



May 17, 2024

Dear Lamoille North Community,



As I hope you are aware, voters from the Lamoille North towns of Belvidere, Eden, Hyde Park, Johnson, and Waterville are being asked to visit their polling locations for a third time on **Tuesday, May 21st**, to cast a third ballot for the FY25 revised elementary-level budget.

We recognize that there has been a tremendous amount of political wrangling during this budget season. A resounding theme at all of our information meetings and those across the state has centered around community anger at our legislators and Montpelier in general. **Even so, the majority of school district budgets have now successfully passed.**

Providing a public education to our youth is not just a moral obligation; it is also a legal requirement. This budget represents our collective responsibility under the law to ensure every student receives the education they deserve. It is our roadmap for managing financial resources to support school operations and goals so that we can fulfill our moral and legal obligations to our students.

As we approach May 21st, we hope each of our voting-age community members will take the time to learn the ins and outs of your revised budget. Please read on to understand the answers to some frequently asked questions as follows:



This proposed budget does NOT include any new programming, services, or positions. This revised budget only continues our current level of learning opportunities and supports for our K-6 students. More than \$357,455 was removed from the general fund budget put before voters on Town Meeting Day. In fact, 3.5 staff positions across the district have been eliminated since Town Meeting Day to keep costs down.

81% of LNMUUSD Elementary education needs are paid for by Non-Residents. Because education taxes are a state tax, local education tax funds are blended together with those of residents from across Vermont. Just \$2.6 million in direct local funding makes up the MUUSD-A elementary budget of \$13.8 million this year. Another \$2.7 million comes through non-resident taxes, and the remaining \$8.5 million comes from the State Education spending pot.

69% of Lamoille North residents pay current-year education taxes based on income (a.k.a. Property Tax Credit). A typical income-sensitized education property taxpayer contributes approximately 2.5% of their income to education property tax. For FY25, households with FY23 income up to \$128,000 may be eligible to pay education property taxes based on income or a combination of income and property.

68% of the revised FY25 elementary budget supports direct student instruction. At the heart of the education mission lies an unwavering commitment to students. This commitment is the driving force that propels us to strive for improvement and success on their behalf.

The passing of this budget directly impacts the services we provide to our students.

If this revised budget, up for vote on May 21st, does not pass, you could be making some difficult choices, including the potential reduction or even suspension of bussing for all students and the use of local funds for our after-school programs. These services are vital for the well-being and educational experience of Lamoille North's children. This revised FY25 elementary budget is our communities' budget. The 642 elementary students that make up Belvidere Central/Waterville Elementary, Eden Central, Hyde Park Elementary, and Johnson Elementary schools rely on you to understand the impact of your vote on their future and to take action.



To learn more about the FY25 Revised Budget, the *Property Tax Credit*, and school operating questions being faced by your Board and Communities, please visit the FY25 information page at www.LNSD.org - just hit the blue bar at the top of the webpage. Thank you for taking the time to understand the revised budget and its implications.

At the end of the day, we have a moral, ethical and legal responsibility to take care of our children and to unconditionally serve their educational and social-emotional needs. We say this not to discount the realities of rising costs all around us, but to say that we believe nothing is more important than assuring a future that holds promise for all of our children. We are well poised for this if we continue to educate and care for our students by offering them opportunities in their educational experience that will enable them to do well in whatever village, town, city, state or country they choose to live their lives.

Very truly yours,

Catherine Gallagher, M.Ed.
Superintendent of Schools
Lamoille North Supervisory Union