

**April 6, 2023 - Budget Update**

Dear Faculty, Staff, Parents, and Community Members,

There are many great things going on at the NPCSD.

I would like to congratulate the cast and crew of the Broadway musical Footloose which was performed at school a couple of weeks ago



I would also like to congratulate the 61 new members of the National Honor Society who were inducted into NHS at a beautiful ceremony held on March 27th.



Last week the HS music department organized a very successful “Jazz Cabaret” that was held in the cafeteria and open to the public.



The High School's (HS) International/Latino Heritage Club (formerly Hispanic Heritage and World Cultures Club) hosted a Ramadan celebration for the entire HS community to enjoy.



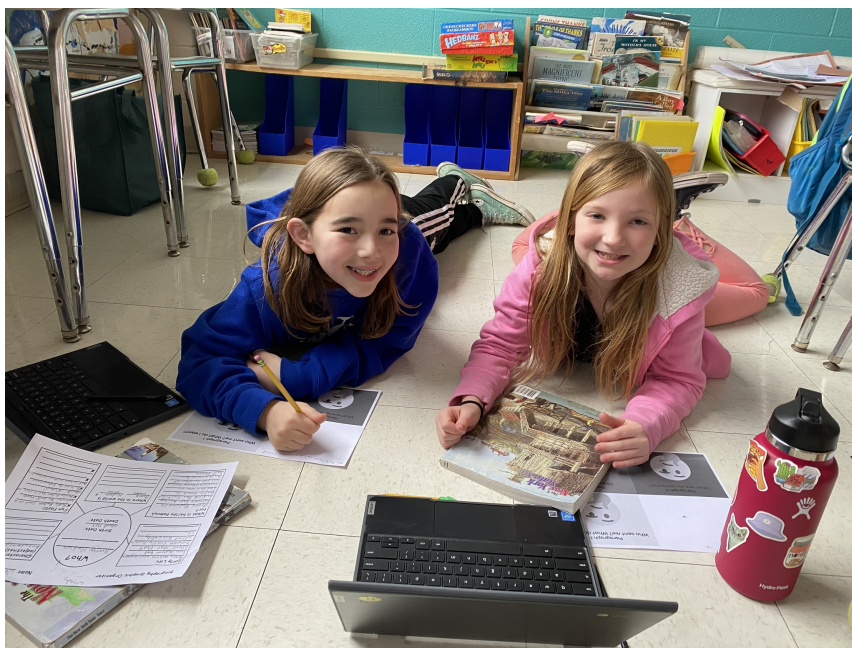
The New Paltz Middle School PTA ran a fun St. Patrick's Day event for the students and they raised over \$1400 to help make school field trips possible.



The Pre-K students put on a puppet show for family and friends to watch.



Lenape Elementary students have been researching local explorers such as Henry Hudson and Samuel D. Champlain in Ms. Maley's 4th grade class.



While we are proud of all that we accomplish at NPCSD, we realize that it does not happen without the hard work of dedicated faculty, staff, parents, and students. We also could not do it without the financial support of our community.

**This brings us to our main topic at hand, the 2023-2024 NPCSD budget.**

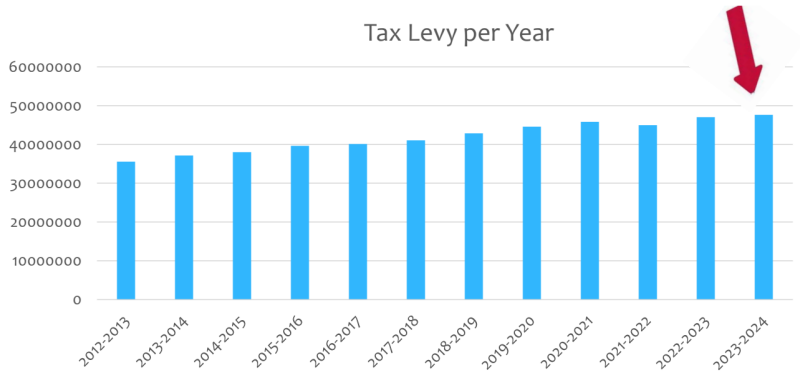
Creating a school budget for the 2023-2024 school year has been very difficult. However, I am pleased to announce that at the final budget meeting on March 29th, the NPCSD School Board adopted a proposed budget of \$71,428,660. This constitutes a 3.5 % increase in spending over the \$68,999,093 from 2022-2023.

The reason this has been such a difficult process is that our increase in expenses has been accompanied by a much lower tax cap, as required by the New York State tax cap formula

	2022-2023	2023-2024	Difference
NYS Tax Cap	4.57 %	1.23 %	(3.24 %)
Real Property Tax Levy	\$47,041,024	\$47,620,238	\$579,214
Projected State Aid	\$18,313,669	\$20,214,222	\$1,900,553
Miscellaneous	\$1,744,400	\$1,694,200	(\$50,200)
Projected Total Revenue	\$67,099,093	\$69,528,660	\$2,429,567
Budgeted Expenses	\$68,999,093	\$71,428,660	\$2,429,567
Fund Balance Used to Balance the Budget	\$1,900,000	\$1,900,000	0

This is good news for our tax payers as the tax levy will rise only a small amount over last year: This levy also includes the purchase of 5 buses and \$100,000 set aside for a mini-capital project which is earmarked for work to be done to address the structural status of the old district office on Main St.

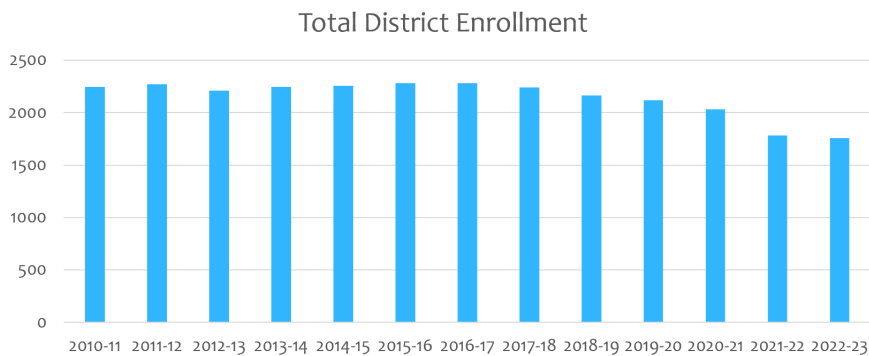
# New Paltz Central School District Tax Levy Trends



However, having our tax cap drop from 4.57 % in 2022-2023 to 1.23 % in 2023-2024 caused the board to have to make some tough decisions. In order to create a responsible budget that preserved programs, we needed to closely evaluate all of our needs and all of our spending. This included an analysis of our spending of federal grant monies that will be running out in September 2024.

One fact that we could not ignore was that our population of students has been declining for the past few years but our staffing levels have stayed the same.

# District Enrollment by Year



**This seems like a good time to admit that one of our slides in our March 29th budget presentation was wrong. We mistakenly stated that faculty staffing had increased significantly over the last few years. This was wrong. In fact, faculty and administrative staffing have remained mostly consistent over the past few years.**

In 2016-2017 we had 2282 students enrolled in the district. During the current school year we have only 1757 students enrolled in the district. We expect this level to drop down closer to 1700 in the 2023-2024 school year. Losing over 500 students in six years is disturbing, but it is consistent with trends other schools in our area and in the state are experiencing.

Throughout the budget process, the school board looked closely at all expenses, including staffing. The board sought community input at four separate board meetings and via email. The community provided a great deal of feedback to the board and the board was appreciative of their advice. All advice was fully considered, and in some cases, positions being considered for reduction (including three social workers and a foreign language position) were reinstated in response to public comment and the needs of the district. An administrative cut, not previously being considered by the board, was approved based on feedback from the community and the need to reduce more expenses.

In order to get the budget down to \$71,428,660, a 3.5 % increase in spending over the \$68,999,093 from 2022-2023, several cuts had to be made. While small reductions were made in several budget codes, the most significant changes are as follows:

## Cost Saving Reductions

- \* BOCES Services \$436,000
- \* Consultants/Contractual/Supplies \$110,000
- \* Staff Development \$170,400
- \* Social Emotional Support \$30,000
- \* Substitutes, Enrichment, Misc. \$127,000
- \* 0.6 SEL Coordinator \$90,673
- \* Retiring HS Teacher Position \$154,000
- \* Retiring HS Teacher Position \$154,000
- \* 4.0 Special Ed Teachers \$400,000
- \* 2.0 Aides \$81,000
- \* Vacant Positions Never Filled \$200,000
- \* 4.0 Elementary Teachers \$422,000
- \* 1.0 Administrator \$160,000

**Total Reductions:        \$2,535,073**

In addition to these savings, several other expenses/positions were kept in the federal grant or they were moved to the federal grant. These include:

## Items in the Federal Grant (for one more year)

- \* 3 social workers
- \* 1 foreign language teacher
- \* 1 director of elementary instruction
- \* 1 pre-k teacher and 1 aide
- \* Astor services
- \* Elementary enrichment summer school
- \* Floating nurse
- \* Drug and alcohol counselor

It is important to realize that next year will be a difficult budget year as well. Funding for the items above will be gone and the school board will have tough choices to make as they decide whether these items should be eliminated or moved to the general fund.

The reductions made by the school board were particularly difficult because some impact current employees of the school district. While these reductions are very unfortunate for those losing their jobs, they were fiscally responsible moves because enrollment has dropped to a level where the district will not lose programs or experience significantly larger class sizes as a result of the reductions. For example, many people expressed concern that four elementary positions are being cut. This means that 1 section each of 1st, 2nd, 3rd, and 5th grade will be eliminated based on the following data:



# Elementary Class Sizes

Grade	# of students 2022-23	Number of sections 2022-23	Average Class size in 2022-23	Estimate d# of students 2023-24	Recommended Number of sections 2023-24	Average Class size in 2023-24
Kindergarten	85	5	17.0	90	5	18.0
1st Grade	98	6	16.3	85	5	17.0
2nd Grade	107	6	17.8	98	5	19.6
3rd Grade	126	7	18.0	107	6	17.8
4th Grade	103	6	17.2	126	6	21.0
5th Grade	126	6	21.0	103	5	20.6
6th Grade	132	6	22.0	130	6	21.7

If these reductions were not made, this would be the impact on class sizes:

If Elementary reductions are **not** made:

- \* 1<sup>st</sup> Grade class size will average 14.2 instead of 17.0
- \* 2<sup>nd</sup> Grade class sizes will average 16.3 instead of 19.6
- \* 3<sup>rd</sup> Grade class sizes will average 15.2 instead of 17.8
- \* 5<sup>th</sup> Grade class sizes will average 17.2 instead of 20.6

The situation is very similar for the four special education teacher positions being eliminated. An analysis of the student population and their special education needs indicates that fewer

sections of particular classes will be needed. It is true that special education needs can be hard to predict, however, it is always wise to use data to inform decisions. In this case, the data indicates that all student IEPs can be met with a reduced special education staff.

The school board and I would like to thank all of the community members who gave input on the budget. We also appreciate the hard work of district employees, including Assistant Superintendent for Business Deb Kosinski, and their ability to “think outside of the box” as many cost saving options were explored.

It is my belief, and the belief of the school board, that the \$71,428,660 budget being brought to you is fiscally responsible. We are glad that it also preserves all programs. A significant amount of “belt tightening” occurred to get to \$71,428,660 and we are pleased that it was not necessary to exceed the NYS tax cap of 1.23 %.

I hope that I have given you a good overview of the budget and that I have answered some of your questions. More information will be coming out about the budget hearing on May 3rd and the budget vote on May 16th (which will be held in the high school gymnasium from 7 am until 9 pm).

Please feel free to reach out to me if you have any questions or comments. Thank you for your commitment to the New Paltz Central School District.

Regards,

Stephen Gratto - Superintendent