

BERGENFIELD PUBLIC SCHOOL DISTRICT DISTRICT NEWS



SPRING EDITION - JUNE 2026



www.bergenfield.org



www.facebook.com/bergenfieldsd

FROM THE DESK OF THE SUPERINTENDENT

By Christopher M. Tully Ed.D., Superintendent of Schools



As we begin to wind down the 2025-26 school year, we are also carefully preparing for 2026-27. As I mentioned in the previous newsletter, these continue to be extremely challeng-

ing financial times for our district and for school districts throughout New Jersey.

We have now completed the budget development process for the upcoming school year. The greatest challenge facing school districts across the state continues to be the dramatic increase in health benefit premiums through the New Jersey State Health Benefits Program (SHBP). Over the last five years, healthcare premiums have increased by more than 73%. Most recently, our district experienced a 37% increase on January 1, 2026—17% higher than anticipated.

School districts and municipalities are required to provide health benefits to employees, yet have absolutely no control over the rising costs. SHBP is managed entirely at the state-level in Trenton. In response, our Board of Education—along with school districts across the state—recently passed resolutions urging the State Assembly and Senate to implement meaningful reform to stabilize these unsustainable increases. Lasting relief can only come through state action.

Despite these extraordinary healthcare costs, our district continues to examine every area of spending to re-

main fiscally responsible. Our district has averaged just a 1.96% tax increase over the last 16 years; a record we are extremely proud of. In fact, that average would have been even lower if healthcare costs had remained stable during that time. We have also had three school budgets with a zero percent tax increase over that span.

This year, after utilizing every available source of alternative revenue and reducing more than \$5 million in expenditures, we developed a budget that requires a 9.15% tax increase. For a home assessed at \$320,000, the school tax impact will be approximately \$624.96 for the 2026-27 school year.

To manage these unprecedented healthcare increases, the district was required to utilize a health benefit adjustment waiver totaling \$3,289,445, a banked cap waiver of \$707,819, and the district's allowable 2% tax levy increase of \$1,117,824. These waivers were created by the state specifically for years when healthcare costs rise dramatically beyond local control. This year our district needed to rely upon those measures.

Raising taxes is never a responsibility we take lightly. We remain committed to spending taxpayer dollars wisely, while protecting the high-quality educational programs our students deserve. We firmly believe that investing in public education is one of the most important investments a community can make—not only for our children, but for the future strength of our community.

Bergenfield Public Schools continues to be recognized for its com-

prehensive educational programs and outstanding student achievement. Our students continue to gain acceptance into some of the most competitive colleges and universities in the nation, including Harvard University and the Massachusetts Institute of Technology this year. Over the past 21 years, our district has built a strong reputation for excellence, innovation, and continuous improvement.

On behalf of the Bergenfield Board of Education, I sincerely thank our taxpayers for their continued trust and support. Your investment in public education continues to strengthen our community and enhance local property values. Many families tell us they chose Bergenfield specifically because of the outstanding reputation of our schools.

Thank you again for your continued confidence in our schools. We remain committed to providing our students with a world-class education. The best is yet to come!

HONORARY GUARD



Mr. and Mrs. Gallione, Jesse, Jordan, and Jack.

At the June 9th Art Show at BHS, three members of the BHS Football Team served as Honor Guards for the Col. Floyd Thompson display. Jordan Correa, Jesse Maldonado, and Jack Walsh were responsible for protecting Thompson's many military medals, photos, and other items.



DISTRICT NEWS

CONTRAST OF THE 2025-26 AND 2026-27 SCHOOL BUDGETS

INSTRUCTION

	Budgeted for 2025-26	Budgeted for 2026-27
Regular Programs	22,823,927	23,246,495
Special Education	14,045,767	14,576,563
Basic Skills	446,710	660,584
Bilingual Education	1,089,013	1,062,906
School Sponsored Co/Extra Activities	400,153	435,291
School Sponsored Athletics	815,693	821,023
Total Summer School	133,092	138,516
Community Services Programs/Operations	250	0
Total General Instruction Expenses	\$ 39,754,605	\$ 40,941,378

SUPPORT SERVICES

Tuition	5,900,138	6,183,112
Attendance	10,250	10,629
Health Services	872,537	1,004,502
Speech, OT, PT, Related & Extra Services	608,895	811,147
Other Support Services	1,607,163	1,808,745
Guidance	1,469,187	1,440,772
Child Study Teams	1,669,904	1,879,618
Improvement of Instructional Services	1,000	1,000
Educational Media Services/School Libraries	796,174	797,627
Instructional Staff Training Services	1,000	1,000
General Administration	1,639,602	1,625,810
School Administration	3,596,586	3,733,143
Central Svcs	859,166	854,101
Admin Info Technology	471,800	397,424
Operation & Maintenance of Plant Services	6,769,937	6,629,986
Security	1,142,322	986,820
Student Transportation Services	3,812,744	3,750,710
Employee Benefits	15,076,229	19,111,242
Total General Support Services Expenses	\$ 46,304,634	\$ 51,027,388

RESERVES

Int Earned - Maintenance Reserve	1	1
Int Earned - Current Expense Emergency Reserve	1	1
Total Reserves	\$ 2	\$ 2

TOTAL GENERAL FUND CURRENT EXPENSES

\$ 86,059,239 **\$ 91,968,768**

CAPITAL OUTLAY

Equipment	0	25,000
Facilities Acquisition/Construction	1,089,624	1,213,956
Capital Reserve: Transfer to Capital Projects	0	0
Interest Deposit to Capital Reserve	1	1
Total Capital Outlay	\$ 1,089,625	\$ 1,238,957

SPECIAL SCHOOLS

Special Schools	41,829	43,363
Transfer of Funds to Charter Schools	320,833	248,011
Total Special Schools	\$ 362,662	\$ 291,374

OPERATING BUDGET GRAND TOTAL

\$ 87,511,526 **\$ 93,499,099**

DISTRICT NEWS



2025-26 TEACHERS OF THE YEAR



Mrs. Buono, Ms. Churn, Mrs. Cosgrove, Mr. Dunn, Mrs. Handras, Mr. Rapetti, and Mrs. Zapata.

Congratulations to each of this year's honorees on being selected as Teacher of the Year for their school! The seven recipients are: Mr. Anthony Rapetti for Roy W. Brown Middle School; Mrs. Leslie Zapata for Washington School; Mrs. Jean Buono for Franklin School; Mrs. Enza Handras for Hoover School; Mrs. Kelly Cosgrove for Lincoln School; Mr. Sean Dunn for Jefferson School; and Ms. Lisa Churn for Bergenfield High School.

Dr. Tully stated, "On behalf of the Bergenfield Board of Education, I would like to congratulate our 2025-26 Teachers of the Year. Each recipient is being recognized by his/her peers within our learning community for demonstrating outstanding commitment to our students. This honor is well-deserved!"

The Teachers of the Year were honored at the Board of Education meeting in May.

NEW BALANCE NATIONALS



Ryan, Matthew, Jason, and Jacob at the Nationals.

The BHS Boys Sprint Medley Relay Team (Jacob Rosario, Ryan Enrile, Matthew O'Brien, and Jason Enrile) competed at New Balance Nationals and ran an impressive race—finishing first in their heat and 23rd out of 67 competing teams. Their time of 3:35 is the 8th fastest time in NJ and 38th fastest in the nation this past season!

NIKE NATIONALS



Camille, Jody, Leylanie, and Marley at the Nationals.

The BHS Girls 4x400m Relay Team (Jody Madriaga, Leylanie Gomez, Marley Odamtten, and Camille Hayletts) competed at the Nike Nationals. The girls ran a time of 4:08, which broke their own school record by 2 seconds. Camille ran the fastest split of all teams competing with a personal best time of 57.59 seconds!

BIG BROTHERS BIG SISTERS



Students at a Big Brothers Big Sisters session.

This past year has been another special one for the two Big Brothers Big Sisters mentoring programs.

Mentors and mentees have participated in engaging activities centered on friendship-building, STEM learning, healthy coping strategies, and gratitude.

It has been inspiring to see the growth in confidence, leadership, and connection among the students involved.



Students at a Big Brothers Big Sisters session.

ORCHESTRA FESTIVAL



The students with teacher and conductor, Mrs. Quirk.

In April, twelve of our 4th & 5th graders participated in the NJ SMA Elementary Orchestra Festival in Sparta. They were selected from hundreds of students recommended by their music teachers from seven counties of Northern Jersey. The students did an amazing job in both their musical preparation and performance!

Bergenfield Board of Education
100 South Prospect Avenue
Bergenfield, New Jersey 07621-1958

Non-Profit Org.
U.S. Postage Paid
Paramus, N.J.
Permit No.
357
ECRWSS

Postal Customer
Bergenfield, NJ 07621

DISTRICT NEWS | JUNE 2026

District Central Administration

Dr. Christopher M. Tully, Superintendent of Schools
JoAnn Khoury-Frias, Business Administrator/Board Secretary
Darlene Markman, Asst. Superintendent of Curriculum
Shane Biggins, Director of Personnel

Board of Education

Deborah Podwin, President
Guadalupe Ruiz-Catala, Vice-President
Dr. Joseph Amara, Trustee
Fanny Cruz-Betesh, Trustee
Lisa Escott, Trustee



 www.bergenfield.org

 www.facebook.com/bergenfieldsd

DISTRICT NEWS



CONGRATULATIONS TO THE 2025-26 TEACHERS OF THE YEAR

Inside This Issue

From the Desk of the Superintendent.....Pg 1	Big Brothers Big Sisters.....Pg 3
Honorary Guard.....Pg 1	New Balance Nationals.....Pg 3
Contrast of the 2025-26 and 2026-27 School Budgets.....Pg 2	Nike Nationals.....Pg 3
2025-26 Teachers of the Year.....Pg 3	Orchestra Festival.....Pg 3