



KINGSWAY REGIONAL SCHOOL DISTRICT

Committed to Excellence

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Dear School Community:

Last month I sent you a letter communicating Kingsway's tentative budget and a number of budget reductions we needed to make to close a large deficit. Since then, we have had the opportunity to consider your feedback, ensuring that every decision we made to balance our budget, despite significant challenges, was done in a way that preserved and/or enhanced student experiences next year. We will not compromise our standard of excellence, despite the challenges created by insufficient and inequitable state aid allocations.

The final budget, adopted on Thursday, April 27th, reflects a *new* approach to how we will administer our schools as well as a number of significant reductions taken to close a \$2.4 million deficit. You can read through our [Fiscal Year 2018 Budget Summary](#) located on our website for more details regarding our organizational summary, enrollment projections, significant challenges, deficit explanation, and financial details per department. The information enclosed in this letter aims to update you on a few of the items we focused our attention toward since tentative adoption.

What has been cut from the final budget?

Twenty-two (22) positions and the school resource officer have been cut from the final budget. This is two (2) more than what I had communicated during the tentative budget process. The following positions have been reduced from the 2017-18 School Budget: (4) Administrators; (1.5) Teachers; (2) Counselors; (1) Athletic Trainer; (5.5) Secretaries; (5) Paraprofessionals; (2) Custodians; (1) Maintenance Staff; and, (1) School Resource Officer. In addition, the following programs have been cut: middle school sports; our Alternative High School (Twilight); all out-of-district professional development; and, various equipment and capital improvement items.

What has been restored since Tentative Budget Adoption?

The following programs have been restored and will run during the 2017-18 School Year.

- **Freshmen Sports** – I fielded a number of calls and emails from our parents asking that we raise the registration fee to *pay for freshmen sports*. A parent survey earlier this month generated 571 responses; 439 (74%) confirming that they would agree to pay \$195 per season to restore all freshmen athletics. The one-hundred (\$100) dollar increase will raise enough revenue to cover the \$96,000 expenditure. Therefore, freshmen sports will not be cut from the budget and communication regarding this fee will be sent in advance of the start of next year's fall season.
- **Activity Fee** – Your feedback during the freshmen sports survey suggested that we charge a registration fee for all co-curricular activities. Therefore, since this has become a fairness issue,

Home of the Dragons

we will be amending Policy 2436 to include a ninety-five (\$95) Activity Registration Fee. This fee will be paid annually by those middle and high school students who choose to participate in an intramural; in a wellness or performing arts program; or, in an activity or club next year. The additional revenue will be used to restore/preserve co-curricular activities originally reduced during the tentative budget process and be used to replace middle school sports with an expanded intramural program.

- **Late Bus** – The late bus has been restored two days per week (Tuesdays and Thursdays) next year for middle and high school students. Maintaining a late bus will ensure all students have opportunities to participate in after-school co-curricular programs. The cost to return the late bus two days per week will be paid for by proceeds from our Community Education & Recreation (CER) Program. The cost to run the late bus twice per week is \$35,000.
- **Random Drug Testing** – Our schools and school community is not immune to the harmful effects of substance abuse and, as a result of the tragic passing of one of our high school students, our ‘no-tolerance’ policy is going to be a focus for next school year. Therefore, a new random drug testing policy will be established for students who participate in co-curricular and/or athletic programs as well as those students who drive to school, allowing us to randomly test several hundred students for alcohol or other drug use and require mandatory drug treatment therapy/programming. The full cost of this program will be sponsored by the Kingsway Education Foundation (KEF) through the Foundation’s Mini-Grant Program. The cost to run this program is \$18,000.
- **School Security Specialist** – We have enjoyed a collaborative relationship with the Woolwich Township Police Department and have, together, worked to resolve a number of serious issues threatening the safety and welfare of our school community. However, given our budget cuts, the nearly \$80,000 annual cost paid to the Township of Woolwich has been reduced. In response to this loss, and in an effort to maintain school security as a top priority in our District, we have reduced two (2.0) additional paraprofessionals, bringing our staff cuts to a total of twenty-two (22), and awarded a contract to a private school security company to provide similar services. The private company will provide us with a retired law enforcement officer (either state trooper or municipal police) with a minimum of twenty years’ experience at nearly half the cost.
- **PSAT Testing** – PSAT testing for our 9th, 10th, and 11th grade students has been restored for next year and will be sponsored by the KEF through the Foundation’s Mini-Grant Program. The cost to run this program is \$14,319.

Renew the fight with Trenton...

As we inch closer to June 30th, the deadline for when the State Legislature is required to adopt the FY18 State Budget, we are encouraged that the New Jersey Senate has heard our plea for fair school aid. I was proud to [participate in a press conference](#) with our Kingsway team on the steps of the NJ State House Annex on Tuesday, May 2nd, where Senate President Sweeney [pledged more aid for underfunded NJ Schools](#), stating that the Senate would not pass a State Budget unless the State re-appropriates school aid to the underfunded school districts. Senator Sarlo supported this announcement by saying, “[A]s part of the budget, we will begin the process of funding the formula.”



While this is great news and we are excited that the Senate stands with Kingsway, and hundreds of districts like Kingsway, pledging their willingness to resolve the school funding fiasco, the Assembly has failed to act. Now is certainly not the time to quit; we need our community to continue to hold the Assembly Speaker Vincent Prieto accountable. You can do so by calling Speaker Prieto at (201) 770-1303 and telling him that he must work tirelessly to resolve this issue before June 30th.

Should you have questions regarding adoption of the 2017-18 school budget or our fight for fair school funding, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Very truly yours,



Dr. James J. Lavender
Superintendent of Schools

