# Jefferson Township Public Schools: School Funding & Reconfiguration Update

**Jeanne Howe, Superintendent**
**October 14, 2024**

# JEFFERSON FUNDING BASICS

- State Aid is funding for public schools from state revenues, such as income tax and sales tax
- School Funding Reform Act of 2008 (SFRA)
    - A formula to “fairly” distribute state aid
- Equalization aid remained frozen for eight years
    - No adjustments made for changes in enrollment
- S-2 Enacted in July 2018
    - Seven year implementation
    - Reallocation of aid from “overfunded” to “underfunded” districts

## LOSSES TO DATE = $44,696,099

# ADVOCACY EFFORTS

- Joined Save Our Students (SOS)
- Numerous letter-writing campaigns
- Meetings with local legislators (pre- and post-COVID)
- Meeting with senior member of the Governor's cabinet
- SFRA OPRA Request for formula algorithm
- Joined other districts in OPRA lawsuit
- Multiple years testifying at the Senate & Assembly Budget hearings
- Collaboration with Township Administration & Council
- Media Outreach

# BUDGET RESPONSES

- Reduced central office support staff and administrative staff
- Right-sizing of instructional staff
- Closing Drummond & Milton Schools
- Seeking out grant opportunities
- 2018 Referendum to remove facility improvements from annual operating budget

# JTPS BUDGET HIGHLIGHTS

- Preschool for all
  - Specific funding of $3.9M for the 24-25 school year
- Strategic use of Federal COVID Relief funding
  - Maintain 1:1 laptop program and technology infrastructure
  - Sustain instructional programming
  - Facility/HVAC improvements
- Curriculum revisions
- Increased security personnel & related facility enhancements

# WHAT WE NEED

- State Aid cuts that are proportionate to the decline in enrollment
- Explanation for Geographic Cost Adjustments and Wealth & Income Factors
- Funding for Special Education reflecting actual enrollment
- Increase in base per-pupil cost
- Increase in Extraordinary Aid
- **IMPACT AID FOR DISTRICTS IMPACTED BY HIGHLAND AND PINELANDS ACTS**

# RECONFIGURATION UPDATE

- Closure of Cozy Lake discussed with County Office of Education
- Fifth Grade Stakeholder Committee feedback will be applied to ensure an age-appropriate experience for all fourth and fifth graders
- Current plans reflect information presently available
    - State aid figures will not be received until late February or early March
- The capacity of the current six schools significantly exceeds the current enrollment
- Reconfiguration team meeting regularly to identify complete list of tasks and make recommendations to the Board

# RECONFIGURATION UPDATE

- Special Education
  - Self-contained special education classes will be housed at Briggs and Stanlick Schools
  - All schools will offer in-class resource instruction and related services
- Preschool through Grade Three
  - Lake Hopatcong
    - Preschool and Kindergarten will attend Briggs School
    - Grades one through three will attend Stanlick School
  - Oak Ridge
    - Preschool through grade three will attend White Rock (****this is a change from the prior announcement****)

# RECONFIGURATION UPDATE

- Fourth through Eighth Grade will attend what is now called the Middle School
  - Fourth and fifth graders will maintain an elementary school experience that has been traditional in our district

- Grades nine through 12 will attend the High School

- Central Office Staff will be relocated to available space in an open school building, not Cozy Lake

# RECONFIGURATION: NEXT STEPS

- Exploring options for bussing
  - Students in grades four through 12 will be bused to the MS/HS campus
  - The goal of the committee is to separate grades 4-7 and grades 8-12
  - We are unsure if we will be able to accomplish this, but it is our goal

- Comprehensive task list developed and to be adjusted, as needed
  - Tasks broken down into categories aligned with the BOE committees
  - Progress to be reported to the respective committee
  - Information will be shared publicly during BOE meetings, through communications from the Superintendent, and updates posted to the district website