

FEB. 2024



# SUPERINTENDENT NEWSLETTER

## Governor's Proposed Budget Cuts

This week, Wynantskill joined several of our partner school districts within Rensselaer County to advocate against the cuts in our state aid funding. We spent the day in individual meetings with the assemblymen/women and the senators who represent our region.



More than half of the schools across NYS have a deep concern regarding the proposed budget by New York Governor Kathy Hochul. The Governor's Executive Budget proposal eliminates the "hold harmless" provision for school funding.

Under this budget, our small district of Wynantskill will face a significant reduction in Foundation Aid of over 9% which will amount to a loss of \$177,034.00. Last year and several years prior, we would see a 3% increase. This was a small increase and coupled with the amount levied in the property tax, still made keeping up with salary increases and inflation, next to impossible. Each year we have had to be very creative, trimming back where we could, in order to close the budget gap each year. This reduction of \$ 177,034.00 poses a direct threat to the quality of education and resources we can provide to our students.

We believe that our supportive politicians in Albany will help the Governor see that the Executive proposal will hurt our schools and take away from our children's education but to achieve this goal, we need your help.

First and foremost, we urge every member of our community to stay informed about the proposed budget and its potential impacts on our school district. Understanding the gravity of the situation is crucial in recruiting support and advocacy efforts.

Secondly, we invite you to join us in advocating for the Wynantskill UFSD by taking action. There are two primary ways you can make a difference:

Sign This Petition: By adding your name to this petition, you are demonstrating your support for maintaining adequate funding for Wynantskill UFSD. Every signature strengthens our voice and sends a powerful message to decision-makers.

**Contact Your Local Officials**: Reach out to Wynantskill UFSD's local representatives, including state legislators and government officials, to express your concerns about the proposed budget cuts. Your voice matters, and your advocacy can influence decision-making processes.

**Governor:**

- Kathy Hochul – (518) 474-8390, [email](#)

**Lieutenant Governor:**

- Antonio Delgado – (518) 402-2292, [email](#)

**Assembly:**

- Scott Bendett – (518) 272-6149, [email](#)
- John McDonald – (518) 455-4474, [email](#)

**Senate:**

- Jake Ashby – (518) 371-2751, [email](#)

Feel free to use the prepopulated letter on the following page:

Dear **XXXX**:

The Governor's executive budget proposal would have a devastating impact on our school district. Wynantskill UFSD would **lose \$177,034** in funding due to the Governor's proposed changes to Foundation Aid.

The Governor is proposing to do away with "hold harmless" or "save harmless," a long-standing provision that provided districts with aid no less than what they are currently receiving. She is also proposing an adjustment to how the state calculates inflation that takes a 10-year average and drops the highest and lowest years rather than using the actual calculated consumer price index (CPI) from the previous calendar year as current law states.

Our school district, like many across the state, relies heavily on state aid. In fact, it currently makes up **34.03% percent of our revenue**. The property tax cap, which was implemented after the creation of the Foundation Aid formula, makes it difficult to account for the difference expected under current law.

This coupled with the loss of federal stimulus funding and increased student needs would result in cuts and reductions including academic and social-emotional supports that are so very much needed in our school.

We respectfully ask you and your colleagues to reject the Governor's proposal for Foundation Aid. We do not understand the logic for making this change considering the state's financial standing, and the increased needs of our students locally and across the state.

We also advocate for the state to provide funding to study Foundation Aid so that the state can create a funding formula that is more equitable and predictable for school districts across the state. The state has avoided addressing this issue for far too long.

**NAME**





## Capital Project Update

- NYSED approved the proposed plans on 1/26/24. The project is now in full swing and on track to be completed on schedule.
- Contracts have already been awarded to AW Ferrell, Trian, and TBS. They are procuring materials and getting ready for a Spring start.
- Architect, Ed Anker and Schoolhouse Construction Services will be soliciting 2 bids for contractors: a General Contractor and an Electrical Contractor
- Drawing and specifications will be issued for Bid on 2/14
- Pre-Bid Walkthrough will take place on 2/21
- Bids due 3/14 at 3pm in the cafeteria
- March 21st BOE meeting award Bids

Follow more updates here:

<https://www.wynantskillufsd.org/capital-project/>

*Gardner-Dickinson is looking to have this project fully completed by the end of 2024.*



# Stop-Arm Program



In an active effort to enhance student safety, the Wynantskill Union Free School District has implemented measures to crack down on school bus stop-arm violations. In January 2024, a total of 28 tickets were issued to drivers who illegally passed stopped school buses within the district.

The district's proactive approach involves the use of high-tech cameras installed on the exterior of school buses, capturing clear evidence of motorists disregarding the stop-arm signals. These cameras automatically activate when the stop-arm is extended, providing indisputable documentation of the violations.

Local law enforcement, in collaboration with the school district, reviewed the footage and identified the violators, resulting in the issuance of 28 tickets during the month of January alone. The penalties for these violations may include fines, license points, and other consequences as dictated by state law.

School administration and law enforcement are emphasizing the severity of the issue, underscoring the potential dangers posed to students when drivers fail to obey school bus stop signals. The district is committed to maintaining a safe environment for its students during their daily commute to and from school.

An estimated 50,000 cars illegally pass stopped school buses in New York State every day. As the program gains momentum, WUFSD hopes that the increased enforcement will act as a deterrent, ensuring the well-being of students across the district.