

Inspire. Achieve. Innovate

Welcome to **SADDLE RIVER SCHOOL DISTRICT**



*A presentation to the Board of Education
about our schools, our community, and our future.*



INSPIRE

Curiosity
and Confidence



ACHIEVE

Excellence
in All We Do



INNOVATE

Preparing Students
for Tomorrow

WHY WE ARE HERE TONIGHT

A fast-moving summer of new information, rising costs, and enrollment growth brought us to this discussion.

**NOVEMBER 17
2025**

COMMUNITY LETTER
FROM THE SUPERINTENDENT



A letter was sent to our community to explain the current financial situation and our potential needs.

APRIL 2026

BUDGET PRESENTATION
TO THE PUBLIC



Presented the 2026–2027 budget, which addressed an approximately \$1.5 million budget gap through the strategic use of available surplus fund balance and eligible state-approved waivers, including healthcare and enrollment waivers.

MAY 2026

PLANNING
FOR GROWTH



The district reviewed its current budget and determined it could move forward with commissioning a professional demographic study to better understand future enrollment.

JUNE 2026

BOARD PRESIDENT
SPOKE ABOUT NEED



Our Board President spoke about the need for an operational question to maintain a balanced budget moving forward.

JULY 2026

HEALTHCARE COSTS
RISE AGAIN



The district received notification that healthcare benefit costs are projected to increase another

34%

AUGUST 2026

NEW ENROLLMENT
PROJECTIONS &
FINANCIAL IMPACT
ANALYZED



With new enrollment projections and financial impact analyzed, the district completed the demographic study to combine the future impact of the growing enrollment.

AUGUST 21

COUNTY DEADLINE



Operational question
due to the County Office:

AUGUST 21

Because of this deadline, the district and Board attorney worked within a very compressed timeframe to review the demographic projections, analyze anticipated costs, determine the amount necessary to support future district operations, and develop the proposed operational question.

**Before asking our community for additional support,
we have actively pursued savings, partnerships, and efficiencies.**

1



SMARTER PURCHASING

Renegotiating vendors, reviewing subscriptions,
and seeking competitive quotes.

2



SHARED SERVICES

Including our shared Business Administrator.

3



BOROUGH PARTNERSHIPS

- Lawn care and snow removal provided through our municipal partnership at no cost to the district.
- Increased borough partnerships coming our way!
- We'll be joining the Town Hall with receiving financial support from pilot programs.
- Receiving support by having a Class III Officer at no charge to the school's budget.

4



EXPANSION OF IN-HOUSE EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMS

Wandell has expanded its special education opportunities for students so they can be educated at home with their peers and create a loving, inclusive environment.

5



REDUCTION OF COSTS PURSUED

Implemented a transportation waiver to reduce district busing expenditures. Researched alternative healthcare providers in an effort to reduce costs. However, no vendor was able to offer a more competitive rate.

6



STAFFING CONSOLIDATION THROUGH ATTRITION

Following a full-time teacher retirement, the district consolidated staffing needs and did not replace the position for the 2025–2026 school year.

How rising costs, enrollment growth, and years of constrained revenue have brought us to this moment



2% STATE LEVY CAP

For years, the district's ability to increase the tax levy has generally been constrained while many operating expenses have risen at higher rates.



RISING HEALTHCARE COSTS

30%+

Healthcare increased more than 30% last year, with another significant increase anticipated.



ENROLLMENT GROWTH

Saddle River has already experienced significant student enrollment growth.



MORE GROWTH AHEAD

377

The new demographic study projects substantial additional enrollment associated with future housing development.



WE HAVE A COMPLETED DEMOGRAPHIC STUDY

AUGUST 2026

We are planning today for the educational needs
of a growing community.



This Is Not Isolated to Saddle River. This Is a Statewide Challenge Across New Jersey.



The 2% Budget Cap Is Not Keeping Pace With Costs That Are Outside the District's Control.

OUR FINANCIAL REALITY

TODAY AND INTO THE FUTURE

How rising costs, enrollment growth, and years of constrained revenue have brought us to this moment.

HISTORICAL BUDGET TRENDS & STATEWIDE

1.9%
23-24

2.0%
25-26



2.2%
24-25
6.1%
26-27

BREAKING THE 2% CAP

THE FINANCIAL REALITY OF TODAY

2%
STATE LEVY CAP

The traditional annual limit on levy growth.



31%
HEALTHCARE INCREASE

Experienced in the 2026-27 budget.

AND MANY OTHER ESSENTIAL COSTS CONTINUE TO RISE



TRANSPORTATION



TUITION



SPECIAL EDUCATION



INSURANCE



UTILITIES



SALARIES



SUPPLIES & SERVICES



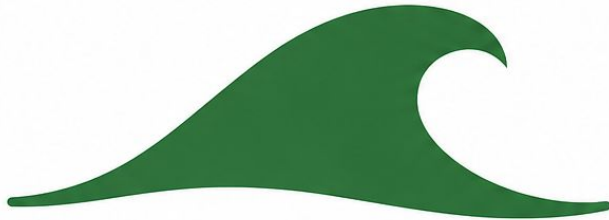
- ✓ Since 2012, school budget increases remained around 2% to eliminate a budget vote.
- ✓ Prior to 2012, every school voted on budgets yearly.
- ✓ Rising operational costs such as utilities, transportation and liability insurance are far exceeding the 2% budget cap.
- ✓ In 2020, a law was passed that transferred the majority of health benefit increases to the District. This trend is expected to continue, impacting schools statewide, often causing extensive cuts to programs.

STUDENT ENROLLMENT IS ON THE RISE.

We will experience **TWO WAVES** of student enrollment growth.

1 FIRST WAVE: ALREADY HERE + ORGANIC GROWTH

Between the 2025 and 2026 school year with the completion of Choctaw and organic growth.



2 SECOND WAVE: COMING NEXT + ORGANIC GROWTH

Once these next three construction developments are completed.



-  AvalonBay Communities – 1 Route 17 South (275 units)
-  Toll Brothers – 107–115 E. Allendale Road (54 units)
-  Toll Brothers – Algonquin Trail / W. Saddle River Rd. (48 units)

WHAT WE LEARNED FROM THE AUGUST DEMOGRAPHIC STUDY.

Our numbers are growing.



These are projections from a demographic study:

Demographic Study for the Saddle River School District August 2026

GROWTH AT WANDELL



FIRST WAVE

GROWTH SINCE 2022-23
(THROUGH 2025-26 SCHOOL YEAR)

115 → 145

STUDENTS
(2022-23)

STUDENTS
(2025-26)

+26.1%

INCREASE

TOTAL PK-12 ENROLLMENT



SECOND WAVE

CURRENT (2025-26)

352

STUDENTS



PROJECTED (2030-31)

480

STUDENTS

(WITH FUTURE DEVELOPMENTS)



+128

STUDENTS

+36%

INCREASE

BY SCHOOL LEVEL (SEND/RECEIVE)



WANDELL SCHOOL
PK-5

145 → 211

STUDENTS

STUDENTS

+66 STUDENTS

+46% INCREASE



MIDDLE SCHOOL
(GRADES 6-8)

63 → 102

STUDENTS

STUDENTS

+39 STUDENTS

+62% INCREASE



HIGH SCHOOL
(GRADES 9-12)

144 → 167

STUDENTS

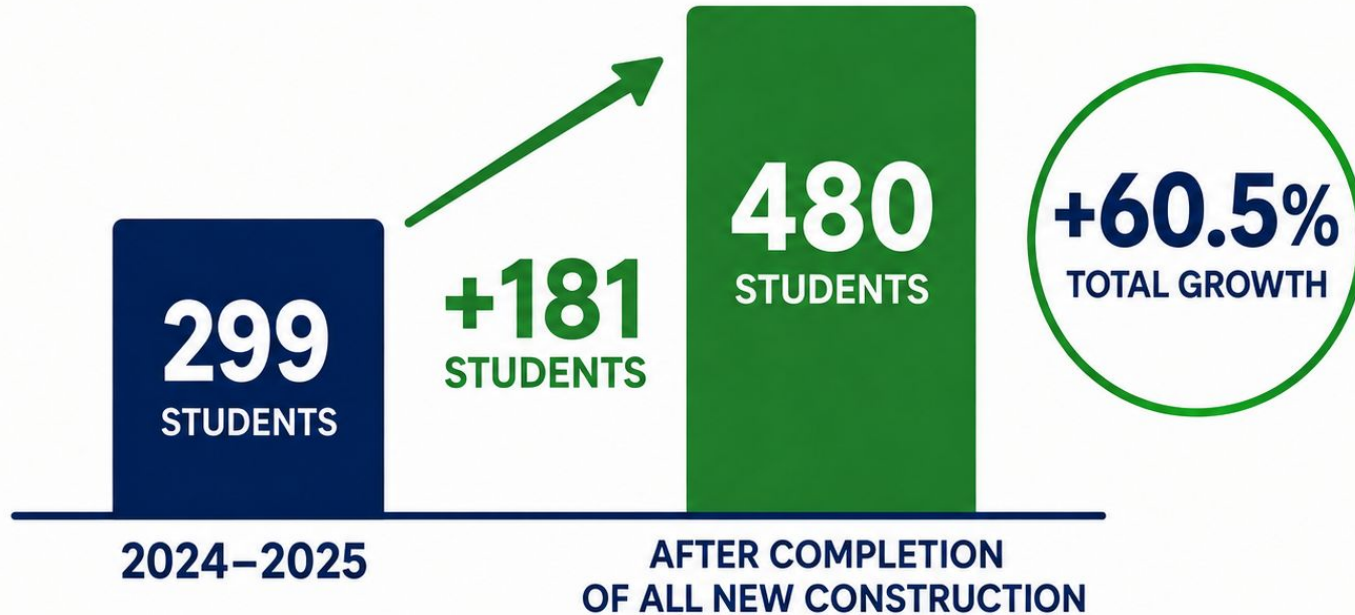
STUDENTS

+23 STUDENTS

+16% INCREASE

TOTAL GROWTH OF SADDLE RIVER SCHOOL DISTRICT

ONCE ALL NEW CONSTRUCTION IS COMPLETED



WHAT WILL THE ADDITIONAL FUNDING SUPPORT?

Investing in Our Students. Protecting Our Classrooms. Strengthening Our Future.



THIS FUNDING WILL ALLOW
WANDELL TO HIRE

5 NEW TEACHERS

TO PREVENT OVERSIZED
CLASSROOM EXPANSION



4 HOMEROOM TEACHERS

to maintain small class sizes



1 FULL-TIME INTERVENTIONIST

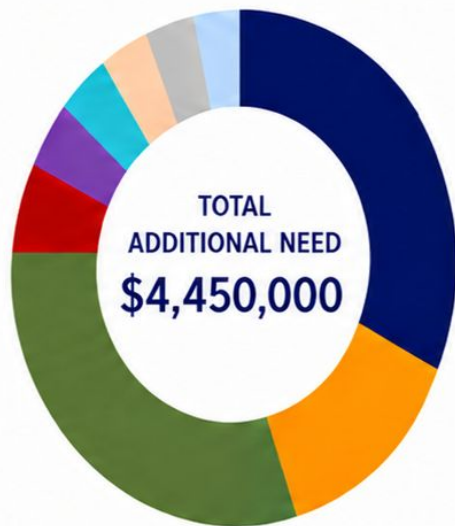
to help students with learning gaps

EXPLANATION OF ADDITIONAL FUNDS NEEDED

Investing in Our Students. Protecting Our Classrooms. Strengthening Our Future.

WITHOUT THESE FUNDS, WE WOULD BE STARTING THE 2027-2028 BUDGET AT A DEFICIT DUE TO THE LACK OF AVAILABLE FUND BALANCE, WHICH HELPED US BALANCE THE 2026-2027 BUDGET.

WHERE THE ADDITIONAL FUNDS GO (FY 2027-2028)



	SPECIAL ED \$900,000	20.20%
	TUITION (NH / RAMSEY) \$478,675	12.21%
	HEALTH BENEFITS \$347,165	35.00%
	BUSINESS (INSURANCE, UTILITIES, TRANSPORTATION, ETC.) \$109,748	5.00%
	SALARIES (CURRENT) \$99,647	2.70%
	INSTRUCTIONAL SUPPLIES & SUBSCRIPTIONS \$69,650	1.62%
	BUILDING & GROUNDS \$79,178	3.00%
	TECHNOLOGY \$53,837	3.00%
	ADDITIONAL (NEW STAFF) \$650,000	3.00%
	1,839,542 DEFICIT	

FY 2027-2028 BUDGET SNAPSHOT



ESTIMATED TOTAL COSTS

\$16,162,054



BUDGET AT 2% CAP

\$11,397,054



ESTIMATED HEALTH BENEFIT
WAIVER

\$315,000



TOTAL NEEDED

\$4,450,000

WHY NOVEMBER? WHY NOW?

Understanding the timing of the operational question

1



AVOID ADDITIONAL ELECTION COSTS

Placing the question on the November general election ballot avoids the additional expense of conducting a separate election.

A future special election could result in an estimated **\$30,000–\$50,000** in additional district costs.

2

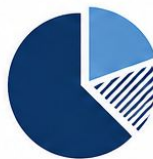


ENROLLMENT GROWTH IS HAPPENING NOW

Student enrollment is already increasing through organic growth, with additional enrollment anticipated from new residential development.

Growth creates additional staffing, programming, tuition, and transportation needs.

3



LIMITED FINANCIAL FLEXIBILITY

The 2026–2027 budget is tightly structured and relied on available fund balance and state-approved waivers to achieve balance.

This leaves the district with limited financial flexibility and less available surplus to address future unexpected needs.

4



UNPREDICTABLE SPECIAL EDUCATION COSTS

New or existing students may require specialized programs, services, placements, tuition, or transportation.

These significant costs can arise unexpectedly during the school year and can vary greatly from student to student.

5



PLANNING BEFORE THE 2027–2028 BUDGET

A November decision provides financial clarity before development of the next school budget.

This allows the Board to plan based on the resources that will be available.



The timing is intended to provide financial clarity, avoid the cost of a separate election, and allow the district to plan for enrollment and educational needs before the next budget is developed.

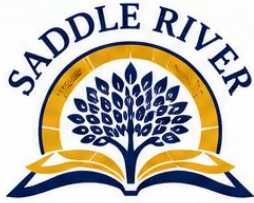
HOW WILL THIS TAX LEVY AFFECT THE AVERAGE TAXPAYER?



PROJECTED INCREASE

\$3,330

**ON AN AVERAGE
ASSESSED HOME
AT \$1,924,866**



— SCHOOL DISTRICT —
Inspire. Achieve. Innovate.

TONIGHT'S DECISION. YOUR VOICE IN NOVEMBER.

Understanding what happens next

1



**TONIGHT
BOARD VOTES**

The Board decides whether to place the operational question on the November ballot.



2



**NOVEMBER
QUESTION ON THE BALLOT**

If approved by the Board tonight, the operational question moves forward to Saddle River voters.



3



**THEN
THE COMMUNITY DECIDES**

Saddle River voters make the final decision.

**Tonight, the Board decides whether to ask the question.
In November, the community decides the answer.**



OUR COMMITMENT



CLEAR
INFORMATION



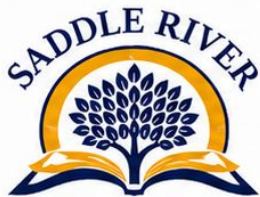
TRANSPARENT
COMMUNICATION



RESPONSIBLE
PLANNING

The district will continue providing information about the question, its financial impact, and the educational needs it is intended to address.





SCHOOL DISTRICT
Inspire. Achieve. Innovate.

COMMUNICATION IS KEY

*If the question moves forward tonight,
our commitment is to keep our entire community
informed every step of the way.*



SEPTEMBER



SEPTEMBER 9

Community
Information Meeting
7:00–8:00 PM
Wandell School



SEPTEMBER 23

Board of Education
Presentation
Wandell School



SEPTEMBER 26

Community Car Show
Information Booth
Rinlaub Park



SEPTEMBER 29

Back to School Night
Parent Information
Table & Updates



OCTOBER 5

Community Information
Session
6:00–7:00 PM
Town Hall Meeting
Beginning at 7:00 PM



OCTOBER 7

PAWS Meeting
Presentation
Wandell School



**MORE
TO COME!**

Additional
opportunities
will be added as
we move toward
November.

MULTIPLE WAYS TO STAY INFORMED



**DEDICATED SECTION
ON OUR WEBPAGE**
www.wandellschool.org

A transparent online resource
with current information
and updates.



**REGULAR
COMMUNITY
UPDATES**

Ongoing communications
and information blasts
to the community.



**PRESENTATIONS &
RESOURCES**

PowerPoints, informational
materials and updates
available to the public.



**COMMUNITY
MAILERS**

Information delivered
directly to Saddle River
residents.



YOUR QUESTIONS MATTER. YOUR VOICE MATTERS.

Our goal is to ensure every resident has access to clear information,
understands the impact of the question, and has opportunities to
ask questions before voting in November.



LISTEN



INFORM



CONNECT

— SADDLE RIVER SCHOOL DISTRICT —

NOVEMBER OPERATIONAL QUESTION

COMMUNITY QUESTIONS & ANSWERS

Ask. We Answer. Everyone Stays Informed.

➤ Your Voice Counts. ➤

