

SCHOOL DISTRICT OF THE CHATHAMS

Superintendent's Newsletter: September 2016

Dear Parent,

I hope that your family has had a restful and restorative summer. It has been an eventful couple of months here in district, and we are sure to have an exciting school year in 2016/2017!

As you may have heard, just this past week the latest edition of *New Jersey Monthly Magazine* hit the newsstand. For the second consecutive time, the publication ranked Chatham High School as the number one high school in the state. School rankings should never, ever be taken as a definitive measure of a school, as they typically derive from what is easy to measure and not necessarily what is most important to measure, such as how comfortable students feel to be curious, creative, respectful, or balanced as a result of their schools. Still, we are extremely proud of our students for their accomplishments and successes. Further, this wonderful accolade is in no small way a direct result of the generous and consistent investments our community has made in its school system. I sincerely thank you for this commitment to our students.

At the same time, as superintendent and in the other roles I have held in the district, I am able to attest firsthand to the need for additional investments in the infrastructure that houses our outstanding programs and people. Over the past eighteen months, our Board of Education and district administration have worked to elicit feedback from our community about prospective infrastructure projects, collaborated with district architects about the projects garnering the most support from the community, and submitted the draft project proposals to the Department of Education for approval. This lengthy process will culminate in a referendum vote to be held on September 27 for six projects that the district believes to be vital to our infrastructure and to meet the needs of current and future students. You will receive a separate mailing with more details about this referendum, but I include some of that detail in the pages that follow. You may also visit our [webpage](#) to learn more. PLEASE VOTE ON SEPTEMBER 27.

Beyond the capital improvements proposed in the referendum, I touch on a couple of other items in this newsletter. They include ongoing district-wide initiatives in the area of student wellness, some improvements or changes at our schools as we open our doors in two weeks, and the customary summer reading I like to share each year.

Our teachers, administrators, and support staff members look forward to welcoming your children back to school. I wish you the best for a fulfilling and enriching 2016/2017 school year.

Sincerely,

Dr. Michael LaSusa, Superintendent of Schools

REFERENDUM OVERVIEW

Summary

After surveying members of the community and holding public feedback sessions last fall, the Board of Education determined that there were six projects that were both critical in need and that received support from the majority of the survey respondents. The projects are listed to the right, along with their estimated net costs.

The projects will appear in the same order on the ballot and will be voted upon as distinct measures. That is, a voter may cast a “yes” or “no” vote for each measure, and only those projects gaining a majority “yes” vote will move forward.

The date of September 27 is one of five allowed by the state for the purpose of holding a referendum vote. The two earlier dates in 2016—January 26 and March 8—did not provide us enough time to fully develop our projects. The two later dates—November 8 and December 13—would delay the start of any project gaining approval from our voters and impact the completion dates of these important projects. Thus September 27 is the earliest possible date our Board of Education could have selected to hold this vote.

The tax impact estimates are based on a 20-year bond at a 3.25% interest rate, and assume that all projects gain approval.

Projects	ESTIMATED Project Costs	ESTIMATED Debt Service (State Funded)	ESTIMATED Net District Costs
	(in millions)		
1. CHS Auditorium Renovation	\$3,500,000	\$1,400,000	\$2,100,000
2. CMS Auditorium Renovation	\$3,800,000	\$1,520,000	\$2,280,000
3. CMS STEAM Addition	\$3,200,000	\$0	\$3,200,000
4. Cougar Field Improvements	\$1,429,000	\$0	\$1,429,000
5. MAS 4 Classroom Addition	\$2,400,000	\$281,538	\$2,118,462
6. Roof Replacements	\$1,535,300	\$614,120	\$921,180
TOTAL	\$15,864,300	\$3,815,658	\$12,048,642

ANNUAL Tax Impact

Municipality	per \$100,000 of Assessed Value	for a Home Assessed at \$700,000	for a Home Assessed at the Municipal Average	
	Chatham Borough	\$17.45	\$122.15	\$667,372
Chatham Township	\$16.77	\$117.39	\$781,892	\$131.14

MONTHLY Tax Impact

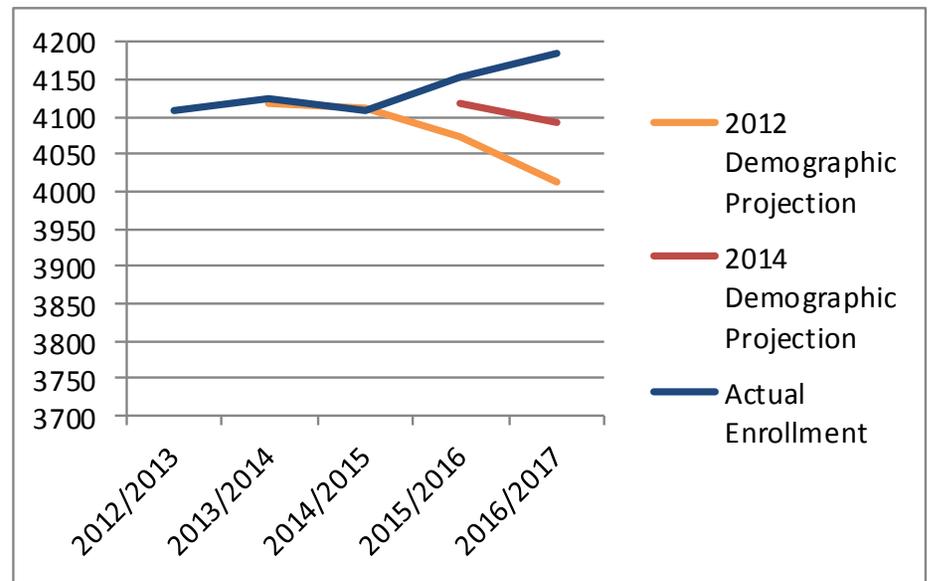
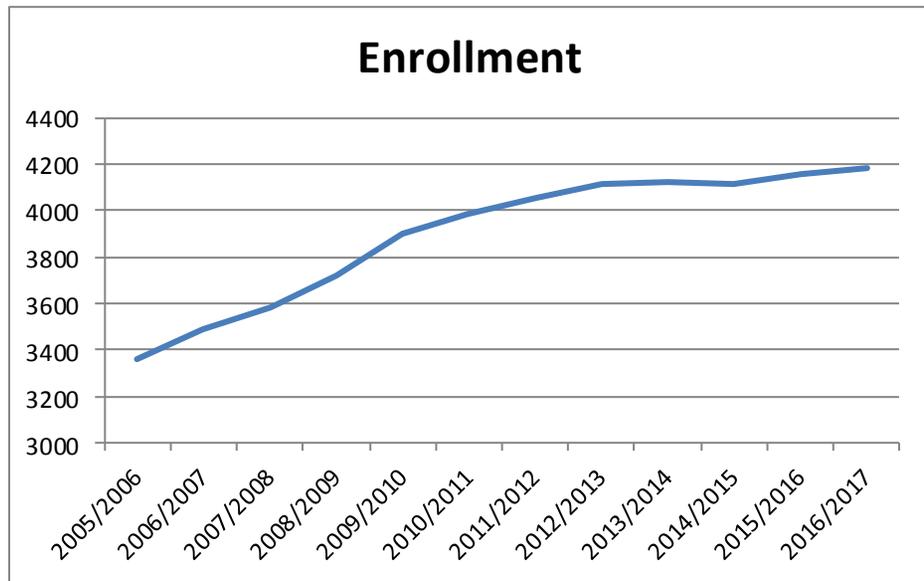
Municipality	per \$100,000 of Assessed Value	for a Home Assessed at \$700,000	for a Home Assessed at the Municipal Average	
	Chatham Borough	\$1.45	\$10.18	\$667,372
Chatham Township	\$1.40	\$9.78	\$781,892	\$10.93

ENROLLMENT OVERVIEW

Since the April 2005 referendum, the district enrollment has steadily climbed. The Board of Education has commissioned demographic reports from professional forecasters during this period, the most recent of which were conducted in 2012 and 2014. As you can see, actual enrollment has outpaced the forecasts from the professional demographers. The increase in students has stretched our facilities and limited the district's flexibility to optimally run programs. In addition, it has forced the district to divert investment away from critical infrastructure and into additional classroom space that has been added in incremental steps to handle the increased number of students. At the current time, there is an immediate need for more classroom space at the elementary level and improvements in critical infrastructure. This referendum seeks to address these needs.

ENROLLMENT SNAPSHOT

Year	Actual	2012 Demographic	2014 Demographic
	Enrollment	Projection*	Projection*
2005/2006	3358	NA	NA
2006/2007	3489	NA	NA
2007/2008	3582	NA	NA
2008/2009	3720	NA	NA
2009/2010	3900	NA	NA
2010/2011	3988	NA	NA
2011/2012	4056	NA	NA
2012/2013	4110	NA	NA
2013/2014	4124	4119	NA
2014/2015	4110	4111	NA
2015/2016	4154	4073	4117
2016/2017	4185	4014	4092



*2012 and 2014 Demographic Reports prepared by Whitehall Associates, Inc.

Referendum—CHATHAM HIGH SCHOOL

Two of the projects would impact Chatham High School and Lafayette Avenue School. The first is the renovation of the auditorium, built in the early 1970s and outdated in terms of its furnishings, ADA (Americans with Disabilities Act) standards, and other features. The second project would be a partial roof replacement at the schools. Like all portions of roofs in the proposal, those at CHS and LAF have surpassed their life expectancies. 40% of the cost of all roofing projects would be offset by the state.

Critical Needs Met

- ⇒ Replace original seating and furnishings
- ⇒ Bring facility into ADA compliance
- ⇒ Replace original carpeting
- ⇒ Replace portion of roof
- ⇒ Replace HVAC system

1 Auditorium Renovations

Existing



Proposed



2 Chatham High School (HS) Partial Roof Replacement

Existing



Proposed

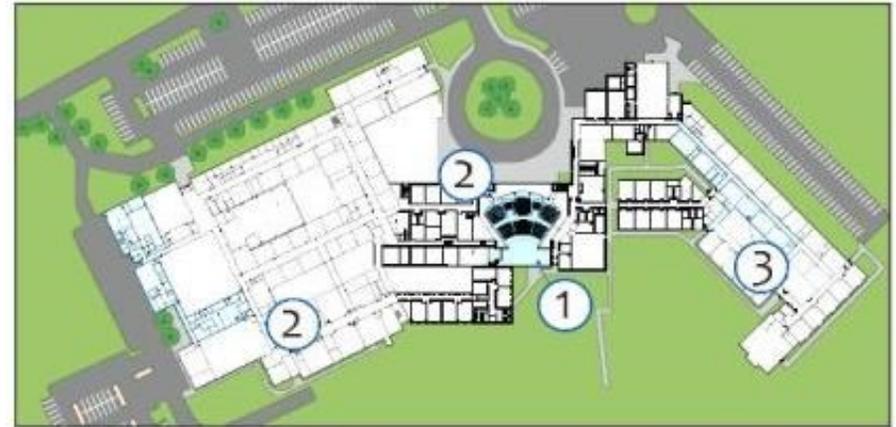


3 Lafayette School (LS) Partial Roof Replacements

Existing



Proposed



CHATHAM HIGH SCHOOL & LAFAYETTE SCHOOL

Project List:

1. Auditorium Renovation
2. HS Partial Roof Replacement (As indicated by Hatch)
3. LS Partial Roof Replacement (As indicated by Hatch)



Images are similar projects throughout the state and are intended to represent design intent. Actual results may vary.

Referendum—CHATHAM MIDDLE SCHOOL

There are two projects proposed at Chatham Middle School: the renovation of the existing auditorium and the construction of three new lab spaces that will house our Design and Technology program. The projects include the removal of all asbestos-tile flooring in this wing of the school and the conversion of the wing into a modern S.T.E.A.M. (Science, Technology, Engineering, Art, and Math) facility. A portion of the middle school roof will also be replaced if voters approve of the final referendum question.

Critical Needs Met

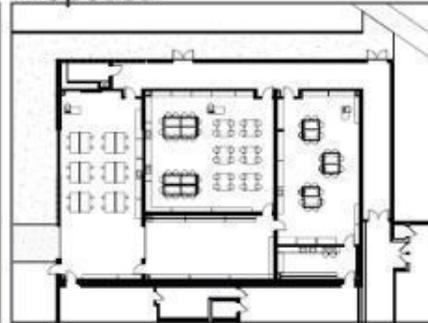
- ⇒ Remove asbestos flooring
- ⇒ Replace seating, furnishings, and roofing system
- ⇒ Install HVAC system, modern lighting and sound systems
- ⇒ Create modern lab spaces to meet curricular needs
- ⇒ Update art classrooms

1 STEAM Education

Existing



Proposed



2 Auditorium Renovation

Existing



Proposed



3 Partial Roof Replacement

Existing



Proposed



CHATHAM MIDDLE SCHOOL

Project List:

1. STEAM Education
2. Auditorium Renovation
3. Partial Roof Replacement (As indicated by hatch)



Images are similar projects throughout the state and are intended to represent design intent. Actual results may vary.

Referendum—COUGAR FIELD COMPLEX

The Cougar Field Complex was built in the 1970s and most of its components are original to that time. The field is currently used for boys soccer, football, and lacrosse teams, as well as for boys and girls spring track.

Critical Needs Met

- ⇒ Install new, ADA-compliant bleachers
- ⇒ Replace sound system
- ⇒ Install parking bumpers
- ⇒ Replace concession stand and press box
- ⇒ Create walking path

① New Walking Path

Existing



Proposed



② New Parking Bumpers

Existing



Proposed



③ New Bleachers

Existing



Proposed



④ New Long Jump Pits

Existing



Proposed

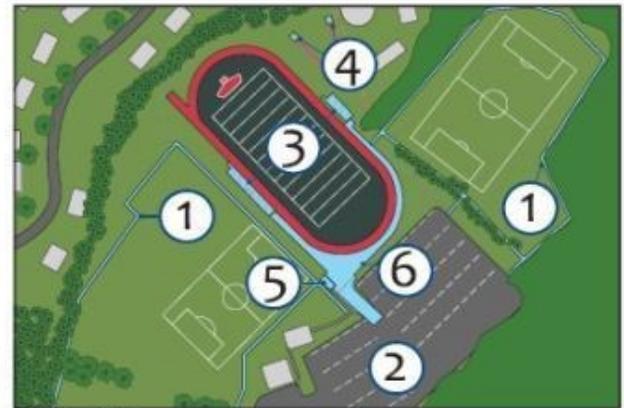


⑤ New Concession Stand

Existing



Proposed



Project List:

1. New Walking Path
2. New Parking Bumpers
3. New Bleachers
4. New Long Jump Pits
5. New Concession Stand
6. New Macadam Pavement

COUGAR FIELD

Images are similar projects throughout the state and are intended to represent design intent. Actual results may vary.



Referendum—MILTON AVENUE SCHOOL

There is currently insufficient space in our three elementary schools. In each building, certain programs are forced to share classrooms or take place in non-classroom areas. For multiple years now, our enrollment has exceeded demographic projections. This year, our enrollment is at its highest point in the history of the district. Building four classrooms at MAS will provide more flexibility to move stand-alone programs from other buildings to MAS, thus opening space in all elementary schools.

Critical Needs Met

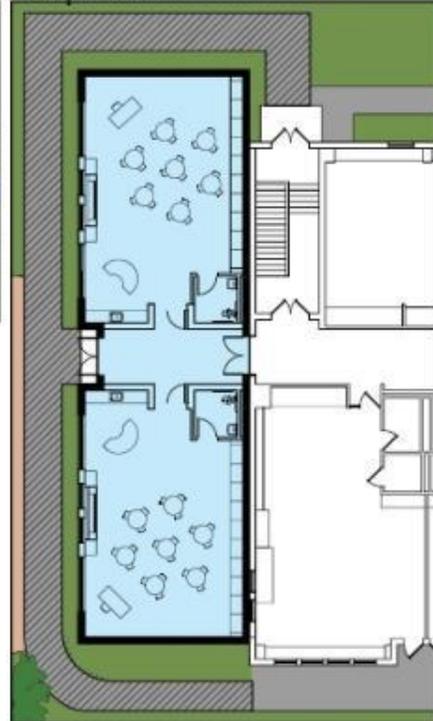
- ⇒ Add four classrooms, each with a bathroom
- ⇒ Move stand-alone, special education programs from SBS or WAS to MAS
- ⇒ Provide more flexibility in the future for a full-day kindergarten pilot

1 New Addition

Existing



Proposed



Proposed First Floor Addition Shown
Similar Second Floor not Pictured



Project List:

- 1. New Two Story Addition

MILTON AVENUE ELEMENTARY SCHOOL



Images are similar projects throughout the state and are intended to represent design intent. Actual results may vary.

SOME NEWS FROM THE SCHOOLS

Washington Avenue School welcomes its first new principal in a dozen years, with Kristine Dudlo (pictured left) taking the reins from Mary Quigley (pictured right 500 times thanks to the PTO celebration at the end of the year). Ms. Dudlo is a College of New Jersey Graduate who has served as a supervisor of instruction, reading specialist, and BSI teacher in her former districts.



Lafayette Avenue School did something truly innovative last year. Principal Russo and school counselor Cindy Weiner developed a “Focus for Five” program. The program entailed a brief period of time at the beginning of the day and after recess during which students would simply remain calm and focused while their teacher projected a soothing video on the classroom screen. The video also included a message about calm or kindness. Teachers and students reported that these periods of respite and focus helped foster more productive learning environments. Additionally, the school experienced a decline in discipline incidents.



Over the years, our school district has been incredibly fortunate to receive generous donations from our support groups (CEF, PTO, Boosters, etc.) that have bolstered the district’s own resources. One form of steady support has been that of technology. Thanks in part to this support, as well as the district’s planning and procurement of technology resources, this year all **Chatham Middle School** students will receive a Chromebook for use at school and at home. Students will receive their devices beginning in the late fall.



It is good to have friends in high places! As a result of a generous donation from the PTO and his brother’s landscaping company, Mr. Andrezza was able to secure the resources to beautify the grounds around the **Milton Avenue School** property. The new landscaping includes decorative pavers and plant labels to brighten up the whole area.



Chatham High School has enjoyed some positive publicity this summer, with both *Newsweek* and *New Jersey Monthly Magazine* ranking it as the top public high school in the state. Go CHS!



Southern Boulevard School benefitted this summer from a PTO grant that promotes fitness among the students and a better utilization of the school property. The PTO provided funding for the creation of a walking/running path along the perimeter of the upper back field at the school. This will give students another activity to try during recess or physical education class.



Opening of School Notifications

At your convenience, please visit the district website and click on the [Parent Resources](#) tab. This tab holds key notifications and information for parents, including the procedures followed for school cancellation. Please note that student safety is the driver and top priority for decisions related to school cancellation. If the weather were predictable and if all conditions in Chatham were consistent and stable, these decisions would be easy. However, since the weather and conditions fluctuate quickly, there are times when I do not make the best decision relative to closing school or keeping it open. Please try to be flexible when the weather gets tough.

Student Wellness

We are in the midst of a multi-year effort to address wellness-related issues among our students and ensure that our school environments are safe, healthful places. This effort has included parent outreach, the incorporation of research-based practices like mindfulness into our health and physical education programs, examination of our homework and schoolwork practices, purchase and distribution of more flexible furniture in our classrooms, and a host of other activities. As a high-achieving district, it is important to strike a balance between challenging students to reach their academic potential and recognizing that pushing too hard undermines the learning and development of children. One area we believe we could improve upon in this regard is that of email and the compulsion to be “plugged in” at all times. This year, our staff will make an effort to demonstrate to students that it is O.K.—in fact, appropriate and necessary—to unplug from email or social media at times.

Harassment, Intimidation, and Bullying

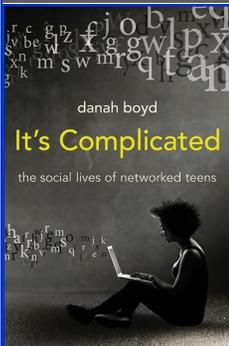
New Jersey has the most far-reaching anti-HIB law in the country. Please take time to review [our policy](#) on HIB. The school district must comply with all provisions in New Jersey’s law, taking seriously any potential act of HIB and responding accordingly. Please also take time to discuss with your child the importance of being respectful of other students and abiding by the behavioral expectations outlined in the student handbook of your child’s school. HIB or other disciplinary incidents can be difficult and stressful, so any proactive steps aimed at their prevention are important.

PARCC

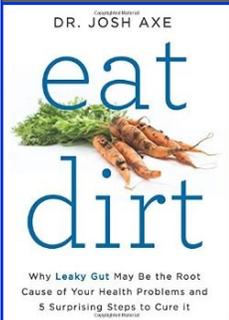
New Jersey is in the third year of implementation of the Partnership for the Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers. This means that PARCC is the product used to carry out and fulfill New Jersey’s standardized testing program. This summer, the state board of education adopted rules to require passage of the Algebra I PARCC test and the English 10 PARCC test as high school graduation requirements beginning with the Class of 2021. The school district is required to administer the PARCC tests. Regardless of your personal feelings about PARCC or standardized testing in general, please understand that if your child is slated to graduate in 2021 or later, as of right now PARCC is part of the graduation landscape.

SUMMER READING

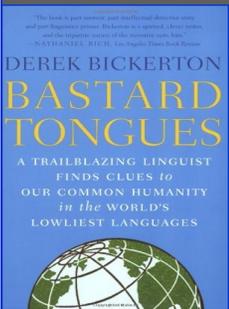
Over the years, I have been the fortunate recipient of many good book recommendations courtesy of parents in the district. I am probably not as good as I should be about following up on all of these recommendations, even when parents are sometimes kind enough to drop off a copy of a book at my office. This summer, I read three books recommended to me by parents. I am not sure if these titles are a reflection of our parent community, or their perceptions of what I ought to be reading based on interest or self-help! Thank you to all for sharing your reading selections!



I do not have a Facebook or Twitter account (and am criticized for it by family and co-workers). I do not have a teenage child (yet). This eye-opening book dispels many of the assumptions that adults like me make about teenagers and their use of social media. For example, the author argues that teens' desire for privacy in a networked world is akin to yesteryear's teens' desire to retreat into their bedrooms to talk on the phone with their friends, and that attempts at parent surveillance are counter productive. She shows that one reason that teens crave socialization via digital avenues is that they by and large have far fewer options to socialize outside of the house than teens did just a couple of decades ago—gone are the days of parents telling teenagers to go out in the summer and just be back for dinner. She also convincingly demonstrates how nuanced a typical teenager's use of social media really is, replete with code switching and a keen understanding of audience. Overall, this book is reassuring to those who fret for the next generation.



I have been told that my last name means “the dirt” in Sicilian, though I have no idea if this is really true. Regardless, when a parent recommended this title to me, I felt obligated to read it. The core argument of the author is that the scientific community is only beginning to understand how important the trillions of microbes that live in our body are to our overall health. As a result of modern-day stress, over-sanitization of our homes, consumption of processed foods, and several other forces, the healthy microbes that should be alive and well in our bodies have withered or even disappeared. This, in turn, creates health problems. The author's proposed solution? Of course, eat whole, unprocessed foods. Beyond that, though, we should seek exposure to the natural world. Dr. Axe points out that the composition of the human body shares many of the Earth's naturally occurring elements and that not being afraid to get our hands dirty promotes beneficial responses throughout our bodies. So touch, breathe, and even eat a little more of the natural world.



The one thing I can tell you about this book is that it is unlike any you have ever read. Derek Bickerton is a Cambridge-educated linguist with a specialty in Creole languages. But his memoir about bouncing all over the world to unearth remote pidgin languages reads as much like an Indiana Jones film as it does an in-depth examination of what makes languages work. Most extraordinary is Bickerton's ability to seemingly “pick up” any language by socializing with strangers in cafes and bars, and then break down the components of the language to make discoveries about its formation that pre-established conclusions and assumptions had gotten wrong. But the real crescendo of the book is that Bickerton's study of Creole languages all over the world—from Ghana to Suriname to Hawaii—leads him to a revelation about all human language development. I had never read a book on linguistics that I would call exciting or fascinating. This one is both.

WELCOME BACK!