

FRSD 2025/2026 Budget FAQs

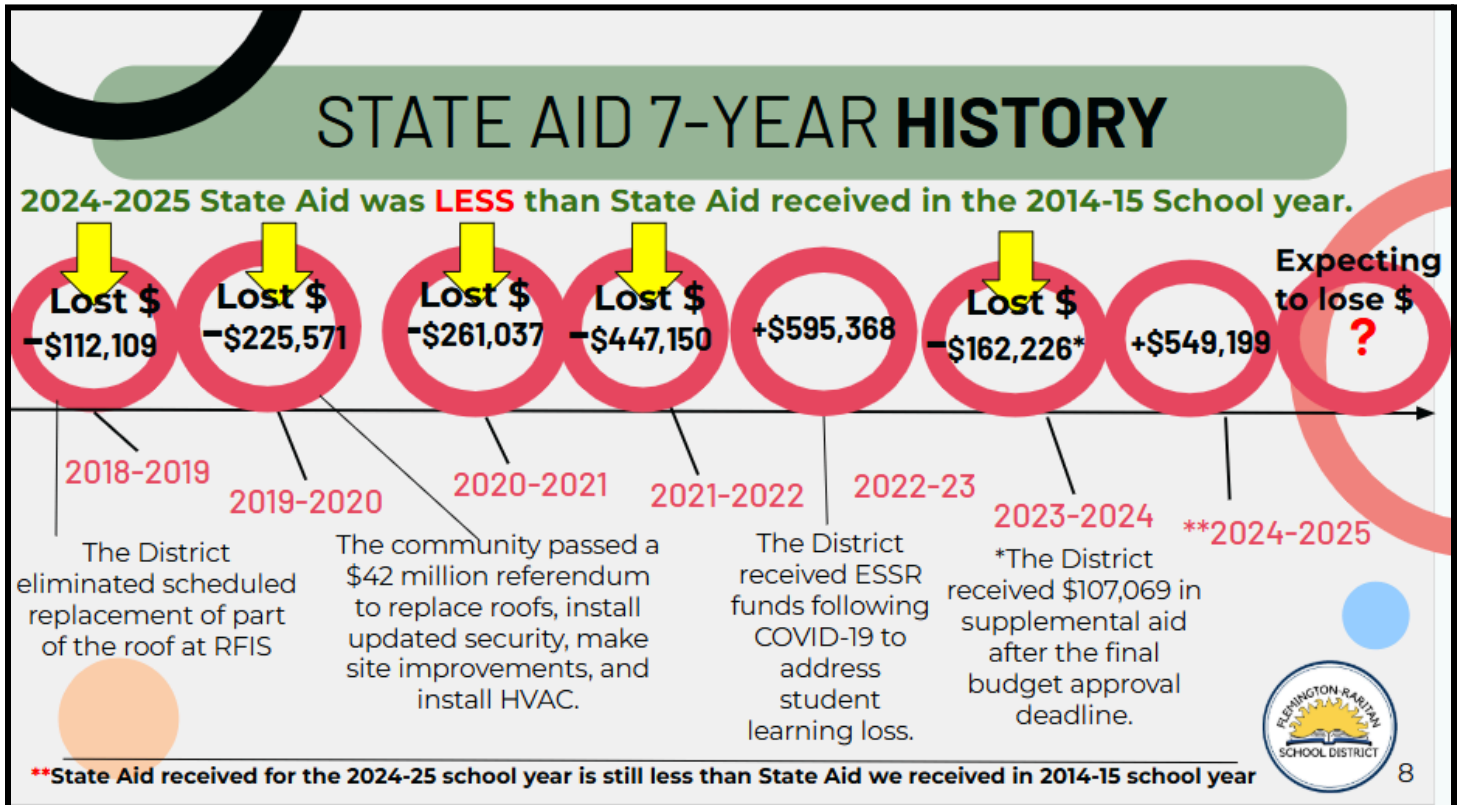
1. “How much was the school district’s total budget for the 2024-2025 school year?”

The District operated on an 80 million dollar budget. Community members can find budget information on the District’s 2024-2025 friendly budget which is posted on our District’s website and linked [here](#).

	General Fund	Capital Reserve	Special Revenues	Debt Service	Total
2024-2025 Total Expenditures	\$70,434,234	\$0	\$4,276,182	\$5,912,012	\$80,622,428
Less: Anticipated Revenues	\$10,715,501	\$0	\$4,276,182	\$ 895,306	\$15,886,989
Taxes to be Raised	\$59,718,733	\$0	\$0	\$5,016,706	\$64,735,439

2. “How much did the State of New Jersey contribute toward the school district’s 2024-2025 budget?”

Of the 80 million dollar school district budget, the State contributes 9%. The total state revenues from State sources for the 2024-2025 school year was \$6,095,841. We received an increase from the previous year of \$549,199.



3. **“What is our current district enrollment and how has this changed over the past five to six years?”**

The District’s current enrollment is 3,294 students. In 2018-2019, the District had 3,129 enrolled students.

4. **“What is our “What is the 2% tax cap, and why does it exist?”**

The 2% tax levy cap limits the annual increase in property taxes that New Jersey school districts can impose to fund their budgets. This cap was put in place to offer stability and predictability for taxpayers while encouraging districts to manage resources efficiently. Currently, until new legislation is enacted, New Jersey maintains a 2% limit on school tax levy increases each year.

5. **How does Flemington-Raritan compare to other Hunterdon County per pupil costs?**

Flemington-Raritan is ranked number 30 out of 76 K-8 districts on the amount of per pupil spending with 1 being the lowest and 76 being the highest. Using the most recent data from the NJDOE in 2023-2024, FRSD spent \$19,310 per student.

When compared to other Hunterdon County districts, **FRSD has the lowest per pupil costs in ALL of Hunterdon County, except for Hunterdon County Vocational**, a district that receives state donations to support vocational careers.

Hunterdon County Vocational's budget is supported through donations such as [over 3 million from the NJOE](#) and [another three million from the Hunterdon County Commissioners](#).

A quick comparison of nearby Hunterdon County Districts using the [NJDOE Budgetary Per Pupil Costs 2024](#):

- East Amwell- \$23,510
- Kingwood- \$22,005
- Delaware- \$22,955
- Clinton Twp.-\$24,553
- Readington- \$24,497
- Hunterdon Central- \$24,653
- **Flemington-Raritan \$19,310**

A link [here](#) provides information from the NJDOE Budgetary Per Pupil Costs 2024 just for Hunterdon County.

Operating Type, Enrollment Group	County	District Code	District Name	2021-22 Actual Per Pupil Amount	2021-22 Ranking Within Group	2022-23 Actual Per Pupil Amount	2022-23 Ranking Within Group	2023-24 Budgeted Per Pupil Amount	2023-24 Ranking Within Group
A. K-6	Hunterdon	1970	Hampton Boro	30,080	N.A.	25,742	N.A.	29,490	55 58
A. K-6	Hunterdon	2590	Lebanon Boro	23,209	52 57	26,008	53 57	26,720	49 58
A. K-6	Hunterdon	3180	Milford Boro	26,994	55 57	26,220	54 57	32,484	56 58
B. K-8 / 0 - 400	Hunterdon	370	Bethlehem Twp	21,388	48 75	21,147	43 75	22,243	38 76
B. K-8 / 0 - 400	Hunterdon	430	Bloomsbury Boro	19,880	42 75	24,567	57 75	29,075	66 76
B. K-8 / 0 - 400	Hunterdon	670	Califon Boro	25,970	66 75	26,602	64 75	32,905	69 76
B. K-8 / 0 - 400	Hunterdon	910	Clinton-Glen Gardner	19,824	41 75	20,677	42 75	21,237	31 76
B. K-8 / 0 - 400	Hunterdon	1160	East Amwell Twp	21,041	45 75	22,042	45 75	23,510	47 76
B. K-8 / 0 - 400	Hunterdon	1600	Franklin Twp	22,186	54 75	23,140	51 75	24,939	55 76
B. K-8 / 0 - 400	Hunterdon	1680	Frenchtown Boro	22,804	57 75	23,517	52 75	22,711	41 76
B. K-8 / 0 - 400	Hunterdon	2140	High Bridge Boro	22,966	59 75	22,899	50 75	26,811	60 76
B. K-8 / 0 - 400	Hunterdon	2450	Kingwood Twp	18,695	33 75	18,750	32 75	22,005	37 76
C. K-8 / 401 - 750	Hunterdon	20	Alexandria Twp	19,589	43 60	20,139	43 60	21,498	45 64
C. K-8 / 401 - 750	Hunterdon	1040	Delaware Twp	20,796	53 60	21,287	50 60	22,935	52 64
C. K-8 / 401 - 750	Hunterdon	2220	Holland Twp	19,896	46 60	20,372	45 60	21,244	42 64
C. K-8 / 401 - 750	Hunterdon	2600	Lebanon Twp	20,166	50 60	21,225	49 60	22,779	50 64
C. K-8 / 401 - 750	Hunterdon	5180	Tewksbury Twp	23,925	59 60	24,582	57 60	27,607	60 64
C. K-8 / 401 - 750	Hunterdon	5270	Union Twp	19,998	47 60	21,761	52 60	22,892	51 64
D. K-8 / 751 +	Hunterdon	920	Clinton Twp	21,027	66 72	22,745	69 72	24,553	71 76
D. K-8 / 751 +	Hunterdon	1510	Flemington-Raritan Reg	18,418	44 72	19,247	47 72	19,310	30 76
D. K-8 / 751 +	Hunterdon	4350	Readington Twp	20,610	63 72	21,534	62 72	24,497	70 76
E. K-12 / 0 - 1800	Hunterdon	1376	South Hunterdon Regional School District	25,490	47 48	24,980	47 48	26,934	48 50
H. 7-12 / 9-12	Hunterdon	1050	Delaware Valley Regional	22,155	36 46	21,960	31 46	24,396	33 46
H. 7-12 / 9-12	Hunterdon	2300	Hunterdon Central Reg	21,055	31 46	21,535	29 46	24,653	35 46
H. 7-12 / 9-12	Hunterdon	3660	North Hunterdon-Voorhees Regional High S	23,247	41 46	24,544	39 46	24,947	38 46
J. Voc	Hunterdon	2308	Hunterdon Co Vocational	14,244	4 21	12,967	2 21	10,812	1 21

Source: NJDOE Taxpayers' Guide to Education Spending 2024 (Indicator 1)

Flem.-Raritan = \$19,310

6. How do school districts manage an increase in costs without exceeding a 2% rise in the budget?

School districts are granted one-time allowances for certain cost increases, such as significant enrollment growth or rising health benefit expenses, based on NJDOE guidelines. For the 2024-2025 school year, the Flemington-Raritan School District did not receive any such allowances, and it is unclear whether it will be eligible for allowances in the 2025-2026 school year. However, the District did receive adjustments for the 2023-2024 school year. Not all of these adjustments were utilized, and district budget guidelines allow for the carryover of unused funds. This carryover, referred to as the "banked cap," enabled the District to implement a 3.5% tax levy increase for the 2024-2025 school year. The District currently has a remaining balance of \$363,061 in banked cap, which can be applied to the 2025-2026 budget.

7. "How did we get in this position?"

Inflation over the last few years is at a 40-year high and our schools are not immune. Just like your expenses at home have risen, so have ours. This year, the cost of contracted salary increases combined with increased health care costs, alone exceeded the 2% cap. Additionally, the cost of supplies, utilities, general services, landscaping and maintenance, transportation, and special education tuition has skyrocketed. Federal funding through the Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief (ESSER) Funding from the pandemic that helped pay for many items expired.

Unfortunately, our District also lacks substantial funds in capital reserve accounts that could be used to offset capital costs this budget season. To be clear, the District can only use [capital reserves](#) for *capital* projects, such as those listed in our long-range facility plan, i.e., replacing a roof on a building. Around the state, we see many districts in the same position as ours, having to make difficult decisions to balance their budgets. Locally, we have experienced reductions in state aid from the [S2 funding formula](#), as well as a loss in potential tax revenue from a 1971, New Jersey law, ["Payment-in-Lieu-of-Taxes \(PILOT\) Program."](#)

The Board of Education passed resolutions for two consecutive years to advocate to our legislators for the state to reanalyze the funding formula and ensure that each district can provide adequate resources to ensure a thorough and efficient education. We also met with our local legislators, stressing the urgency of this reform at the state level.

8. “What are some key legislative and economic factors that have influenced school funding in New Jersey over the past two decades?”

School Funding Reform Act (SFRA): Drafted in 2006 and implemented in 2008, this legislation aimed to provide equitable school funding in New Jersey, addressing disparities among districts by using a weighted funding formula based on student and district needs. The SFRA is a weighted funding formula that calculates an "Adequacy Budget" for each district based on student population characteristics and determines the local "fair share" contribution. However, the formula and calculation method still need to be clarified. New legislation may bring a State committee to study how districts receive their local fair share. During the federal school year of 2010, in the aftermath of the 2008 financial crisis and bank collapses, New Jersey experienced massive budget cuts. The state's governor significantly reduced school funding, impacting district operations and resources.

S-2 Bill (2018): This legislation revised New Jersey's school funding formula, reducing state aid to districts deemed "overfunded" while gradually reallocating resources to underfunded districts, sparking stakeholder debate.

Health Benefits Legislation (2020): Changes in health benefit requirements placed a greater financial burden on school districts, straining budgets further and affecting operational sustainability. The 2020 health benefit legislation demonstrates a growing trend of shifting financial burdens onto local school districts, further straining their ability to allocate funds for instructional and operational needs.

Collectively, these points reveal a pattern of attempts to create equitable funding systems that are often disrupted by economic challenges, policy debates, and increasing cost burdens on local districts.

9. “Why would a school district need to exceed the 2% tax cap?”

Unforeseen or unavoidable circumstances, such as rising operational costs, significant enrollment increases, or mandates for new programs, may necessitate funding beyond the 2% cap to maintain or improve the quality of education.

10. “What are the reasons Flemington-Raritan Regional School District requests a tax increase beyond the 2% cap?”

The Flemington Raritan Regional School District operating costs exceed a 2% increase. Special education services, transportation costs, facility maintenance, health benefits, technology improvements, salaries, maintaining small class sizes, programs to supplement STEM (i.e., Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics), extracurricular after-school sports and clubs, music and arts programs, and compliance with state and federal mandates.

11. “What financial challenges is the school district currently facing, and how are these impacting its ability to maintain quality education?”

Last year, the combined impact of contracted salary increases and rising healthcare costs exceeded the mandated 2% budget cap, creating significant financial strain. There have been soaring costs in essential services. The district has faced skyrocketing costs in critical areas such as:

- Supplies and instructional materials
- Utilities and general services
- Facility maintenance to ensure safe learning environments
- Transportation for students
- Special education tuition to meet mandated requirements

The expiration of Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief (ESSER) funding, which provided vital financial support during the pandemic, has intensified budget pressures.

These escalating costs and the end of federal relief funding present new challenges in maintaining the quality of education while adhering to fiscal constraints. Strategic and difficult decisions will be necessary to balance resources and minimize the impact on students and staff.

12. “What financial pressures is the Flemington-Raritan Regional School District facing, and how are these challenges impacting the ability to sustain quality education and operations?”

School district budgeting has become increasingly challenging due to the convergence of multiple financial pressures:

Federal Funding Expiration: The end of pandemic-related federal funding, such as ESSER, has removed a critical source of financial support for districts.

S2 Funding Formula: The redistribution of state aid under the S2 formula has resulted in the cumulative loss of state funding for many districts, creating significant gaps in budgets.

Lack of Surplus Funds: Limited or nonexistent surplus reserves leave districts without a financial cushion to address unexpected costs or revenue shortfalls.

Rising Self-Insurance Costs: Increased costs for self-insurance services and claims have strained already tight budgets.

School Security Costs: Expenses for school-based security officers and other safety measures continue to rise as districts prioritize student and staff safety.

Special Education Costs: The rising costs of out-of-district placements to meet the needs of special education students further exacerbate budget pressures.

Deficit Budgeting: Year-over-year deficit budgeting has become a recurring challenge, forcing districts to make difficult trade-offs to balance the budget.

Escalating Operational Costs: Rising energy and transportation costs add another layer of financial strain, limiting resources for instructional and programmatic needs.

State-Mandated Expenses: Unfunded or underfunded mandates increase expenditures without corresponding revenue, further complicating budget planning.

These combined factors make it increasingly difficult to sustain quality education while meeting financial and operational obligations. Strategic planning, advocacy, and community collaboration are essential to navigate these challenges effectively.

13. “How did the District determine the need for a tax increase above the 2% cap?”

The district conducted a thorough analysis of its budget and considered essential needs, cost-saving measures, and potential impacts on programs and services. The tax increase request was developed after all other options were explored.

14. “Did the District implement cost-saving measures such as reducing positions?”

In the 2024-2025 school year, the District reduced its budget by 3 million dollars through a reduction in staff and programs. We reduced spending on technology, supplies, and professional development. We even switched health insurance providers to realize additional savings of close to \$800,000. The District continues to apply for grants that can support our budget.

15. “How does the budgeting process in the Flemington-Raritan Regional School District ensure fiscal responsibility?”

Managing a budget is a complex and challenging task requiring difficult fiscal decisions. Every financial choice has a direct impact on how we deliver high-quality instruction to 3,300 students from PreK through Grade 8. Budget deficits present no perfect solutions, only tradeoffs that require thoughtful prioritization to minimize negative effects on education. The budget process timeline occurs from October through May. Initial Planning is conducted by the Superintendent and Business Office to outline key priorities and fiscal constraints. Board members are engaged in the process through regular meetings to review progress, provide input, and refine budget proposals. Departments collaborate with the Superintendent’s office through meetings with department heads to discuss specific needs, challenges, and resource allocation. There is building-level input through discussions with building principals and district administrators to ensure alignment with instructional goals. A preliminary public budget meeting is held to present initial findings and gather community feedback. Final budget details are reviewed and approved during a public board meeting, ensuring transparency and accountability. The budgeting process is a collaborative effort involving multiple stakeholders to balance fiscal responsibility with the need to maintain excellence in education. Every step reflects our commitment to serving our students effectively, even in the face of financial challenges.

16. “What is the district’s plan to address the budget shortfall for the 2025-2026 school year, and what impact might it have on programs and staffing?”

The District is facing a budget shortfall for the 2025-2026 school year, even with state aid potentially equaling last year’s state aid. To address the budget shortfall, the district is holding a special election on the second Tuesday in March 2025 to ask permission to exceed the 2% tax levy cap. In the interim, the district will prepare two separate budget scenarios, one that includes exceeding the 2% tax levy limit, and another version that reflects significant reductions in personnel, support programs such as Reading Recovery in our elementary schools, supplemental science, mathematics, engineering, and technology courses (STEM) in all schools such as robotics and coding, raising class size limits, and reducing Class III officers in our schools.

17. “Why is the Flemington-Raritan Regional School District planning for a special election to raise the tax levy above 2%, and what financial challenges is the district facing?”

The District, in cooperation with the Board of Education, is planning for a special election to ask the community to raise the tax levy above 2%. The Flemington-Raritan Regional School District Board of Education is seeking approval from the district’s legal voters to raise additional funds to help balance the budget. Currently, the District is projecting a negative district budget balance of over three million dollars, and likely closer to four million. Without additional funds, just like last year, the District will need to make drastic reductions to balance the budget.

18. “How will the additional tax revenue be used if the voters approve an increase in the tax levy?”

The district is required to clearly outline how the funds will be allocated, ensuring transparency. A public vote cannot be for items currently in the base budget, and it has to be for a specific reason and approved by the county department of education office. Additional funds requested will:

- Keep the number of teachers needed for small class sizes to match [District Regulation 2312- Class size](#);
- Fund Class III Officers in our district;
- Provide funding for extracurricular athletics like our middle school, and after-school, sports teams for students (baseball, track, wrestling, basketball, etc.) and co-curricular activities;
- Keep personnel to provide programs such as Reading Recovery and teaching positions to exceed the state requirements for gifted and talented education; and
- Maintain before-school and after-school clubs and enrichment programs.

	Minimum	Recommended Maximum	Target
Preschool:	<15	15	---
Kindergarten:	15	18	17
Grade 1:	15	20	17
Grade 2:	16	22	17
Grade 3:	16	23	19
Grade 4:	17	24	23
Special Education:	As dictated by N.J.A.C. 6A:14-4.3		

19. “How does the tax increase process work?”

Exceeding the 2% cap requires a special question posed to the voters. The Flemington Raritan Regional School District must present the special question proposal to the voters during a special election which will occur on the second Tuesday in March 2025. A majority vote is needed to approve the increase above the 2% tax levy.

20. “What happens if voters reject the proposed tax increase?”

If the increase is rejected with the majority of the voters voting no on raising the tax levy, the district must revise its budget to remain within the 2% cap, resulting in significant cuts to programs, staff, and services totaling more than three million dollars. The Flemington-Raritan Regional School District is at a critical crossroads, where raising the tax levy through a school special election has become a necessity to preserve the quality of education for our students. Without this increase, the district faces significant budget shortfalls that will directly impact students by increasing class sizes, reducing essential programs, cutting after-school activities, and compromising safety measures.

21. “What are the potential impacts on students if the Flemington-Raritan Regional School District does not secure funding, and why is the public funding question essential for maintaining educational quality?”

The Flemington-Raritan Regional School District faces a critical financial challenge due to a cumulative loss of over \$1 million in state funding over the past six years. Despite significant budget reductions for 2024-2025, the district is projecting another substantial shortfall for 2025-2026.

Without additional funding, the district will need to make further cuts that will directly impact students by:

- Increasing class sizes in grades K-8 to over 25 students per homeroom,
- Reducing access to essential programs such as STEM, evidence-based reading instruction such as Reading Recovery, and supplemental academic opportunities such as STEM,

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- Eliminating safety and security personnel, including Class III Officers,
- Replacing outdated student technology critical to achievement, and
- Cutting after-school programs, including clubs and extracurricular sports.

Approval of the public funding question is essential to maintain small class sizes, support vital student programs, and ensure the safety and success of all students.

22. “What will be the tax impact as a Flemington Borough resident of raising the tax levy above the 2% cap?”

		Flemington Borough		
		Proposed 2025-2056		
	2024-25	2%	4%	6%
Average Assessed	\$400,000	\$400,000	\$400,000	\$400,000
Per \$100	\$3,948	\$3,941	\$3,977	\$4,013
		-\$7	\$29	\$65

These amounts are estimated using 2024 ratables and tax rate, 2025 information is not yet available

23. “What will be the tax impact as a Raritan Township resident of raising the tax levy above the 2% cap?”

		Raritan Township		
		Proposed 2025-2056		
	2024-25	2%	4%	6%
Average Assessed	\$600,000	\$600,000	\$600,000	\$600,000
Per \$100	\$8,069	\$8,303	\$8,379	\$8,455
		\$234	\$310	\$386

These amounts are estimated using 2024 ratables and tax rate, 2025 information is not yet available

24. “How can community members learn more about the special question proposal?”

The district will provide detailed information through meetings, its website, and other communication channels such as letters from the superintendent's desk. Residents are encouraged to participate in discussions and ask questions to make an informed decision.

25. “What is the status of enrollment in the district that is contributing to the additional costs?”

Enrolling numbers continue to increase. The district has 3,294 students as of December 2024, compared to 3,241 students last year. The district continues to see an increase in enrollment due to new homes in the community. Any costs attributed to the increase in preschool students are offset by the increase in preschool expansion award funding.

26. “Why is the district seeking to exceed the 2% tax levy cap, and how has the loss of state aid contributed to this need?”

Retaining current staff, maintaining all programs and services, as well as meeting contract requirements will raise the district's cost above a 2% increase. The district has lost state aid repeatedly. In 2024-25, the district

received less state aid than received in the 2014-15 school year. The timeline below details the loss of state aid to the district.

27. “What factors are contributing to the district's rising cost for the 2025-2026 school year, and how does the revenue structure impact the budget challenges?”

Approximately 85% of our District's revenue comes from local property taxes. We receive limited state aid, federal grants, and other government funding. Retaining current staff, maintaining all programs and services, and meeting all contract requirements will raise costs by above 2%. Special education costs are rising, specifically tuition for students who attend school out of district for more specialized care and services. In the 2025-26 school year, the district will assume full responsibility for bussing our students, as we will no longer be partnered with Hunterdon Central in a shared services agreement, a decision that was beyond our control. The full effects of this dissolution of the jointure are uncertain at this time. The District anticipates transportation costs will increase by 20%.

28. Has the district used savings to address budget shortfalls in the past, and what impact have previous budget reductions had on staffing and programs?”

Yes, the district used savings from the previous school year to help balance the budget. The District reduced the budget for the 2024-2025 school year by close to 3 million--collapsing, eliminating, and absorbing close to 30 positions, including a school librarian, special education, and music teaching positions. The reduction of staffing from last year's shortfall impacted the district significantly. In prior years, the district has always allocated savings to balance the budget, however, the recurring problem was that the district was not able to regenerate those savings due to the rise and fixed costs in the budget.

29. “How has the district managed the financial impact of expiring Federal grants, and what further reductions will be necessary without exceeding the 2% budget increase?”

The district eliminated positions and programs last year that were no longer financially sustainable due to the federal ESSER and ARP grants ending. The district has also absorbed other programs deemed essential and beneficial to the district. Without a rise in the budget of over 2%, the district will need to eliminate close to thirty positions and programs to balance the budget at 2%.

30. “Does the expansion of preschool contribute to the district's negative budget balance?”

No, the Flemington-Raritan Regional School District has been involved in the preschool expansion award program since January 2024. The greatest challenge in providing full-day preschool in the district is space for the number of preschool students, not funding. The challenge remains on how to fulfill the anticipated 19 additional classrooms needed for the future. The district has over \$400,000 of unspent pre-K expansion funds available due to the mid-year implementation of the preschool program. The district may only use these funds for preschool initiatives such as adding playgrounds at our schools and continuing to enhance its preschool programs. In 2023-24, the district received \$1.2 million in preschool funding. In 2024-25, the district received \$2.2 million in funding. Funding has contributed to expanding the preschool program and covering the costs of preschool regular education, preschool teachers, and teacher assistants in our preschool classrooms. The preschool award funding also contributes to the beautification of buildings and grounds such as a new playground at Copper Hill Elementary School.

31. “Does the district anticipate the need for large expenditures in curriculum such as new educational programs, technology, or new staff?”

The district continues to prioritize raising student academic achievement. In 2023-2024, the District adopted a new mathematics series in grades K-3. In the 24-25 school year, the district continued with the adoption of the

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new mathematics programs for grades 4 and 5. This rollout of mathematics curricula is planned for the 25-26 school year for grades 6 through 8 but may not pursue continued curricular improvements due to District budget shortfalls. In addition, new science curriculum materials for grades 7-8 are likely not to be purchased in 2025-2026 due to the district's financial shortfall.

32. "Is there something we can do to help?"

As discussed above, one of the major contributors to our budget issues is state laws that hamstring school districts' ability to fund. This in conjunction with a flawed state aid funding formula are problems that need to be addressed by lawmakers to combat the ever-rising costs that school districts face. Please consider joining our efforts in [advocating to our State legislators](#) to voice your concerns about the lack of funding for our schools, especially for school districts in Hunterdon County. For the 2023-2024 school year, as a whole, school districts in Hunterdon County lost \$2.1 million in funding. For the 2024-2025 school year, Hunterdon County is still struggling to recover from the steep cuts last year. Our local legislators also appreciate hearing from Raritan Township and Flemington Borough community members. You can contact Raritan Township Town Council Members information can be found [here](#) and Flemington Borough community members.

Some members of our community have expressed a desire to donate financially. For those who wish to donate, please send donations to the [Flemington-Raritan Education Foundation which supports](#) the district through its fundraising efforts and is grateful for any contribution made.

The district is appreciative of the community's involvement.