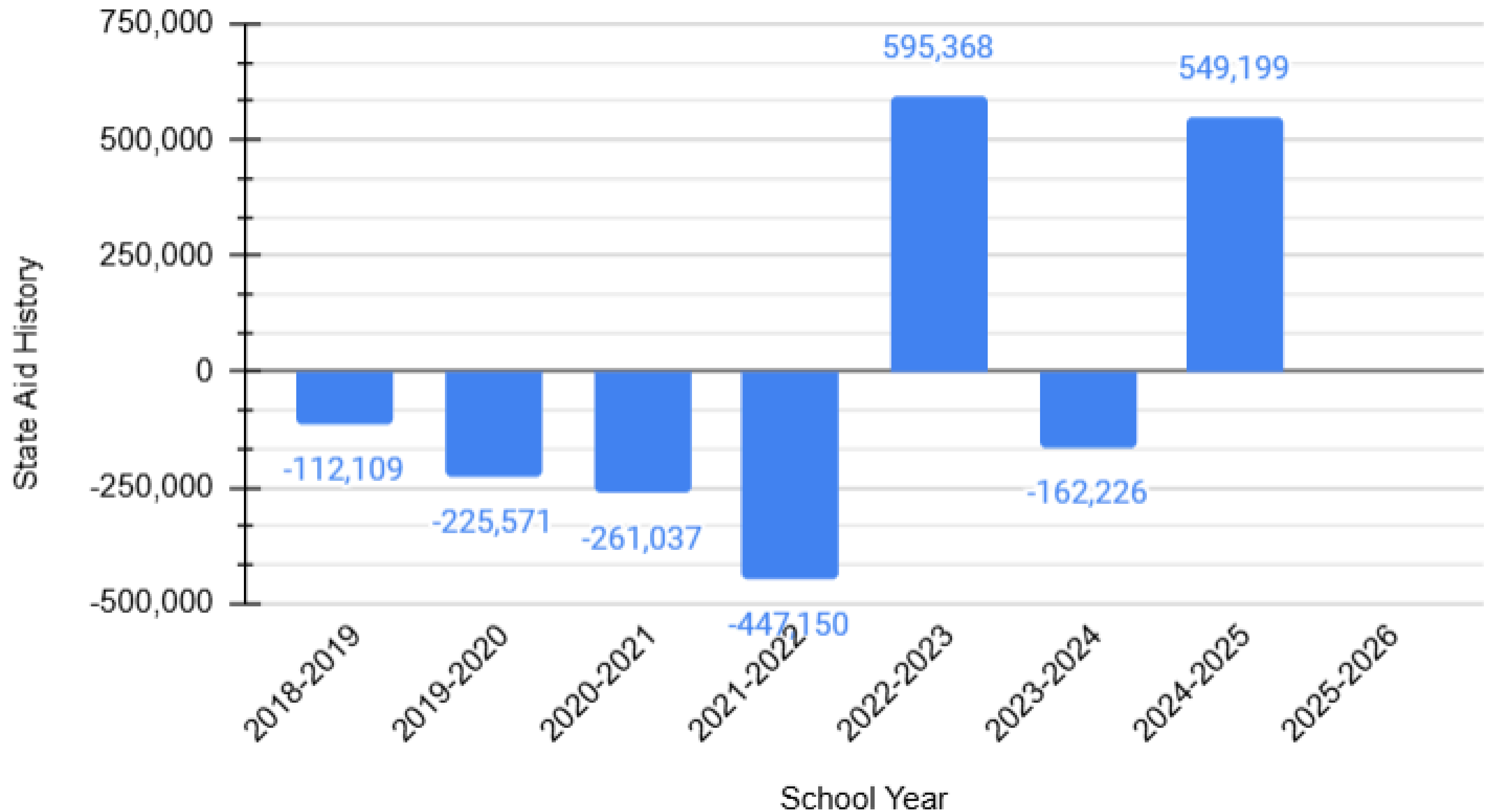


New Jersey's school funding comes from a few sources: local property taxes, aid from the State of New Jersey, and aid from the federal government, although most New Jersey district[s] receive minimal aid from the federal government.





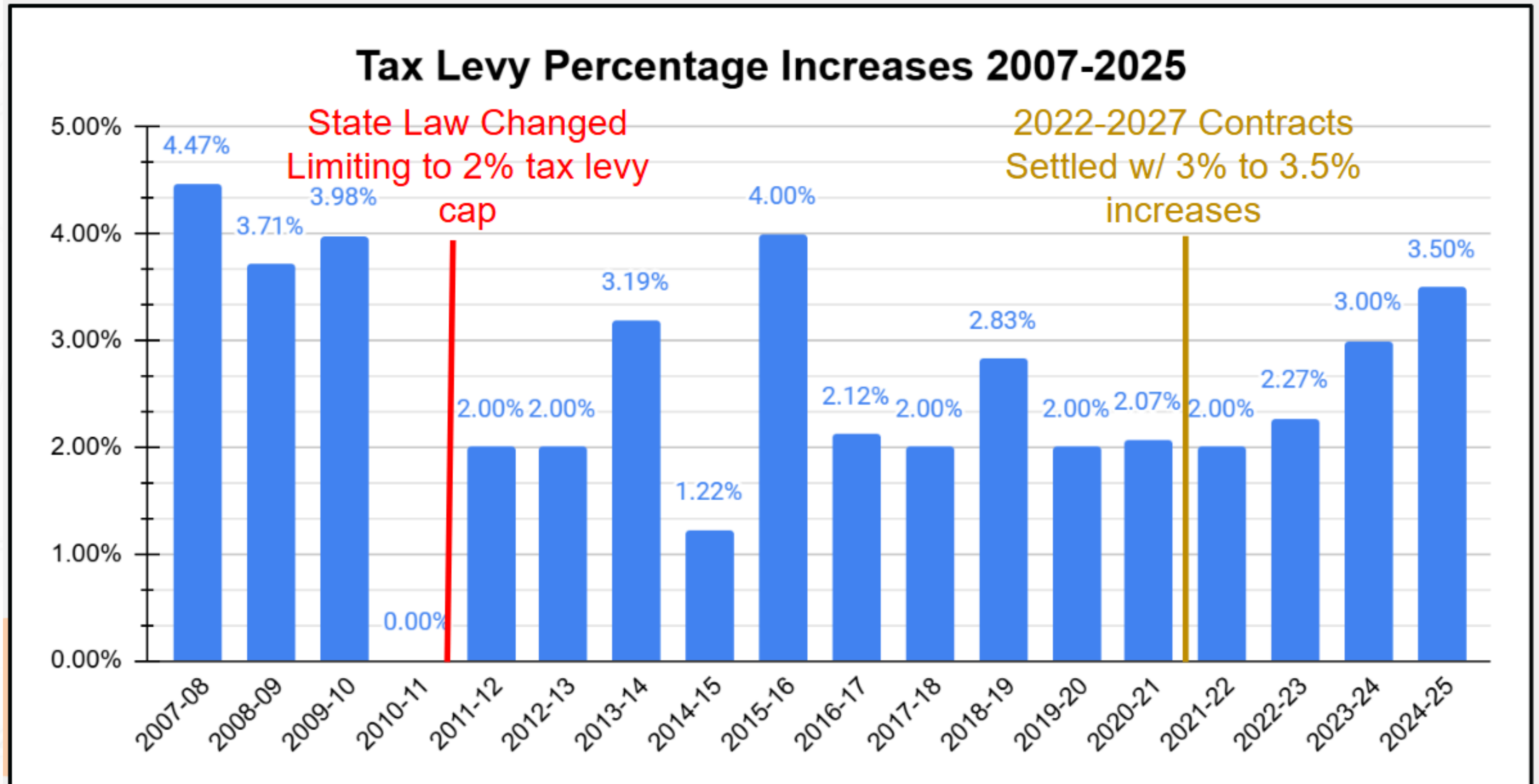
## Changes in State Aid History Per School Year 2018-2025







# TAX LEVY INCREASES - 2007-2025







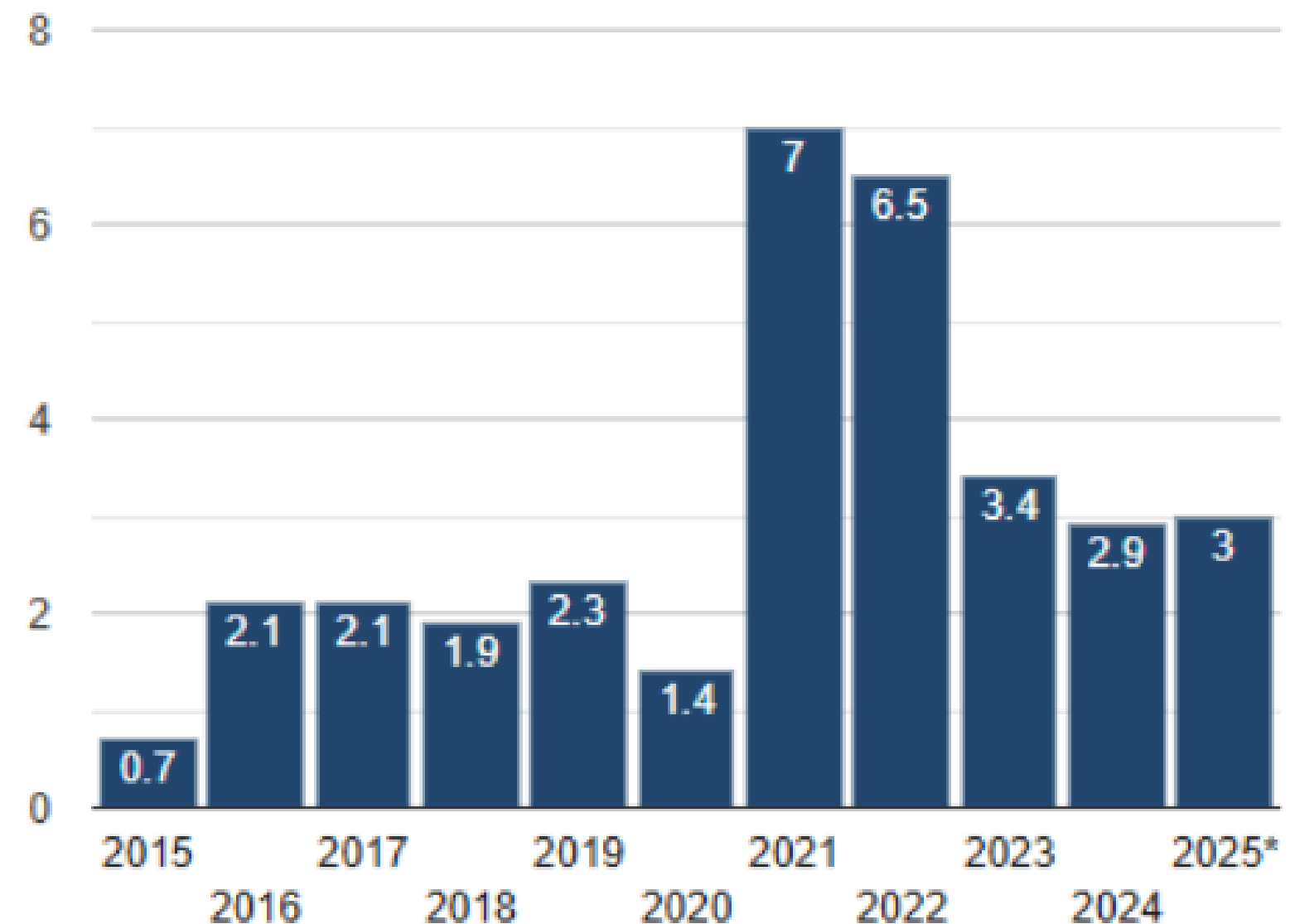
# A LOOK AT INFLATION

In 2014-2015, the total operating budget of \$55,934,124 increased to \$70,434,234 in 2024-2025. According to the U.S. Department of Labor Statistics and the inflation rate calculator, the annual inflation rate for the United States was 3% for the 12 months ending January, compared to the previous rate increase of 2.9%, according to U.S. Labor Department data published on February 12, 2025. Since 2015, the cumulative inflation rate is 33.5%.

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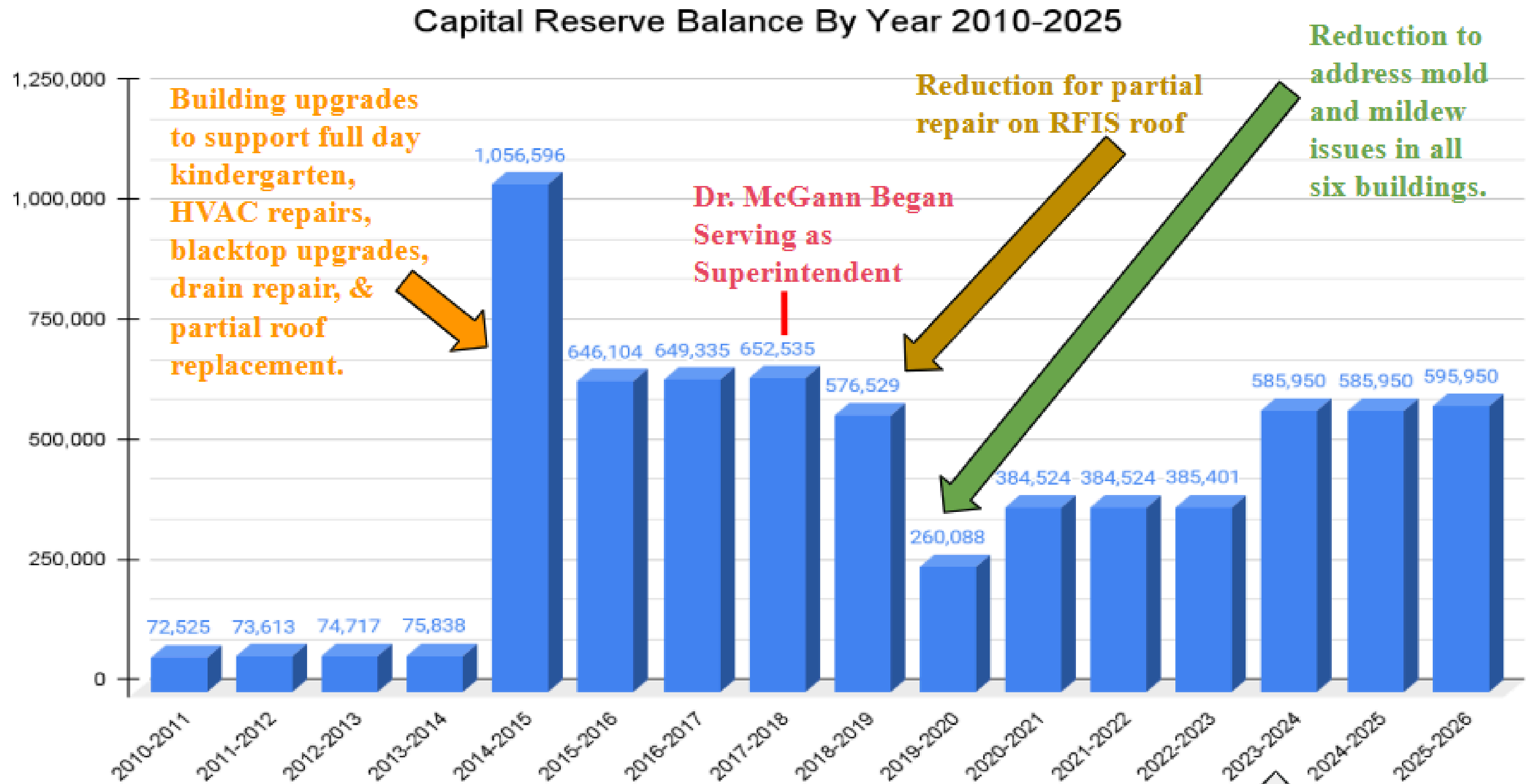
Chart: United States Annual Inflation Rates (2015 to 2025)







# CAPITAL RESERVE BALANCE BY YEAR: 2010-2025



Building back our capital reserve.



# MARCH 11 - SPECIAL ELECTION

The special election is being held in March because the Governor signed into law on September 4, 2024, a bill that authorizes school districts to submit to the voters of the district at a special election permission to raise additional funds for the subsequent school budget year beyond the district's authorized tax levy for that year.

The district is seeking approval from legal voters to raise an additional \$2,388,749 above the tax levy for the 2025–2026 school year as permitted under legal code, P.L. 2024, c.60, N.J.S.A. 18A:7F-5 and -39.

We aim to keep thirty (30) teachers and staff to maintain small class sizes in the elementary schools including teachers to support specialized reading programs, a Class III Security Officer for each school in the District, keep STEM programs alive, and junior varsity sports.



FRSD has an MOA with Raritan Township for 5 officers and with Flemington-Borough for 1 officer. The District currently has 5 full-time officers. The District pays Raritan Township and Flemington-Borough \$65,000 per officer. The officers are employees of Raritan Township and Flemington Borough Police Departments, respectively.





# INTERPRETIVE STATEMENT

The Flemington Raritan Regional School District was impacted significantly by the state funding formula which has reduced school aid by over a million dollars cumulatively over the past 6 years. The district made significant reductions in the 2024-2025 and for the 2025-2026 school year. Despite these reductions, the district again faces a significant shortfall for the 2025-26 budget year.

If the district has to make reductions again to teaching staff and programs, the reductions will impact our students. Therefore, the district is seeking additional funding in the 2025-26 budget to support the maintenance of small class sizes in elementary classrooms of approximately 17 to 24 students per grade level. Class sizes, without the approval of the public question, will be over 25 students in most homerooms in grades K through 8.

Approval of the question will support evidence-based reading instruction, and supplemental academic programs such as gifted and talented programs and courses in STEM (science, technology, engineering, and mathematics). The question approval will also fund safety and security personnel, specifically Class III Officers in each school. After-school programming, which includes extracurricular sports, will be affected without the approval of the public question.

Approval of this public question will result in a permanent increase in the district's tax levy.







# 6% TAX LEVY INCREASE VS. BUDGET SPENDING

Even if the special question passes, the 6% increase in the tax levy still doesn't balance the scale. More cuts to instructional tools and personnel will be necessary.

**\$3,583,124**  
**6% Tax Levy Budget Increase**



**\$5,018,528**  
**Contract Salaries  
State-Required Benefits  
Operations & Maintenance**



The requested tax increase is 6%, separate from the school funding portion. The Governor's budget address is February 25th.



# TAX IMPACT OF SPECIAL ELECTION

## Flemington Borough

	2024-2025	Proposed 2025-2026
		6%
Average Assessed Home	\$400,000	\$400,000
Per \$100	\$3,948	\$4,013
Annual Tax Increase		\$65

These amounts are estimated using 2024 ratables and tax rate, 2025 information is not yet available

## Raritan Township

	2024-2025	Proposed 2025-2026
		6%
Average Assessed Home	\$600,000	\$600,000
Per \$100	\$8,069	\$8,455
Annual Tax Increase		\$386

These amounts are estimated using 2024 ratables and tax rate, 2025 information is not yet available



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# PER PUPIL SPENDING

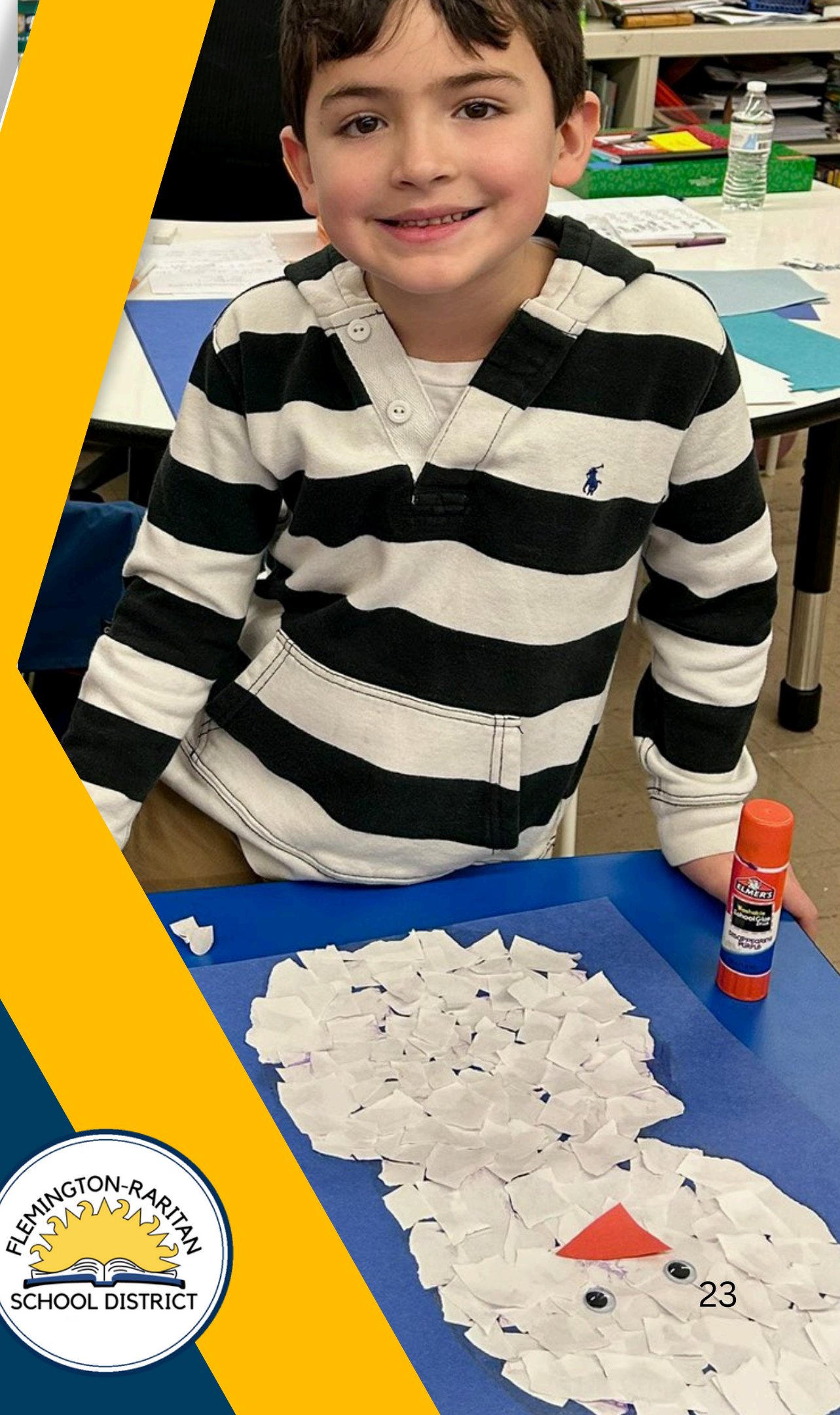
Our latest per pupil spending is the lowest for a K-8 district in Hunterdon County. We are spending less than our surrounding schools to educate our students.

Hunterdon Central	\$24,653
Clinton Twp.	\$24,553
Readington	\$24,497
East Amwell	\$23,510
Delaware	\$22,955
Kingwood	\$22,005

**Flemington-Raritan \$19,310**

FRSD is still spending the lowest amount per pupil compared to neighboring districts. The only one that has had a lower spending growth rate over that time is Lebanon, driven partially by the fact their PP spending was so much higher than FRSD's initially.

**If FRSD has a 'spending problem' unique to this district, why would it be repeated in every neighboring district?**





# 2025-2026 BUDGET PROCESS

Balancing the budget is a complex task and fiscal choices are often difficult. Every decision can impact the way we deliver instruction to our 3,300 students in PreK through Grade 8. As a school district is forced to manage a budget through deficits, there are often no solutions, only tradeoffs.

Budget Process: October through May:

- Planning in the Superintendent, Business Office, School Offices, and all departments.
- Board Committee meetings.
- Budget meetings with curriculum departments.
- Budget Meetings with Building Principals and District Administrators.
- Preliminary budget public meeting.
- Final budget public meeting.





# FACTORS THAT INFLUENCE BUDGET DECISIONS

Last year, the cost of contracted salary increases combined with increased health care costs, alone exceeded the 2% cap. Additionally, the cost of supplies, utilities, general services, facility maintenance, transportation, and special education tuition costs have skyrocketed. Federal funding through the Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief (ESSER) Funding from the pandemic that helped pay for many items has ended.



**MANDATED VS  
NON-MANDATED  
EXPENSES**



**FACILITY  
MAINTENANCE  
PRIORITIES**



**RESERVE ACCOUNT  
BALANCES**



**EDUCATIONAL  
PRIORITIES**



**STAFFING NEEDS**



# BUDGET: FINANCIAL STRAIN REASONS

- Federal funding ended;
- The S2 Funding Formula;
- A lack of surplus funds;
- An increase in self-insurance costs services. and claims;
- An increase in costs due to rising costs of school-based security officers & other school security items;
- The loss of cumulative state funding;
- Rising costs for out-of-district placements for student education;
- Deficit budgeting year over year;
- Rising costs such as energy and transportation; and
- State Mandated expenses





# TRANSPORTATION

Transportation of students from Point A to Point B has increased. It is more expensive to transport students than it was ten or even five years ago. Costs have increased for a multitude of reasons, including school bus driver shortages. Janine Byrnes, the President of the School Transportation Services of New Jersey, answered questions about increasing costs of transportation services and school bus driver shortages in a winter, 2024 article. New Jersey Legislation N.J.A.C 6A:27, Student Transportation requires a Board of Education to provide coordinated transportation services. Transportation of students requires that District boards of education that receive State aid for preschool programs according to N.J.S.A. 18A:7F-54 shall also provide transportation to preschool students who live remote from their school of attendance. In Flemington-Raritan Regional School District, the District works expeditiously to keep transportation costs low using parent waivers of transportation for students. The District reduces transportation costs by using data from parents who enroll their children in preschool and choose to waive transportation services.

FRSD and Hunterdon Central have worked together over decades to provide transportation for students in our combined districts by pooling resources and coordinating services. Last school year, the Hunterdon Central Board decided to terminate the existing Joint Transportation Agreement between our districts, effective at the end of this year. However, the current leadership from our respective districts has agreed to explore a new arrangement that would continue our longstanding cooperation to provide student transportation into the 2025-2026 school year and beyond. Both school boards are committed to ensuring that all eligible students receive the transportation they deserve at the lowest possible cost to the taxpayers. To that end, we anticipate that a new proposed agreement between Flemington-Raritan and Hunterdon Central will be presented to both Boards of Education in the very near future. We will share additional details regarding the new agreement once they are available, and we look forward to continuing our successful partnership with our partner district for years to come.







In 2023–2024, the District applied and received its first preschool expansion award funding.

# PRESCHOOL EXPANSION



**+\$1,228,968**

**Year 1: 2023-2024**

The District received a total amount of \$1,228,968 for preschool expansion funding. However, the District's requirement to fund preschool is \$943,482 for a total budgeted amount of \$2,172,450.

**+\$2,219,912**

**Year 2: 2024-2025**

The District received a total amount of \$2,219,912 for preschool expansion funding. However, the District's requirement to fund preschool is \$1,080,658 for a total budgeted amount of \$3,300,570.

Preschool award funding pays for preschool teacher salaries, teacher assistants, new playground, curriculum, and other costs. It is a WIN for the District.

Special Education law requires each district to provide a system of free, appropriate special education and related services to students with disabilities ages three through 21. The District has 138 preschool students, 84 of these children are special education three and four-year-old students and are required by the District to receive free, appropriate special education and related services. The District is required to provide free preschool to any student who will have attained the age of three years on or before October 1.





# Q & A

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## THE PROCESS FOR Q&A







# PLEASE VOTE



**TUESDAY  
MARCH 11, 2025**

**POLLS OPEN  
6 AM – 8 PM**

**SCAN FOR MORE  
BUDGET INFO**

