

**New Hartford Public Schools Special
Board of Education Meeting
March 31, 2021**

**6:00 pm/Virtual Meeting
Join Zoom Meeting**

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/89744095557?pwd=emR3L1BHZ0Y2T3BmMUFFLzB1TWczZz09>

Meeting ID: 897 4409 5557

Passcode: P5h7Yp

Present- Tim Goff, Karl Hermonat, Penny Miller, Tom Buzzi, Tim Klepps, Tony Persechino, Heather Tomala, Kelly O'Dell Longhi, Mary Stempien

Other- Brian Murphy, Kelly Carroll, Amanda Shaw, Barbara Mclean.

A. Chair to Open Meeting - Tim Goff opened fully virtual meeting at 6.02pm.

B. Pledge of Allegiance - The board joined in the pledge of Allegiance.

C. Communication to the Board

Chairman Goff explained that the reason for tonight's special meeting, was in response to the sixteen letters and emails received by the Board of Education, regarding parent's thoughts on the proposed 2021-2022 district budget and specifically staffing levels for the next school year. Goff explained the importance of the public's input and that the Board of Education should acknowledge and work together with the public to ensure the best outcome for the New Hartford Public Schools.

Although Goff did not read all sixteen letters aloud, he did summarize by stating the author, date received and main purpose of each one. A copy of each letter was also shared with Board members and School Administration prior to the meeting and have been included in the meeting minutes.

D. Old Business

1. Budget-2021-2022

Goff gave an overview of the status of the budget and how the Board plans to move forward. On March 13th at 8pm chairman Goff and Superintendent Murphy presented the budget to the New Hartford Board of Finance. On March 23th, there was a special Board of

Finance meeting where both Goff and Murphy answered questions regarding the 2021/2022 budget. One of the main questions asked at that meeting was regarding the letters received by the public about the budget. Many of these letters were also received by the Board of Finance. Goff responded that as a result of the public input, the Board of Education would reassess the budget and make a decision on how to move forward. The three possible outcomes identified by Goff were as follows:

- 1- To add back in the fourth grade teaching section bringing the new proposed percentage increase to 4.4%
- 2- Add back in the fourth grade teaching section and find other line items to reduce, in an attempt to keep the increase at the original 3.89%
- 3- Make no change and leave budget as first presented.

Chairman Goff opened discussion to the board members. Buzzi asked Superintendent Murphy if he had any suggestions on how to add the teaching section back into the budget based on the outcry of support from the public and what other line items could be reduced to offset the increase of \$47,000. Mr. Murphy stated that any reduction to the budget would be impactful however after further assessment, he recommended reducing one reading interventionist at the cost of \$24,198, decreasing the health insurance line by 20,074 based on a reduction in percentage from 8% to 7% and finally reducing the maintenance supplies line item by \$3000. These reductions total \$47,272 which would result in bringing back the fourth grade teaching section. The rest of the board members participated in the open discussion expressing their opinions of the budget proposal and presented questions to Mr. Murphy regarding other areas that savings could be made. Notables in the discussion were that although there could be additional funding available to schools next year based on the new covid relief package that was passed, the money is not in hand therefore cannot be included in the budget number.

Persechino and O'Dell Longi voiced their opinion of keeping the 4th grade teacher and the reading interventionist and presenting the budget to the Board of Finance at a higher rate. Buzzi, Klepps and Hermonatt all agreed however recommended working within the current guidelines and moving forward with Mr. Murphy's recommendations. Miller disagreed and said that the reading interventionist and maintenance line items should remain and other areas of savings should be looked at.

Motion- by Buzzi, to follow Mr. Murphy's recommendation to add back in the 4th grade teaching section (\$47,272) and reduce one reading interventionist, (\$24,198) reducing the health insurance line item (\$20,074) and the maintenance supplies line item (\$3000) keeping the budget at 3.89%. Seconded by Hermonat.

AYE: Goff, Hermonat, Buzzi, Klepps, Persechino, Tomala, O'Dell Longhi, Stempien, **NAY:** Miller
ABSTAIN: none

Unanimous

The next board of Finance meeting will be held on April 6th which is a public hearing of the budget. A special Board of Finance meeting will then follow on April 13th which will discuss any potential changes as a result of the public hearing. All members of the public are encouraged to attend.

E. Adjournment

Motion: by Buzzi to adjourn meeting at 6.46pm. Seconded by Klepps.

Unanimous

Respectfully Submitted

Laura Fritch
Board Secretary.

-----Original Message-----

From: Krissy <kworley0778@gmail.com>

Sent: Tuesday, March 30, 2021 6:16 PM

To: gofft@newhtfd.org

Cc: Bruce Worley Jr. <bworleyjr@gmail.com>

Subject: Education Budget

Good evening,

I am writing again to express my opposition to the plan to reduce the number of fourth grade teachers next year. Eliminating a fourth grade teaching position will result in larger class sizes which will negatively impact the quality of our children's education.

My husband and I moved from Bristol because we wanted our daughter to have a better education. She has thrived with the smaller class sizes in New Hartford. If the fourth grade teaching position is eliminated, then her class size will increase next year. This means that her teacher will spend more time handling a larger group of children instead providing an education. We know this because that is what is happening in Bristol, where we lived for ten years and had five children go through the school system.

As homeowners and taxpayers, my husband and I strongly object to reducing the number of fourth grade teachers.

Thank you for your time.

Best,
Kristina Worley

From: Jessica Chicoski <chicoskifamily@gmail.com>

Sent: Monday, March 29, 2021 7:33 AM

To: Brian Murphy <murphyb@newhtfd.org>; Kelly O'Dell Longhi <Kellyodell3@yahoo.com>; Thomas Buzzi <Buzzi@newhtfd.org>; gofft@newhtfd.org; kleppst@newhtfd.org; millerp@newhtfd.org; persechino@newhtfd.org; stempienm@newhtfd.org; tomalah@newhtfd.org; town@newhartfordct.gov

Subject: Board of Education Budget

Good Evening,

I am writing in regards to the teacher positions that are being cut this upcoming fiscal year. I was not planning on writing, as I know so many have, what would my letter say that the others haven't? Then I had my teacher conferences this past week and it really got me thinking. Both my daughters are being affected by these cuts. My daughter Evelyn is currently in Second Grade at Bakerville. She has a very small class size right now and we have seen huge benefits from that. My daughter Marlita is currently in Third Grade at Antolini, her current class size is an ideal class size and this has been one of her most successful years, even during a constant changing year.

I have a Masters in Education and a Mental Health License. I worked as a Behavior Consultant for seven years before staying home to raise my daughters. I understand the benefit of a strong special education department. I understand the benefits of classroom management and how that can impact the behavior of children. I understand the benefits of making sure children get the necessary services they need and their needs are being met. Each and Every Child!

If you know me, you know I am invested in this town. I substitute teach in our school system, I am on the PTO, and I have been working day in and day out trying to raise the necessary funds to provide new playgrounds to our elementary schools. These roles I have played have also given me insight into what an amazing town and what an amazing school system we have. I love subbing in our schools and working with the teachers we have. I love the support the teachers give each other and I see how difficult it can be when they don't have the necessary help they need to address their students. Cutting one of them to put more on another may financially be worth it if all we care about is dollars. But cutting one of them is going to be detrimental to what we pride ourselves on. And I am speaking from an educator as well as a parent.

I had my daughter's conference and I was told how well she is doing. The teacher said she has been able to take a small group and work on words that are not usually addressed in 2nd grade. She is continuously moving my daughter along because she has the ability to address her needs individually. I know that the students that are behind need the extra help and support, but what about the students that are where they need to be or are above? Is it fair to put all the extra help and resources to help students that need extra support but expect the children that are where they need to be to just sit back and be content? Should we not always want our kids progressing?

I know Evelyn's class staying at 13 children is not realistic and I am OK with her class size going up to 17. I know the third grade teachers we have, already address that class size and manage it well. But to think Marlita's class will rise up to numbers like 22 or more is unreasonable. Classroom management by itself becomes difficult with those numbers. Let alone really getting to know the kids needs. Next year is going to be an even more difficult year for our children. They have been with the same group of 13 or 17 children all year long. They do not get to interact with the other classes and play with the other children. They are used to their small groups. Now we will throw them into large class sizes and it is going to be overwhelming on the children as well as the staff... Remember how important classroom management

is, remember how important the mental health of our students are. More children, means more chaos. More children means less individual support...Is that really beneficial?

Both my girls have made huge progress this past year. Both of my daughters have teachers that truly know them. They know exactly what the best way to teach them is. They know exactly how to address a concern when there is one. They know exactly how to keep them moving forward so they are constantly learning and progressing. Putting Marlita in a class size with 5 or more kids will change all of that.

We all know the benefit of a smaller class size. We know that children's individual needs get recognized and addressed. We know our teachers are better teachers when they have a classroom that is smaller and they can meet with kids individually. We already know the benefits. You, the board, are our voice. You are here to support our children and push for what we all know is best. Keeping that fourth-grade teacher is what is best. It is best for our children and it is best for our teachers.

Thank you for your time reading this letter. I am not sure if it will make a difference, but in my heart I knew I had to say something. I know I tried all I could to advocate for our staff and children.

Jessica Chicoski

From: Hillary Coan <hillscoan@hotmail.com>

Sent: Saturday, March 13, 2021 2:10 PM

To: Tim Goff <gofft@newhtfd.org>; kleppst@newhtfd.org; tomalah@newhtfd.org; buzzit@newhtfd.org; Kelly O'Dell Longhi <Kellyodell3@yahoo.com>; stempienm@newhtfd.org; persechinoa@newhtfd.org; 'millerp@newhtfd.org' <millerp@newhtfd.org>

Subject:

Dear Board Members,

I'm writing as a parent of a current 3rd grader. I would like to voice my concern about the proposed budget in which will decrease the number of sections for my child's class next school year. I worry about my son's needs being met along with his fellow classmates. I feel the class sizes need to stay at a more manageable size, research shows that class sizes at this grade level shouldn't exceed 20 students. With the smaller classroom sizes, there are less distractions, more time for the teachers to devote to instruction and less to classroom management. I would like to ask you to consider adding the teacher and para position back into the budget for the upcoming academic year.

Thank you for your consideration,

Hillary Schibi

From: Erika Fritch <erika.fritch@gmail.com>

Sent: Saturday, March 13, 2021 9:09 PM

To: gofft@newhtfd.org; kleppst@newhtfd.org; tomalah@newhtfd.org; buzzit@newhtfd.org; kellyodell3@yahoo.com; stempienm@newhtfd.org; persechinoa@newhtfd.org; town@newhartfordct.gov; murphyb@newhtfd.org

Subject: Parent Concern - 2021-2022 School Year

March 13, 2021

Dear Board of Education Members, Board of Finance, and Superintendent Murphy,

My name is Erika Pratt and I am the parent of two daughters that attend the New Hartford Public Schools. Over the past four years, my husband and I have been so pleased with the education our daughters have received. The teaching staff and administration have been exceptional about meeting their social-emotional and academic needs. I would also like to commend the New Hartford Board of Education for how well they have navigated the many difficult decisions throughout the current pandemic.

It has come to my attention that the New Hartford School District is considering eliminating a fourth grade classroom for the 2021-2022 school year. My oldest daughter will be directly impacted by this potential decision. There are currently four third grade sections and I feel it is in the best interest of all students to have four sections of fourth grade in the upcoming school year. Reducing sections during a time when so much educational learning has been lost due to the pandemic does not seem to be in the best interest of all students. Smaller class size allows the teacher to have closer proximity to their students. It also allows for more one-on-one and small group instruction. In turn, the teacher can better meet the individual needs of their students. Lastly, students are more likely to participate and become more involved when there are less students in the classroom.

My husband and I are both educators and have firsthand experience with the impact larger class size has on instruction. Likewise, we are keenly aware of the affects Covid has had on academic and social-emotional growth. There are educational gaps that have widened because of Covid that will become more apparent in subsequent years. Larger class size can lead to more students falling through the cracks on either end of the educational spectrum. If the New Hartford School Systems has four sections of fourth grade next year it will better help lessen these gaps and better meet the needs of the students.

In closing, I urge all members of the Board of Education, the Board of Finance, and Superintendent Murphy to seriously consider my request to have four sections of fourth grade in the 2021-2022 school year. Thank you for taking time and attention to this matter.

Sincerely,

Erika Pratt
erika.fritch@gmail.com
860-733-9999

-----Original Message-----

From: Lauren Lyn <laurenslyn@gmail.com>

Sent: Friday, March 12, 2021 9:54 PM

To: Brian Murphy <murphyb@newhtfd.org>; town@newhartfordct.gov; kellyodell3@yahoo.com; kleppst@newhtfd.org; tomalah@newhtfd.org; buzzit@newhtfd.org; gofft@newhtfd.org; stempienm@newhtfd.org; persechinoa@newhtfd.org

Subject: Budget/classroom size concerns

Dear members of the New Hartford Board of Education, Board of Finance and Brian Murphy,

I am writing to voice my concerns about regards to the number of teachers in 4th grade for the upcoming 2021 school year. It is my understanding that by removing a single teacher the average class size will increase from about 17 to about 24. I believe this would be difficult for the kids in these classes under normal circumstances.

We cannot discount the fact that we are not under normal circumstances. These children have gone from full time in school to distance learning and back and forth and I am afraid that the education of some, if not all of them has most likely abated to some degree. I believe that a change in class size of this scale has the potential to leave some students behind if they are already struggling.

Another point that concerns me is an increase in class size will make individualized attention to each student much less, and has the potential to escalate any behavioural issues. This is a key point in their development and I believe this is a very precarious situation that requires our full attention. My opinion is that increasing the average class size by reducing the number of teachers is a really bad idea. In fact, I think we should be going in the opposite direction.

I am asking that the BOE and BOF address these concerns and reinstate the fourth classroom in the fourth grade for the next school year.

Thank you for your consideration.

Lauren Lyn

From: john tavano <tavano_50th@sbcglobal.net>

Sent: Friday, March 12, 2021 8:09 PM

To: Murphyb@newhtfd.org; town@newhartfordct.gov; Millerp@newhtfd.org; persechinoa@newhtfd.org; stempienm@newhtfd.org; kellyodell3@yahoo.com; buzzit@newhtfd.org; tomalah@newhtfd.org; kleppst@newhtfd.org; gofft@newhtfd.org

Subject: Teacher reduction and classroom section removal

Good evening to the members of the New Hartford Board of Finance, Board of Education and Brian Murphy.

It has been brought to my attention that there is a plan in place to remove some classroom sections for the upcoming school year, specifically the 4th grade class (currently 3rd graders). I am not sure what the logic would be for this other than simply trying to save some money at the expense of our young children. To increase each class section size by at least 6 children is an extreme change in any climate, but seems extraordinarily careless considering what these children have gone through over the last 12+ months.

I have witnessed firsthand with my own children the negative effects this last year's type of learning atmosphere has already had on their education and growth, and adding more children to the classroom would then further hurt both their short and long term development. Those children that have fallen behind over the last year will now struggle even more to catch up and meet their expectations with these excessively large student to teacher ratios. Our children simply deserve better!

Another reason why the idea of removing a section for the upcoming school year is extremely short sided is the current state of the New Hartford housing market. Families continue to look to move into our town, which makes it likely that the already high number of students in these grade will grow even further.

We need to put the needs of our children's first and should always look to promote success in the classroom. A child forced to be in a class with 23 students will be at a huge disadvantage when compared to those in more reasonably sized classrooms. What ever happened to providing equal learning environment across the entire district?

Our town has always been proud of our school systems and with good reason. However, if you implement this section reduction you will be actively participating in something that will directly result in a lesser education for the students.

I implore both the BOF and BOE address my concerns and reinstate the 4th section for the upcoming 4th grade.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,
Mr. & Mrs. John Tavano
130 Lair Road

-----Original Message-----

From: Michelle LeClair <michelleleclair11@hotmail.com>

Sent: Friday, March 12, 2021 7:12 PM

To: gofft@newhtfd.org; kleppst@newhtfd.org; tomalah@newhtfd.org; buzzit@newhtfd.org; kellyodell3@yahoo.com; stempienm@newhtfd.org; town@newhartfordct.gov; murphyb@newhtfd.org; millerp@newhtfd.org

Subject: Proposed Budget

To whom it may concern,

I am writing to you in regards to the proposed budget to decrease the number of teachers for the upcoming year in the 3rd and 4th grade.

I do not believe this is in the best interest of our children.

Having gone through this pandemic over the past year, do we really know how these students are doing socially and emotionally? Or academically? With smaller class sizes, teachers will be able to give more attention to each student. I feel some will really need it! I also don't want any child who has fallen behind academically to continue to struggle in a bigger class next year.

The 2nd graders right now will have more stress next school year to deal with. They are going from a small school that they have been going to now for several years to a new school, a bigger school, new teachers and even new classmates with both NHE and BAK combining. They could have more anxiety with what they've already dealt with over the past year and the pandemic.

I hope you will consider my opinions on this and not cut the teachers or tutors for the next school year. Especially in the 3rd grade. These students need the fourth section and this is not the year to make it only three sections.

Thank you for your time,
Michelle LeClair

From: Melissa Ferrucci <mel779@hotmail.com>

Sent: Thursday, March 11, 2021 9:41 PM

To: town@newhartfordct.gov; Brian Murphy, Superintendent of Schools <murphyb@newhtfd.org>; Tom Buzzi <buzzit@newhtfd.org>; gofft@newhtfd.org; hermonatk@newhtfd.org; kleppst@newhtfd.org; millerp@newhtfd.org; Ryane Longhi <kellyodell3@yahoo.com>; persechinoa@newhtfd.org; stempienm@newhtfd.org; tomalah@newhtfd.org

Subject: Staffing for the 2021-2022 School Year

Dear Board of Finance Members,

My name is Melissa Ferrucci. Both of my children attend Ann Antolini school. My son, Ethan, is in 6th grade in Mrs. Daigle's class and my daughter, Alexa, is in 3rd grade in Mrs. Underwood's class. My husband and I made the decision to move our family to New Hartford four years ago. Our major deciding factor was the public education that would be offered to them.

As an elementary school teacher, I have seen first-hand the effects that the COVID-19 pandemic has had on students. During these unprecedented times, educators are seeing many gaps in learning and achievement. In order for students to make the necessary progress to meet grade level expectations and state standards, it is essential that class sizes remain the same for the benefit of our students. If the decision is made to cut teachers, this will impact our children negatively.

New Hartford has always put their community first and I trust that you will do the same in this situation. Please grant our children the opportunity to be successful as they recover from the COVID-19 pandemic.

Thank you for giving me the opportunity to share my concerns about the staffing for the 2021-2022 school year at Ann Antolini School.

Respectfully,
Melissa Ferrucci

From: Kenney, Erin E. (Counselor Education & Family Therapy) <e.kenney@ccsu.edu>

Sent: Thursday, March 11, 2021 4:21 PM

To: gofft@newhtfd.org; kleppst@newhtfd.org; tomalah@newhtfd.org; buzzit@newhtfd.org; kellyodell3@yahoo.com; stempienm@newhtfd.org; persechinoa@newhtfd.org; town@newhartfordct.gov; murphyb@newhtfd.org

Subject: Class size concern

To Superintendent Murphy and Board of Education Members,

It was brought to my attention that there was a proposed drop in the educational budget impacting classroom size and therefore impacting my son's future grade(s). I find it important to advocate for many reasons but would like the opportunity to express a few specifics in my correspondence.

First, I want to share that we moved to town when my son (now age 7) was entering Kindergarten. We vacillated about whether to accept his granted spot in the lottery for Ana Grace Magnet school that we pursued or send him to public school in town. After having a tour of New Hartford Elementary and many discussions we ultimately decided to send him to public school in New Hartford and a big part of that decision was contingent on the small class sizes. Over the years we have felt that New Hartford Elementary has provided a safe space for learning that feels like a family away from home. I strongly believe this would not be the case if the class sizes were larger.

In addition to this I am a licensed therapist and own a private practice in Avon. I have seen firsthand since this pandemic has entered our lives how much our children have been impacted emotionally. I feel that it is imperative that their needs are prioritized at this time. Increasing class size puts more of a stressor on the teachers who as a result are unable to focus on the needs of each child both emotionally and academically. I also urge you to take into consideration the academic needs as well after almost 2 years of disruption. The young individuals I see in my practice are all struggling right now emotionally because of the many impacts the pandemic has had on them. They need our support more than ever, we are their community, this is their future.

I thank you for taking the time to read my words.

Erin Kenney MS, LPC

From: Heather Morin <first_impressions@hotmail.com>

Sent: Thursday, March 11, 2021 3:49 PM

To: gofft@newhtfd.org; kleppst@newhtfd.org; tomalah@newhtfd.org; buzzit@newhtfd.org; kellyodell3@yahoo.com; stempienm@newhtfd.org; persechinoa@newhtfd.org; town@newhartfordct.gov; Murphyb@newhtfd.org

Subject: Education budget, 4th grade teacher reduction

Hello all,

First off, thank you for all you do. I know your jobs aren't easy ones. I'm writing to you to express my heavy concerns over the proposed removal of one of the fourth grade teachers for the 2021-2022 school year. This will have a direct impact on one of my children. I feel that having class sizes of 22-23 students is too high and will negatively impact all the students in that grade. This is especially harmful in a year following a pandemic where a lot of kids - my child included - will be playing catch up.

I urge you to reconsider this reduction and put the students' well being ahead of budget concerns. We specifically moved to New Hartford to provide our children with a quality education. We, as a town, should never sacrifice providing a quality education to all students.

Thank you,
Heather Morin
860-707-5049

-----Original Message-----

From: Marissa Klepps <marissa.klepps@gmail.com>

Sent: Monday, March 8, 2021 8:51 PM

To: Brian Murphy <murphyb@newhtfd.org>; town@newhartfordct.gov; kellyodell3@yahoo.com; kleppst@newhtfd.org; tomalah@newhtfd.org; buzzit@newhtfd.org; gofft@newhtfd.org; stempienm@newhtfd.org; persechinoa@newhtfd.org

Subject: Budget Concerns

Hello members of the New Hartford Board of Finance, Board of Education and Brian Murphy:

I am writing this letter to voice my concerns about the decrease in classroom sections, specifically next school years 4th grade class. After last year and this years "pandemic year", I'm afraid that many of the students needs will not be met with average class size increasing by 5/6 students.

First, The short and long term impact Covid-19 has had on students academically and/or psychologically is unknown. If classroom Sizes increase, children who have already fallen behind or will fall behind, will struggle to meet expectations or ever exceed expectations.

Additionally, with the uptick in the housing market in New Hartford, we run the potential for more families to move to town, which could further increase classroom sizes.

The decision to cut staff appears to be financially Driven and not based on what's Best for each individual Student success. It can't be disputed that a student in a 22/23 student classroom will not be receiving the same amount of 1:1 time with a teacher as one in a class with 17/18 students. This doesn't maintain an equal learning environment across the district.

It should be highlighted to the town tax payers that any state reimbursement that the town receives for special education costs goes directly to the town budget and is NOT reflected in the BOE budget. This creates the appearance that the BOE increased spending this year when the majority of the increase in the budget comes from outplacement of students whose needs cannot be met in our district.

I ask that both the BOF and BOE address these concerns and reinstate the 4th section in the 4th grade.

Thank you,

Marissa Klepps

----- Forwarded message -----

From: **Jane Allyn** <janeallyn2@gmail.com>
Date: Mon, Mar 8, 2021 at 4:59 PM
Subject: Board of Finance - BOE Budget
To: <town@newhartfordct.gov>
Cc: Brian Murphy <murphyb@newhtfd.org>

Good afternoon Ms. Wexler and fellow members of the board,

My name is Jane Allyn and I am writing regarding the BOE budget for the upcoming academic year. I've also reached out separately to Brian Murphy and the BOE.

The BOE budget includes a significant year over year increase for outplacement costs for high needs students. The budget assumes that a classroom teacher and tutor position will need to be eliminated in order to help cover these increased expenses. As I understand it, the outplacement costs for the high needs students will be reimbursed by the state. It would stand to reason that no positions should need to be eliminated to cover these outplacement costs since they are reimbursed. However, I've been told that the BOE budget cannot reflect this reimbursement because it goes to the town and not back to the BOE. If this is true, can an accommodation be made this year so that the BOE budget receives the reimbursement, or at least enough of it to avoid having to cut a classroom teacher and tutor to meet the budget?

I am asking to avoid eliminating a classroom teacher because the student population is not driving the staff change. In fact, the upcoming 4th grade class will see an increase in their average class size of 5 to 6 students. This will not only be larger than any other grade in town, but it will result in the largest average class size for the town for the last 4 years. This is coming on the heels of a full year of adjustments due to COVID which has set most, if not all, students behind. If we expect to get our students back to pre-Covid academic status, it would seem that we should at a minimum, keep our staff at pre-Covid levels.

If this is not an option, is there any other way we can be creative to avoid a reduction in classroom teachers?

Thank you in advance for your consideration.

Jane Allyn

From: Stephanie Genao-Reyes [<mailto:s.genaoreyes@yahoo.com>]

Sent: Monday, March 8, 2021 12:16 PM

To: Christine Hayward <CHayward@newhartfordct.gov>

Subject: 4th grade teacher reduction

Good afternoon,

I am writing in response to the recent change approved by the BOE to decrease the 3rd and 4th grade class counts to three. As a mother of a child who will be going into 4th grade next year this change really concerns me.

These children have not been able to get the proper education they need over the past year because of the impact COVID has had on their learning. They need in class learning as much as they need one on one time with their teacher. How will they get the much needed one on one time with their teacher if he/she has so many children? The children can not get back the time they lost of valuable in class learning, but these kids can work hard with their teacher to help them push forward.

Maybe during "normal" times this would be acceptable, but not when the children have already lost so much education over the past year. I beg you to reconsider this decision for the sake of my child's education and future. These children have already gone through so much. We need to encourage growth and stability, not give them another obstacle for them to overcome.

Sincerely,

Stephanie Genao

Sent from my iPhone

On Mon, Mar 8, 2021 at 9:29 AM Caitlin Gagnon <caitlin_gagnon@yahoo.com> wrote:
Dear Brian Murphy and The Board of Finance-

This morning I was made aware of the budget decrease that affects the 3rd and 4h grade classrooms in the coming years. While I am grateful for all that the Board of Ed and Mr. Murphy do for our incredible little town, I have concerns with this decision. As a taxpayer and a parent of three young children in the school system, I want to share my thoughts on the matter.

I am against this decision for the following reasons:

- These years are critical transition years for children as they move up to Antolini and any added support that is needed would be harder to provide with an increase of children in the classroom.
- Covid will still be a real issue and this increases the chances of children being too close in the classroom.
- Despite the fact that we have incredible teachers, my 4th grader comes home very often letting me know the classroom children are at times "out of control" and that is at the smaller numbers, especially when a substitute is in charge.

I feel that not only would negatively impact our students, but our teachers have been asked to go above and beyond in the last two years, this is a lot to add to their plates. I do not see in the BOE minutes any reasons documented as to how this would be beneficial to our schools, and plan to attend the next BOE meeting to better understand the opposing view.

Thank you,

Caitlin Gagnon

March 2, 2021

Dear Superintendent Murphy and Members of the Board of Education,
I am writing this letter out of concern for the proposed reduction of a 4th grade section for the 2021-2022 school year. I respectfully ask that you reconsider this decision. As a parent of 3 children and a 19-year veteran elementary school teacher in a larger school district, I am fully aware of the drastic impact that class size has on education. Class size affects academic performance, student engagement, and social emotional well-being, especially in the elementary grades.

Class size affects academic performance. Overall, students in smaller classes perform better than those in larger classes. This is well known and one of the reasons families looking to buy homes and/or leave larger districts are drawn to New Hartford Public Schools. Students in smaller classes receive more individualized attention and have more opportunities for both enrichment and intervention. New Hartford Public Schools teach Lucy Calkins' Units of Study for Reading and Writing. These rigorous programs rely heavily on teachers conferring frequently with students. Larger class sizes mean less opportunity for this critical 1:1 time.

Another factor is student engagement. The smaller the class, the stronger the classroom community, and the greater the opportunity for engagement. A large class makes it more difficult to get to know students, build rapport, and establish relationships with families. Students in smaller classes have more opportunities to participate, engage, and receive teacher feedback than those in larger classes. Students in smaller classes are apt to feel more comfortable asking questions and/or participating in an environment that feels comfortable to them.

A third concern is the social emotional well-being of both staff and students. The current school year has been extremely challenging for all. The NHPS staff is incredible and I am so impressed by how the pandemic has been handled. I applaud teachers for their flexibility in teaching students in the classroom and remotely on a day-to-day basis. However, the fact remains that the fluctuation between in-person and remote learning (sometimes globally, sometimes due to specific classes in quarantine) and the fear of contracting COVID-19 takes a toll on educators and children. A larger class environment will not support the current fragile social-emotional state of our valued educators and our children.

In summary, I am extremely concerned about the proposal to eliminate a 4th grade class section in 2021-2022. In these challenging times, our children need more opportunities to be successful. Increasing class size by 5-7 students is bound to have a negative effect on our students and staff. I strongly encourage you to revisit this decision. I sincerely thank you for all you do for our children.

Respectfully,

Brooke Harris