



# Hastings Happenings

SPRING 2021 SPECIAL BUDGET EDITION

## A MESSAGE FROM THE BOARD OF EDUCATION

*Dear Hastings Residents,*

This school year has been like none other in history. However atypical this year, one thing is abundantly clear: Hastings schools are successful because of the energy and focus of all who work on behalf of our students and all who live here. The proposal for the 2021-22 budget is detailed in this newsletter. It reflects the collaborative work of our building principals, administrators, our business official, and board trustees who are recommending a modest increase to maintain our current staffing, programs, and operations and restore some program loss that occurred due to the State aid cuts we contended with in the 2020-21 school year.

We have been watching the financial landscape closely, as the state aid cuts that we endured last year made us acutely aware of aid reliability. Fortunately, the advocacy of community members, Dr. Valerie Henning-Piedmonte, Ms. Maureen Caraballo, and board trustees, along with advocacy state-wide, has ensured the restoration of our state aid as revenue to our budget. The board is acting conservatively by keeping current staff and programs, restoring a key science faculty position that was cut in the 2019-20 school year, and utilizing the aid restoration to replenish our reserves that had been tapped for essential expenditures such as increased nursing, building cleaning, technology and human resources in this year of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Please spend time reviewing the information enclosed in this newsletter. The full budget is available on our website: [www.hohschools.org](http://www.hohschools.org). Please be in touch if you have questions—board trustees and the Superintendent are always available and our contact information can be found on the back page of this newsletter.

## BUDGET HIGHLIGHTS

**Proposed Budget:**

**\$52,823,911**

**\$21.69 per \$1,000**

**Assessed Value Change  
from Prior Year: \$0.31**

**Budget-to-Budget Increase: 2.25%**

**Proposed Tax Rate Change: 1.45%**

Voting for the budget will take place at the Cochran Gym at Hastings High School on Tuesday, May 18th. If you would like to vote by absentee ballot, please contact the District Clerk at 914-478-6206 or at [delabarreram@hohschools.org](mailto:delabarreram@hohschools.org).

Although COVID-19 has had a significant impact on all aspects of teaching, learning, and operations in our school district, we are grateful that the community has stood strong in support of teachers, administrators, and our students. We thank each of you for your support of our school district. We particularly thank Dr. Henning-Piedmonte, Ms. Caraballo, Ms. Melissa Szymanski, our principals and assistant principals, our round-the-clock facilities department, our nurses, our administrative support, and of course, our teachers, who each day continue to reach each of our learners and inspire their futures.

Sincerely,

*Board of Education Trustees*

## NYS STAR PROGRAM

The New York State School Tax Relief Program (STAR) provides homeowners with two types of exemptions that reduce their school tax bills. The Basic STAR exemption is available for owner-occupied primary residences for those with incomes below \$500,000 for STAR credit (\$250,000 or less for the STAR exemption). An Enhanced STAR exemption is available for those 65 or older, with incomes of \$90,550 for 2021 benefits, or \$88,050 or less for 2020. Annual applications are required for the Enhanced STAR. A taxpayer who is eligible for the Enhanced STAR program may designate an adult third-party to receive an annual notice from the Town of Greenburgh regarding the filing deadline. For some taxpayers this credit will be received as part of the state tax return.

Forms can be found online at [www.tax.ny.gov/forms/orpts/star.htm](http://www.tax.ny.gov/forms/orpts/star.htm) or by calling the Assessor's Office at (914) 993-1520.

For Village homeowners, the 2020-2021 Basic and Enhanced STAR exemptions should be about \$1,708 and \$3,973 respectively.

# BUDGET OVERVIEW

## HASTINGS-ON-HUDSON UNION FREE SCHOOL DISTRICT PROPOSED 2021/22 BUDGET

APPROPRIATIONS	ADOPTED BUDGET 2020/21	PROPOSED BUDGET 2021/22	BUDGET CHANGE
General Support	\$4,643,750	\$4,820,931	\$177,181
Instruction	\$32,157,992	\$32,853,290	\$695,298
Pupil Transportation	\$1,463,294	\$1,372,700	(-\$90,594)
Undistributed	\$13,395,123	\$13,776,990	\$381,867
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$51,660,159</b>	<b>\$52,823,911</b>	<b>\$1,163,752</b>
% BUDGET CHANGE			2.25%

REVENUES	ADOPTED BUDGET 2020/21	PROPOSED BUDGET 2021/22	BUDGET CHANGE
State Aid	\$4,433,075	\$5,708,311	\$1,275,236
Miscellaneous Receipts	\$1,190,000	\$1,275,000	\$85,000
Appropriated Balance	\$1,680,000	\$534,843	(-\$1,145,157)
Retirement Reserve	\$500,000	\$650,000	\$150,000
Reserve for Tax Certiorari	\$0	\$100,000	\$100,000
Property Taxes	\$43,857,084	\$44,555,757	\$698,673
<b>Total Receipts</b>	<b>\$51,660,159</b>	<b>\$52,823,911</b>	<b>\$1,163,752</b>
% TAX LEVY CHANGE			1.59%
Assessed Valuation	\$2,050,664,459	\$2,054,452,140*	\$3,787,681
Tax Rate	\$21.38	\$21.69	\$0.31
Tax Rate Change			1.45%

\*Assessed valuation is subject to change.

### BASIC STAR EXEMPTION IMPACT

2021-2022  
Estimated Basic  
STAR Savings  
**\$1,708**

### VOTING

**Tuesday , May 18  
7 a.m. to 9 p.m.  
Cochran Gymnasium, HHS**

In order to vote, you must be:

- A citizen of the United States.
- 18 years old as of May 18, 2021.
- A resident of the District for 30 days prior to May 18, 2021.
- Previously registered or have voted in either a School Election or a General Election held since 2016, or have registered to vote on Wednesday, May 12, 2021 in the High School Lobby.

### ABSENTEE BALLOTS

To request an absentee ballot please contact the District Clerk, Melissa DeLaBarrera at 914-478-6206 or email [delabarreram@hohschools.org](mailto:delabarreram@hohschools.org).

Absentee ballots must be returned to the District Clerk no later than 5:00 PM on May 18, 2021.

# WHAT YOU WILL SEE ON THE BALLOT

## PROPOSITION I

YES | NO

Shall the Board of Education of the Hastings-on-Hudson Union Free School District, Town of Greenburgh, NY, be authorized to expend the sums set forth in the 2021-2022 Annual Budget in the total amount of \$52,823,911 and to levy the necessary tax therefore?

## ELECTION OF SCHOOL BOARD MEMBERS

The election of three Board of Education Trustees will take place at the same time as the budget vote. The candidates, in the order in which they will appear on the ballot are:

- Damaris-Lois Yamoah Lang
- Matthew Gordon
- Doreen Bucher
- Steven Goldfinger
- Alexander Dal Piaz



## DEBT SERVICE

- ▶ This category represents the District's long-term financing of capital improvement projects and alterations.
- ▶ Funds are included for the payment of principal and interest of the capital improvement bond authorized by the community in 2014.
- ▶ Also included is the District's lease payment on the Energy Performance Contract.
- ▶ The lease payment is financed by the savings the District received in energy costs.

## INTERFUND TRANSFERS

### Capital Fund

Funds have been appropriated for capital improvement projects and upgrading facilities. The following is a breakdown of projects funded:

**District Wide:** Funds have been appropriated for capital improvement projects and upgrading facilities.

### Projects Funded:

- |   |          |
|---|----------|
| ▶ Cleaning of ductwork, ventilation & exhaust, part 2 | \$30,000 |
| ▶ Classroom doors                                     | \$20,000 |
| ▶ Sidewalks replacement                               | \$50,000 |

---

<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>\$100,000</b>
--------------------	------------------

## SPECIAL AID FUND

Funds for the summer school program for students identified by the Committee on Special Education are allocated in this fund.

The District is responsible for 20% of summer school tuition and busing.

# HASTINGS HIGH SCHOOL

## FIRST RACIAL EQUITY DAY

Hastings High School held its first racial equity day in January, a day designed to provide students with the opportunity to analyze how racial equity affects the world.

In place of the traditional midterm exam week, three of the four scheduled exam days were held as regular instructional days while the fourth day was filled with workshops and discussions examining racial equity and how it shapes the world. Although discussing race and racism is not new in the Hastings-on-Hudson School District, this is the first time it has been scheduled as a full day focused on equity.

"I would call this an expansion of the discussions that we've been having over the years," said Diversity and Inclusion Coordinator Jenice Mateo-Toledo. "Obviously things have changed since we started these conversations, so the way we do things has to change as well."

Students participated in workshops that encouraged them to reflect personally about their own beliefs on race and racial equity. Led by Dr. Yolanda Sealey-Ruiz, associate professor of English and Dr. Detra Price-Dennis, associate professor

of education in the Department of Mathematics, Science, and Technology of Teachers College, Columbia University, the workshops also focused on racial equity in the media and social change.

"The vision for the day included the goals of promoting positive community building across diverse groups, fostering connection across lines of difference, understanding structural inequities, elevating diverse perspectives, and bringing students, administrators, and faculty together as a community," said Assistant Superintendent of Curriculum and Instruction Melissa Syzmanski.

"This is a day of learning for all of us," added Mateo-Toledo. "We really need to have these conversations and I think this is a good way for people to participate and learn."

Designed by a team of administrators, teachers, and community leaders, the racial equity day culminated with keynote speaker, Kevin Richardson, one of the "Exonerated Five," five young black and Latino boys who were wrongfully convicted of sexual assault in a high-profile case dubbed as the "Central Park Jogger Case." Richardson spoke on the

themes of knowing and making use of personal rights, and the importance of perseverance.

"We are grateful to our speakers for helping us to meet these outcomes," he said. "We are committed to inspiring a shift from isolated theoretical social justice, race, and equity conversations to a district-wide movement towards race, equity and social justice practices."

Students were also asked to complete a short survey conducted by Hastings High School graduate Yakira Sameth. Sameth is working with the local organization, Hastings RISE, on matters of racial awareness. The survey was designed to support increased dialogue and foster multiculturalism.

"I think, as a school district and a community, we are not just talking the talk, we are walking the walk," said Mateo-Toledo. "We are doing the things that need to be done and we have an administration that has taken a lead on the issue and showed the importance of this work."

A Racial Equity Learning Day for the middle school was held in March.



# FARRAGUT MIDDLE SCHOOL SPARKS AFFINITY GROUP

The Hastings-on-Hudson school district now has a group designed to ensure that middle school students of color feel seen, heard, empowered and supported.

“It provides a free space where they won’t have to worry about censoring themselves because we share a common identity,” said Jada Dickens, a math teacher at Hillside Elementary School and one of the faculty advisors of the group at Farragut Middle School.

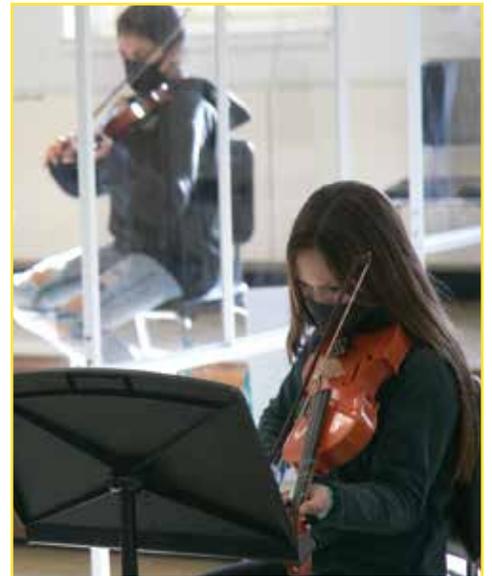
The FMS Affinity Group provides a safe space for students to talk about their experiences and openly share their feelings with others who may share the same beliefs and viewpoint. The group meets virtually, after school. Although there is an affinity group in the high school, Dickens said it is important to provide the same atmosphere for middle school students.

Having participated in an affinity group when she was in high school herself, she wished she had the option earlier.

“It was in middle school that I really needed it,” she said. “By the time they get into high school it’s almost too late for us to have that conversation about who they feel they are as a person.”

“Students often times don’t know where they fit in,” said advisor Raquel Reid-McFarlane, a fifth grade teaching assistant at the middle school. “The whole idea of the group is having a sense of belonging.”

The advisors noted that the group intends to allow middle school students from grades five to eight a place to hold discussions with their peers who may differ in age but share similar identities. The goal of the group is to allow the students the chance to make connections that they may not make in school otherwise. The advisors also act as a bridge between administration and the faculty, allowing students to come



Raquel Reid-McFarlane (left) and Jada Dickens (right) outside of Farragut Middle School.

to them if they ever feel marginalized or uncomfortable. Dickens said that allowing students to have conversations at a younger age may give them more confidence in and out of school.

“It is a place for them to gain tools,” said Dickens. “It’s important to have these conversations and to provide them with support.”

The group began meeting in

January. With students more engaged in conversation about current events and the tumultuous times of the nation, both advisors said that now is the most important time to allow their students’ voices to be heard.

“These kids are affected by what happens in the nation,” said Dickens. “It’s not just high school students; these students know what’s going on as well.”

# HILLSIDE ELEMENTARY SCHOOL CONSTRUCTION PROJECT PROGRESSING

If all goes well, Hillside Elementary School will have more space this time next year.

The Hillside addition project started the week of February 15, in an effort to maximize space at the elementary school as well as provide use of new and redesigned learning spaces. Business official Maureen Caraballo said that the project is not actually on its anticipated schedule – and that is a good thing.

“We think we might be able to get ahead of schedule,” she said. “It is moving along well and we’re really happy the way things are progressing.”

The new addition will include cafeteria/ auditorium space that will support the entire school as well as the community. Administrators at Hillside are already looking forward to utilizing the space for school activities.

“What we recognized is that the increased space is going to create additional possibilities for scheduling and special events for our students,” said

Hillside Elementary School principal Amy Cazes.

For Cazes, the construction is also a chance for the students at Hillside to experience a unique lesson as the project continues.

“This is an opportunity for students to see construction up close, and we’re excited to incorporate the project into our learning in the classroom,” she said.

“We’re very fortunate to provide stellar education for our students while also creating a building for our future.”

Currently, construction crews are performing required work of site preparation, digging, and removal of rock where the future addition will stand. Caraballo hopes that if everything stays on track, students will be welcomed in a new space early next year.

“We anticipate the space to be opened for students in February 2022,” she said. “We’re very excited and looking forward to opening the doors for our students.”



# SCHOOL DISTRICT BUDGET NOTICE

Overall Budget Proposal	Budget Adopted for the 2020-21 School Year	Budget Proposed for the 2021-22 School Year	Contingency Budget for the 2021-2022 School Year
Total Budgeted Amount, Not Including Separate Propositions	\$ 51,660,159	\$52,823,911	\$52,125,238
Increase/Decrease for the 2021-22 School Year		\$1,163,752	\$465,079
Percentage Increase/Decrease in Proposed Budget		2.25 %	0.90%
Change in the Consumer Price Index		1.23%	
A. Proposed Levy to Support the Total Budgeted Amount	\$43,857,084	\$44,555,757	
B. Levy to Support Library Debt, if Applicable			
C. Levy for Non-Excludable Propositions, if Applicable **			
D. Total Tax Cap Reserve Amount Used to Reduce Current Year Levy			
E. Total Proposed School Year Tax Levy (A + B + C - D)	\$43,857,084	\$44,555,757	\$43,857,084
F. Total Permissible Exclusions	\$429,726	\$430,865	
G. School Tax Levy Limit, <u>Excluding</u> Levy for Permissible Exclusions	\$43,478,816	\$44,124,892	
H. Total Proposed School Year Tax Levy, <u>Excluding</u> Levy to Support Library Debt and/or Permissible Exclusions (E – B – F + D)	43,427,358	\$44,124,892	
I. Difference: G – H (Negative Value Requires 60.0% Voter Approval – See Note Below Regarding Separate Propositions) **	\$51,458	\$0	
Administrative Component	\$4,595,703	\$4,797,303	\$4,724,303
Program Component	\$42,650,128	\$43,492,721	\$42,867,048
Capital Component	\$4,414,328	\$4,533,887	\$4,533,887
<b>Reductions in administrative expenditures, program expenditures, equipment, and overtime.</b>			
** List Separate Propositions that are not included in the Total Budgeted Amount: (Tax Levy associated with educational or transportation services propositions are not eligible for exclusion and may affect voter approval requirements)	Description	Amount	

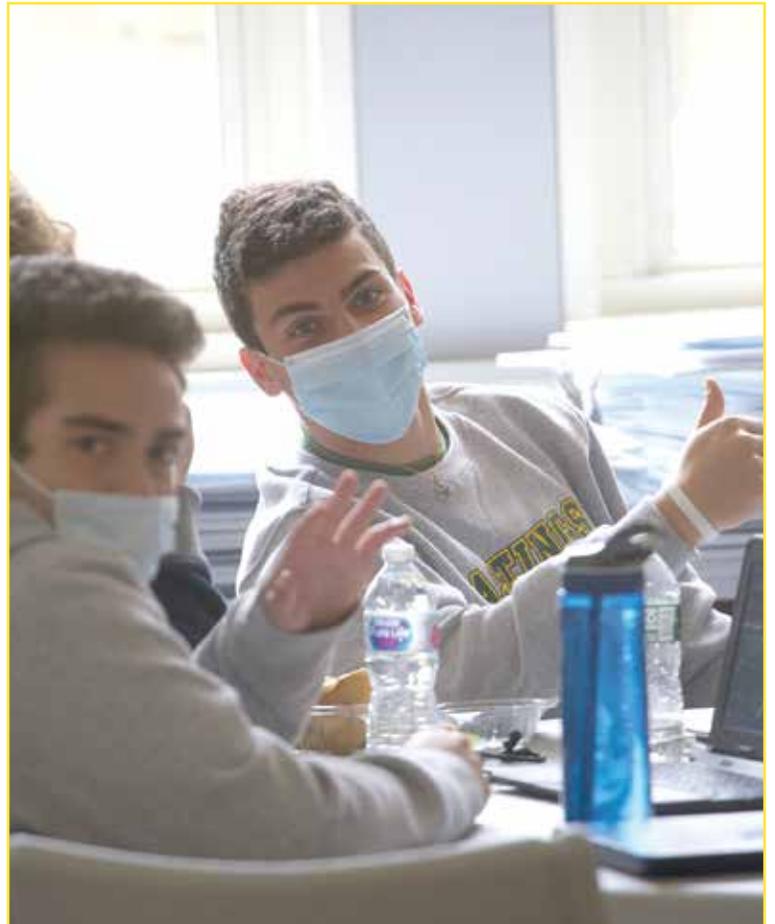
	Under the Budget Proposed for the 2021-22 School Year
Estimated Basic STAR Exemption Savings <sup>1</sup>	\$1,708

The annual budget vote for the fiscal year 2021-22 by the qualified voters of the Hastings on Hudson school district, Westchester County, New York, will be held at Hastings High School in said district on Tuesday, May 18, 2021 between the hours of 7:00am and 9:00pm, prevailing time in the Hastings High School Cochran Gym, at which time the polls will be opened to vote by voting ballot or machine.

1. The basic school tax relief (STAR) exemption is authorized by section 425 of the Real Property Tax Law.

# SCHEDULE OF RESERVE FUNDS

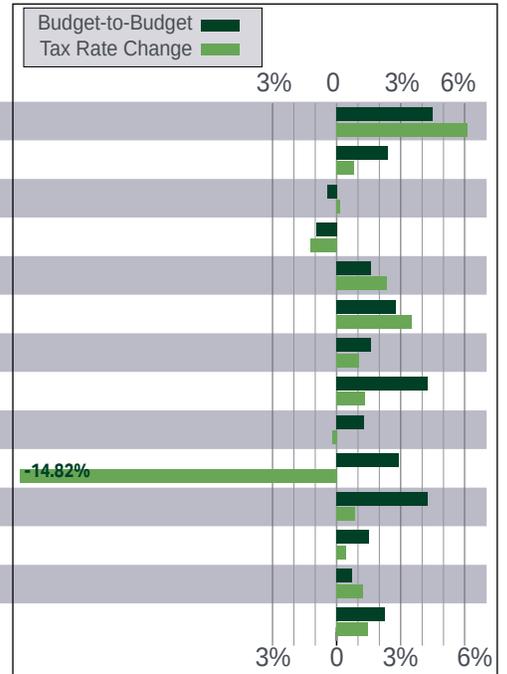
Reserve Type	Reserve Name	Reserve Description	3/31/21 Actual Balance	6/30/21 Estimated Ending Balance	Intended Use of the Reserve in the 2021-2022 School Year
Capital	Reserve For Capital	To pay the cost of any object or purpose for which bonds may be issued.	\$627,371	\$627,371	Capital Building Projects
Repair	Reserve For Repairs	To pay the cost of repairs to capital improvements or equipment.			
Workers' Compensation		To pay for Workers Compensation and benefits.			
Unemployment Insurance	Unemployment Insurance Payment Reserve	To pay the cost of reimbursement to the State Unemployment Insurance Fund.	\$50,000	\$150,000	To pay unemployment Insurance
Reserve for Tax Reduction		For the gradual use of the proceeds of the sale of school district real property.			
Mandatory Reserve for Debt Service	Reserve For Debt	To cover debt service payments on outstanding obligations (bonds, BANS) after the sale of district capital assets or improvements.	\$20,440	\$20,440	None
Insurance		To pay liability, casualty, and other types of uninsured losses.			
Property Loss		To establish and maintain a program of reserves to cover property loss.			
Liability	Liability Reserve Fund	To establish and maintain a program of reserves to cover liability claims incurred.	\$85,182	\$600,000	To pay liability claims
Tax Certiorari	Reserve For Tax Certiorari	To establish a reserve fund for tax certiorari settlements	\$1,395,911	\$1,295,000	To pay Tax Certiorari Judgments.
Reserve for Insurance Recoveries		To account for unexpended proceeds of insurance recoveries at the fiscal year end.			
Employee Benefit Accrued Liability	Reserve For Employee Benefit Accrued Liability	For the payment of accrued employee benefit due to employees upon termination of service.	\$455,378	\$510,000	Vacation payout for employees terminating service.
Retirement Contribution	Reserve For Retirement System Contribution	To fund employer retirement contributions to the State and Local Employees' Retirement System	\$1,480,663	\$1,550,000	To pay ERS liabilities.
Reserve for Uncollected Taxes		For unpaid taxes due certain city school districts not reimbursed by their city/ county until the following fiscal year.			
Other Reserve	Reserve For Retirement System Contribution-TRS	To fund employer retirement contributions to the New York State Teachers' Retirement System (TRS.)	301,610\$	\$301,610	To pay TRS Liabilities.



# BUDGET HISTORY

School Year	Budget	Budget-to-Budget	Tax Rate Change	Tax Rate per \$1,000
2008-09	\$41,633,422	4.51%	6.12%	\$734.01
2009-10	\$42,624,795	2.38%	0.80%	\$739.89
2010-11	\$42,441,795	-0.43%	0.17%	\$741.12
2011-12	\$42,028,394	-0.97%	-1.25%	\$731.86
2012-13	\$42,708,466	1.62%	2.34%	\$748.96
2013-14	\$42,895,492	2.78%	3.52%	\$775.34
2014-15	\$44,601,912	1.61%	1.03%	\$783.31
2015-16	\$46,493,447	4.24%	1.31%	\$793.55
2016-17	\$47,082,130	1.27%	-0.22%	\$791.78
2017-18	\$48,454,314	2.91%	-14.82%	\$20.86
2018-19	\$50,518,586	4.26%	0.86%	\$21.04
2019-20	\$51,283,825	1.51%	0.43%	\$21.12
2020-21	\$51,660,159	0.73%	1.23%	\$21.38
2021-22	\$52,823,911	2.25%	1.45%*	\$21.69*

\*Estimate



## BUDGET VOTE

MAY 18, 2021

7 a.m. to 9 p.m.

Cochran Gymnasium

Hastings High School



# 2021-22 PROPERTY TAX REPORT CARD

	Budgeted 2020-21 (A)	Proposed Budget 2021-22 (B)	Percent Change (C)
Total Budgeted Amount, not Including Separate Propositions	\$51,660,159	\$52,823,911	2.25%
A. Proposed Tax Levy to Support the Total Budgeted Amount <sup>1</sup>	\$43,857,084	\$44,555,757	
B. Tax Levy to Support Library Debt, if Applicable			
C. Tax Levy for Non-Excludable Propositions, if Applicable <sup>2</sup>			
D. Total Tax Cap Reserve Amount Used to Reduce Current Year Levy, if Applicable			
E. Total Proposed School Year Tax Levy (A + B + C - D)	\$43,857,084	\$44,555,757	1.59%
F. Permissible Exclusions to the School Tax Levy Limit	\$429,726	\$430,865	
G. School Tax Levy Limit, <u>Excluding</u> Levy for Permissible Exclusions <sup>3</sup>	\$43,478,816	\$44,124,892	
H. Total Proposed School Year Tax Levy, <u>Excluding</u> Levy to Support Library Debt and/or Permissible Exclusions (E - B - F + D)	\$43,427,358	\$44,124,892	
I. Difference: (G - H); (negative value requires 60.0% voter approval) <sup>2</sup>	\$51,458	\$0	
Public School Enrollment	1,588	1,657	4.35%
Consumer Price Index		1.23%	

<sup>1</sup> Include any prior year reserve for excess tax levy, including interest.

<sup>2</sup> Tax levy associated with educational or transportation services propositions are not eligible for exclusion under the School Tax Levy Limit and may affect voter approval requirements.

<sup>3</sup> For 2021-22, includes any carryover from 2020-21 and excludes any tax levy for library debt or prior year reserve for excess tax levy, including interest.

	Actual 2020-21 (D)	Estimated 2020-21 (E)
Adjusted Restricted Fund Balance	\$5,376,887	\$4,490,277
Assigned Appropriated Fund Balance	\$1,450,000	\$800,000
Adjusted Unrestricted Fund Balance	\$2,065,000	\$2,100,000
Adjusted Unrestricted Fund Balance as a Percent of the Total Budget	4.00%	3.98%







Hastings-on-Hudson  
Union Free School District  
BOARD OF EDUCATION  
27 Farragut Avenue,  
Hastings-on-Hudson, NY 10706

Non-Profit  
U.S. Postage  
PAID  
White Plains, NY  
Permit No. 7323

BOARD OF EDUCATION  
Lauren Berman, *President*  
Silvia Robles, *Vice President*  
Alison Andrus • Jeremy Arnon  
Jeremy Galland • Jodie Meyer  
Doug Sundheim

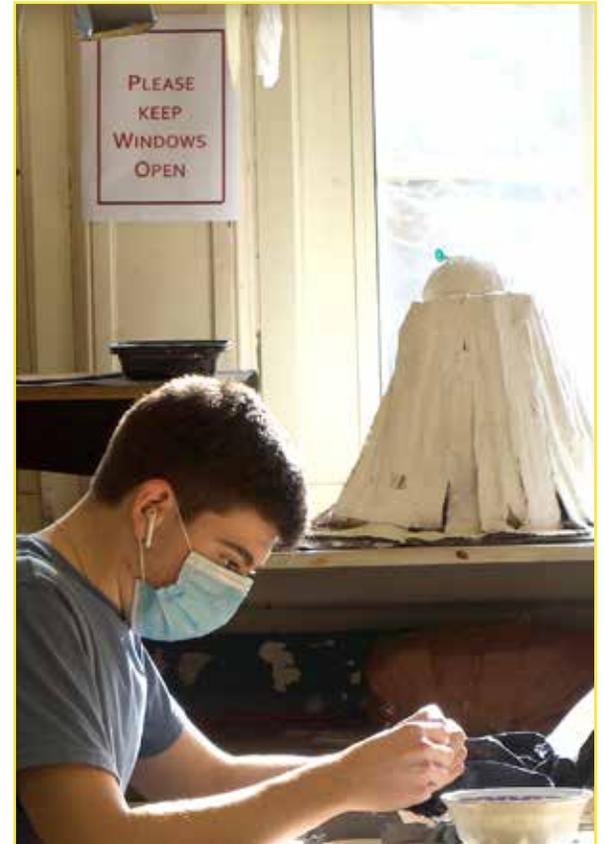
CONNECT WITH US  
EMAIL: [BOE@HOHSCHOOLS.ORG](mailto:BOE@HOHSCHOOLS.ORG)  
PHONE: 914.941.8880

Valerie Henning-Piedmonte, Ed. D.,  
*Superintendent of Schools*  
Melissa Syzmanski,  
*Assistant Superintendent of  
Curriculum & Instruction*  
Maureen Caraballo,  
*Business Official*

[WWW.HOHSCHOOLS.ORG](http://WWW.HOHSCHOOLS.ORG)

Resident  
Hastings-on-Hudson NY 10706

To stay abreast of school news, sign up online at  
[bit.ly/hoh\\_resubscribe](https://bit.ly/hoh_resubscribe)



**SI QUIERE UNA TRADUCCION  
EN ESPANOL DE ESTE BOLETIN,  
POR FAVOR LLAME AL 914-478-6206**