

Budget Process

Investing in Students, Strengthening Our Future



January 2025

Highland Falls - Fort Montgomery CSD



BOE Members:

- Anne Lawless, BOE President
- Faith Aprilante, BOE Vice-President
- Aaron Falk, BOE Member
- Trish Kinney, BOE Member
- Gus Koutsourades, BOE Member
- Gabe O'Connell, BOE Member
- Kristen O'Dell, BOE Member
- Erik Mitchell, West Point Liaison
- Dawn Lent, District Clerk

District Administration:

- Michael McElduff, Superintendent of Schools
- Christopher Carballo, Assistant Superintendent for Business
- Rachel Adelstein, Assistant Superintendent for Curriculum, Instruction, and Technology

Mission



The mission of the Highland Falls-Fort Montgomery Schools is to provide enriching, safe and meaningful educational experiences that builds a strong foundation for our diverse student body.

Vision



The HFFMCSD is a school community focused on developing students as lifelong learners equipped with critical thinking and problem solving skills necessary to navigate and shape the future.

Core Beliefs



We will consistently and effectively achieve our vision and accomplish our mission if in all of our work we demonstrate the following core beliefs:

- Focus on the needs of each student and create opportunities to ensure equity
- Foster engagement, collaboration and a sense of belonging for all school community members
- Take collective responsibility and make thoughtful decisions based on best practices
- Diversity, equity, and inclusion are fundamental to creating a welcoming and nurturing environment
- Promote safety, health and wellness for the developmental growth of our community
- Consistently prioritize efficiency and affordability, while also striving for excellence
- Embrace curiosity, connection and critical thinking

Beginning With the End in Mind



- The budget process begins as early as October.
- November the BOE approves the budget calendar.
- Multiple presentations throughout March and April.
- Ends in May when the annual budget is brought to voters.
 - Voting will take place on May 20, 2025 from 6:00 am to 9:00 pm at the Highland Falls Intermediate School
- Team effort where all stakeholders work together.

Budget Calendar: Staying the Course



- Official work began for the 25-26 budget on November 7th when the budget calendar was approved by the BOE.
 - The approved calendar can be found the District's website
- The Budget Calendar includes submission dates for information from:
 - Building and District level Administrators
 - Additional departments
- Presentations to the BOE and community, and New York State (NYS) around mandated budget hearing and meeting dates.
- Information gathered includes:
 - Preliminary equipment requests
 - New staffing (if needed)
 - Curriculum and Technology proposals
 - Also included are important dates for BOE candidates, voter information dates (i.e.: absentee and early mail ballots, etc.) and mandated approvals for submission to NYS related to the budget



Meeting the Needs to Support our Goals

A school district budget represents more than just numbers; it embodies the Mission and Core Values of the HFFMCS D community.

The HFFMCS D budget:

- Meets the educational needs of our students while ensuring compliance with New York State regulations.
- Defines the District's comprehensive annual spending plan.
- Offers a detailed overview of the financial framework driving the District's operations for the upcoming year.
- Aligns with the Board of Education's annual goals to support strategic priorities.

The Budget Process in Action



- Building-level and departmental budgets are developed independently and thoroughly reviewed to ensure alignment with district goals and priorities.
- The budgeting process follows a school-based approach, with allocations determined by building-level enrollment and specific needs.
- The process applies an equal and equitable standard, ensuring that every student has access to the resources necessary for success.
- Regular communication with the community ensures transparency, fostering understanding and support for the district's financial decisions.

Key Components of a School Budget



- Salary and Benefits (Health Insurance, Social Security, workers' Compensation)
- Transportation
- Instruction (Student Programs)
- General Support (Facilities, Personnel, Business, General Insurance)

NYS Budget vs NYS Expense Reporting



NYS Annual Reporting Forms for School Expenses

- Salary & Benefits (Administrative, Capital & Program)
- Transportation (Program)
- Instruction) (Program)
- General Support (Administrative & Capital)

NYS Reporting for School Budgets: Mandated by NYS

- Administrative Component (General Support & Benefits)
- Capital Component (General Support & Benefits)
- Program Component (Instruction, Transportation & Benefits)

NYS format for reporting school expenses is different than reporting for school budget. HFFMCSD shows the annual budget in both formats

Bringing it Together: How we Create the Budget



- Building and district level administrators submit requests:
 - Staffing, supplies, materials, equipment, new curriculum proposals, and professional development
- The administration uses estimates for costs that have yet be finalized, including:
 - Health insurance, retirement systems, energy costs, etc.
 - District health insurance rates, which are not finalized until March, An estimate is used for November-March for discussion purposes. Once finalized the budget is updated accordingly.
- The administrators use estimates for revenues that have yet to be finalized:
 - NYS aid is a perfect example: the governor's proposed budget is normally released in January, so an estimate is used from November-January (budget development). An update is done in January, as requested, to reflect any changes. April 1st is the deadlines for the NYS, if it is passed into law, the amount is used for the final budget presented in May.
- Your feedback and questions are important to the process:
 - Budget meetings allow for the BOE and community to ask clarifying questions and give feedback.

Building a Budget Together



- Opportunities to share your feedback, ask questions, and gain a further understanding through District - Sponsored events
- Superintendent's Videos and Presentations - The Budget Process
- Public Comment at BOE Meetings & Budget Public Hearings
- Check out our website: [2025-2026 budget](#)

Learning the Budget Language: We are Here to Support



- We understand that the budget document, financial terms and acronyms we use may not reflect everyday language many of us use.
- We have developed a list of frequently used financial and budget terms to bridge the gap and have a more fluent conversation with the BOE and the community.
 - This can be found on the District website:
 - Located in the Business Office tab
- You can also find prior-year budget information as well.

Next Virtual Event: Explaining the Budget Process



The District will share out an additional virtual presentation that further explains the budget process in mid-February.

Check out our website for the list of budget presentations for the 2025-2026 school year.