



**THE STATE EDUCATION DEPARTMENT / THE UNIVERSITY OF THE STATE OF NEW YORK**

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Commissioner of Education  
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June 6, 2017

Yehuda Weissmandl  
President, Board of Education  
East Ramapo Central School District  
105 South Madison Avenue  
Spring Valley, NY 10977

Dear Mr. Weissmandl:

As I informed you in my letters of April 17 and 28 and May 1, 2017, pursuant to Chapter 89 of the Laws of 2016, the Commissioner of Education is required to review the East Ramapo Central School District's ("District") proposed budget for the 2017-2018 school year and to present his or her findings to the Board of Education ("Board") no later than 30 days prior to the date of the annual school district budget vote in May.

Specifically, the law requires that the Commissioner review the budget to ensure that it, to the greatest extent possible, expands educational programming for public school students, including but not limited to extracurricular activities, course offerings, non-mandated support services, non-mandated art and music classes, programs and services for English language learners and students with disabilities, and maintaining class size. The Commissioner's review of the budget must also ensure that it is balanced within the context of revenue and expenditure estimates and mandated programs.

On May 16, 2017, the District presented a proposed budget to the voters, which I had approved on May 1, 2017 in accordance with the legal requirements described above. The first proposed budget included a 1% tax cap override, among other things. However, the first proposed budget was voted down by the District's voters.

As a result, the Board has elected to present a second proposed 2017-2018 budget to the voters for a re-vote on June 20, 2017. The second proposed budget totals \$231,084,269 million and includes the following elements:

1. Expands Summer Learning Opportunities
  - Instrumental Music Summer Camp 4-8
  - Computer Sciences Summer Academy 2-8
  - Health Sciences Summer Academy 2-8
  - Extended School Year Program K-8
  - Services for Students with Interrupted Formal Education ("SIFE")

2. Expands Arts Instruction
3. Expands English as a New Language and Bilingual Instruction
4. Provides New Academic Standards Facilitators and Support for Effective Instruction
5. Strengthens Instruction for Students with Special Educational Needs
  - Increases collaborative teaching classes
  - Increases clinical services

In accordance with the legal requirements described above, I have reviewed the District's second proposed 2017-2018 budget and find that it is balanced and does expand educational programming for public school students.

Finally, as you know, in my video message to the East Ramapo community following the May budget defeat, I noted that, while the law passed in 2016 gave me approval authority over the District's proposed budget in several respects, I cannot create the District's budget. In that message, I encouraged the community to seize this opportunity to come together and find a way to move forward collectively for the benefit of all East Ramapo's children. Clearly, both the public and non-public school communities care deeply about and want what is best for their children. Whether an individual's personal interest takes the form of art and music classes, services for students with disabilities and English language learners, safe transportation, more election polling places, or something else – everyone's child matters and everyone's interest matters.

However, as has been the case in the District for several years, in budget cycles where need is great and dollars and resources are limited, difficult decisions must be made and middle ground must be found to balance the needs of the entire community. I again urge the East Ramapo community to come together to move the District forward. Ultimately, this is your community and it is your budget. While the monitors, the Department and the District will help to support this effort, it is up to the entire community to chart a path forward together.

Sincerely,



MaryEllen Elia  
Commissioner

c: Dr. Deborah Wortham  
Charles Szuberla  
John Sipple