

**BOARD OF EDUCATION**  
**The School District of South Orange and Maplewood**  
**525 Academy Street, Maplewood, NJ 07040**

December 21, 2015

TO:           Members, Board of Education  
              Members, Board of School Estimate  
              John Ramos, Superintendent

FROM:       Cheryl Schneider, Business Administrator  
              Susan Grierson, Assistant Superintendent, Curriculum & Instruction  
              Paul Roth, Chief Information Officer

SUBJECT:   2016-17 SCHOOL BUDGET DEVELOPMENT – ANALYSIS

The development of the 2016-17 school budget is again focused on allocating resources to student achievement to the extent possible consistent with the district goals first adopted by the Board of Education on September 15, 2008 and updated and readopted on October 19, 2015. Specifically, Board Goal Four: Resource Management which calls for the achievement of other goals while slowing the rate of increase in operating expenses.

The district's General Fund (operating) budget is funded primarily from two sources: local taxes (92%) and state and federal aid (6%). Appropriated surplus and miscellaneous revenue make up about 2% of total revenue.

Given the expectation that the amount of resources available will be limited, and recognizing that the local taxpayers are financially stressed, the budget development process includes an analysis of the major categories of expenditures to determine if the resources are effectively and efficiently allocated and to identify trends in the rate of growth of expenditures. The goal is to identify opportunities that may result in the ability to redirect resources to new initiatives intended to impact student achievement. These ongoing analyses will be once again taken into consideration throughout the budget development process.

In addition, specific topic areas are usually identified by the Finance Committee, with input from Administration and the full Board of Education, to review when developing the annual budget. This year's budget is anticipated to be developed based upon guidelines developed through the Strategic Planning process and upon initiatives to support the recently adopted Equity and Access Policy. Therefore, specific analysis topics were not identified other than a request for an internal review of Special Education spending. The Special Education analysis will be presented by Ella Rideau, Director of Special Services. It is also anticipated that Special Education will provide an update on the projections for enrollments and revenues associated with the Montrose Early Childhood Center at a later date in the budget development process.

This memo updates some analyses from prior years that are being considered as part of the budget development along with the guidelines being developed from the Strategic Planning.

Additional analyses in areas such as energy consumption, paper expenses, and cost of contracted services are anticipated to be completed further along in the budget development process. The topic areas considered in this memo include the following:

1. *Technology Investment*
2. *Enrollment changes and Building Capacity*
3. *Summer Programming*
4. *Access and Equity Policy*
5. *Legal Expenses*
6. *Transportation updates*

## **TECHNOLOGY INVESTMENT**

### ***Introduction***

During the last three years the main goal of the IT department was to increase internet bandwidth and increase the number of student computing devices to prepare for state mandated PARCC assessments. Additionally, security systems were expanded and connected with the district's telecommunications systems and data networks, including expansion of the systems to support the opening of the Montrose Early Childhood Center during the summer of 2015.

In September 2015 the management of the district educational software licensing was transitioned to the IT department. The combination of increased infrastructure demands (while considering changes in e-rate funding structures), an increase in use of mobile devices and an increase in technology integration in the classrooms, the expansion of communication systems, the addition of educational software, and the need to continually replace aging equipment requires additional funding to maintain services. The proposed technology budget is structured to support these needs while maintaining a 5 year replacement schedule of electronic equipment and ensuring technical support keeps pace with an increasing demand of technology services and equipment.

The IT budget spans services of four departments, data processing, assessment, and IT services, and now educational software and technology integration in the classroom. IT Services is comprised of networking equipment, networking services, hardware maintenance and parts, software and appliance subscriptions, telecommunications services and contracts, vendor services, technology equipment and general consumption of consumables (toner, bulbs, batteries, etc.).

### ***Network Services***

This area covers costs for the district's 1,000mbps internet connection, a 1,000mbps wide area network, and public wireless internet access in the district meeting room. This costs outlined in this area includes an additional 1,000mbps internet connection. The second internet connection will be provided by a different carrier, adding fault tolerance into the infrastructure.

Please note that district bandwidth demands continue to increase and that national educational goals recommend schools to obtain 1,000mbps internet access per 1,000 users by 2019. E-rate

funding is changing in order to help schools reach these goals. E-rate funding for telecommunication services are eliminated; however, funds were redirected for the purchase of networking equipment. The Schools and library funds have allocated funding for schools to purchase network switches, routers, and wireless networking equipment. 50% of the cost of network equipment will be reimbursed to a maximum reimbursement of \$450,000. The district has 3 years to use this funding. The 2016-2017 budget request for networking equipment is to replace the core switches in Columbia High school, Maplewood Middle School, and South Orange middle School and to replace intermediary switches in all of our schools. It is essential to replace the core switches as they were originally installed 15 years ago and have reached end of life.

### ***Hardware Maintenance & Parts***

The school district supports and repairs over 6,000 computer devices, TV's, cameras, file servers, scanning machines, printers, LCD projectors, folding machines, sound systems, stage lighting systems, radios, intercoms, bells, interactive boards, and security systems. This equipment is shared by students and faculty and is under continuous use. The projected cost for preventative maintenance, hardware maintenance contracts, repairs, replacement parts, and to replace systems that cannot be repaired is currently around \$500,000 annually.

### ***Software and Equipment***

The district uses the various database systems to manage information, work flow and support academic initiatives including, but not limited to, student information systems, library systems, food service systems, transportation systems, emergency notification systems, personnel systems, financial systems, reading programs, basic office systems, the district website, video streaming programs, and multiple educational software services. The combined educational cost of administrative and educational software maintenance, technical support, and licensing fees for these systems is over \$500,000 annually.

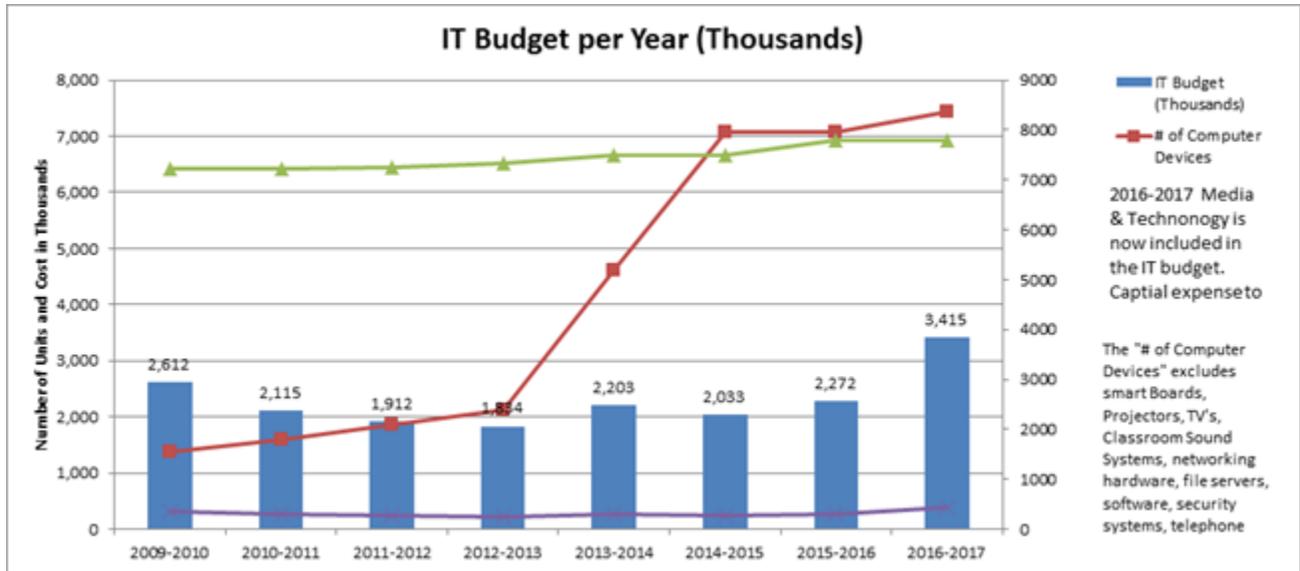
Each elementary school contains a computer lab, general purpose library computers, laptop cart and Chromebook carts. Each middle school contains a library lab, computer lab, general purpose library computers, three laptop carts and Chromebook carts. The high school has a computer lab for each department, TV studio, 2 TV editing labs, Graphic Arts lab, Cad lab, Journalism room, Photo lab, Writing lab, laptop cart, and Chromebook carts. Every year, equipment that is 5 years or older is refreshed in order to keep systems current. Old equipment is re-purposed for non-critical tasks, used for parts, or removed from inventory and recycled. This section also includes additional equipment requested by principals and supervisors. The annual projected cost of technology equipment is over \$300,000.

### ***Dedicated building technical support and vendor services***

The district's technology inventory has more than tripled over the last 3 years, the number of support calls has steadily increased, resulting in the need for additional technical staff to continue to provide support for the districts faculty and staff. Three additional technology staff members were added in the 2015-2016 budget in order to provide more immediate support for our teachers. Building technicians also maintain supplies, maintain building equipment inventory

records, handle basic technical issues and act as the primary person of contact for technical support. Feedback on this additional support has been positive and the rate of response to technology issues has increased dramatically. Support through contracted services have been coordinated with the technical staffing allowing for a reduction in spending with vendor services while allowing the vendors to focus in areas such as security, installations, and specialized audio-visual support.

How does the 2016-2017 budget requests compare to prior year budget appropriations?



School Year	IT Budget Appropriations	
2009-2010	2,612,000	*During the last two years, replacement of a portion of aging systems was deferred and funding was reallocated towards technology requirements to prepare for PARCC
2010-2011	2,115,000	
2011-2012	1,912,000	
2012-2013	1,834,000	
2013-2014	2,203,000	
2014-2015	2,033,000	
2015-2016	2,272,000	
2016-2017	3,415,000	

Note: Part of the increase in the 2016-2017 budget requests include appropriations previously accounted for in the Media and Technology budget accounts. A direct comparison of these costs will be reviewed later in the budget development process. Additional requests for IT related items are still being received from administrators and therefore this number is still likely to change.

**ENROLLMENT CHANGES AND BUILDING CAPACITY**

Each Fall the District updates its enrollment projections based on the October 15 enrollments reported to the state. A professional demographer considers historical enrollment trends, local birth rate data, as well as considers residential development or anticipated program changes. The 2015 demographic study was performed by Whitehall Associates. This is the fourth year that Whitehall Associates has provided demographic projections for the District. While the projections are disaggregated by school and by grade level, the accuracy at this level of detail is uncertain, and should be used as general guidance in budgetary planning. Looking at the actual figures for October 2015 compared to Whitehall’s projections for this year, the overall enrollment projections were 100% accurate, however, while Whitehall’s enrollment projections are typically within 1% of the actual enrollments for the aggregated grade level figures, this year we experienced greater variation.

	Projections	Actuals	Actuals/Projections
<b>Elementary enrollment</b>	3,262	3,339	102.36%
<b>Middle School Enrollment</b>	1,591	1,560	98.05%
<b>High School Enrollment</b>	1,916	1,877	97.96%
<b>Total General Classroom Enrollment</b>	6,769	6,776	100.10%
<b>Ungraded Enrollment</b>	111	104	93.69%
<b>Total District Enrollment</b>	6,880	6,880	100.00%

Kindergarten enrollment figures continued to increase at unprecedented rates. Prior to 2013-14, we would see Kindergarten enrollment rates of approximately 97% of calculated birth rates from 5 years prior. For the past two years we have seen Kindergarten enrollments at a rate of 106% of the calculated birth rate from 5 years earlier. The 2015-16 Kindergarten enrollment is approximately 120% of the calculated birth rate from the calculated birth rate from 5 years ago. It becomes difficult to predict the Kindergarten enrollment for next year with this extreme outlier. Is it a single year anomaly or an indication of future year enrollment figures? The projections for 2015-2016 took into account the 106% survival ratio of the prior two years rather than the standard 6 year basis, but the 120% was unforeseen. On the other hand, both the middle school and high school enrollments were lower than anticipated, resulting in an overall enrollment exactly as projected. The higher elementary enrollments, especially at the Kindergarten level will have an impact not only on budgeting decisions for the 2016-17 school year, but also compels the need to revisit elementary space considerations.

***Elementary School Enrollment***

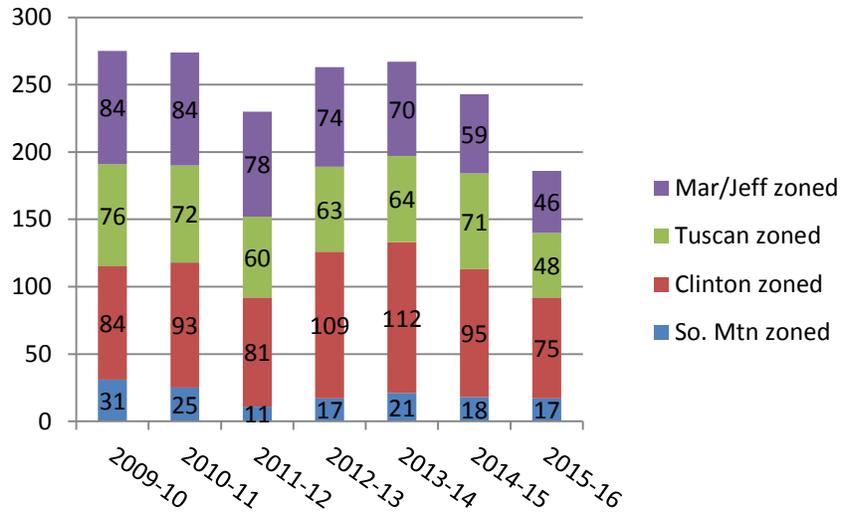
Elementary enrollment has been increasing since 2006 by nearly a 24% increase over the past 8 years (2,683 elementary students in the 2006-2007 school year compared with 3,320 elementary students in the current, 2015-2016, school year). While the elementary enrollment growth was

anticipated to taper off over the last few years, Kindergarten enrollments continue to increase impacting enrollment projections for all grade levels into the future.

Understanding that space would be tight with the continued enrollment growth, an analysis completed in 2010 determined that by making adjustments to elementary boundaries, we would be able to accommodate all of the elementary students without undergoing the expense of building any additions. The Board voted to adjust the boundaries as well as acknowledged that Board Policy 8110 allows the administration the discretion to balance enrollments at specific grade levels between schools when making assignments. With minor adjustments for a handful of students, the change in boundaries has allowed us to handle the increased enrollments without having to lose a dedicated art or music room, something that was considered acceptable if necessary to avoid building an addition to our elementary schools. However, expanded programming such as the elementary reading intervention program has put additional demands on the elementary space that continue to compete for any available space in the buildings.

If elementary enrollments continue at similar rates to those we have been experiencing the past few years, we will continue to face space constraints at individual elementary buildings. All buildings will continue to be at capacity leaving little room for expanded programming or for alleviating space constraints at other buildings. We are still awaiting a break-out of building level projections from the demographer, but based on an internal analysis of the current enrollments, it appears that more buildings will possibly face enrollments over 600 in future years. We likely will continue to see discrepancies between buildings with some schools continuing to experience enrollments over 600 while others see enrollments drop under 500, if elementary boundaries are maintained as they are today. Some locations may face a shortage of one or two rooms by the time we reach 2018-19 if we continue to see these high elementary enrollments continue.

A thorough analysis of redistricting options should be considered. For budgeting purposes, staffing considerations should assume that all elementary schools will be at capacity. If any boundary changes are to be considered, then the impact on transportation expenses should be taken into consideration in budget development. Redistricting discussions should consider the attendance zones for Seth Boyden, originally designed to receive about 50% of its enrollment through an opt-in program. Originally the elementary boundaries were created with the Seth Boyden zone being smaller to allow space for others to opt in. The South Mountain and Tuscan zones were made larger, anticipating that students from these zones would opt into the demonstration program at Seth Boyden. Over the years, we have seen a higher number of students opting in from the Clinton area and some still from the Tuscan area. The following chart shows the changes in enrollments for the non-zoned students at Seth Boyden over the past seven years:



At the same time we have been seeing the composition of the school experiencing a steady increase in the number of students eligible for free and reduced lunch and students requiring additional academic support. The Seth Boyden free and reduced lunch population composes 46% of the school enrollment, compared with 20% of the enrollment districtwide. The composition of the Seth Boyden population should be considered when developing the 2016-17 budget and resource allocation. These factors should also be considered in any general attendance zone discussions.

The opening of the Montrose School building as an Early Learning Center provided some relief on those buildings that previously housed the preschool classes. Although the recommendation is for this building to house only preschool classes, the option of relocating Kindergarten classes to Montrose remains available should additional elementary space be needed. In addition, other considerations regarding Special Education programming may impact enrollment figures at elementary school buildings.

***Middle School Enrollment***

Middle School enrollment has been increasing since 2007 with over a 19% increase over the past 7 years (1,332 middle school students in 2007-2008 compared with 1,587 middle school students in 2014-15), although there was a slight decrease in middle school enrollment in the current year with a smaller 6<sup>th</sup> grade class. The high elementary numbers will be matriculating into the middle schools and the middle school enrollments are expected to continue to grow for the next five years, reaching 1,728 students in 2020-21, or another 10% or 168 students more.

With the middle schools already fully utilizing their buildings, it was determined that additional classroom space would be needed at the middle school level. The addition to Maplewood Middle School, opened last year, added an additional 7 classrooms to the building to accommodate the growing enrollment. It is likely that attendance zone adjustments will need to be made so that the increasing enrollment numbers will be attending Maplewood Middle. A third 7<sup>th</sup> grade team was added at each middle school this year, resulting in three grade level teams in the 6<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> grade

teams, but still two teams in the 8<sup>th</sup> grade. The possibility of adding a third team for the 8<sup>th</sup> grade should be considered in the 2016-2017 budget development.

### ***High School Enrollment***

High School enrollment has fluctuated over the past few years, and although there was a slight decrease this year, it is anticipated that there will be continuous growth going forward as the higher middle school and elementary enrollments move into the high school. The demographer projections indicate that the enrollment will reach nearly 2,100 by 2020-21. Based on the current elementary enrollments, it is likely that the high school enrollment will continue to grow to enrollments in the 2,300-2,400 range in later years. Additional classroom space was identified as part of the Columbia High School capital renewal discussions and capital plans were being developed to convert these spaces as needed. With the potential of these additional classroom spaces, it was determined that an addition was not needed at the time of these discussions. Stakeholder discussions, as part of the middle states accreditation process, will impact the final determination of the use of the existing space. However, the enrollment projections should continue to be monitored closely each year when the projections beyond 2020-21 would be more statistically sound. Preliminary decisions will be critical in the next few months as the high school enrollments are expected to increase by approximately 7% over the next two years and space alterations take extensive time for planning and execution.

Scheduling and staffing discussions are critical to informing the 2016-17 budget as increased staffing may be necessary with the expanding enrollments. Higher class sizes have resulted in scheduling concerns when larger classes were scheduled in classrooms with lower occupancy allowances, creating an additional limitation to scheduling and staffing flexibilities.

### ***New Housing Developments***

Demographic projections take into consideration new construction when developing enrollment projections. Although some current projects have the potential of adding a fair number of students, the projections anticipate that the students would be spread out by grade level. To date, this assumption has proved to be true but we continue to observe registrations from the new development addresses as increasing enrollments from each of these developments combined over time will add to our already burdened facilities. Since these projects are adding new residential space, not previously assigned to specific schools, we will consider the appropriate “zones” for these schools as we look at all of the enrollment figures. Notification of the attendance zones for each of these new developments will be posted on the website and sent to realtors as soon as they are determined, although they will be reminded that Policy 8110 does allow for adjustments as necessary. Any students that have enrolled prior to any adjustments to the attendance zones, will have the option to continue at the schools they are already attending.

## **SUMMER PROGRAMMING**

Each year the South Orange & Maplewood School District offers a myriad of summer learning opportunities to students. Summer offerings are designed to serve students at the elementary, middle and high school levels, for the purposes of enrichment, academic support and credit recovery. The intent of these offerings is to support student academic growth, provide opportunities for acceleration, and to allow students to recover credits necessary for promotion or graduation. Summer programming is beneficial for students to maintain skills they have learned during the school year and prevents “summer slide”. Students are selected to attend summer programming to increase a level or take additional courses to improve their programming options. Summer programming has been referenced during discussions regarding the access and equity policy. It is anticipated that there will be a need to increase the 2016-2017 budget for summer programming in order to provide all the courses offered in the past and to support all the new/additional supports for the level up students. All plans would be dependent on teacher availability.

There are additional costs and factors to consider when scheduling summer school courses. Additional costs/issues to consider are:

- Transportation – cost of transporting eligible students
- Paraprofessional – some students require a paraprofessional to accompany them to class
- Support staff – secretaries, nurse services
- Substitutes for absences
- Lack of AC for all classrooms– warm classrooms are not conducive to learning
- Supervision – 12 month principals/supervisors and 11 month supervisors are all busy with additional work. There is no one assigned to answer questions and emails
- Additional materials required such as text books, reading material, copies.
- Notification for parents is an ongoing concern. Parents make summer plans for their children in the winter and we traditionally notify parents very late in spring. This creates a hardship since some parents might want their child to attend but cannot change plans.
- Summer is the only time available for capital projects and for concentrated maintenance and cleaning projects. Extensive use of district facilities makes it impossible to address these facility needs.

## **ACCESS AND EQUITY POLICY**

The recently approved Access and Equity Policy is being considered throughout the budget development process. Although the actions associated with the implementation of this policy are still being developed, the realization that this policy will impact staffing considerations, that implementation will necessitate additional support both academically and in other areas such as guidance, and increased numbers in some courses will necessitate the purchase of additional textbooks and supplies, are being considered in all areas of the district. Some initial areas of discussion include:

- Letters will be sent to parents with a level recommendation and an option for parents to choose for their child to move up a level.
- In order to prepare students for success, programming must be added to address *summer* support for academic preparedness for students who will move up to a higher level. (This specifically affects students in grade 5 to 6 math and CHS supports.)
- Intervention support at the Elementary Schools will be considered to provide more math interventions in addition to the reading intervention program in place.
- Continuation and potential expansion of Elementary School before school and/or after school programming.
- Continuation and potential expansion of Middle School after school programming.

Also tied to the Access and Equity Policy is the need to review, not just the academic support, but also the social support mechanisms in place for students. In order for our students to succeed in school they need *specific* counseling services that include:

- Guidance support if students are failing a course. Phone calls to offer services that exist.
- Guidance support in assisting with course decisions associated with the access and equity policy
- Continue to offer bias awareness and social responsive training

Support for student emotional needs, in general, has also been an area of discussion. It is suggested that a thorough review of the programs in place compared to student needs be considered. A recommendation to expand the middle school iStep program, currently in place to for therapeutic support at Maplewood Middle School, to include a similar program at South Orange Middle School next year is being considered in the 2016-17 budget development.

### **LEGAL EXPENSES**

The school year 2003-2004 was the first year that the school district hired an in-house counsel rather than strictly paying for outside counsel. Some legal services are still provided through outside counsel, often times through our insurance program. Periodically we review the costs of legal services to determine the effectiveness of in-house counsel versus total dependence on outside counsel. One of the main goals of bringing our legal services in house, effectuating savings, appears to continue to have been met. In good measure, these savings can be attributed to the convenience of having an attorney on site that can immediately respond to problems and thus minimize litigation exposure. Having an attorney in house, likewise, makes our outside attorneys more efficient. Mr. Stern can, and does, assist them in preparing litigation matters for the district. In the area of special education, in particular, there was an immediate reduction in the number of pending cases when legal services were first brought in-house. However, we have seemed to have been experiencing an increase in the number of settlements in the past few years, and the financial magnitude of some of these settlements seems to be increasing. The following chart shows the costs associated with legal expenses over the past few years compared to the costs experienced in 2002-03, the last year prior to having an in-house attorney.

	<b>Baseline 2002- 2003</b>	<b>2011-2012</b>	<b>2012-2013</b>	<b>2013-2014</b>	<b>2014-2015</b>
<b>Legal fees (outside counsel)</b>	\$300,821	\$80,263	\$47,525	\$40,567	\$74,437
<b>Salary of In- house Counsel (including benefits)</b>	n/a	\$161,261	\$165,293	\$171,600	\$175,462
<b>Misc. expenses (approximated)*</b>	n/a	\$5,000	\$5,000	\$5,000	\$5,000
<b>Total Expenses</b>	\$300,821	\$246,524	\$217,818	\$217,167	\$254,899
<b>Legal Judgments**</b>	\$342,402	\$148,083	\$121,906	\$21,675	\$86,990

*\* Includes items such as reimbursement for travel, professional memberships, conferences and publications, and on-line legal research tools.*

*\*\* Legal judgments do not include settlements such as special education tuition or other areas where reimbursements or future payments would be made from specific department account lines. An analysis of all settlements, including those paid from other areas is underway.*

Reducing legal expenses sometimes can be attributed to simple good luck, and likewise, an increase in expenses may just be simply more cases or more costly cases. We live in a very litigious society and sometimes, despite our best efforts, lawsuits are filed and must be defended at significant expense. Accordingly, although we have seen some decreases in legal expenses in the past, it would be prudent to maintain budget allocations level from year to year given the fluctuations and the lack of control we have over the number of and magnitude of, potential cases from year to year. We have reduced the budgeted levels for legal fees over the past few years and we have been fortunate to be able to stay within these lower levels. However, seeing the recent increases in legal fee expenditures, and seeing a rise in the number of pending cases, a suggestion to increase allocations may be warranted.

A review of legal expenses and settlements over the past few years is underway to determine if there are any trends indicating areas that we may be able to offer additional support to curtail future litigation.

It should also be noted, that the responsibilities of the in-house attorney has expanded over the years to include oversight of 504's, residency issues, Harassment, Intimidation and Bullying investigations and trainings, amongst other areas. The value of these additional responsibilities cannot be measured against the expenditures previously made to outside counsel.

## TRANSPORTATION UPDATE

The Transportation Program is an integral part of the South Orange Maplewood School District. It is a non-academic program that represents a significant portion of the Districts' budgeted expenditures. More than 2,100 residents are provided transportation to and from school or aid in lieu of transportation at a cost of more than \$5,200,000 or about 4.5% of the 2015-16 total General Fund budgeted expenditures. The Board must provide the pupil transportation services in accordance with the policies that have been adopted to support the education program. The transportation costs that are attributable to Special Education are approximately \$3,200,000 of the \$5,200,000 total. This total includes salaries and benefits for the drivers and aides, the expense for the contracted services for the special education students and maintaining the district buses used to transport these students.

Out of district transportation is coordinated through cooperative transportation programs by the Sussex Cooperative, the Essex Regional Education Services Commission and the Morris Union Jointure Commission. These coordinated efforts enable us to lower the cost of these transportation services by sharing routes with neighboring districts.

Past budget analyses have reviewed the entire transportation program and identified efficiencies which were incorporated into the current program, such as an alteration to bell schedules allowing the district to save approximately \$100,000 a year in transportation costs while continuing to offer the same services to students. Current routes continue to be analyzed to determine if further efficiencies may be available. It should be noted, that as we try to more efficiently utilize buses, scheduling becomes tighter. In the case of inclement weather or other unforeseen circumstances, there would be less flexibility for response.

Another area reviewed annually is the value in providing transportation services through district employees versus contracting for services. Traditionally the costs are similar between the two options.

### Contracted Routes:

Cost of a tiered route (1 bus doing 2 routes) is approximately \$47,000 annually.

### In-House Routes:

#### Regular Education Students:

Driver (salary and benefits for 0.5 FTE)	\$35,000
Depreciation for bus (\$82,000/12 years)	\$ 6,800
Annual maintenance for bus	<u>\$ 5,500</u>
	\$47,300

#### Special Education Students:

Driver (salary and benefits for 0.5 FTE)	\$35,000
Aide (salary and benefits for 0.5 FTE)	\$25,000
Depreciation for bus (\$51,000/12 years)	\$ 4,250
Annual maintenance for bus	<u>\$ 5,500</u>
	\$69,750

There are both pros and cons to serving students with district-owned buses versus contracted routes.

District Operated:

PROS

- Control of vehicles, staff and routes
- Flexibility (routing and scheduling)
- Staff loyalty
- Driver Consistency
- Ease of communication with drivers
- Avoid risk of inflated prices for bids
- Implementation of procedures/standards

CONS

- Vehicle Maintenance & Liability
- Staffing responsibilities
- Capital investment in bus fleet
- Secured space for parking
- Administrative responsibilities

Contracted Services:

PROS

- Staffing is contractor’s responsibility
- Limit increase in cost to CPI for renewals
- Reduced capital investment
- Reduced administration involvement
- Less maintenance responsibility
- Reduced land and facility needs
- Risk lack of providers
- Less liability and maintenance

CONS

- Limited competition
- Diminished enforcement of student discipline guidelines
- Reduced ability to communicate with drivers
- Risk of inflated prices for bids

Mandated: Transportation of Remote Students

Board policy provides transportation to and from school for public and nonpublic school pupils in grades K through 8 who live more than two (2) miles from the school they attend and in grades 9 through 12 who live more than two and a half (2.5) miles from the school they attend, as determined in NJAC 6A:27-1 et. seq. Approximately 300 in-district students are transported based on these criteria.

School	# of Remote Students Transported
Columbia HS	5
Maplewood MS	2
South Orange MS	8
Clinton ES	0
Jefferson ES	100
Marshall ES	144
Seth Boyden ES	35
Tuscan ES	0
South Mountain	0
So. Mountain Annex	32
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>326</b>

### Non-Remote Students

The District also provides transportation for some students residing less than the distance mandated by statute (labeled “non-remote” by NJDOE). If the District assigns a student to attend a school outside his or her home area and the school is more than one (1) mile from the student’s home, the student is eligible for transportation provided by the District (Board Policy 8600). The District makes such assignments to maintain the pairing of Jefferson and Marshall Elementary Schools and to provide a service or program only offered at a specific school, including but not limited to the ESL program and the Demonstration program at Seth Boyden. 443 students are transported based on these criteria. It should be noted that these non-remote counts are for those students whose home to school distance is less than or equal to two miles, but greater than one mile. If these programs were to be maintained, but courtesy busing eliminated there are additional students that the district would still be required to bus.

	Non-remote >1.0 <2.0 miles	Remote >= 2.0 miles	Totals
Jefferson Students from Marshall area	114	100	214
Marshall Students from the Jefferson area	103	144	247
Seth Boyden Demonstration Program	83	35	118
ESL Program at Clinton Elementary	29	0	29
ESL Program at South Orange Middle	2	1	3
“Hazardous route” to Marshall Elementary*	32	0	32
“Hazardous route” to South Mountain*	80	32	112
Total Students Transported	443	312	755

\*Students who are required to walk along routes that have been identified as hazardous by the South Orange Village Department of Public Safety are eligible for transportation.

### Courtesy Busing to Columbia High School

The Superintendent may grant courtesy transportation to non-remote students requesting to walk to an existing remote bus stop near their home if there are empty seats on the bus. Courtesy busing is currently offered to Columbia High School students who reside in the Newstead area of South Orange. Currently there are 5 students who require transportation from this area (live more than 2.5 miles from Columbia High School), and approximately 34 students who receive courtesy busing. When the revised bell schedule was instituted at Columbia High School it was necessary to add a second route for both the regular education students and the special education students.

### South Mountain and Annex Shuttle

A shuttle bus service is provided between South Mountain and the Annex. Students in the South Mountain area may walk to South Mountain and ride the shuttle to the Annex. Students who reside in the area of the Annex may walk to the Annex and ride the shuttle to South Mountain. Over 114 students take advantage of the shuttle. All of these students live less than 2.0 miles from their respective schools. Approximately 32 students live less than 1.0 mile from school.

## Routing Considerations/Efficiencies

### Columbia High School:

- *If courtesy busing was eliminated, it may be possible to transport the 5 students mandated with a smaller bus and combine this route with the special education transportation route to the high school, freeing up a driver for alternate routes. However this courtesy busing has been offered for many years and ridership on this bus is nearly full. 34 students would be impacted.*
- The district has been picking up the CHS students at 7 different bus stops in the Newstead area even though the original intention of this courtesy busing was that students would walk to the remote bus stops (one or two) servicing the high school. Time constraints that may result if this route is paired with another may make it necessary to reduce the number of bus stops offered.

### Maplewood Middle School:

- 1 regular education student who lives more than 2.0 miles from the school is transported to Maplewood Middle School. This 1 student attended Marshall Jefferson but because their address is in Maplewood they are assigned to Maplewood Middle School. These students live less than 2.0 miles from South Orange Middle School.

### South Orange Middle School:

- 8 regular education students who live more than 2.0 miles from the school are transported to South Orange Middle School. These 8 students are zoned for Clinton Elementary School and then matriculate to SOMS. These students live less than 2.0 miles from Maplewood Middle School.

### Clinton Elementary School:

- 29 students are transported to Clinton Elementary School for the ESL program all of whom live between 1.0 and 2.0 miles from Clinton School (less than the state mandated 2.0 miles but over the 1.0 courtesy limit defined by Board Policy for students in programs outside their resident school). 13 of these 29 students are zoned for Seth Boyden School, 8 are zoned for South Mountain and 3 for Marshall/Jefferson. If an ESL program was available at Seth Boyden School, or available at multiple elementary schools, it would reduce the transportation needs for the program, allowing for more routing flexibility.
- *If courtesy busing was eliminated the ESL route to Clinton School would be eliminated. All 29 students live less than 2.0 miles from Clinton School. 29 students would be impacted.*

### Jefferson Elementary School:

- *If busing was eliminated for those students who reside between 1.0 and 2.0 miles from Jefferson Elementary School, we could reduce the number of bus routes necessary from 5 routes down to 2 routes. 114 students would be impacted. Areas north and west of Marshall School would be impacted including streets around Montrose School, streets around Irvington Avenue, and streets between Marshall School and Scotland Road/South Orange Avenue area.*

- *The Marshall-Jefferson pairing is serviced by both contracted routes and in-district routes. Transportation costs to continue this program as it currently exists is projected to be approximately \$250,000 for the 2016-2017 school year.*

#### Marshall Elementary School:

- *If busing was eliminated for those students who reside between 1.0 and 2.0 miles from Marshall Elementary School, we could reduce the number of bus routes necessary from 6 routes down to 3 routes (or 4 routes if we were to maintain the hazardous busing). Between 103 and 132 students would be impacted, depending on the impact on hazardous routes. Areas south and east of Jefferson School would be impacted including streets around Walton Road, Maplewood Avenue, Dunnell Road and those streets around DeHart Park. Also impacted would be those streets around Montrose School that currently receive busing due to the hazardous route designation.*
- *The Marshall-Jefferson pairing is serviced by both contracted routes and in-district routes. Transportation costs to continue this program as it currently exists is projected to be approximately \$250,000 for the 2016-2017 school year.*

#### Seth Boyden Elementary School:

- *If busing was eliminated for those students who reside between 1.0 and 2.0 miles from Seth Boyden Elementary School, we could reduce the number of bus routes necessary from 3 routes down to 1 route. 83 students would be impacted. The areas impacted range from students residing in the Tuscan area, some parts of the Jefferson area, and students living in the areas between Irvington Avenue and South Orange Avenue.*
- *Transportation for the Seth Boyden Demonstration program is currently serviced by contracted routes. Transportation costs to continue this program as it currently exists is projected to be approximately \$115,000 for the 2016-2017 school year. This includes 3 tiered routes serviced by a contracted service.*

#### South Mountain Elementary School and Annex:

- *If courtesy busing was to be eliminated, in addition to eliminating the shuttles between South Mountain and the Annex, transportation to South Mountain would be eliminated (including the hazardous route transportation). A route would still be required to take students to the Annex, so elimination of courtesy busing would allow us to reduce the number of bus routes to one. 80 students would be impacted by the elimination of courtesy busing. Over 104 students would be impacted by the elimination of the shuttles between schools.*
- *Transportation for South Mountain School is serviced by contracted routes (an in-district route services an additional shuttle route). Transportation costs to continue this program as it currently exists is projected to be approximately \$100,000 for the 2016-2017 school year. This includes 2 tiered routes serviced by a contracted service and the in-district shuttle route.*

*Overall, nearly 500 students would be impacted by the total elimination of Courtesy Busing. The elimination of the courtesy busing, given current enrollment figures, would allow us to reduce*

*the contracted routes currently serviced and save an estimated \$200,000 depending on the realignment of remaining routes.*

### Subscription Busing

State law allows a school district to provide subscription busing to defray the cost of non-remote busing. Subscription busing is a program where the district offers busing to parents at a fee to cover all or part of the costs of the non-remote busing. Parents of students qualifying for free or reduced price meals under the federal school lunch program are not required to pay for the busing. If the Board were to consider a reduction in the non-statutory transportation, subscription busing is one way to offer the service while increasing revenue to offset transportation expenses. However, any anticipated savings would need to be weighed against the costs of establishing and administering a billing system for the program, which are expected to be substantial.

When considered in the past, typical subscription busing programs charged around \$600-\$700 for a seat on the bus. The seats were usually offered on a first come first serve basis, offering only available seats on existing routes rather than adding an additional bus to service subscription busing. If the Board wished to consider offering Subscription busing, we would review what other districts are doing and the potential of what such a program would look like in South Orange Maplewood. Consider for reference that if you were to offer subscription busing to the 34 Columbia HS courtesy students, and all partook, that would be a revenue of approximately \$23,000, which would be about a break-even for the cost of running the route.

### Non-Public School Transportation

When a school district is required to provide remote busing to public school students, it is also required to provide remote busing to certain nonpublic school students. A school district may decide to pay the parents of these nonpublic school students an amount of money (established by the state) in lieu of busing. The established rate for the 2015-16 school year is \$884. If the cost of providing transportation exceeds this amount, aid in lieu of transportation reimbursement is provided to the student. Approximately 13% of the overall transportation costs are attributable to aid in lieu/nonpublic transportation. Efforts have been made, as required by law, to try to provide transportation by providing transportation for these students wherever possible. Routes have been added each year saving the district around \$70,000 by providing transportation rather than aid in lieu of transportation.