

# **Westhill Central School District**

## **Foundation Aid Increase Investment Plan**

**July 1, 2023**



**Westhill**CSD

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## **OVERVIEW**

### **Background**

Section 10-d of part A of chapter 56 of the laws of 2021, as amended by §5-b of part A of chapter 56 of the laws of 2022 requires that, for the 2023-24 school year, each school district receiving a foundation aid increase of more than ten (10%) percent or \$10,000,000 must post to the district website prior to July 1<sup>st</sup> a plan by school year of how the funds will be used to address student performance and need, including but not limited to:

- (i) increasing graduation rates and eliminating the achievement gap;
- (ii) reducing class sizes;
- (iii) providing supports for students who are not meeting, or at risk of not meeting, state learning standards in core academic subject areas;
- (iv) addressing student social-emotional health;
- (v) providing adequate resources to English language learners, students with disabilities; and students experiencing homelessness;
- (vi) goals and ratios for pupil support;
- (vii) detailed summaries of investments in current year initiatives and balance funds spent in priority areas.

The budget language states that, prior to posting such a plan, each school district must seek public comment from parents, teachers and other stakeholders on the plan and take such comments into account in the development of the plan.

In response to this criteria, the district had a public information meeting regarding the 2023-24 budget on March 20th in the high school auditorium and a public hearing on the district's proposed budget on May 9, 2023. This plan was posted on the district's website on June 27, 2023 seeking public comment.

### **Guiding Principles**

The district's goals will guide the recommendations of the Foundation Aid Increase Investment Plan. In this context, the following principles will provide the framework for the Board of Education and district administration in planning for the Foundation Aid Increase Investment Plan.

- The Health and Safety of students and staff will remain the priority consideration for the reopening of School
- Excellence and equity of educational opportunity will be provided for all students
- Essential social-emotional and trauma Informed supports for students, staff and families will be provided as a key component of the plan
- The delivery of instruction and support services will be flexible and responsive to evolving public health, budgetary and environmental conditions
- Communications with students, staff and families will be frequent, consistent and transparent

## INTRODUCTION

### ***Our Core Beliefs***

*At the Westhill Central School District, we believe that:*

- *Each individual has dignity and worth*
- *The capacity to learn for each individual is boundless*
- *Curiosity and exploration stimulate innovation and learning*
- *High expectations and challenging curriculum lead to greater achievement*
- *Effort and perseverance are essential to achieve one's personal best*
- *Positive relationships are fundamental to success and growth*
- *Collaboration within and among school, families and community partners is essential to meet the needs of each student*
- *Acceptance and mutual respect encourages students to take the risks necessary for academic and personal growth*
- *Education prepares students to become productive and responsible citizens who contribute to their communities*
- *Students need to develop their strengths, confidence and resilience to meet the challenges they will face throughout life.*

## **Foundation Aid Investment Plan Development Process**

The District's Foundation Aid Investment Plan development process was guided by five (5) focus areas.

Focus Area 1 - Teaching and Learning

Focus Area 2 - Technology for Teaching and Learning

Focus Area 3 - Communication and Community Engagement

Focus Area 4 - Employee Engagement and Professional Learning Focus

Focus Area 5 - Learning Environment Systems and Structures

### **Alignment with School Reopening Plan**

The District's Foundation Aid Investment Plan aligns with the August, 2021 School Reopening Plan, which provides the blueprint for fully and safely reopening all school buildings at all grade levels in accordance with applicable CDC, NYS Department of Health, and Onondaga County Health Department guidance.

The district's [reopening plan](#) is also available for review on the district website.

### **Alignment with Technology Plan**

The Westhill Central School District's [Instructional Technology Plan](#) was developed by the technology committee with input from: the district's plan for Children with Disabilities, consultation with the English as a New Language program as well as research and best practices in the instructional technology field. The goal of the Instructional Technology Plan is to transform the learning process through seamless technology integration, and to continue to support all learners by providing the necessary resources and guidance.

The plan is organized into five major focus areas with identified outcomes, expectations for students and staff, action steps and results. The five focus areas are interdependent:

Technology Learning Competencies--A set of grade by grade competencies that each student will achieve

Professional Learning--A plan for providing learning opportunities for staff so that they can implement the plan

Technology Infrastructure to Support Student Learning--Providing devices, a network, wireless connectivity and high speed internet access to support student learning

IT Support--A plan for supporting the technology rich environment at ESM Schools

Emerging Technologies--A structure to stay focused on “what’s next” so that we continue to stay on the cutting edge

The [Technology Plan](#) is available on the district website.

### **Public Comment and Stakeholder Feedback**

A budget workshop was conducted on March 27, 2023 to provide an opportunity for the analysis of needs for the District’s Foundation Aid Increase Investment Plan. The District’s Foundation Aid Increase Investment Plan was reviewed by the Westhill Instructional Team which is comprised of administrators and teachers from all district buildings and a group of parent leaders from each building. A public information meeting on the Foundation Aid Plan was held on March 20th in the high school auditorium and a public hearing on the district’s proposed budget on May 9, 2023. This plan was posted on the district’s website on June 27, 2023 for districtwide stakeholder input and feedback.

## **FOUNDATION AID INCREASE INVESTMENT PLAN FOR 2023-24**

### **Increasing graduation rates and eliminating the achievement gap**

Funding will support a range of strategies to focus and accelerate learning, while addressing potential gaps in learning. We will continue to document and prioritize essential learning standards to drive our curriculum, instruction and assessment. Teacher teams will provide feedback to identify essential standards. We will utilize summer grade level professional learning plan days to communicate the priorities. Updated pacing will be reflected in curriculum maps and prioritized standards will be flagged as well. Teachers are expected to follow the documented scope and sequence of each course/class, while prioritizing essential learning standards.

Expectations:

- Teachers are expected to follow the documented scope and sequence of each course/class
- Teacher will identify essential standards based on specific identification criteria
- Teachers will collaboratively determine the scope and sequence of curriculum delivery to ensure cohesiveness
- Teachers will develop student friendly learning targets for each standard within departments

Feedback/Grades:

The focus will be on formative feedback over grades. Grades should reflect mastery or evidence of learning toward standards on standards-aligned assignments. Feedback will be provided on standards aligned assignments (digitally or in-person). Students will have opportunities to improve their grade on assignments, based on the feedback provided.

### **Reducing class sizes**

Funding will support a focus on a lower student-teacher ratio for students at the kindergarten, first and fifth grade levels. The funding will also support learning at targeted grade levels in grades 3-5 and in specific courses of ELA and Math in grades 6-12 to provide a lower student-teacher ratio.

### **Providing supports for students who are not meeting, or at risk of not meeting, state learning standards in core academic subject areas**

Funding will support summer learning programs for students entering grades kindergarten through high school in varying degrees to address learner needs at risk of not meeting state learning standards in core academic subjects based on assessments. During the school year, instructional coaches will provide support in strengthening best practices for learning in Tier 1 at the elementary level and after school programs will provide additional support for students in grades 7-12.



## Addressing student social-emotional health

- The district's school social workers, psychologists and counselors reviewed and updated the school counseling plan.
- The plan addresses that universal, secondary and tertiary interventions are in place. Universal interventions are designed to support the social emotional well-being of all students and adults. Tier I interventions for all students is the use of the district wide Panorama framework At all levels an evidenced based best practice curriculum focused on the core SEL competencies of self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship skills and responsible decision making is in place.
- Implementation of the plan addresses that these practices are culturally and linguistically responsive to our student and family population.
- the elementary level we will continue to use the Second Step Curriculum and Responsive Classroom.
- Special attention will be paid to the social emotional and mental health needs of students transitioning to in-person instruction. Counselors will collaborate with teaching and school staff to ensure students are provided necessary additional support services for a successful transition to in-person learning.
- We will regularly review and make adjustments to our comprehensive developmental school counseling plan with particular focus on social emotional learning and mental health and wellness.
- The school counselors in each of our buildings will continue to collaborate with the school psychologist, building principal, school nurse and other support staff to ensure that the needs of students and adults are being met.
- Through collaboration and partnership with community based agencies and our local government we will continue and expand services available to students, families, faculty and staff.
- We will strengthen our school based mental health services, provide referrals to community based mental and behavioral health clinics and we will utilize our Employee Assistance Program to support the mental health needs of our faculty and staff.
- Using a multi-tiered system of support, we will identify and support children and families who have experienced trauma and are struggling.
- We will continue to collaborate with our county government to provide case management and wrap-around services to our children and their families.
- We will continue to collaborate with Onondaga County and Contact Family Services to provide social emotional learning support through Primary Project at Elementary Schools.
- We will collaborate with Onondaga County for social emotional learning support provided by Student Engagement Specialists.
- We will collaborate with Onondaga County to provide mental health services for students and families through ARISE.
- We will collaborate with Onondaga County for support from ACCESS for Child Protective Services.

**Providing adequate resources to English language learners, students with disabilities; and students experiencing homelessness.**

**English Language Learners**

The well-being of our ELLs and their families is of utmost importance for our ENL teachers and they partner with families to serve as a source of continuity. Our ENL teachers personally reach out to families regularly to ensure that appropriate supports are accessible, including but not limited to food, technology, internet access, translation of information, community resources.

ENL Teachers will review/determine preferred mode of communication and the language in which families prefer. Important reopening documents will be summarized and translated and/or interpreted for families based on language of preference as identified on Home Language Questionnaire (HLQ).

ENL teachers will ensure that parents receive messaging regarding reopening using a combination of translated materials and interpretation services for families. They will be informed of expectations and teachers will utilize translation services as needed to rephrase and interpret important district information to keep families informed. ENL teachers will plan regular communication with families.

**Students with Disabilities**

The Westhill Central School District will continue to provide a Free Appropriate Public Education (FAPE) for all special education students.

All accommodations, modifications, supplementary aides, services and technology needs included in a student's IEP will be reviewed and discussed by the case manager, general education teacher(s) and parent to determine the appropriate accommodations, modifications, supplementary aides, services and technology for the student will need based on their unique needs.

**Students Experiencing Homelessness**

School district staff work with school-based supervisors from Onondaga County called ACCESS Team supervisors. An ACCESS Case Worker, who is already assigned to the school for the purpose of needs assessment and 1:1 assistance, i.e. referrals to county services and supports, provides support for homeless youth. The assigned ACCESS Case Worker is able to connect with the school counselors or social workers and school-based support teams to gather information, to identify needs, make home visits, and to provide a three-tiered assessment to determine the level of need. Tier 1 supports include foundational support for all students, Tier II supports students' immediate needs and Tier III targets students with the greatest needs and targets follow-up care to address the needs.

## Goals and ratios for pupil support.

### Detailed summaries of investments in current year initiatives and balance funds spent in priority areas.

Since the increase in foundation aid for the Westhill Central School District exceeded a 10% increase, the following is how the district plans to spend the majority of the \$2,182,477 increase in foundation aid during the 2023-24 school year. This additional foundation aid is already included in the school district's budget for 2023-24.

Student Support Services	
Additional psychological services	\$ 116,000
Instructional coaches	232,000
Instructional salaries & benefits	750,000
Teaching assistants for academic support	98,000
Additional staff to reduce class sizes	236,000
Support for English language learners	164,500
Instructional technology equipment	50,000
Instructional academic intervention and SEL support	35,000
Professional development for faculty and staff	7,500
Health and safety	225,000
BOCES services	<u>42,000</u>
	\$ 1,956,000

The items listed in this plan are intended to maintain the high graduation rate of the Westhill Central School District, while providing additional social-emotional support for students, and academic support for students at risk of not meeting academic standards. This includes: English language learners, students with disabilities and homeless students. Funding will also address areas of health and safety.