

State Aid Loss - 23-24 School Year \$2.3 Million (30 Percent of State Aid)

Stafford Township School District
Revised 3-20-23

The State Aid Formula has always been based on the following factors...

- **Enrollment** - Increase of 70 Students
- **Socioeconomic Status** - Increase of 40 Students
- **Special Education Population** - Increase of 15 students
- **English as a Second Language** - Increase of 15 students
- **Speech Only** - Increase of 10 students

***Based on these factors, when there is an increase, state aid would normally increase as well. However, they depleted us by \$2.3 Million instead.**

Equalization Aid

- The Equalization Aid calculation is a district's local fair share subtracted from our adequacy budget which is the calculation based on the district's overall enrollment with the weighted calculations (grade level, socioeconomic, etc.).
- Our local growth increased by 13 percent over the past year which resulted in under funded local effort.
- Basically, the state believes that the taxpayers should be paying more, based off of the increased home values.

Why and when was Stafford deemed an S2 District?

SFRA Chapter 67

- The state determined Stafford was receiving too much state aid based off of enrollment in 2018.

State aid 2018 \$9,481,953

- 2018-2019 - \$118,625
- 2019-2020 - \$303,174
- 2020-2021 - \$514,567
- 2021-2022 - \$325,492
- 2022-2023 - \$579,696
- 2023-2024 - \$2,373,627

Total Revenue Loss - **\$4,215,181**

- 2024-2025 *Projected* - \$749,566

- \$4,964,747

Projected State Aid Loss

State Aid Page 9 NET-A-A3	Entitlement Page CH67 - B1	Over Cap Differential Col. A - B Page 8 (B)	Estimated State Aid Loss Each Year	
2018-2019			5%	
\$ 9,481,953	\$ 7,469,452	\$ 2,372,753	\$ 118,638	
2019-20			13%	
\$ 9,074,364	\$ 6,742,255	\$ 2,332,109	\$ 303,174	
2020-2021			23%	
\$ 8,771,190	\$ 6,533,943	\$ 2,237,247	\$ 514,567	
2021-2022			37%	
\$ 8,256,623	\$ 7,376,915	\$ 879,708	\$ 325,492	
2022-2023			55%	
\$ 7,931,131	\$ 6,877,138	\$ 1,053,993	\$ 579,696	
2023-2024			76%	
\$ 7,351,435	\$ 6,877,138	\$ 474,297	\$ 360,466	estimated
2024-2025			100%	
\$ 6,990,969	\$ 6,877,138	\$ 113,831	\$ 113,831	estimated
Cumulative Aid Loss			\$ 2,315,864.25	
Additional Reduction 18-19			\$ 47,337	
			\$ 2,372,753	
			2,363,201	
			9,552	

Ocean and Monmouth County School Districts OPRA the State Aid Formula

- **February 2020 OPRA Request Submitted, Denied, and Lawsuit Filed:** Multiple school districts (Brick, Toms River, Jackson, Lacey, Stafford, Freehold Regional, Manalapan) submitted an OPRA request to the state to turn over records to seek understanding of how the state's school funding formula is calculated for the state's roughly 600 districts. *This OPRA request was denied and as a result, the schools filed a lawsuit.*
- **January 2021 DOE Ordered to Share Formula with Schools:** The Department of Education was ordered to turn over the algorithm code to the districts that sued for its release, after two years of wrangling and rejections of Open Public Records Act requests.
- **November 2022 DOE cannot share formula due to "disappearing numbers":** The Attorney General said the DOE cannot provide that data "because the data files located in the WORKSPACE folder that are used by the SAS program that performs the calculations called for are temporary, and cease to exist when the SAS session ends." *In short, the numbers they use disappear as soon as they are through calculating the local fair share, the education department claims.*

As a result, the state aid formula is still a mystery.

New Jersey State
Excess Surplus –
\$10.1 Billion Dollars

The state has the money, why wouldn't they distribute this to our students as they are the best investment in the future?

Ocean, Monmouth, and Cape May Counties: Why Us?

- Since the state aid formula is a mystery you can only assume this was politically driven as Ocean, Monmouth, and Cape May are republican counties.
- Ocean County has the highest percentage of loss (11.07% loss).
- Ocean County is in the bottom 8 of all counties for equalization aid, yet is experiencing the highest percentage of loss and realizing the most growth in the entire state of New Jersey.

Southern Regional vs. Stafford

- Approximately 10 years ago, Southern Regional lost a significant amount of state aid and since then they have been slowly recuperating.
- Southern regional receives far less state aid than our district currently does.
- They received an increase in state aid for next year, however they are currently only at \$3.9 million as opposed to our \$7.6 million.
- The weighted per pupil cost calculations also differ for middle and high school students.
- Regional District Tax Calculations differ from our school district.

What does this mean for Stafford Township taxpayers?

Average home of \$300,000

Tax Bill Elementary School

-\$111.88	-.05%	2019	2144.12
-\$ 2.14	-.001%	2020	2141.98
+\$ 5.60	+.26%	2021	2147.58
+\$.48	+.022%	2022	2148.06
<u>+4.91</u>	+.23%	2023	2152.97
-\$ 103.03			

Potential Negative Impact for Stafford Schools: Now and the Future

- Staff Cuts
- Class Size Increases - 27 to 30 Students
- Field Trips Eliminated
- Combine Special Education Self Contained Classes
- Loss of Special Education Programs: Life Skills Trips, Iguana Cafe, Field of Dreams, In the Spotlight
- Enrichment Eliminated
- Developmental Kindergarten Eliminated
- Technology Upgrades Eliminated
- 1:1 Chromebooks
- STEAM Lab Eliminated
- No Professional Development for Staff
- No Facility Upgrades
- Possible Loss of Courtesy Busing
- Large Preschool Waitlist - No Additional Classes
- Cutting Edge Programs: Esports, Broadcasting, Makerspace, Zen Den, Performing Arts
- Increased Admin to Student Ratio
- Social Emotional Learning Programs Limited

What has Stafford Administration, BOE, staff, and community done to fight for our schools?

- **2019:** S.O.S Rally & Superintendent and Board of Education met with legislator and senator
- **2020-2022:** COVID-19 Pandemic
- **2022-2023:** Projected Loss of \$360,000
- **2023-2024:** Actual Loss of \$2.3 Million Dollars
 - Township Agenda Resolution to support our schools
 - Board of Education Resolution & Letter from Superintendent and BOE to state officials and Governor Murphy
 - Superintendent corresponded with Executive County Superintendent and BA to convey the loss of programs due to this state aid decrease. We also re-submitted our budget for him to review and pleaded for him to fight for our district.
 - Superintendent and other schools affected met with Commissioner of Education on March 14, 2023 and conveyed our concerns.
 - Superintendent and other schools affected met with District 9 Legislators (Senator Connors, Rumpf, Gove) and District 10 Legislators (Assemblyman McGuckin)
 - Superintendent and Business Administrator presenting at Stafford Township Town Council Meeting on March 21, 2023
 - Community Petition to Governor Murphy and NJDOE
 - Board of Education Members and community members will attend the state legislature budget hearings

What can you do?

- Attend a NJ Public Budget Hearing - Register Here: <https://www.njleg.state.nj.us/budget-hearings-registration>
- Send letters to:
 - NJ Senate President, Nicholas Scutari, 67 Walnut Ave. Clark, NJ 07066
 - Governor Murphy, Office of Governor, PO Box 001, Trenton, NJ 08625
 - Commissioner of Education Angelica McMillan, Department of Education, PO Box 500, Trenton, NJ 08625-0500
 - Jefferson Van Drew, 1001 Tilton Road, Suite 101, Northfield, NJ 08225
 - Senator Vin Gopal, 802 West Park Avenue, Suite 302, Ocean Township, NJ 07712

Our voices were heard...

- Stafford Schools along with the other 4 districts in Ocean County who faced devastating state aid loss in the millions **are being reinstated 66% of their budgets for the 23-24 school year.**
- The petition, letters, resolutions and meetings with legislators have paid off and Senator Vin Gopal, Chairman of the Education Committee, worked with Governor Murphy to reach a deal to reinstate 66% of these district's original state aid loss.
- What does that mean for future budgets? **We still don't know but must plan to be conservative because this appears as it's just to help with this year's budget.**

Closing Thoughts

- Despite challenging times ahead, I am confident our entire Stafford community and staff will rally together and continue to provide our students with an outstanding education and experiences.
- As always, Stafford Schools will rise to the occasion and make sure the students' education will not be compromised.
- We will stay true to our "Students First" philosophy.
- We will do our best to maintain our staff and programs that make Stafford Township School District a top Ocean County school district.



“Children are the world’s most valuable resource and its best hope for the future”
– John Kennedy