

Darien Public Schools - Administrative Offices

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January 8, 2021

Dear Families and Staff,

Good afternoon everyone.

Return to In Person & Hybrid Learning

As you are aware, the District transitioned to remote learning for five days this week. Pursuant to yesterday's meeting with public health officials, this communication is confirmation of the announcement made at last night's Board of Education (BOE) meeting that the District will resume in-person learning for students in the elementary schools and hybrid learning for secondary students in MMS and DHS on Monday, January 11, 2021. Specialized Instructional Programs (DLC, ALC, and EXCEL) will resume the in-person schedule that was in place prior to remote learning.

We look forward to welcoming back our students on Monday. Thank you for your continued partnership and understanding as we continue to navigate this pandemic and respond to the latest information.

Superintendent's 2021-2022 (FY22) Budget

The Superintendent's FY22 Budget was presented last night at the Board of Education Meeting. The proposed budget of \$106,587,389 represents an increase of 3.99% above the 2020-2021 budget. The budget is a spending plan that is responsive to the economic climate; Board of Education goals; strategic planning priorities; enrollment projections; the COVID environment; and contractual obligations.

Developing the budget for the FY22 school year has been challenging as the major costs driving the increase are fixed and contractual costs. Specifically, the primary drivers of the budget are the following:

- salaries, health & benefits (2.33%);
- enrollment (0.24%);
- non personnel contractual (0.27%);
- Special Education (0.52%);
- COVID-19 & Budget Control (0.44%);
- building conditions survey (0.20%);and,
- net operating/equipment adjustments (0.27%).

On their own, these drivers exceed 3.99%. Realizing a budget increase of 3.99% has only been possible through line item savings and the reallocation and reduction in staff positions. . Despite the challenges, this budget reflects a spending plan that continues to support district initiatives as well as maintaining the excellent programs that our students deserve and the community has come to expect.

Optimal class sizes are maintained across all schools through the addition of a class section of kindergarten at Holmes Elementary School and a class section of third grade and fifth grade at Ox Ridge Elementary School. The high school staffing includes +2.0FTE teachers for increased enrollment.

Other modest educational and program improvements include the continued support of the 1:1 technology initiative with digital devices for students in grades K-2 and 9; software, network and wireless technology infrastructure upgrades for student learning; a technology technician, a buildings' condition survey; increased STEM opportunities for high school students, support for social and emotional learning; new diversity programs (Open Choice & Teacher in Residence Programs); and, the restructuring of the elementary Special Education & Support Services Facilitator positions.

The major capital projects planned for the 2021-2022 school year are resurfacing the high school gymnasium; new carpet in the high school and middle school libraries, repaving at MMS, Hindley, Tokeneke and Central Office, design work for an HVAC system at Holmes and replacement of some air conditioning units at Middlesex Middle School; the installation of new emergency lighting at Holmes, Hindley and Royle Elementary Schools; and, the installation of a new roof at Royle Elementary School. The recommendations of the architectural study to address the removal of the portables throughout the district is presently before the Board of Education. We are excited that site work has commenced at the new Ox Ridge Elementary School.

The Darien community has long supported and invested in its schools and takes pride in the school system and the achievements of its students. Darien's commitment to quality education resonates through the strong community support for past town budgets. It was particularly evident this year as we experienced additional COVID related expenses to support the health and safety of our students and staff.

In these challenging times, it is critical that the town continues to protect its educational program and investment. A premier school system directly benefits our taxpayers by maintaining property values and making Darien a desirable town for families and students. The FY22 proposed budget represents the collective efforts of the administration to deliver the highest quality education possible to all Darien students, at the lowest possible cost to the taxpayer and with the biggest return on their investment

You can follow the budget process by reading the [budget materials](#) and by viewing and/or participating in any of the upcoming BOE meetings, the first of which is tomorrow, [Saturday, January 9](#). The schedule of budget meetings can be accessed on the District [website](#).

Enjoy the weekend ,

Sincerely,



Dr. Alan Addley, Ed.D