

2023-24
Proposed

BUDGET

Board proposes budget with estimated average 0% tax rate increase

Proposal supports academic & social-emotional support services for students

On Tuesday, May 16, Burnt Hills-Ballston Lake School District residents will go to the polls to vote on a proposed \$81,570,122 budget for the 2023-24 school year. Polls will be open from 7 a.m. to 9 p.m. in the gym at BH-BL High School, 88 Lakehill Rd.

Voters will also be asked to elect three candidates to the Board of Education and vote on the seating of an *ex officio* student board member. (See pages 5-7.)

The proposed 2023-24 budget carries a 1.12% tax levy increase with an estimated average 0% tax rate increase, making this the 12th consecutive year the district has proposed a budget below the state's tax cap.

Overall spending in the proposed budget will increase by \$4.93 million, or 6.44 percent. This increase is due in large part to shifting grant-



Annabelle Debach is all smiles working on an English Language Arts activity in Jennifer Martin's Charlton Heights Elementary School kindergarten classroom.

funded programs and services into the general operating budget. The increase, however, will be offset by a higher than usual increase in foundation aid and the modest growth within the community (i.e., new homes, businesses).

"Reaching the fully funded level of state foundation aid is welcome news for BH-BL," says Assistant Superintendent for Support Services Dr. Christopher Abdo. "This increase of \$3.8 million in aid allows us to propose a budget that adds programs and services for students, while still carrying an estimated average tax rate increase of 0 percent."

"Yet, a note of caution is that the district is not likely to see this level of increase in future budget cycles, which is why everything included in the proposed budget has been analyzed for its educational and financial impact over both the short and long term," adds Abdo.

DRIVING FACTORS IN BUDGET DEVELOPMENT

In December, when school leaders and the Board of Education began the budget development process they focused on several

factors they knew would impact the 2023-24 and future budgets. These are higher inflation rates, an increase to state foundation aid, aging buildings that require frequent repairs/upkeep, and expiring federal grants that are supporting current programs and services.

School districts, like everyone else, are impacted by the higher inflation rates. BH-BL experienced a rise in costs for health insurance, energy, interest on capital project borrowing, and supplies—everything from classroom and instructional materials to cleaning supplies.

Additionally, the limited-time federal grants allocated to districts to help them recover from the global pandemic by funding services and staffing for additional academic and other supports for students, are expiring in the next two budget cycles.

Superintendent of Schools Dr. Patrick McGrath explains that the support programming and staff the district put in place with the grant funding had actually been a long-term goal of the district.

BUDGET *at-a-glance*

- ✓ Proposed Budget: \$81,570,122
- ✓ Estimated Average Tax Rate Increase: 0%
- ✓ Tax Levy Increase: 1.12%
- ✓ Budget-to-Budget Increase: 6.44%

**RESULTS
by the Numbers**

\$6.35M

The total dollar amount in scholarships that students from the Class of 2022 received.

1,800

The number of college credits students from the class of 2022 accumulated prior to their graduation from BH-BL.

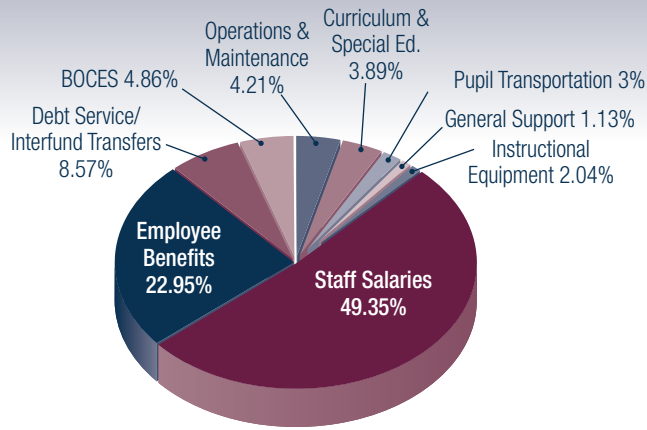
96.3%

The district's average graduation rate* for the past six years. It's one of the highest in the Capital Region. (*NYSED school report card data.)

89%

The percentage of 2022 graduates who attended a 2- or 4-year college after graduation.

BH-BL



Expenditures Summary

CATEGORY	2022-23	PROPOSED 2023-24	% CHANGE '22-23 to '23-24
General Support <i>(Includes district supplies & materials, legal services, general insurance)</i>	\$902,235	\$925,696	2.60%
Curriculum/Spec. Ed. Private Placements*	2,831,577	3,173,368	12.07%
BOCES	3,773,164	3,961,823	5.00%
Instructional Equipment, Furniture & Materials**	1,296,941	1,662,747	28.21%
Operations & Maintenance	3,658,150	3,432,175	-6.18%
Pupil Transportation***	1,722,000	2,448,000	42.16%
Employee Benefits & Payroll Taxes	17,759,810	18,718,134	5.40%
Debt Service & Interfund Transfers****	6,409,737	6,994,208	9.12%
Staff Salaries	38,281,112	40,253,971	5.15%
Total Expenditure	\$76,634,726	\$81,570,122	6.44%

* This figure reflects a shift in budget lines for high-impact tutoring.

**This figure reflects additional, one-time equipment expenses across multiple departments.

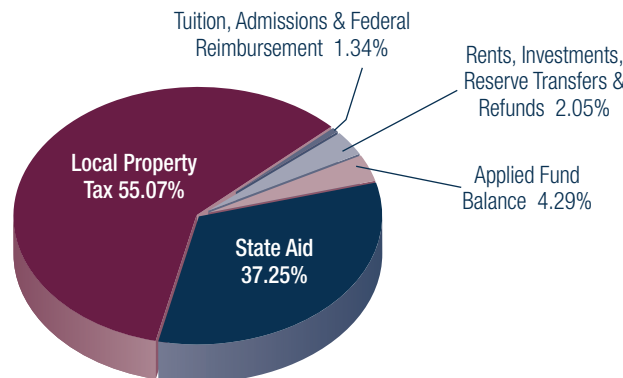
***This figure reflects the phase-in of state transportation mandates.

**** This figure reflects increased interest rates for Bond Anticipation Notes.

Revenue Summary

	2022-23	PROPOSED 2023-24	% CHANGE '22-23 to '23-24
State Aid	\$26,446,574	\$30,385,946	14.90%
Local Property Tax	44,421,597	44,917,786	1.12%
Tuition, Admissions & Services	878,386	890,938	1.43%
Rents, Investments, Refunds, Transfer from Reserves*	2,190,169	1,675,452	-23.50%
Federal Aid/Medicaid Reimbursement	198,000	200,000	1.01%
Applied Fund Balance	2,500,000	3,500,000	40.00%
Total Revenue	\$76,634,726	\$81,570,122	6.44%

*This figure reflects Loss of Transfer from Debt Service and an increase in estimated interest income.



School District Budget Notice

Overall Budget Proposal

	Budget Adopted for the 2022-23 School Year	Budget Proposed for the 2023-24 School Year	Contingent Budget for 2023-24 School Year*
Total Budgeted Amount, Not Including Separate Propositions	\$76,634,726	\$81,570,122	\$81,073,933
Increase/Decrease for the 2023-2024 School Year		\$4,935,397	\$4,439,207
Percentage Increase/Decrease in Proposed Budget		6.44%	5.79%
Change in the Consumer Price Index		8%	
A. Proposed Levy to Support the Total Budgeted Amount	\$44,421,597	\$44,917,786	
B. Levy to Support Library Debt, if Applicable	\$0	\$0	
C. Levy for Non-Excludable Propositions, if Applicable	\$0	\$0	
D. Total Tax Cap Reserve Amount Used to Reduce Current Year Levy	\$0	\$0	
E. Total Proposed School Year Tax Levy (A + B + C - D)	\$44,421,597	\$44,917,786	1.12%
F. Total Permissible Exclusions	\$1,974,202	\$4,084,634	
G. School Tax Levy Limit, <u>Excluding</u> Levy for Permissible Exclusions	\$42,662,440	\$43,772,792	
H. Total Proposed School Year Tax Levy, <u>Excluding</u> Levy to Support Library Debt and/or Permissible Exclusions (E - B - F + D)	\$42,447,395	\$40,833,152	
I. Difference: G - H (Negative Value Requires 60% Voter Approval)	\$215,045	\$2,939,640	
Administrative Component**	\$7,424,340	\$7,720,599	\$7,673,635
Program Component**	\$55,029,644	\$58,111,344	\$57,757,854
Capital Component**	\$14,180,742	\$15,738,180	\$15,642,445

The box on the left is the "School District Budget Notice" as required by state law. School districts must present their costs in three prescribed components, as defined below. A more detailed breakdown of expenses and revenues is given on page 2.

* Assumptions made in projecting a contingent budget for 2023-24, should the proposed budget be defeated: While this may be adjusted, the district assumes the proposed budget would be reduced by removing non-contingent expenses for equipment and new capital project costs. To result in no tax levy increase as the law requires, we would also need to cut a number of staff positions and increase class sizes.

Basic STAR Savings Impact

Estimated Basic STAR Savings¹

	Ballston	Charlton	Clifton Park	Glenville
Estimated Basic STAR Savings ¹	\$750	\$724	\$743	\$607

The annual budget vote for fiscal year 2023-24 by the qualified voters of the Burnt Hills-Ballston Lake Central School District, Saratoga & Schenectady Counties, New York, will be held at BH-BL High School, Tuesday, May 16, 2023, between 7 a.m. and 9 p.m., prevailing time in the BH-BL School District, at which times the polls will be opened to vote by voting machine.

¹ The estimated basic school tax relief (STAR) exemption is authorized by section 425 of the Real Property Tax Law. The numbers listed here come from the NYS Office of Real Property Services website: <https://www.tax.ny.gov/pit/property/star/max-savings/school-district/sd41.htm>

**BUDGET COMPONENTS DEFINITIONS

- Administrative costs include the salaries and benefits of administrators and supervisors, the salaries and benefits of clerical staff, school board costs, curriculum development, staff development, tax collection, legal and auditing costs, central printing, central data processing, general insurance, BOCES administrative costs, research, planning, and evaluation.
- Program costs include the salaries and benefits of all teachers and staff delivering pupil services (health, guidance, library, and athletics), textbooks, instructional materials, equipment, extracurricular activities, BOCES program costs, and all costs of the transportation program except bus purchases.
- Capital costs include the salaries and benefits of custodial staff, debt service, bus purchases, utilities, fire insurance, tax certiorari, and other court-ordered expenses.



BH-BL High School student Annabelle Hinkle is enrolled in the Building Trades program through Capital Region BOCES Career & Technical Education (CTE). Hinkle and classmates recently participated in an introductory course taught by a professional mason with Upstate Masonry Institute that taught them a hands-on approach to learning the fundamentals of masonry with brick and block.



**RESULTS
by the Numbers****50+**

The number of high school students who were recognized in the prestigious National Merit Scholarship Program over the last 10 years. Congratulations to **Ana Zepf**, our National Merit Scholarship Commended student for 2022.

35

The number of clubs offered at BH-BL High School that range in focus from community service and student government to academics, athletics, and fine arts.

28

The number of Suburban Council varsity athletic teams currently at BH-BL. The proposed budget, however, includes the addition of a Girls Wrestling team.

BH-BL

Q What happens if voters do not approve the proposed budget?

Under New York State law, if the school budget is defeated, the BH-BL Board of Education typically has two options: put the same or a modified budget up for another vote on the third Tuesday in June, or immediately adopt a contingent budget. If residents defeat the proposed budget during a second vote, the board must adopt a contingent budget.

CONTINGENT BUDGET RULES

Under New York state law, districts that adopt a contingent budget cannot increase the current tax levy by any amount—resulting in a zero percent tax levy increase.

Bringing the BH-BL tax levy increase down to zero would force the board to reduce the proposed budget by \$496,189. In doing this, the board may not be able to adhere to its goal of preserving student programs and services or staff, or restoring staffing from prior years. It would also likely have to make a number of staff reductions across all schools, which would increase class sizes.

Adopting a contingent budget also prohibits a district from spending any money in certain areas, including community use of school facilities (unless all costs are reimbursed to the district); new equipment purchases including school buses; nonessential maintenance; capital expenditures (except in emergencies); salary increases for non-instructional and non-unionized employees; and certain field trips and student supplies.

These requirements existed prior to the tax levy cap and remain in effect.



Q Are new buses being purchased for next year?

Yes, but the cost of the new buses is *included* in the budget proposal rather than as a separate proposition. Bus purchases are done this way so the district doesn't have to borrow funds and incur debt. The proposal includes \$1,557,072* for the purchase of a 77-passenger bus, a 72-passenger bus, two 70-passenger electric buses, two 30-passenger buses, and a 21-passenger wheelchair accessible bus to replace some of the district's oldest buses. (*It is possible that the district may need to purchase a towing vehicle. However, at the time this newsletter went to print that decision wasn't final. If this occurs, the total purchase amount of buses would become \$1,671,000.)

The district anticipates being reimbursed approximately 72.5 percent of the cost of the buses through state transportation aid in subsequent years, resulting in a net local cost of approximately \$459,525. Additionally, by purchasing buses outright, the district saves an estimated \$15,000

annually in interest and legal fees associated with borrowing funds.

BUS REPLACEMENT PLAN

The buses scheduled to be replaced in the 2023-24 school year are among the oldest in the district's fleet and have already accumulated high mileage, exceeded their warranties, and undergone many maintenance repairs. Beyond certain limits, buses typically become too costly to maintain given the state's stringent safety codes. Furthermore, new school buses are aligned with the latest safety and emissions standards and have better fuel economy rates.

BH-BL's 69-bus fleet travels more than 750,000 miles a year, transporting more than 3,100 students to and from its five schools. The buses are also used for sporting events, out-of-district runs, shared transportation runs, field trips, summer school, and other events.

In order to keep buses in safe working order, the district's long-standing policy has been to replace several of the oldest buses each year.

Q Are there any tax savings programs available to help taxpayers?

Homeowners can receive a property tax exemption or credit under the School Tax Relief (STAR) program.

The Basic STAR* exemption or credit is available on a homeowner's primary residence for anyone who owns and lives in his/her own home. Homeowners who earn \$500,000 or less can receive a STAR credit. Homeowners earning \$250,000 or less can receive a STAR exemption or credit.

The Enhanced STAR exemption is available on the primary residence of taxpayers age 65 and older with yearly incomes of \$93,200 or less.

OTHER TAX RELIEF OPTIONS

BH-BL residents over the age of 65 with incomes of \$37,400 or less also can be exempted from paying

school taxes on 5 to 50 percent of their home's assessed value depending on their exact income. The district also grants a disability exemption, ranging from 5 to 50 percent, for qualifying residents of any age with disabilities and incomes of less than \$37,400.

The board adopted the Alternative Veterans' Tax Exemption at level 1, which allows qualifying veterans to be exempted from paying school taxes on a portion of their home's assessed value depending on their military service.

Applications for these district exemptions and the state's STAR program must be filed with your town assessor's office. Please visit your town's website or call your town assessor if you have questions.

2023 Estimated STAR Values	
Basic STAR	MAXIMUM TAX SAVINGS
Ballston	\$750
Charlton	\$724
Clifton Park	\$743
Glenville	\$607

Enhanced STAR	MAXIMUM TAX SAVINGS
Ballston	\$1,591
Charlton	\$1,592
Clifton Park	\$1,664
Glenville	\$1,216

***STAR Program Savings:** Please contact your town assessor's office to learn more about the latest requirements for residents participating in the STAR program.

RESULTS by the Numbers

654

The number of students (grades 4-12) who play a musical instrument, accounting for 71% of district 4th graders who began a new instrument this year.

81

The number of students who were asked to have their artwork shown at an exhibition within the Capital Region or were asked to play in a music festival concert this school year.

3

The number of awards student musicians in the High School Jazz Ensemble received for their outstanding performance at this year's Invitational Jazz Festival. Students received awards for Outstanding Soloist in all divisions, Best Saxophone Section and Best Rhythm Section.

Q Is there another proposition on the ballot?

In addition to the first proposition (the 2023-24 budget) residents will also be asked to vote on a second proposition reauthorizing an *ex officio* student member position on the BH-BL Board of Education. By law, residents must approve this proposition every two years.

This proposition was first proposed and approved in May 2015. For the past eight years, a different high school student each school year has been appointed as an *ex officio* member.

The student member attends board meetings, sits at the board table, and contributes to public discussions. He or she does not vote and does not attend executive sessions. The student board member is an incoming senior who is selected by his or her peers.



Did you know that O'Rourke Middle School students raised \$4,300 in a holiday coin collection? They used the money to purchase toys (lots of toys!) and donated them to the Toys for Tots program, which is aimed at helping families in need during the holiday season.

BH-BL



Board of Education CANDIDATES

Vote for Three

On May 16 residents may also elect **three** members to the Board of Education for three-year terms.

MTC Night, May 9

To learn more about the candidates, there will be an informal **Meet-the-Candidates Night on Tuesday, May 9 at 7 p.m.**

The event will be hosted by BH-BL High School Student Government Organization (SGO) members in the HS Library.

*** The statements to the right of each candidates' bio were written by the candidates. The opinions contained within are theirs and may not reflect the opinions or views of BH-BL School District leaders or the Board of Education.**

BH-BL



Don Marshall

is seeking his third term on the board. He served as a teacher in the Peace Corps in Africa after graduating from Butler University. He also holds a master's degree in social work from Syracuse University. Don was an educator and therapist for at-risk adolescents and their families his entire professional career, and was the Executive Director of The Charlton School for 30 years. Don was involved in leadership roles with community youth sports programs and served on several school committees. He also served on a statewide NFP Board of Trustees. He and his late wife, Karen, have lived in Burnt Hills for more than 30 years. Their three grown children are BH-BL alum.*See his position statement at right.



"I have always understood that being on the Board of Education is a responsibility and a privilege. As a current school board member, I am very aware that I represent the students, the families, and the entire BH-BL community.

I was president of the Board when our school district was confronted with the sudden crisis of the COVID pandemic. I am proud of how quickly and professionally our district responded to this generational challenge to our students' health and education. We adjusted swiftly to this challenge with a comprehensive plan that focused on keeping our students safe, while maximizing our resources and opportunities to keep them in school and learning. The implementation of this ambitious plan was aided by the fact that we had a modern technical infrastructure in place, including providing every student in grades 4-12 with a computer. The plan was complex, but what made it effective was the tremendous effort on the part of our entire district staff, at all levels, as well as on the support and extraordinary efforts of our families and, of course, the maturity of our students. There were many heroes.

Still, the data shows that some learning losses occurred for almost all students. Our current efforts and highest priority is focused on implementing the strategies and structures necessary to help our students recover from their learning losses as completely and quickly as possible.

The data also shows that some students experienced emotional challenges during the pandemic. The District is adding resources to provide additional support services to these students as they move forward in their social, emotional and academic growth."

I ask you to consider voting for me for a final term on the Board as we complete this important process. In return, I renew my commitment to work hard at expanding upon tradition of providing our students with a relevant, comprehensive, and fact-based education that they and our community have come to expect. I will do this with an eye on cost containment and the efficient use of our, and your, resources. Thank you.

Lakshmi Nagarajan

is seeking her second term on the BH-BL Board of Education. She has always been very involved in the school community and is currently serving as secretary for the High School PTSA and the O'Rourke Middle School PTA. Lakshmi continues to stay involved in the district through volunteering in PTA, school, and athletic activities. Lakshmi is the Director of Operations at Holistic Wealth Advisors. She holds her MBA from the University of Connecticut and holds the professional designation of Certified Financial Planner. She and her husband James moved to the District in 2007. They have two children currently enrolled in BH-BL schools.*See Lakshmi's position statement at right.



"It is my honor to have the opportunity to run for the Board of Education. Having served one term already, I now feel I have a level of understanding of processes and issues and I look forward to using this knowledge to continue to effectively serve our community. I am passionate about community involvement in our district. Constituents should be able to voice and debate different policies and proposals while administrators and educators should be empowered to implement best practices. This process should be transparent to all stakeholders to encourage open communication and support. This is so important to students' education as so much occurs outside of the traditional school day.

The connection between the district, its taxpayers, and government leadership is vital to the prosperity of the community—affecting everything from quality of life issue like crime rates to economic factors like housing prices and employment. Our district's ongoing success will continue the current work of the Board balancing fiscal responsibility with educational proficiency.

While local involvement is important at the district level, we need to stay innovative and competitive at state, national and global levels. Our community has the best perspective to determine what our needs are to continue the high levels of achievement for BH-BL. We do rely on financial support from the government, but we should push back on broad educational mandates that do not make sense for us while maximizing monetary and infrastructure support for which we qualify. Competing demands for resources at all grade levels must be considered when difficult decisions arise. These needs must be balanced against budgetary restrictions and constraints and the reality that taxpayers have priorities for tax dollars outside of education. Balancing all stakeholder views leads to the community's overall success.

As a resident for over 15 years, I love our community's commitment to all its residents. I am fully committed to continuing to serve the district that influences our families, our children, their minds and futures. I am invested in the best interests of our community and our children so I will always look for a path that considers the betterment of both. I would be truly honored for the opportunity to continue to serve on the Board of Education."

Board of Education CANDIDATES

James Ireland

is seeking his first term on the Board of Education. He and his wife Kim have been district residents for 21



years. They have two children who attend the high school. Jim is a graduate of St. Lawrence University where he studied math and economics, and earned a Bachelor's degree. He works as a Mortgage Loan Originator for Ballston Spa National Bank. Jim is also a 2015 graduate of the award-winning Leadership Saratoga program. Over the years, Jim has been heavily involved in numerous school committees and associations as well as community activities. He and his family also play an integral role in the BH Track Club, both within the district and the community. *See Jim's position statement at right.

"More than 20 years ago, my wife and I moved to Burnt Hills knowing that we would be raising a family and wanted to live in a good school district. We made the right decision. We are raising two amazing daughters who we are so very proud of. One is a senior headed to SUNY Geneseo in the fall and our youngest is a freshman.

For the last 13 years, I have worked for Ballston Spa National Bank, which has encouraged me to volunteer in our community and schools. For many years, I have been an active member of the BH-BL Business Professional Association (BPA), having served as President and a member of the board. Through the BPA, I have helped organize the Community Flag Day Parade. Additionally, I have been a volunteer soccer coach for Burnt Hills United and as a driver for the Saratoga County Office for the Aging Meals on Wheels program. Specific to the school, I have volunteered and served in a number of capacities that provide me insight from different perspectives. When it comes to school operations, I have participated on two hiring committees and Co-chaired the last Bond Referendum Committee and I am serving again in that role for the current Bond Referendum Committee. I also served on the O'Rourke Middle School Building Council, taught Junior Achievement at Charlton Heights, participated on the Charlton Heights Playground Build Committee, and currently serve as President of the BH Track Club (the booster club for the three running sports).

BH-BL has made shared decision making a priority and I have experienced and participated in it first hand. During my six years on the middle school's Building Council as a parent representative, I saw the importance of bringing all parties to the table to create and make recommendations to the Board. The Building Council worked on literacy, project-based learning, block scheduling, and the impact COVID had on learning.

I bring a proven track record of serving the community and I would welcome the opportunity to help guide and ensure our district's success going forward. Please consider voting for me to serve and represent you on the BH-BL School Board."



Exit Survey

Following the vote, residents may complete a voluntary and anonymous exit survey. The responses and comments will help the board gather valuable community feedback to help guide future budget and program decisions. High School students will be helping run the exit survey which can be taken on a Chromebook.

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Upcoming Capital Project Vote Slated for October 2023

Last summer, the board voted to create a capital project committee to tour the schools, study and rank the importance of identified areas of need, and make repair, upgrade and improvement recommendations. The large representative stakeholder group is made up of community members, faculty and staff, board members, administrators, students, architects, and engineers. The committee has been meeting twice a month since January and is expected to submit recommendations to the board by June. The board will review and finalize the recommendations this summer and a final proposal is currently estimated to be put to voters in October 2023.

Every five years since 1983, the board has asked voters to approve an improvement plan that address the district's most pressing infrastructure needs. Much like a home, school buildings see wear and tear from daily

activities as they age. If you consider the size of the district's schools and the number of students served each year in the spaces (460 to 1,000 students), then you'll have an idea of what happens to the schools.

"Regular improvement projects help the district address the normal aging of our buildings and keep our facilities modern and our learning spaces up to date," says Dr. Christopher Abdo, Assistant Superintendent for Support Services and the Capital Project Committee Co-Chair. "The board has yet to determine the scope of the project, but since the district does capital projects on a consistent basis the impact on the tax levy is likely to be in line with previously approved referendums."

Regular projects also allow the district to maximize the New York state building aid that is available for the maintenance of school facilities.

Building aid currently reimburses BH-BL 76% of eligible expenses.

One factor that must be considered is the enrollment growth that BH-BL has been experiencing in recent years. There are more than 200 additional students enrolled in grades K-5 than there were seven years ago. This growth, coupled with increased programmatic needs, is leading to overcrowding in certain areas. For instance, spacing for small-group or one-to-one academic and social-emotional assistance is limited and often occurs in partitioned areas within other rooms or hallways.

"Every square inch of our buildings is being used, which is great," says Committee Co-Chair James Ireland. "But it's also extremely eye opening for all of us to see just how limiting these old buildings can be for students and staff who are learning and teaching in today's educational environment."

BH-BL



**RESULTS
by the Numbers****5**

The number of consecutive years Charlton Heights Elementary School has been named among the "Best Public Schools" through the Daily Gazette's People Choice Award. The students', staffs' and leaderships' dedication to their school continues to receive praise.

1,524

The number students in grades 7-12 who participated on an athletic team this school year.

2

The number of athletic teams (fall & winter season) that won a state championship titles.

6

The number of Section 2 team championships won by the Boys Swimming, Boys Cross Country, Girls & Boys Volleyball, Girls Tennis and Wrestling teams.

BH-BL

BH-BL students in the high school's CIVITAS Club participated in a Model United Nations (UN) conference in New York City. The budget proposal includes funding for additional conferences to allow students the opportunity to become more deeply involved in the program.

Model United Nations program to expand next school year

In March, more than two dozen students in the high school's CIVITAS Club participated in a Model United Nations (UN) conference in New York City. Model UN is an educational simulation centered around a series of programs run internationally with the goals of furthering understanding about the United Nations, educating students about international relations and world issues, and promoting peace and the work of the UN through cooperation and diplomacy. BH-BL students in Model UN prepare all year to participate in the annual conference.

"This year, our school was assigned the country Senegal," explains high school senior and Model UN participant Mary Hayden.

"The club's advisors, Mrs. Tolan and Ms. Fay, worked with all of us to help us identify our personal preferences in regards to our research interests and then assigned us to respective committees."

For instance, Hayden was assigned UNICEF (United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund) and,

like the other committees, she was given two topics to research: finding solutions for housing insecurity for children worldwide and determining ways to increase literacy rates for children. Model UN participants are required to write a position paper about their stance on the topic and support it with research.

At the conference, committee sessions rotated through the speakers list, moderated caucuses, and unmoderated caucuses, which is where some students find themselves contributing to discussions. It was during these sessions that blocs were formed and resolutions were written, explains Hayden.

In addition to the conference, students took a guided tour of the United Nations Headquarters, met and attended presentations by Senegalese UN delegates, visited the Metropolitan Museum of Art, and dined at an authentic West African restaurant to sample Senegalese cuisine.

The budget proposal includes funding for additional conferences to allow students the opportunity to

become more deeply involved in the program.

"Going to New York City for four days for Model UN created the best four days of my life thus far," says Hayden. "To be able to travel and learn with 30 of my friends and classmates was an invaluable and unforgettable experience. The Model UN conference is so applicable to our lives now because the UN evolves and changes at the same speed that the world does. Therefore, the conference gives students the opportunity to become more fluent on current events and issues while crafting and improving their critical thinking and public speaking skills, simultaneously inspiring them to become a part of worthwhile, positive change. The chance for this program to expand excites me, as students will have additional opportunities to foster these skills and immerse themselves in a different culture through pre-research and the conference. I couldn't recommend Model UN more and look forward to students continuing to enrich their high school experience through participation in this program."

2023-24 School Budget Vote Continued from page 1

“The additional assistance we put in place is proving to have positive impacts on our students,” says McGrath. “Targeted academic support in math and reading, as well as from increased social-emotional connections through an expanded counseling program and extracurricular offerings have clearly benefitted our students. In fact, these initiatives and opportunities have worked so well that we are seeking to maintain them beyond the life of the federal grants.”

WHAT'S BEING PROPOSED FOR NEXT SCHOOL YEAR?

The additional state Foundation Aid will make it possible for BH-BL to continue the support programming (originally funded through federal grants) by shifting expenses to the general operating budget.

“Next year, the combination of federal grants and the operating budget will ensure that we can preserve or expand upon the district’s strong academic programming as well as student-centered services and opportunities,” says Assistant Superintendent for Curriculum and Instruction Dr. David Collins.”

This includes:

- ◆ **Maintaining** the elementary-level science enrichment program (PACE) that introduces students to enhanced academic opportunities beyond the general classroom.

- ◆ **Sustaining** the high-impact tutoring services for students who benefit from one-to-one assistance in certain subject areas.

- ◆ **Restoring** a portion of the elementary reading program (reduced in 2019-20) by adding a reading specialist to provide Response to Intervention (RtI) services.

- ◆ **Maintaining** Academic Intervention Services (AIS) for English Language Arts (ELA) and math support at O’Rourke Middle School.

- ◆ **Maintaining** three full-time and one part-time Special Education positions at the elementary

level based on student and programming needs.

- ◆ **Securing** one full-time counseling position at each elementary school for facilitating academic planning and goal setting, building character traits and strengthening interpersonal skills as well as providing individualized services and guidance to support healthy minds.

- ◆ **Maintaining** grant-funded elementary sections to provide optimal student-teacher ratios in the classroom.

- ◆ **Adding** three full-time and one part-time staff positions in various certifications to create an additional half team for 7th and 8th grade based upon increased enrollment.

- ◆ **Adding** another English as a New Language (ENL) teaching position based upon increased need.

- ◆ **Implementing** a girls wrestling program in response to the growing popularity of the sport and the level of interest among students.

- ◆ **Introducing** a new K-5 literacy program (including materials and staff training). The new program better aligns with the English Language Arts curriculum and standards.

- ◆ **Funding** for new equipment for the athletics and Fine Arts programs, as well as for the maintenance and custodial departments. Several items in these departments have exceeded their use expectancy or become too costly to repair. Often times, replacement parts are unavailable.

- ◆ **Expanding** the Model United Nations program by adding more conference opportunities in response to the increased interest and participation of students. (See page 8.)

- ◆ **Continuing** to broaden the high school’s Distance Learning program by offering more classes across different subject areas. BH-BL currently offers 23 distance learning classes on the network.



Megan Christensen is a Pashley Elementary School reading teacher who provides additional academic assistance to students. She often works with students one-on-one or in small-groups where she is focusing on critical skills that supplement and support classroom instruction.

“This program provides the opportunity for our students to learn in the same classroom as students from diverse background across the state and provides revenue to maintain and grow our academic programming,” adds Collins.

- ◆ **Supporting** school improvement efforts while the district is in between larger capital improvement projects. Improvements include replacing floors made with asbestos and modernizing classrooms for today’s inclusive, collaborative learning environments. All of BH-BL’s buildings are between 70 and 100 years old. For that reason, school leaders we will continue to stay on a five-year cycle for bond referendums, with the next one planned for October 2023. (See page 7.)

“The budget puzzle involves balancing all of these items while being sensitive to our community’s ability to support it,” says McGrath. “In the end, this budget keeps us true to our mission of over 100 years: We are parents, teachers, community members, and school leaders all working together to create a world-class education for BH-BL students.”

BH-BL



Just can't hide that **Spartan** **PRIDE**



Congratulations to Science Research students Jack Stuhlman, Lilly Mertzlufft, Carsyn Bonesteel, and Anya Kotkoskie for being awarded at the prestigious Regeneron Greater Capital Region Science & Engineering Fair where they presented original STEM research to scientists and engineers. Bonesteel also won third place overall and advances to the International Fair this May.



The high school Drama Club's performance of *Beauty & the Beast* was the first production held in the newly renovated auditorium. Students performed for a packed house—and full balcony! Pictured are Patrick Nyhan as the beast and Hannah Countermine as Belle.



Congratulations to Cassidy Robleno, Mia Paolino, Allie O'Rourke, and Sam Torres of the 4x400 indoor track relay team for winning a New York State Championship title. They also set a new school record (3:59.02).



Let's hear it for the O'Rourke Middle School's Odyssey of the Mind team for winning first place at the regional competition. Congratulations to team members Lincoln Barclay, Harrison Bower, Colton Cruz, Tommy Ismail, Allison Ismail and Liam Lahn-Schofield.



Congratulations to Stevens Elementary School's 2nd grader Abigail Rieger who earlier this year read her 1,001st book to Principal Evans to complete the 1001 Books program. Did you know, as of March, nearly 11,000 books were borrowed from BH-BL libraries?



The districtwide food drive to support local families in need was another huge success this year thanks to the incredible and generous BH-BL community. Did you know that nearly \$1,400 in gift cards and monetary donations were raised? And a lot of non-perishable items were donated? Pashley families filled 18 giant boxes; Stevens families filled 22 giant boxes; Charlton Heights families donated 721 items; O'Rourke families donated 3,181 items; and high school families donated 1,943 items.



Middle and high school students enrolled in Chinese language courses recently visited Chinatown, NYC. They spent the day on a guided tour of the Museum of Chinese in America (MOCA), dined on authentic Chinese cuisine at Lady Chow Restaurant, and participated in a scavenger hunt while immersing themselves in the culture and flare of Chinatown's busy streets. Mandarin Chinese offerings begin in 6th grade, with an exploratory class, and continue as full sequential courses in grades 7 through 12.



In early fall, students, staff and the Board of Education hosted a ribbon cutting and re-dedication ceremony for the newly renovated and expanded Arthur C. Mengel High School Auditorium. Following the ceremony was a tour and the district's first concert held in the new space.



Congratulations to the Boys Cross country team for winning a NYS championship title this fall. This is the school's 6th consecutive state cross-country title and 11th overall title. Nice job Keller Casey, Brayden Cyr, Brody Dugan, Thomas Kotkoskie, Nolan McFarland, Logan Muller, Cayden Robleno, Matthew Rounds, Ben Smith, Matthew Windecker, and Coach Button.

This is just a sampling of the many successes BH-BL students accomplish in the classrooms, on the stage, and on the fields throughout the year. To see more, please visit our website and follow us on social media (Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, LinkedIn).



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Ballot Items

The 2023-24 Proposed Budget

Three Board of Education Candidates

An *ex officio* student Board of Education member

BH-BL



Double congratulations go to BH-BL High School students Benjamin Jewell and Madelyn Connelie who are the first and second place winners, respectively, of the local VFW Post 4460 Voice of Democracy essay contest. Both students then advanced to the VFW Department of NY District 3 essay evaluation and were further awarded with first (Jewell) and third place (Connelie) honors. Their essays competed against 44 VFW Posts in 14 counties and included all public and private school entries in those counties. Additionally, BH-BL High School social studies teacher Kurt Semon was awarded the "Smart/Maher Citizenship Educational Teacher Award" by the VFW Department of New York (during COVID) and was recently given an in-person honor.



Photo from left: BH-BL Superintendent of Schools Dr. Patrick McGrath, BH-BL High School social studies teacher Kurt Semon, high school students Madelyn Connelie and Benjamin Jewell, and Larry Zeglen, Commander, VFW Post 4660.

Voter Qualifications

All voters must be United States citizens, age 18 or older on election day, residents of the BH-BL School District for 30 days immediately prior to election day, and registered.

Registering to Vote

You are already registered to vote on May 16 if you are registered with your county Board of Elections to vote in a general election.

Absentee Ballots

Registered voters may vote by absentee ballot if they are unable to appear at the polling place on May 16.

To receive an absentee ballot, first fill out an application which can be obtained from Deputy Clerk of the Board Rebecca Manson at the district office. The application can also be downloaded from the BH-BL website at www.bhbl.org/budget/voting-information/

The completed application must be returned to Rebecca Manson at least seven days before the election if the ballot is to be mailed to the voter, or at least one day before the election if the ballot is to be picked up personally by the voter at the district office from 8 a.m. to 4 p.m. Absentee ballots will be counted only if they are returned to the clerk no later than 5 p.m. on May 16. For more information, call 518-399-9141, ext. 85025.