FARMINGDALE ELEMENTARY SCHOOL NEWSLETTER

September 2026

The Board of Education and the District administration hope you had a relaxing and enjoyable summer. As another school year begins, we want to provide the community with an update on the school's overall financial situation. Thankfully the school has been functioning as normal over the last several years so we are not sounding the alarm, but do want the community to be aware of the continuing decrease in State Aid. The State of New Jersey provides funding to local school districts to support their budgets and offset the reliance on local taxes. This aid helps our district provide a thorough and efficient education required by law. The amount of funding changes each year and this makes consistent budgeting more difficult.

Over the last few years, suburban school districts across the state are struggling with reduced State Aid contributions. Local districts are closing & selling schools, laying off staff, reducing after school programs, eliminating sports and cutting spending to balance their budgets.

Our District is no different than others around the State as we struggle with similar financial strains while continuing to provide a great small school environment. Utilities, health insurance and salaries continue to increase while our State Aid decreases significantly year to year. The chart below is a snapshot of the State Aid the District has received from Trenton over the last twelve years.

Year	State Aid	Year	State Aid
2015/16	$780,516	2021/22	$745,738
2016/17	$784,929	2022/23	$620,568
2017/18	$785,824	2023/24	$541,292
2018/19	$805,470	2024/25	$589,115
2019/20	$805,840	2025/26	$571,442
2020/21	$804,538	2026/27	$554,300

As you can see the State Aid contribution from 2015 to 2021 was fairly consistent and the District could rely on this amount in our annual budget. However the last six years have seen drastic decreases each year except for a small increase in 2024/25 school year. The current State Aid contribution is $251,540 less (31.2%) than the 2019/2020 amount. In that same timeframe, our health insurance costs rose 105% and will increase again 34% more in 2027. Unfortunately, local taxes have replaced these amounts in the annual budget. The local tax levy has increased from $2.07 million in 2019/20 to $2.83 million in 2026/27, a 36% overall increase in seven years.

The Board and Administration are doing everything possible to limit the increase in the local tax levy while also operating an effective public school. One path the Board has utilized for this is researching

and applying for grants. Here are a few of the grants secured by the District to make much needed improvements to the school property:

- 2023 NJ DCA Local Recreation Improvement Grant – Replacement of playground mulch and timber-tie border, reconstructing the asphalt sport courts, new basketball backboards & goals and a new Gaga pit.
- 2024 NJ DCA Local Recreation Improvement Grant – Installation of a new open-air pavilion including lighting, receptacles and security cameras along with an accessible sidewalk connecting the gymnasium door to the playground and parking area. This project also included the purchase and installation of a new storage shed near the gym.
- 2025 Lighting Improvements – Discovered a grant opportunity to replace all the old lighting fixtures & bulbs with LED lights. This greatly improved the lighting levels in each classroom while lowering our energy consumption.

In addition to the grants improving the facility, the Administration routinely secures academic grants to help provide after school and summer enrichment along with increasing exposure to the arts for students. The school has received an Arts Residency Grant every year since 2018, enabling students to work with professional artists in dance, theatre, photography, printmaking, and visual arts. Arts Residency funding totals $90,500 to date.

During the 2025-2026 school year, the District also secured $9,500 in total donations from the Liv Morro Memorial Foundation and St. Andrews United Methodist Church of Spring Lake to support our classrooms and Music and Theater programs. These grant opportunities were discovered by teachers and parents and without their help, we would not have received either of them.

Last year, our Board President started a non-profit Educational Foundation to raise money to help fund extracurricular activities that exceed our budget allowance. The Foundation raised $10,239 to help support the after-school musical that dozens of students participated in last year. The Foundation received funds from local residents, church groups, businesses and other organizations to avoid the elimination of activities such as the musical. We hope to expand the use of the Foundation to bring additional positive educational experiences to our students.

The Farmingdale PTA is another fantastic organization that assists the school by providing donations and manpower for school field trips and student activities such as school dances, trunk or treat, carnivals, ice cream socials, Blue & Gold Day and more. They have raised tens of thousands of dollars over the years and are an essential part of our District.

We bring these items up for discussion as all small school districts in the State are facing increased legislative pressure to merge and/or share services to lower education costs. We currently utilize shared service agreements with Howell Township Schools for our child study team, IT services, daily food services and various other items. We have the lowest overall budget of any Pre-K to 8 district in

Monmouth County that operates a school. We have the least amount of administration staff and janitorial/facility maintenance staff of those same districts. Our staff salaries are among the lowest in the county yet we still have fantastic teachers. Our teachers deserve contractual raises just like you want a raise in your own career. We do more with less as they say and there's almost nothing left to cut to reduce our tax levy.

The purpose of this letter is to inform the community of the financial strain our District is feeling and to hopefully get more parents and property owners involved in the school. The school is a large part of our community. The Board needs your input on the future of the school. What are the 5 and 10-year plans? What improvements or changes do you want to see at the school? Do you have ideas for funding opportunities?

The Board will have an available seat up for election in November. No petitions were submitted over the summer so the seat will be filled via write-in ballots. If you're interested in volunteering your time, please speak to the Administration or Board Members for input.

Thank you.

The Board of Education and District Administration

PLEASE JOIN US AT OUR MONTHLY BOARD OF EDUCATION MEETINGS, HELD IN THE SCHOOL MEDIA CENTER. ATTACHED IS THE 2026-2027 SCHEDULE.