
April 2, 2026

Dear Stakeholders,

Below is information related to school start times for the 2026–2027 school year and the tentative budget for Fiscal Year 2027 (“FY27”).

2026–2027 School Start Times

Currently, students attending Bernards High School who reside in Far Hills, Peapack, or Gladstone use NJ Transit to reach our campus in Bernardsville. The NJ Transit schedule is inflexible, with a pre-established schedule that provides students with an “early” and a “late” option for arriving at Bernards High School each morning.

The “late” option, simply put, arrives too late at the Bernardsville train station for students from Far Hills, Peapack, and Gladstone to reach Bernards High School comfortably on time. As a result, students who live in Far Hills, Peapack, and Gladstone only have the “early” train option to arrive at Bernards High School with a reasonable amount of time to spare.

By affording students from Bernards High School an additional 10 minutes to arrive at school in the morning, students who live in Far Hills, Peapack, and Gladstone will have the option of taking either train. This is an important consideration for the students we serve and guides decision-making across all three schools, as we look forward to the 2026–2027 school year. Here are the adjusted school start and end times for all three campuses, which we will implement this fall to reflect a balanced approach for all the students we serve in the Somerset Hills.

- Bernards High School will start at 7:55 am and end at 2:51 pm.
- Bernardsville Middle School will start at 8:00 am and end at 2:56 pm.
- Bedwell Elementary School will start at 9:05 am and end at 3:41 pm.

FY27 Budget

The Somerset Hills Board of Education met on Saturday, March 21, 2026, for its annual public Budget Retreat. The Board adopted a tentative budget for the 2026–2027 (FY27) school year. The FY27 budget charts our priorities and is supported by three revenue streams: local taxes raised, state aid from the New Jersey Department of Education, and entitlement grants from the United States Department of Education for certain populations.

Budget Presentation

[HERE](#) is the Budget Retreat slide deck shared at the public meeting for your consideration and review.

FY27 Budget Highlights

- Includes a 3.74% tax increase that balances the needs of the taxpayers with educational opportunities for the students we serve.

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- Adjusts staffing levels to reflect student enrollment while sustaining the integrity of our programming amid increasingly challenging economic conditions.
 - Enhances curriculum in Language Arts, Latin, Multilingual Learner, Media Center, and Social Studies; supports professional development.
 - Maintains transportation for Bernardsville students living on hazardous routes.
 - Introduces a Bilingual Paraprofessional to support Grade 2 classrooms.
 - Continues enhancements in student services for students qualifying for special services due to a disability. The FY27 budget maintains the commitment we made to these programs for the current school year.
 - Enhances safety and security measures in all four District facilities.
 - Finalizes a two-year plan to replace six tennis courts at the Polo Grounds beginning in May and ending by September (anticipated) in advance of the 2026 Girls' Tennis schedule. The courts will be inaccessible to the public during this time.
 - Continues character-based education initiatives throughout the District.
 - Enhances instructional leadership and innovation at Bernards High School with an additional administrative position.

Budget Growth Mechanisms

The budget is permitted to increase the tax levy by 2%, which it does. Additionally, the Board approved my recommendation to utilize an additional Healthcare Adjustment Waiver of \$1,005,396, permitted by the New Jersey Department of Education, to rapidly offset escalating healthcare costs while maintaining the quality of our programming and class sizes throughout the District.

Planning for the Future

The future in Somerset Hills is bright, given this budget. However, please also be aware that we are working very closely with a demographer to examine future enrollment and its impact on our budget, including staffing levels. Additionally, future programming will include an analysis to ensure that our elective courses reflect student interests.

The Board will host a Budget Hearing on April 29, 2026, at 7:30 pm in the BHS Community Room. In the meantime, if you have any questions regarding the FY27 spending plan, please contact me at your convenience.

Sincerely,



Brian Brotschul, Ed. D.
Superintendent of Schools