



LACEY TOWNSHIP SCHOOL DISTRICT

A Tradition Of Pride · A Tradition Of Excellence

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SUPERINTENDENT OF SCHOOLS

February 29, 2024

To the Lacey Township School District Staff, Students, Families, and Community:

In my communication dated February 23, 2024, I mentioned that we were waiting for Governor Phil Murphy to deliver his Fiscal Year 2025 Budget Address. This happened this past Tuesday, February 27, 2024. I also mentioned that shortly thereafter, districts across the state, including Lacey, would learn about their state aid figures.

Today, we were shocked to learn that **instead of losing an anticipated \$1.2 million in state aid** for next year, we are instead losing a **devastating \$3.2 million dollars**. The impact of this state aid reduction cannot be understated. [Here's a link to the Fiscal Year 2025 K-12 State School Aid, District Details spreadsheet.](#) **Our students will most definitely be impacted by this loss.**

We feel these determinations are extremely unfair and allow no procedural method for us to meet our financial obligations to provide a thorough and efficient education. With the permitted tax levy increases maximized for the 2024-2025 school budget and in order to be within the 2% state-imposed cap, we cannot make up the millions of dollars lost to our district. With the final year of the S-2 reduction factored in, the Lacey Township School District has lost over \$13.7 million dollars over the last seven years. Once again, we are forced to make drastic reductions to our operating budget that will be painful and widespread.

The 2024-2025 school budget includes the following items that rise above the 2% state-imposed cap: contractual responsibilities, increased insurance premiums, tuition increases outside of our local control, transportation cost increases, price increases due to inflation, and regular market cost increases for just about everything. Prior to today's release of state aid figures, reductions amounting to \$7 million have already been made to next year's budget, including:

- Teacher reductions, which will drive classes into the upper 30s across all grades.
- Administrator Reductions, which will keep Lacey Township's cost per pupil ranking in the bottom 4% of the state.
- Support Staff reductions, which will alter services that students currently receive, such as one-to-one services for special needs students.
- Reductions to many areas of athletics.
- Reductions to co-curricular budgets which will reduce the opportunities for students to stay after school.
- Reductions to academic supports for students who need extra help.

- Elimination of educationally valuable field trips.
- Reduction of elective class offerings at the middle and high schools.

I write to you today to provide you with this new information and I will continue to do so as we get closer to finalizing the budget. We are still in the process of analyzing every single detail in order to make very difficult decisions on how to present a balanced budget while exploring all avenues for emergent relief.

What We Have Done So Far...and What You Can Do to Help

- We formed a district-wide S-2 Advocacy Committee.
- We started a letter writing campaign: ***S2 Pathway to Advocacy - Save Our Schools!*** (see our [website](#) for more information).
- District Leadership members testified at a Senate Budget Education Committee Hearing to support Senate Bill 2434.
- District Leadership members met with NJ State Senator Carmen Amato, Members of the 9th Legislative District, and the Lacey Township Committee.

What Can You Do?

- You can continue to advocate for our students by contacting our legislators and explaining how these cuts will impact your children. See the links below.
 - [Click on link for an explanatory video on how to contact your legislator](#)
 - [Click on this link to easily send your legislator your concerns](#)

How Can You Stay Informed?

There is one upcoming Board of Education meeting and a separate meeting that will address the 2024-2025 Budget:

- **March 20:** The annual introduction of the Tentative Budget will take place during the regularly scheduled Board Meeting, which begins at 7:00 pm in the Lecture Hall at Lacey Township High School.
- **April 30:** The Public Hearing on the Proposed Budget will take place during a special meeting, which begins at 6:00 pm in the Lecture Hall at Lacey Township High School.

We will continue to keep you updated as we continue to work on finalizing the budget. More importantly, we will continue to seek relief from these devastating reductions and seek to restore the state aid that has been lost. We have an amazing school community. We are committed to keeping it that way. Thank you for your continued support.

Sincerely,
Vanessa R. Pereira, Ph.D
Superintendent of Schools