

MONTCLAIR PUBLIC SCHOOLS

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Superintendent of Schools

Jonathan Ponds, Ed.D.

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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MONTCLAIR SCHOOLS SUPERINTENDENT JONATHAN PONDS CALLS 2024-25 BUDGET PLAN A WIN FOR ALL

March 19, 2024 (Montclair, NJ)—The 2024-25 Montclair Schools tentative budget was unanimously approved by the Board of Education (Board) last night. The budget is now sent to the County for approval before it makes its way back to the District for final adoption. The approximate \$147 million dollar operating budget would **maintain all current staffing and programs** at Montclair’s 11 public schools while allowing the District to:

- Stay within the 2% tax levy increase
- Save \$266 for taxpayers on average homes assessed at \$631,882 due to interest earnings (Debt service tax levy of ZERO for bond referendum)
- Hire new teachers to fill vacancies
- Recruit and retain excellent educators
- Fund technology upgrades and maintain our 1:1 initiative
- Fund assessment tools, such as IXL and Acadience, allowing teachers to use data to identify student needs and address them individually
- Fund mentoring and tutoring programs to ensure our students receive support

In addition to **no staff cuts** and a tax levy cap at 2%, the District received \$1.46 million dollars in debt service aid, and an increase in State Aid of 6.40% for a total of \$9.3 million, and is making no withdrawals from capital or maintenance reserve. “This is a balanced budget that stabilizes the District and creates a positive forward path for years to come,” said Superintendent Jonathan Ponds.

Business Administrator Christina Hunt began work on this budget in October conducting school and department meetings. The formal process continued through January 1, where updates were made to salary guides and a full data collection reviewed. Even though ESSR and other federal funding decreased due to the end of COVID relief, the District was able to balance the budget in a cost effective manner. Two preliminary budget presentations were given to the Board, one on January 4 and one on March 6. All presentations are housed on the District [website](#).

This work was held simultaneously with strategic planning. Hunt praised the budget as one that would help the District achieve the goals laid out in its five-year Strategic Plan. “This five-year plan including the action portion is expected to be presented at the April 17 Board meeting and reflects a plan designed after extensive input from community members,” said Hunt. Ponds and Hunt agreed that having strong community engagement in developing a strategic plan was instrumental in formulating a budget that was both fiscally and educationally sound.

“This budget accomplishes the goals of meeting priorities for improving instruction and also maintains extracurriculars and athletic programs that make our district so special,” said Ponds. Ponds highlighted that due to the increase in state aid, the District will be able to allot \$1 million dollars toward executive coaching which will align with Strategic Plan objectives of providing for staff success. “If this budget is approved by the County, it is a win for our families, educators and residents.”

The Board is scheduled to vote on a final budget adoption May 13. Prior to the final adoption, the District will hold a public hearing May 3. To learn more about the 2024-25 budget, see our [budget page](#) on the website.

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