

# Reflections



2016 Budget Edition

Published for the residents of the Croton-Harmon School District



**A FORWARD PATH:** *The budget proposal that will go before our voting community on May 17 represents a plan that provides our district with the tools to look forward. During these tough financial times, it is important for educators to be equipped with the proper tools to continue delivering world-class programs and to expand opportunities for our students.*

## Delivering a Top Education While Remaining Accountable to Taxpayers

The Croton-Harmon School District and its Board of Education are focused on remaining true to our values and delivering the best education possible for each student in Kindergarten through 12th grade. That focus is balanced with our responsibility to remain accountable to the community and work within the confines of New York State's Common Core Learning Standards and fiscal mandates.

Inside this special budget issue of Reflections, you will read

examples of how our district's mission and vision are reflected in the educational opportunities and successes of our diverse student body. It is our goal that graduates of Croton-Harmon Schools go on to become lifelong learners, respectful members of society, effective communicators, problem-solvers and researchers responsible for their own learning. It is our duty to provide opportunities where our students may collaborate with each other and practice these 21st-century skills.

### ENRICHING STUDENT LEARNING

We are pleased to present a budget to our community that not only maintains the elements that make a Croton-Harmon education a unique and exceptional one, but also looks forward and offers new opportunities for our students to develop the skills they will need to become independent and successful adults.

Croton-Harmon High School's program will be enriched in 2016-17 with additional STEM (science, technology, engineering and math) course offerings, including the addition of AP Computer Science and an engineering course. At Carrie E. Tompkins Elementary School, students will continue to pilot world language courses, embrace new technology and see exciting opportunities in the arts. Pierre Van Cortlandt Middle School students are reflecting on their own progress using the new standards-based report card and taking charge of their learning in STEM-D (STEM plus design) and beyond.



### A FISCALLY SOUND BUDGET

The Board and administrative team are proud to put forth a budget that continues to extend learning opportunities while decreasing the overall spending plan. It is due to our district's solid long-term planning that we are able to maintain and expand the programs most important to our mission and values. Our cooperative relationships with the unions invested in our district have also significantly contributed to our positive trajectory into the coming year. This proposal includes the retirement of eight teachers, one school nurse and one secretary, as well as reduced contributions to the Teachers' Retirement System

*continued on page 2...*



**VOTE: May 17 • Croton-Harmon High School • Gymnasium • 6 a.m. – 9 p.m.**

For more information about the budget, please refer to the district website at [www.chufsd.org](http://www.chufsd.org).

## Delivering a Top Education While Remaining Accountable to Taxpayers

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and Employees' Retirement System and a change in the health insurance buyout calculation.

The proposed budget of \$45,905,975 represents a budget-to-budget **decrease** of 0.37 percent from the 2015-16 year and a tax cap-compliant levy that reflects a 0.20 percent increase over the current year. The levy is \$84,642 below the maximum tax levy cap calculation of \$161,349 for our district. We anticipate that the proposed budget will yield a tax rate decrease of 3.50 percent in the Town of Yorktown and an increase of 0.57 percent in the Town of Cortlandt.

We would like to thank you, our community, for your active participation and involvement in our budget process. It is because of your ongoing support that we have been able to implement a number of programs and services for students over the past several years, providing them with

more opportunities for success. We are proud to again put forth a budget proposal that falls within our state-mandated tax levy cap while remaining accountable to our taxpayers.

Please read this issue of Reflections and visit our website, [www.chufsd.org](http://www.chufsd.org), for more information about the proposed 2016-17 budget. You are also invited to call the superintendent's office at 914-271-4793 with any questions or feedback. The public budget hearing will be held in the Croton-Harmon High School Community Room on Thursday, May 5, at 7:30 p.m. All are welcome to attend. Please remember to vote on Tuesday, May 17.

Sincerely,  
Giuseppina Miller, Board of Education President  
Dr. Edward R. Fuhrman, Jr., Superintendent

# What a Croton-Harmon Education Delivers...

### A STANDOUT DISTRICT

Croton-Harmon's three schools remain committed to meeting the needs of the whole child, for each individual student.

For the third year in a row, Croton-Harmon High School was recognized by New York State as a Reward School based on student achievement of college- and career-ready standards. Many high school students have already been accepted into some of the top colleges and universities in the country, including Ivy League schools Columbia University and Brown University.

Two district graduates were inducted into the CHHS Hall of Distinguished Graduates, having achieved professional success in two very different career paths.

### STEPS FORWARD AT CET

The 2015-16 academic year is proving to be dynamic and filled with new learning opportunities for students.

Fourth-grade students enjoyed the implementation of a French pilot, allowing them to get a head start on a second language as they prepare to further their world language studies at Pierre Van Cortlandt Middle School in the coming year.

This year also marked the continuation of several new core class programs, including Science 21, Foundations, and AIS math, reading and writing. All students are benefiting from the introduction of WIN (What I Need) periods at every grade level.

On the technology front, five iPads were added to every second-grade classroom and 60 Chromebooks were introduced at CET. Third-grade students are also enjoying new desks and chairs this year.

The CET specials offer exciting opportunities for students, including two performances by the fourth-grade chorus at the United Nations and themed shows at every grade level. Third-grade students highlighted cultures from around the world using art, music and poetry.

### PREPARING FOR THE FUTURE AT PVC

Pierre Van Cortlandt Middle School introduced a new standards-based report card this school year. All classroom assessment is tied to the standards listed on the report card. As a result, ongoing student assessment clearly articulates the progress that students are making toward meeting these standards. Students are also encouraged to reflect upon their work and set goals for themselves. An electronic gradebook is available to students and their parents so that they can track their own progress on individual assignments.

Students are encouraged to take charge of their own learning. They have the opportunity to move through math at their own pace and depth. The goal is to help them build strong mathematical foundations through an individualized program. As students grow mathematically, they move forward, making mathematical connections at a higher level.

STEM-D units allow students to develop necessary problem-solving skills. This year, students sought solutions to environmental problems, created new energy-efficient solutions and built bridges, among other engineering projects.

PVC educates children to be digital citizens of the world. Every child has an opportunity to learn about Internet safety

as part of a Media Communications class. In late winter, PVC hosted a Digital Citizenship Film Festival featuring student work.

The social/emotional development of children at the middle school level is an important part of the school's mission. The advisory program at PVC seeks to know and support students in a meaningful way. Advisory meetings this year encouraged and supported student thinking and growth, as well as their greater understanding of the global community, their improvement of interpersonal relationships and their development as healthy individuals.

### NEW OPPORTUNITIES AT CHHS

The small, personal atmosphere of Croton-Harmon High School provides a learning environment in which continuous attention is given to individual student needs. The faculty develops curricula and approaches instruction in a manner that ensures every graduate is an effective communicator, researcher and problem-solver.

Students at CHHS have access to a wide variety of courses, including 18 Advanced Placement classes. In 2016-17, AP Computer Science will be offered, completing a computer science strand in mathematics that began this year with two one-semester courses, Computer Science I and Computer Science II.

The English program will be revised for the upcoming academic year. There will be an English 12 course designed to strengthen writing and reading skills in alignment with the Common Core. These revisions will also allow CHHS graduates to execute high-quality, college-level work. This new course will be required for all seniors unless they are taking AP English Literature and Composition. The English electives previously open to seniors only will now be open to all students.

A new science elective, Foundations of Engineering, will expose students to various areas of engineering to help those who are interested in pursuing an applied math or science major become more knowledgeable about the different careers open to them.

Other exciting additions to come to the high school include the introduction of a yoga option as part of the physical education program, as well as a survey initiative that will invite graduates to provide feedback about their preparation for college and school in general. The 2016-17 school year will also mark the beginning of modernizing the library to provide collaboration spaces for students and faculty.

### ATHLETIC ACHIEVEMENTS

The Croton-Harmon Tigers continue to make the district proud. The fall season was highlighted with the varsity field hockey team winning a league title. In addition, 19 student-athletes were named All-League in the fall, and 10 teams earned the Scholar-Athlete award.

The winter season was highlighted by 11 student-athletes being named All-League and four teams designated as Scholar-Athlete Teams. The basketball program hosted its second annual Hoops for Heroes event, which raised money for the Barry Fixler Foundation and Hope for the Warriors. A winter track and field athlete earned sixth place in the New York State Public High



School Athletic Association Indoor Track State Championship triple jump competition and an overall eighth-place finish at states.

### LEAPING FORWARD WITH TECHNOLOGY

Students and teachers continue to make advancements as they embrace new technology that supports learning. Chromebooks have been introduced to third- and fourth-grade students at CET, allowing for more collaboration in the classroom. At the high school, the social studies department has added 80 Chromebooks. Teachers are utilizing Google Classroom and Google Apps for Education to support student-centered learning both in and outside of the classroom.

Using Clarity Brightbytes Survey data, the technology department is gathering data from parents, students and teachers to help improve access, classroom use, skill level and district support of technology. The Clarity data has helped to identify areas of focus, including digital citizenship and assessment of the four Cs – communication, collaboration, critical thinking and creativity. The first Digital Film Festival at PVC provided authentic opportunities for students to grow and thrive in the digital world.

Students at all three schools participated in the national Hour of Code. At PVC, the initiative was highlighted by a visit from Google Expeditions.

On the district level, Twitter and Facebook accounts were launched to share news and connect with the community. Teachers also have new websites to facilitate a greater level of communication with parents and students.

### MEETING MORE STUDENTS' NEEDS

The district implemented its new Flexible Support Program at the high school in the fall and has seen success in serving approximately 25 Croton-Harmon students so far. Thanks to the new FSP and existing RISE programs, students have been able to participate in a wider continuum of services within the district.

For the third year, the district hosted the Preschool Provider Tea, which was well-attended by local preschool providers in the area. This opportunity allows the district to collaborate with preschool educators on how to provide their students with the best prekindergarten experiences.

PVC staff worked with Dr. Jim Wright this year, focusing on Response to Intervention. Dr. Wright's expertise aided the school in launching RtI as a regular practice this year.

# Shared Services Create Savings

Every year, the district participates in many shared service opportunities, consortiums and bids to save money.

In the area of curriculum development, the district works closely with BOCES to save money in staff development, special education, art and environmental education opportunities, library services and printing services. The district also works with BOCES to develop science, math and ELA curricula, offer Rubicon Atlas and Virtual High School, provide career and technology offerings, and conduct conferences and recruiting through the use of OLAS.

Through a transportation consortium, the district saves money on busing for five school runs (including regular education, special education, sports games and field trips), fuel for buses, village summer recreation programs and busing for Destination Imagination events, as well as transportation-related items such as weather alerts, training, and sharing of tools, vehicles and parts with Pace University.

The district's business office has created additional savings through changes and incentives in Medicare, health care, the Workers' Compensation consortium, the New York Schools Insurance Reciprocal, Office of General Services bids, and BOCES bids in the fields of state aid planning, fine paper, Aesop, fingerprinting, supplies, heating/oil and more.

Additionally, an energy performance contract has yielded



a savings of \$18,258 for the district, along with state aid in the amount of \$703,440. The district and Village of Croton-on-Hudson share costs associated with fields, buildings, maintenance equipment and related services, as well as the fees received from outside organizations' use of the district's facilities.

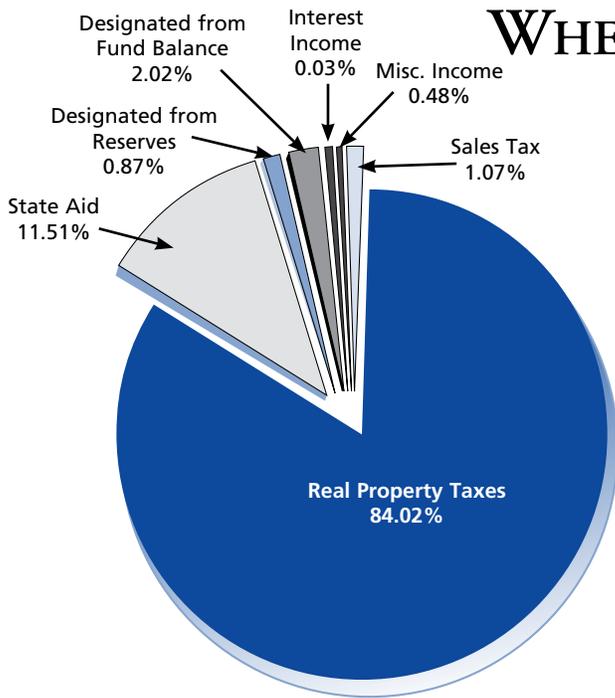
The district continues to invest in multiple banks to maximize capital interest earnings, as well as use New York State building aid to reduce the budget and its impact to taxpayers.

## Proposed 2016/17 Budget Expenditures by Category

	Approved 2015/16	Proposed 2016/17	Change	% of Budget
Instructional Salaries	\$17,354,708	\$17,598,481	\$243,773	38.3%
Non-Instructional Salaries	6,245,485	6,271,891	26,406	13.7%
Fringe Benefits	9,618,140	9,397,351	(220,789)	20.5%
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$33,218,333</b>	<b>\$33,267,723</b>	<b>\$49,390</b>	<b>72.5%</b>
Special Ed (salaries/benefits not included)	1,263,416	1,013,284	(250,132)	2.2%
BOCES – Special Ed	1,017,730	998,807	(18,923)	2.2%
BOCES – All Other Services	1,463,480	1,485,311	21,831	3.2%
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$3,744,626</b>	<b>\$3,497,402</b>	<b>(\$247,224)</b>	<b>7.6%</b>
Textbooks (does not include Special Ed)	83,717	94,497	10,780	0.2%
Supplies	1,045,780	1,056,254	10,474	2.3%
Durable Materials	228,144	228,002	(142)	0.5%
Equipment	104,000	104,000	-	0.2%
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$1,440,641</b>	<b>\$1,482,753</b>	<b>\$42,112</b>	<b>3.2%</b>
Other Contractual Services	3,947,201	3,877,794	(69,407)	8.4%
Debt Service	3,517,199	3,572,303	55,104	7.8%
Interfund Transfers	208,000	208,000	-	0.5%
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$7,672,400</b>	<b>\$7,658,097</b>	<b>(\$14,303)</b>	<b>16.7%</b>
<b>TOTAL BUDGET</b>	<b>\$46,076,000</b>	<b>\$45,905,975</b>	<b>(\$170,025)</b>	<b>100.00%</b>

# Budget 2016-2017 Appropriations & Revenues

## WHERE THE MONEY COMES FROM...



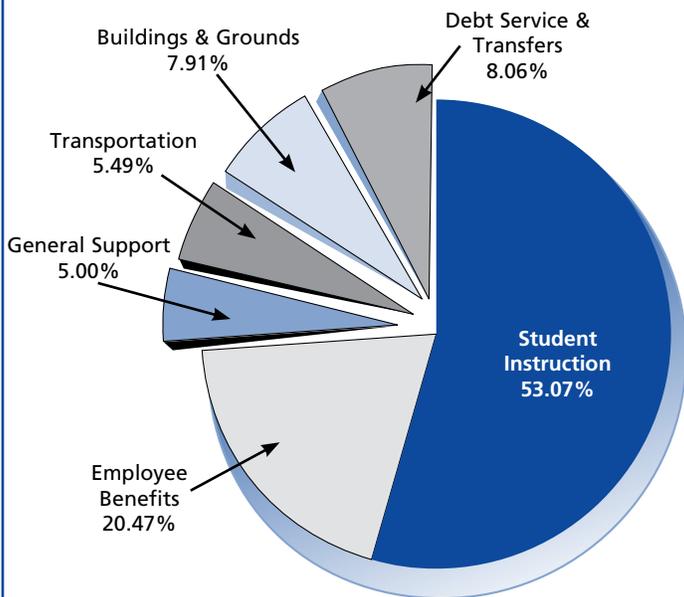
### Revenues

Real Property Taxes	\$38,568,414	84.02%
State Aid	5,285,665	11.51%
Misc. Income	221,880	0.48%
Designated from Fund Balance	926,016	2.02%
Designated from Reserves	400,000	0.87%
Interest Income	14,000	0.03%
Sales Tax	490,000	1.07%

**Total Estimated Revenues**      \$45,905,975      100.00%

The Westchester County sales tax and interest income have remained flat year-to-year. Monies from the district's fund balance and reserves are again being used to contain the tax levy impact.

## ....AND WHERE IT GOES



### Appropriation by Department

Student Instruction	\$24,362,528	53.07%
Employee Benefits	9,397,351	20.47%
General Support	2,293,561	5.00%
Transportation	2,519,181	5.49%
Buildings & Grounds	3,633,051	7.91%
Debt Service & Transfers	3,700,303	8.06%

**Proposed Budget Total**      \$45,905,975      100.00%

- The proposed budget estimates a tax rate of \$1,169.34 per \$1,000 assessed valuation in the Town of Cortlandt, up from \$1,162.67.
- A homeowner whose property is worth \$500,000 has a taxable assessed value of \$9,200 using the equalization rate of 1.84%.
- The estimated annual tax bill for 2016 would be \$10,757.93, an increase of \$61.37.

## ESTIMATED Tax Rate per \$1,000 of Taxable Assessed Valuation

	Cortlandt	Yorktown
ESTIMATED Tax Rate per \$1,000	\$1,169.34	\$840.47
\$ Change from Prior Year	\$6.67	(\$30.46)
% Change from Prior Year	0.57%	-3.50%

**BUDGET DETAIL IS AVAILABLE IN THE SCHOOLS, THE CROTON FREE LIBRARY, THE DISTRICT OFFICE, or by calling Diane L. Chaissan, Assistant Superintendent for Business, at 271-4713, ext. 4211.**

Dr. Edward R. Fuhrman, Jr., Superintendent

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# QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

### *What is a tax levy?*

The school tax levy is the total amount of money to be raised by the district through school property taxes.

### *Are property owners eligible for New York State property tax rebates?*

Yes, since Croton-Harmon's tax levy is within the allowable tax levy limit, those homeowners who are eligible for a STAR exemption, will receive a property tax rebate from New York State for increases in local property taxes on their primary residence.

### *How has this year's state aid impacted the budget?*

The 2016-17 budget

year will be the first since 2009 in which the state has restored Gap Elimination Adjustment funding. Due to this adjustment leading up to the budget adoption, the district was able to bring the tax levy further below the state-mandated cap, as well as decrease the amount of funds designated to the budget from the fund balance and reserves.

### *Will the district get a state aid increase if the new teacher and principal evaluation plans are not approved?*

The budget approved by the New York State Legislature includes requirements that the district have approved evaluation plans for teachers and

principals in order for the district to receive any state aid increases for 2015-16 and 2016-17. Croton-Harmon district leaders fully expect to work in partnership with their teachers and principals to meet the requirements and receive the state aid increases.

### *What happens if the proposed budget is defeated on May 17, 2016?*

The Board of Education has three options:

- Propose the same budget
- Propose a revised budget
- Adopt a contingency budget

If the budget is defeated a second time, the district must operate under a contingency budget. By law, non-

contingent expenses include all equipment purchases (including state-aided technology), salary increases for non-instructional, non-unionized employees, student expenses such as planners and writing instruments and custodial coverage for use of facilities by outside groups. The non-contingent expenses contained in the proposed budget for 2016-2017 are estimated to be \$142,379. Additionally, if the community does not support the budget and the Board of Education adopts a contingency budget, the law prohibits the free use of facilities, including fields, by any group.

## VOTER INFORMATION

**ELIGIBILITY:** To be eligible to vote in the May 17, 2016 school district budget vote and trustee election, you must be a citizen of the United States, 18 years of age or older, and a registered voter who has resided in the district for at least 30 days.

**REGISTRATION:** You may register to vote in the school election on Tuesday, May 10, 2016, from 8 a.m. to 4 p.m., or Wednesday, May 11, 2016, from 4 to 8 p.m. in the District Office, 10 Gerstein Street.

**ABSENTEE BALLOTS:** Applications for absentee ballots can be picked up at the District Office, 10 Gerstein Street, 8 a.m. to 4 p.m., and are available on the website at [www.chufsd.org](http://www.chufsd.org).

**VOTING:** Voting will take place on Tuesday, May 17 at the Croton-Harmon High School gymnasium from 6 a.m. to 9 p.m.

### **THE BALLOT:**

- Proposed Croton-Harmon Union Free School District budget in the amount of \$45,905,975;
- Proposed Croton Free Library tax levy of \$821,144;
- Authorization to purchase various vehicles for the Transportation Department through the use of bond anticipation notes over a five-year period, not to exceed \$260,000; and
- The election of two candidates to the Board of Education for terms of three years.