



Lincoln Park Public Schools

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Dear Parents and Guardians,

The Lincoln Park School District is in the process of evaluating the status of our current year budget as we plan for the 2025-26 school year. There are some relatively serious fiscal concerns that the district is working to manage at this time. We want to ensure that our processes in developing the budget, and working within the parameters of our current budget, are effectively communicated to our staff and school community.

Last year, the district initially projected reducing staff by approximately twenty positions. After extensive review, approximately seven positions were returned to active status for the 2024-25 school year. This led to an extremely tight and in some areas underfunded budget for the current school year. As a result, the district has been eliminating all non-essential purchases. The Board of Education, the school administration and staff members are doing everything in their power to keep costs to a minimum. The district budget process presents challenges due to limited funding and accelerating costs. As we plan for the 2025-26 school year, our top priority is to mitigate the need for staff reductions.

We have targeted educational and operational areas that provide fiscal efficiency and limit expenditures. In an effort to limit out of district placements, we have been successful in implementing a structured literacy instructional program (Orton-Gillingham) to help serve students with a wider range of needs. Additionally, we are enhancing our local special education offerings through the hiring of full time paraprofessionals in certain situations, enhanced training for Handle with Care, and the purchase of specialized equipment and devices, including calming stations.

The district is focusing on cost reduction strategies which will not have negative impact on instruction. One area we are exploring is student transportation, which has proven to be a disproportionately large expense for our district. Recently, the State has changed licensing regulations regarding the requirements to drive a school vehicle with nine or fewer passengers. The standard CDL is no longer required; a regular driver's license with an S-class endorsement will be sufficient beginning July 2025.

The district is planning to purchase vehicles and hire drivers to significantly reduce transportation costs for out of district placements and vocational school students. The district will also be focusing on increasing and incentivizing contracts for parents to drive their students to out of district locations. We are also planning to eliminate all courtesy busing, including all trips under two miles to school.

The Pequannock, Boonton, Montville and Lincoln Park School District Superintendents have met to find efficiencies and revenue sources in special education and transportation. District

Business Administrators and Directors of Special Education will also be meeting to identify specific opportunities to enhance programming and financial savings.

The district currently uses Kelly Education to assign substitute teachers, paraprofessionals and instructional aides. We are looking to develop our own pool of substitutes with the long term goal of minimizing the need for substitute services outside the district's operations. Over time we anticipate some significant savings in this area.

After twenty-five years without a contract, Boonton and Lincoln Park have agreed on a five-year contract which should stabilize our costs going forward. We are also working to finalize and enhance the lease terms and conditions in our contract with Chapel Hill Academy.

All of the options mentioned above appear to be strong initiatives to remediate some of our budgetary shortfalls. No single initiative will return major dollars to the district, but collectively the impact can be meaningful.

We are in the process of seeking partnerships with neighboring districts to help reduce costs and, hopefully, increase revenue in our ongoing effort to stabilize the current and future budgets. Our staff members and administration have been incredibly collaborative in doing more with less and we appreciate the backing we have felt for our staff and the district as we work together to support our most important stakeholders, our students.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Robert P. Mooney". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Robert P. Mooney