

Cheektowaga-Sloan Public Hearing Meeting Transcript of June 2, 2020

At this we will recite the Pledge of Allegiance before our meeting.

I pledge allegiance to the Flag of the United States of America, and to the Republic for which it stands, one Nation under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all.

I call this meeting to order.

Roll Call

Mr. Vohwinkel, here
Mr. Sieczkarek, here
Mrs. Dombrowski, here
Mrs. Ferrucci, present
Mrs. McCowan, here
Mr. Smith, here
Mr. Stewart, here

We have a quorum.

Thank you. At this time Mr. Drescher and Mrs. Galenski will present the budget information.

Good evening everyone, this is Mrs. Galenski on behalf of our Board of Education I would like to thank you for participating tonight in our public hearing. This is the first time we have presented our budget virtually. So we thank you for listening and following along with the power point that we have prepared and that we hope you find helpful.

Mr. Drescher and I will be presenting together this evening as we have done the past several years. I would like to take this opportunity to thank our Board of Education for their thoughtful planning that went into this budget process and I would also like to thank Mr. Drescher for his strong passion and partnership with me as we work together each day to plan in the most thoughtful and fiscally responsible manner.

We selected our first visual as an way of expressing how important it is for us to balance our educational needs, which include high quality instructional programs, valuable resources, technology needs and professional development with how that will impact our taxpayers. We have been and continue to be committed to maintaining this balance as we develop a thoughtful and fiscally responsible budget each year.

We have always used our public hearing in the nontraditional sense as a way to not only share information about our financial picture, but also to provide our community with important information about the great work that our teachers, staff and all of our employees have been doing to support our children and families. We felt tonight was the perfect opportunity to share our district's response for what we call the abrupt school closure that took place back in March.

The COVID-19 Pandemic has closed our District's schools, but has not stopped the District from educating our students and serving our community. The last day students were present in our schools was back on Friday, March 13, 2020. Immediately that weekend, plans were developed regarding preparation and distribution of instructional packets and materials for our students.

On Monday, March 16, all teachers and staff joined together to prepare learning materials to begin remote learning. Never before have any of us experienced something like this and our District's response was incredible. Teachers and staff joined together without hesitation to prepare what was necessary to prepare what was necessary for learning to immediately occur in homes with teachers and staff providing instruction and support from their homes. March 18, moving on with our timeline, families picked up our first round of materials. Any packets that were not picked up were delivered to student's homes. We wanted to ensure that every child had what he or she needed to learn from home. So we committed to doing that with our own District personnel to personally deliver these materials to children who were unable to come to the school for the drive up process.

The next bullet point is very important. Teachers surveyed families, gathering information on computer and wifi access. We wanted an equitable learning situation for every student in our District. So we in turn thought this survey was necessary for us to gain this important information. The survey determined that many of our families did not have computer access at home. So we needed to respond to that. For the families with no wifi access, we assisted them in order to provide wifi at no cost to our families. We have functioned during this time, in a way where we knew people were in crisis, and it was critically important to us in our District to ensure that we weren't putting any additional unnecessary stress on our families.

Our next slide we titled Circumstances Continuing Here. After our next instructional packet pickup in early April, we prioritized the chromebooks we had in District, so that every high school student had a chromebook to use at home. We chose to include this photograph to best represent the immense work that went into responding to our families' needs. So that an equitable learning environment was created for all of our children. In Kindergarten through 8th grade, all students with IEP's, 504's, our ELL students were also provided chromebooks. Again, ensuring the children had what then need at home so they could continue on with learning. We provided 380 chrome books to our students in need.

For our third and final packet creation and pick up, our Pre-Kindergarten through 8th grade students continued to learn through paper based packets, since technology access was not quite equitable and I would like to further explain that. We had a District goal this past year for one to one computer access for all of our students. We completed what is called a Smart Schools Grant in order to purchase the necessary computers. However, this grant continues to be delayed as it is for many districts for approval on the state level and we have not received the funds prior to this abrupt school closure. So as a result, the District made a decision, and we made a commitment and we have ordered 900 chromebooks which are scheduled to arrive mid-June. After June we will have enough chromebooks for every child. Therefore, if any additional school closures occur, all students across the District will receive a chromebook.

Moving onto the next slide, throughout school closure, teachers continued to support students at home. It has been so impressive, through phone calls, e-mails. In Google Suite products that we have been utilizing such as Google Classroom, and Google Meet. We are so proud of the nontraditional measures our entire staff has taken and continue to take in providing instruction and support to our children and families. Our teachers, student support specialists, social workers, and guidance counselors performed what we call check in's during this time and they have provided additional support for all families in need. In fact, our District Family Support Center, which is an extremely valuable resource to us and our families, continue to provide families virtual counseling services and access to community resources throughout this period. If you haven't had a chance to visit it, we created a COVID -19 page on our District website that has been consistently updated and which includes resources for our families as well.

On the next slide, we are talking about how we responded. Each day the Superintendent was on multiple conference calls with BOCES, the County, the State Officials, each one of them had different takes, different needs on what Districts had to respond to and respond very quickly. I can tell you on a personal side, that I was receiving emails from the Superintendent at 11:00 at night, at 6:00 am in the morning, I'm not quite sure when she was sleeping, if she was sleeping.

Each day we worked tirelessly to come up with plans and responses to these requirements. A couple examples, we set up food pickup and distribution for every student in our district that was under 18 years of age. As last week, the District served a total of over 40, 000 to children within our District.

We also established a childcare program for first responders and essential workers, with no cost to those families. It was important that those students and those families were taken care of so that they could help our community and entire region. Our employees continue to take care of our facilities, and buildings and grounds during this closure period. We had a great emphasis on cleaning, disinfecting, making sure it is safe environment for everyone that would enter our buildings, including our teachers, including those people that were taking care of the kids. It was a massive effort. We immediately responded to the Governor's executive order on how the District's Budget Vote would occur. The Election process is now being carried out in fact we have already received many ballots. It was quite an undertaking and quite a process but we feel is important to our community.

So at this point, we are going to transition to our next slide which depicts our overarching belief of educating the whole child. We have worked very hard on our District vision, published on our District website, it represents the core of what we believe in and what we stand for. Educating children is a shared responsibility. That includes high quality instruction, programming, and social/emotional support so that children are best supported so they may learn each day.

The next slide talks about data driven dialogue. As I mentioned in the beginning, it is important for us to share with our community because they are not always in the day to day of what we are doing and how we are spending and how we are being fiscally responsible, yet providing the highest quality education we possibly can. So we chose this next slide to share with our community the work we have done with our Leadership team last summer on Data Driven

Dialogue, otherwise known as what we refer to as DDD work. In order to stand behind our belief that it is important to see success for all learners, we have made a District commitment to using data to make informed decisions on teaching and learning. Real student data provides us with the best picture of how our students are progressing and perhaps which areas need more support, or where they are excelling in these particular areas.

So on this next slide here, you can see a portion of our District administrative team who we all met for several days last July in the summer to reflect on NYS accountability data, and other local data. We were trained in data driven dialogue led by Mrs. Finn, during these administrative work sessions, what we did was come up with a 19-20 district goal which was to focus on data driven instruction. We felt that it was needed to set the tone at the top and then trickle it down from there. We wanted to model what we were expecting from everyone in our District. Setting high expectations is very important to all of us, and modeling what we expect. So we began this process with the leadership team last summer.

The next slide is still data driven dialogue and it is what we came up with. What we are referring to here is a District wide goal, otherwise known as what we refer to as a WIG or Wildly Important Goal. So again, we felt that it was important for us to set an example, so we created a District wide goal in a really simplistic manner to show that we wanted to work on this process and to make our goal that everyone would be utilizing this process. I wanted to share on this slide that all teachers in grades Pre-K through 12th grade were trained in data driven dialogue as we were previously as the leadership team. They were trained on September 4th of this year to build common understanding and vocabulary around this initiative. After this initial meeting, the teachers practiced and utilized these WIGS based on data relevant to their teaching duties. Throughout this school year, principals held meetings with teachers, where their professional goals were monitored with data and reflected conversations. So it's this back and forth feedback. So that we had accountability built in each month at our district leadership meetings, we then shared the progress as a district leadership team and wanted to hear what was happening on the ground floor about what work is being done, what types of results were being yielded. Specific examples were brought forth from our leadership team on how this meeting process was being used. So you can see we started with the leadership team, transferred down to the teachers and has been checked and monitored throughout the school year.

If we turn to the next slide, this is an extremely exciting program that I am happy to share out with our community tonight. It is a pivotal time to know that we committed to something like this and that we will be moving forward with it. The District wide initiative that we began last year and it is something again that we are very proud of. It has already yielded tremendous results in our school culture. I would like to say that with our every changing world, particularly when we are at today with the situation in this world, human connections and relationship building are important keys to success. Restorative Practices are an emerging social science, which studies how to strengthen relationships between individuals as well as social connections within communities. This philosophy focuses on restoring and building relationships among our school community. Restorative Practice holds individuals accountable for the consequences for their actions, it is a philosophical shift of thinking, moving away from what we say focusing on

rules that are broken and punishment to focusing on repairing harm. So they principals of restorative practices are including decision making, active accountability, sparing harm, the key point here is rebuilding trust. Part of our training of restorative practices centered around circles, but before we move to the next slide, this is, the restorative practice slide that you are looking at now, it is important for me to share out with the community that Cheektowaga Sloan throughout this initiative from the very beginning we were researching what we should do. Should we go with this partnership? Should we utilize maybe a service through BOCES? And in hearing the feedback from particularly our support staff, the social workers, counselors, principals, I heard what they wanted. They wanted to partner with the Erie County Restorative Justice Coalition because they felt they were the experts. We could bring forward the best, most researched information and provide us with the best training. So Mr. Drescher and I looked at our financial picture, we looked if this was something we could commit to and with very thoughtful planning, we were able to do that. So this partnership has really been invaluable and training has consistently been happening and before we move onto the next slide you will actually see some of the presenters here in the picture depicted here. This is an example of a highlighted experience that took place back on September 3rd of this school year. This was the District's training that began at that time.

So now we can move onto the next slide which continues with restorative practice we captured here, highlighted on this slide I should say, are pictures of our stakeholders in the District. Engaged in circles and practicing what is implemented with our students. The same pattern we started with administration, we started in getting feedback, we had many stakeholders at the table. We made the decision to commit with the Erie County Justice Coalition, then here we go now, we are trickling it down to teachers, we are training people properly, with this same process that we have found yields the best results.

On September 3rd in these three pictures here, we received District wide training, it is really important for you to know that we included everyone. We included teachers, staff, administration, clerical, custodial workers, and cafeteria staff. Everyone had a voice at the table. With an overview of what restorative practice means, with emphasis on the structure of what we were going to do with restorative practice circles. You can see the active engagement from all the various stakeholders which I believe is a beautiful representation of how we achieve success in our school district.

We put another slide in front of you which should be to continue on for just a few additional things about this very important initiative. Before the District wide restorative practice team as well because we felt we should have representation on our school on a district team with those people leading the way. It's comprised of 35 individuals including teachers, administrators, and critically important is our student support staff. Thirteen teachers with representation from each building piloted restorative practice procedures in their rooms from September and really is still going on in their classrooms until the school closure for this school year. So, throughout the year several meetings were held with restorative practices team including monthly afterschool meetings and several half day meetings. In fact, we wanted to continue this strong momentum, so a virtual meeting was conducted to ensure this would remain strong and our partnership with

Erie County Restorative Justice Coalition also remained strong. That meeting went very, very well. Mrs. Finn is a critical, important leader and I thank her for her leadership with that and moving this initiative forward for greater success.

We included some additional pictures. This one is hard to understand. What's a circle? On this slide here, you should see two pictures, our elementary classrooms of youngest learners engaged in circles to promote relationship building, to ensure voices are heard and to create a respectful learning environment and a positive school culture.

If we go to the next slide, this is really interesting to see. The next picture highlights how it is effective and can be used as the grade levels progress higher. So this is an intermediate grade. To continue emphasizing the community environment focused on respectful interactions and positive relationships. We really began to understand that it is important for us as educators to teach skills and to teach these social skills and how to behave and how to interact with one another. Maybe you have a disagreement but how can you come to consensus without becoming disrespectful. And so you can see where these are working at our youngest ages. This is a picture of our intermediate school and then if you go to the next slide, these are two additional pictures of circles taking place again at Theodore Roosevelt School and then on the next slide you can see how it continues to progress. You can see two pictures here of our middle school and our high school. So again, these are our circles in action and how effective they have been.

I would just like to say at this point that for me, we wondered how the concept of circles would be received. Particularly from the students, because that is very important to us. One of those profound moments for me this school year, and I will never forget it, was at a Superintendent Council meeting, Mr. Julian was there and my council. Mr. Drescher will speak to that next. The council is something that I always wanted to do and we made it happen this year. It's a forum where we had a diverse represented group at the high school, all grade levels, and again diverse representation and they reported back to me. I asked what do you think of these circles, how are they working? They reported back to me that these circles make or break their day. These circles are the single most important part of their school day. I can't tell you, I told this group, my council, I said I am overwhelmed by this, I couldn't be happier about this. It was a risk that we took because these circles take time, and to see how well received they were, that was telling right then and there. If the students are finding them useful and powerful and they even went further on to say how we could make them better. Which I loved. We took copious notes on how we could make these better and they were talking about maybe we could mix up the groups for the following year. We are taking that feedback and certainly trying to make the adjustments as we can to make these circles better. To hear from high school students, the importance of these circles, proved to us as leaders that this was absolutely the right thing to do because we want nothing more than our children to feel important every day they are in our hands. We just couldn't be any happier with this relationship and direction that we went in.

Just to expand a little bit on the Superintendent's Council, which was just established this year, some of the group of students ninth through twelfth grade, with Superintendent Galenski and Mr. Julian. Really the main focus is sustaining a collaborative and positive school culture. Those two things, being positive, being collaborative, has come a long, long way. It has been

established and is beginning to grow. The seeds were planted and now they are beginning to grow. Ways to communicate with all the students between administrators, to make sure the student's voices are heard. Are we really listening to them, do we really know what is important to them, and how do we react to what is important to them and how do we make what is important to them, is important to us.

So when, now the next slide transitions us to another critically important program, the Lucy Caulkins Reading Program which I have talked about for the past two to three years and that continues to strengthen each year. Reading is the single most important skill that children must learn each day in order to be stronger readers and we know that research says that the stronger reader we are, the stronger we excel in everything. So, we have really focused on our reading program at the elementary level, because that's where the foundation is built. To best support our teachers in this endeavor, we are continuing to provide training and support from Kindergarten through 5th grade on the implementation of the Lucy Caulkins Reading Program. We don't want to just implement something and then stop reporting it or stop revisiting it. We have to continue to be strengthened if it is going to do well. During this school year we added the Lucy Caulkins Phonics Program in grades K through 2. Also, teachers in grades 3 through 5 piloted a phonics program called Work their Way. All of this being led by Mrs. Finn, so again I thank her for her leadership with this. Again, you can see where we use dollars to put them in the right spot so that we strengthen programs that are working and that need to continue to be developed over time and make them the best that they can be.

Teachers also have been continuously meeting with BOCES coordinators, we receive additional support that way, and also teachers have been receiving support with this new phonics program. Phonics program is something that our teachers really wanted and so we were very pleased and happy to be able to do that for them.

The next slide further goes on because we are very excited about this, the final stage of the implementation of the Lucy Caulkins Writing Program. It's a pair, the reading we need to implement that first, so then we are ready to concentrate on the writing. We did not want to overwhelm our teachers by expecting them to learn both at the same time. So we took it step by step. There are seven teachers that will receive training this summer and begin to implement this program in the fall. We also had individuals piloting it this year, so as of this coming fall, all our teachers in K through grade 5 will have been trained and will be implementing this program. So we are very, very excited about that.

If we transition now to the next slide, we wanted to focus on Science during this public hearing because we spent a great deal of time on Science over the past few years. I felt it was important to share that out with our community.

There are new learning standards in Science called NYS T12 Science Learning Standards. We have been working on developing curriculum by providing professional development to teachers in K through grade 12. We have new NYS Science exam based on these standards and the students will take this exam for the first time in grade 5 and that will happen in the spring of

2023. It almost seems like a far time away, it really isn't and we needed to be prepared and have the students prepared in order to do well and be prepared for this exam.

So, the next slide goes into a timeline that sort of summarizes K through grade 5 received training on using Science kits provided by BOCES, and this was our goal for this school year.

Grade 6 developed new curriculum in 18-19 with implementation this past school year. Seventh is in the process of developing new curriculums, which will be fully implemented this coming school year.

The high school teachers are meeting this summer to begin alignment with new standards for Living Environment and Earth Science. So you can see we have invested quite a bit of time.

On the next slide for the Science, you should have three pictures that you are viewing and these are students in grade 5 so we wanted a few representations here. These are students in grade 5 engaging with the new science kit curriculum developed by the teacher. I think our key points here for Science, we shift the way that we are teaching and the way that our students are learning Science. A more inquiry based way, much more hands on, and as you can see in the picture, much more collaborative. I think those are our three areas of focus so that the teacher isn't doing all of the talking, the students are leaning through communication with their peers, through this hands on trial and error process and through inquiry. More thought, more thinking, a process puts more responsibility on the children themselves. We thought those pictures represented those types of learning the best.

As we transition to the next slide for Mathematics, using the most updated scope and sequence, teachers are given the same assessment to all students at the close of the unit. We are referring to these as and you will see this on the slides as common assessments. We refer to common form assessments, are again, common form assessments that are given to the students so that we can compare, we can see, we can analyze how the students are doing and again, using that data driven dialogue, see where we might need to make changes to help our students be more successful. The students' data from these assessments, is in a program that we have called eDoctrina which we use it to analyze student performance by standards, allowing teachers to make data driven instructions and choices. On this slide for Mathematics in particular, we have been working with coordinators from BOCES and in Kdg. Through grade 8 to develop these common performances. The second bullet point here is where in year 2 in a program called Illustrative Math at the Middle School. Teachers continue to receive training and support in that particular program. At the high school, the most common form of assessment is updated to what we call Scope Sequence for Algebra I. So we begin we really emphasize Science, we can see Reading, Writing, Science and now here Mathematics.

Those are just a few of the things that we use the budget money that we have. There are so many examples of how we try to stretch the budget dollars. Now we will get into a little bit about the budget and the money.

Go to the next slide please. The District's current adopted budget for the year we are in now, 19-20, the budget is \$36,900,000. In the year 20-21, the proposed budget contains total

appropriations of \$37,136,145 dollars so that is an increase in the budget of \$236,191 from the prior year or an increase of .64% from the prior year. That is 6/10th of 1%, so much less than 1% of an increase in appropriations. Where are the most significant increases? Salary and benefits. There is an increase of a little over \$124,000 in that category with the majority into increased costs of health insurance. Similar to that of every business in North America is experiencing increases in health insurance as we are. Another area that has increased is Special Education to support students with disabilities and special needs and really those types of educational requirements are driven by NYS standards and it is the right thing to do. So, we provide for those as well. Virtually every line item in this budget stayed the same so we really tightened it up and have a lean budget and we think it is important to have it that way. The .64% increase in appropriations in the budget, then drives the tax levy, the amount we are asking from the community. The tax levy increase is 1.59%. The difference between the increase in the budget and increase in the levy is caused by the aid provided by NYS. In this case, we will talk about NYS in freezing aid therefore, the levy increase which is greater than that of the appropriations. Unfortunately, we are not able to give a tax rate by town because we do not have the assessment rolls finalized by the Town Tax Assessors.

One of the main points in this budget is NYS Aid. And for the 2020-21 fiscal year, NYS has frozen the aid that is going to be given to the District. They originally said that they were going to increase it slightly and then on March 13 items for pauses have been going on, they have actually froze it and they're forecasting significant increases in State aid that we have tried to prepare for despite this lack of aid. Again an 8 year run, has only been one half of one percent.

On the next slide, you will actually see each of those 8 years broken down with the tax levy, the percentage change and the comparison to the tax cap. I thought this was really important to display because you can see over this 8 year period, the total increase in the budget has only been 3.98%, whereas, NYS tax cap limit would have allowed about 21.25% and that is over 8 years, You take that over an 8 year period, it would be an increase of less than 4% over that period. The average increase in an 8 year period of ½ of 1%. Less than 1/5 of what the State said we could have increased taxes. Again, we go back to that scale and that balancing, we do the best that we can, we have to keep the community and the tax payers in mind. Really, this result in this record we are the envy of every school district in WNY quite frankly. A lot of planning, a lot of work and thought goes into each of the decisions we make along the way.

So how are these educational dollars spent? You can move forward a slide or two. There are two charts that you see. One is appropriations by type where you can see the dollars. In this case, it's a pie chart and we see that salaries are 42% of every dollar that we spend and employee benefits are 19% So our people costs are really 61% of every dollar spent. Other items are contractual expenses, busing, BOCES costs, and debt services.

If you go forward one more slide, this is a depiction of where do we spend dollars, we spent about 54% in instructional, then you add 19% of employee benefits to that, you actually see that we spend 71% of our dollars in the instructional area. That is where we want to spend money. In instruction. There are other areas that we have to fund as well, for instance, transportation costs are 7%, our debt services are 7%, our building and grounds, taking care of our buildings

comes to 6%. Administration is really only 3% of our total budget. We are pretty lean in the administration area but that is what we want to do. We want to spend our money on instruction for our students. That is where we actually spend those dollars.

On the next slide we move into what action the district has taken to control costs. We always feel it is important to communicate to our community, about what we are doing each day to ensure that what we are doing is controlling costs as in that first slide where there is a continuous balance and we have to maintain that balance so that we are not spending too much and we are keeping the taxpayers at the forefront and still providing excellent programming and outstanding education.

Onto the next slide, we wanted to review some of these, highlight and share what we continue to do. We continue to implement what we call a shared business manager model. We may be the only district, or there may be one other that utilize this type of system or shared service as you would. So, Mr. Drescher who is presenting with me, we only have him in our District 50% of the time. Mr. Drescher is with us what we call .5 and then he works at BOCES in the finance department the other .5 % of the time. We have continued to function with this model, albeit quiet difficult because we don't have many administrators so, Mr. Drescher is wonderful, I can call him at BOCES. We do that all the time. But we have maintained this because it is extremely effective and again keeping our tax payers in mind, we feel that this is a good thing for our community. So we continue to engage in that model. We have eliminated 21 positions in the past 6 years. I share that number with you because it is high, it has been very difficult decisions, but we have been worked internally to make thoughtful decisions that will not negatively impact children and what we can continue to do with possibly not replacing retirements, and making thoughtful decisions. Put simply to everyone, we are not overstaffed. We have to do that. We need to make critically important and often times, difficult decisions because again I go back to that scale and balance. We have to be cognizant of the taxpayers. So, that was a point that I wanted to mention tonight. We partner to BOCES similar to what we do with Mr. Drescher, for management of all of our computer operations. So, while we have Mr. Zybala who is doing an outstanding job in the area of technology, we still do not have a Director of Technology. Instead, we receive aid back for this model so it is a very reduced expense for the District and ultimately the community. We continue to engage in that partnership. We continue to consolidate purchases of supplies such as materials, supplies, computers, and various other things so that we continue to focus on making the best smart purchases as possible. We switched dental coverage to a lower cost provider. We are always looking at ways to save money.

On this next slide, Mr. Drescher will pick up to continue what we have done to control costs.

There are just so many items, but here are a few of the highlights. What we implemented what we call called print management projects. To reduce the cost and paper of printing that we do. With a great item that has saved hundreds of thousands of dollars per year. We implemented a power off program for our computers, refinanced District Bond issues, buildings and grounds vehicle replacement schedule, gasoline monitoring procedures, all of which saved a great amount of money. We are in the process of changing to LED lighting systems to reduce electrical usage

and the dollars related to those. As you know LED lighting is 70% more efficient than regular lighting. We are moving on with that and continuing to spend dollars to see significant savings in the future.

The next slide again, controlling costs during the 18-19 fiscal year, the end of the 18-19, we had six teachers retire. Three of which were not replaced. During 19-20 we had two staff members actually retire as well. Those two positions were the eliminated in the 20-21 budget. So again, significant savings. We continue to look at our student enrollment and look at our staffing needs and balance all of that. It's about fiscal responsibility and doing the right thing each day.

The next slide is controlling costs. If you remember, 3% is all we spent on administration. Which is a very low number compared to other districts. There is a reason for that. We focused on utilizing the people we have. For instance, the Superintendent herself serves as Chief Operating Officer, Personnel Director and also assumes many other roles throughout the District. We don't have any Deputy Assistant or Associate Superintendent for instruction, human resources, buildings and grounds. We are really kind of a unique school district. If you look at other school districts, I don't think you will find one that does not have at least one assistant superintendent. Some have at least one, two, three or four. But we have one Superintendent of Schools who does many things. Again, my job is 2.5 days per week and we do everything we can to still get everything done within that time. Every administrator in our district each has an additional task. We are really proud of our people because no one seems to complain, we are a great team quite frankly and nobody every says no, I don't think to anything that is important to students.

What is the result of that? If you flip to the next slide, All of these initiatives and thoughtful processes that we do every day, saves the tax payers money, and all the things that we just read, these initiatives save in excess of 2.1 million dollars each and every year. If you think about it over that 6 year period that we have been drawing down and look at every savings that we can that is 12 million dollars saved by doing everything we can every day. It isn't easy every day. I can tell you that but we think it is important.

So the next slide transitions to something extremely important to and that is advocacy. We titled this slide Ways the District Advocated to Express our Specific Concerns and Needs. In other words, this advocacy, in ways, is a big part of my job is to be the voice for our community, our tax payers, and fighting for what is right, for a fair share of funding that we deserve.

As we look at the next slide, we try to summarize some of the exact things that we have done since January to do our fair share for State assistance. In January of 2020 and that is when I brought the legislative priorities to NYS School Boards Association and we began sending those priorities out to legislators. January 25, of 2020 this is when I joined together with Mr. Drescher and our Board of Education, which I greatly appreciated and we attended the legislative breakfast on a Saturday morning to collaborate and advocate for additional funding to address our District's needs. The Erie County School Boards Association did a wonderful thing by making it a bit more personal, and so the created different locations for districts so it was a smaller audience if you would. It was a wonderful opportunity. I even had a chance specifically

to talk with Senator Kennedy and really begin to express our specific needs. Again, the Board of Education was there along with Mr. Drescher. It was a wonderful morning highlighting Cheektowaga Sloan and the needs that we have and why we deserve more funding.

On February 6, I personally met with Assemblywoman Monica Wallace. We have developed an excellent professional relationship. She has been a complete support to Cheektowaga Sloan and continues to this day, and she gives us her undivided attention and I prepare ahead of time along with Mr. Drescher, the Board of Education on exactly what I needed to outline to her and to ask her to take Cheektowaga Sloan's concerns to Albany so she can advocate more strongly for us. I speak specifically to the social/emotional needs, why we need funding for that such as how I spoke about tonight with restorative practices, I have become very passionate and expressed my disappointment in the lack of funding and the lack aid we continue to see for our District. That was on February 6. February 28 was a special day. Myself, Mrs. Finn, Mr. Mochrie and Mrs. Potienko and her class hosted a very special visit from Assemblywoman Monica Wallace herself. She could have selected any district that she represents, any classroom, any school, and she chose us. We could not have been more proud and honored to have her come to Mrs. Potienko's first grade classroom, she actually read stories to the children, she talked to them, brought a snack for them. We wanted to highlight to her, how proud we are to be able to use the funding and continue to give us year after year that has been funneled to this Lucy Caulkins Reading and Writing Program. Assemblywoman Monica Wallace herself, as I have, has a strong passion for reading. We made that connection together, and she is so supportive and so I am extremely optimistic that she will continue to come through for us. Even when I say \$100,000 is a significant amount of money and we are appreciative. We have been able to utilize that money to bring books and put them in our students' hands, to create wonderful classroom learning environment for every classroom teacher, to bring in additional resources and she has most recently been also been helping to fund these restorative practices. With this advocacy, you can see how critical it is, and I am committed to continue to do so. In fact, Thursday of this week I will be in another meeting with her and with Assemblywoman Monica Wallace's assistants virtually. So we are going to engage in a virtual meeting to discuss the specific financial concerns related to COVID-19. As you can imagine and have been watching on the news, this has been completely become a financial hardship for so many entities including schools and the unknown is really so scary and so I feel an obligation to express to her on Thursday, our concerns if all of a sudden all of our aid is cut or all of a sudden all of the funding that we think we are receiving. So just to continue to advocate and send out the message to please continue to be that voice to us and express these concerns specific to what the pandemic has resulted in. This is just some of the advocacy that we have been engaged in.

If you go to the next slide. This has been a really proud moment for us. This is everybody represented. You can see Assemblywoman Monica Wallace to the far right holding the book that she read about Government, also it was a wonderful day. The children were tremendous, they had smiles on their faces, they were talking with a woman of importance. It was a beautiful day and we all celebrated in having her be present in one of our schools in Cheektowaga-Sloan.

That's all the advocacy, and I want to reassure the public that I won't stop. I'm fighting for what is right. I won't stop the messages that is being sent to Albany and continue with Senator Kennedy, Assemblywoman Monica Wallace and whoever else can help us get the message out.

Mr. Drescher, you have the next slide. Actually, I will continue with this next slide and will turn it over to Mr. Drescher momentarily. District advocacy continues. I think this will put it into perspective as to what I am referring to. It's hard to grasp this number. We have done the calculations over, over and over again. We are short a total of almost \$36 million dollars as a loss of foundation aid, due to the State not having followed the formula. So for year after year after year, the money that was rightfully owed to us, and we have not been receiving has accumulated and has resulted in this complete shortfall. You can imagine with if all of a sudden we were given this money, what we could do with it. So that is why, behind the scenes, we are so thoughtful every single day in how we can do with more with less if we can. That is how we have to function. We never want to short change the children, teachers and staff but we have to be fiscally responsible. So again, these decisions are really hard, as you see the next bullet here for advocacy is we continue to discuss current and continuing mandates. These mandates keep coming at us without any funding. We could probably have a whole power point on that. Mandates for our ELL population, they are rightfully deserving of the best education, so we brought on ELL teachers but there is requirement after requirement and they leave it to the school district onto how we are going to fund that rather than funneling the appropriate funding that should come with those mandates. We also discussed specific needs in order to provide the best education possible explained to both Senator Kennedy and Assemblywoman Monica Wallace about Restorative practices and these wonderful things. I know Senator Kennedy himself was in the counseling area at one point. He knows that I have a passion for that myself. Again, that relationship has been developed and it is important to have those relationships with Senators and Legislators to be able to do this advocating. Of course the Board of Education, we have many board members all of them are passionate right alongside me with advocacy. We have certain members who sat on a committee specific to advocacy and funding. I can't express my appreciation enough for those members and all of the Board as a whole for standing behind my voice as well to try to get out there that we need our fair share of funding. Again, this is just some of the advocating that we have done.

If you turn to the next slide, in a very disappointing manner, despite all of these efforts, the District continues to do. Mr. Drescher every year, when the state aid runs come, we are praying that we can see a bigger amount of state aid, we are going to see something after all of this advocacy. But for whatever reason, we continue to see virtually no increase. It is not fair, we're hoping the census may be more real life and up to date data which will impact those numbers, but at this point we still never receive our fair share. The funding we do end up seeing, extra, that is funneled to our district, comes from this specific advocating Assemblywoman Monica Wallace gives to us. We will continue advocating and continue to be that loud voice but we have yet to see results. This summarizes a good portion of the advocating that we have done. We make the commitment that we will not stop.

I turn it over back to Mr. Drescher.

Just a little bit about what we control. It remains very, very lean, but we are going to maintain all of our educational programs. We think that is important that we do focus on preparing our students for beyond anything grade 12, whether that be college, jobs, whatever they want to do. We want to make sure that they receive the education that they can go for it. It really is important to us to see our students succeed in life. The educational background as well as real life experiences as well.

We will maintain our Art, Music, Physical Education, Librarians at each of the schools, and our clubs, sports at the current level. All of those things are important to our students and our families.

Student health and building safety remains one of the top priorities and will be funded. We will make sure that they are safe. All of our buildings will continue to be appropriately maintained, in fact in a few years we will had many capital projects to help keeping our students safe, healthy and providing opportunities for education. This budget is fiscally responsible. It's lean, it's tough, but we want to be able to provide the highest quality education without overspending in any way.

If you flip to the next slide, you see that the District's for each year that the 2% tax cap has been spoken of for many years. Actually our cap is only 1.6%. 1.6% is all we would be allowed to increase the budget. However, the District's proposed the increase of 1.59%. Again, I want to remind you of a couple of things. Over that last year period, taxes have increased only ½ of 1% each year average for 8 continuous years. 1./2 of 1% for 8 years. We do not believe that there is any other school district in our area that can match that record, quite frankly.

The next slide kind of takes it down to your level. In fact, the average home has an average increase of \$16.80 for the entire year. Of course, every home is different. If you are like a lot of people who pay their monthly bills, as far as your real property taxes in your bank escrow account, if you break it down that way, it is only \$1.40 per month increase in your taxes. We just want to remind you that the district has been below the NYS tax cap each and every year that this tax cap has been in existence, not just below it, we've been significantly below it on the average for the last 8 years.

So as we transition to our second last slide, in front of you it should read that we appreciate our community and the support you have shown us. We continue to be committed to making thoughtful and difficult decisions in order to keep the tax rate increase as low as possible as well as maintaining a strong educational program for all of our students, which as explained in the beginning, have done a tremendous job of continuing that through this COVID -19 Pandemic. We have had people such as Mrs. Brucz, the Food Service Director and her staff that I can't say enough about who have risen to the occasion and have helped prepare and serve over 40,000 meals to our children and families. We have Mr. Goodrow, from our Buildings and Grounds Department, who has never stopped working during this time and his staff, custodial and the cleaning staff who have continued to maintain the buildings and whenever we have people there they reassure that the buildings are cleaned and sanitized during this pandemic taking place and to our teachers, have done a phenomenal job balancing paper based learning with ___ learning and

utilizing what we have in district such as the chromebooks that I talked about earlier. How we reorganized and prioritized that our high school students had what they needed. All of our students with special needs and our support staff who have gone above and beyond. We talked about counseling virtually, offering resources, helping families, this has been a very difficult time for our community, for our children, who we desperately miss. We all want to be back in school. This has not been easy, but we joined together as a district. We are all so proud of and so proud to work in, that we have supported our families in every way possible. No matter what needs people had. We have personally been delivering meals, we have done whatever we possibly can. We will continue to do that and so I just felt it appropriate to thank everybody in our district, for doing this tremendous job that they have been doing. I want to finish by saying to our community that it is with great hope that our presentation has highlighted the tremendous work that has been taking place district wide with our instructional programming, our social emotional programming, which is near and dear to our heart. Our core beliefs are educating the whole child and we will never risk jeopardizing that. So I promise we will always continue to do as we have done to keep our taxpayers as a priority and in the forefront of all that we do. Thank you very much for attending tonight in this nontraditional manner.

Our final slide, we wanted to make sure that if any of our community members who are viewing at this time have an opportunity to ask questions, this is what we are going to do. I would ask you, our District Clerk, Mrs. Kross, who has been wonderful during this time as well. Mrs. Kross has gone above and beyond. She has been running and leading this election process that was thrown at us overnight and is a process that we have never followed before. We are used to the voting in person and Mrs. Kross has taken on a lot and has done an extraordinary job. Tonight I have asked her if she could please accept questions via email. What we are doing to do as a Board of Education, is we are going to take a break. I would like to note that we are not continuing on a Board meeting, on this break, we are not continuing on in an executive session, we are just going to drop off from our phone call. When we are ready, we will take a ten-minute break to allow our community time to email Mrs. Kross any questions that we may have not answered during this presentation. In approximately ten minutes, so just hand with us if you would, because in ten minutes we will come back on tonight and Mrs. Kross will read the questions out loud and either Mr. Drescher or myself will answer. We appreciate your flexibility with this process virtually. Again, we thank you for u\your time, attention and for participating in this presentation. At this time, again, please email Mrs. Kross with questions. Her email should be on the screen in front of you and we are now going to take a break for approximately ten minutes.

This is Dawn Kross, District Clerk. I have received a few questions. One of them being, Will there be an Erie County Board of Election Monitor present during the ballot opening?

This is Wayne Drescher. I will respond to that. If that is okay. Mrs. Kross is the District Clerk, she will be responsible for overseeing the election process and as per usual we will have three in this case, normally we have approximately ten election inspectors who take names etc., this case we will have three election inspectors in place reviewing helping with the process of helping with the ballots, accepting, and making sure everything is correct with each ballot and inputting

them into the machine to make sure the process is done as normal as we can and make sure everything is done appropriately and proper. So those are independent election inspectors.

Thank you.

The next question is, Will Candidates for this School Board be able to have an observer on site?

No, we really do not and have never had a candidate on site reviewing the process of the election inspectors. If there is any question, if the election is close, or if there is any question related to that, the Erie County Board of Elections will oversee the process and will do a recount if it is necessary. They then if there is a question regarding the election, they then take over the process. We are hoping that does not occur, but if there is a question related to a very close election or tight election, a recount you might call it, then they in fact take over that process.

Thank you. That concludes our questions.

We have concluded the budget presentation and need a motion and a second to adjourn this meeting at 8:30 p.m. Claire motion. Zack second. Claire and Zack. Onto Question. All in Favor? Aye. Opposed? Carried and so ordered.