

Fiscal Responsibility

Property Taxes are increasing while enrollment is decreasing.

1. From 2016-2020, student enrollment has decreased by 673 children while the school budget has increased by \$11,736,000.
2. Per student spending has increased from \$17,866 to \$22,090 during the same period.
3. Projected spending per student for the 2021-2022 school year is \$22,386 with \$15,055 related to classroom expenditures.

In the State of New Jersey, if the increase to the school budget does not exceed the 2% spending cap, the district is not required to obtain voter approval. However, just because this rule exists, it does not mean that the budget should be increased up to the cap every year. The current methodology of the existing Board members has resulted in a build up of over \$8.9M in capital reserves with a current year allocation of these reserves of only \$256K and maintenance reserves of \$4.6M with \$0 current year allocation.

All residents benefit from having a strong school system. However, the cost of that needs to be balanced with the needs of the community and tied to objectives that will improve the quality of education for our children.

Health and Safety

According to the CDC, “when making decisions about how to keep students and staff safe, school and early care and education (ECE) program administrators should consider:

- How many cases of COVID-19 are in your community.
- The number of people vaccinated in your community.
- Ages of children in the school or Early Care Education programs.”



The CDC has failed to address natural immunity in individuals who have had COVID-19 and recovered. Naturally, these individuals have developed a high level of antibody that is proven more effective than the spike protein that exists in vaccines. Based on the studies on its effectiveness, other nations are beginning to amend their vaccination policy requirements to factor in natural immunity, beginning with Israel.

CDC recommends “layer” prevention strategies. These strategies recommended are: (1) **Vaccination**; (2) **Masks**; (3) Physical distancing; (4) Testing; (5) **Ventilation**; (6) Handwashing; (7) Keeping children home when sick and (8) Contact Tracing.

Masks

The CDC also provides specific guidance on the use of masks.

“School and early care and education program administrators may choose to make mask use universally required in your child’s school or ECE program if:



- Children are younger than 12 and are not yet eligible for vaccination.
- The number of COVID-19 cases is increasing or high in the school or your community.
- The number of cases caused by a variant of concern is increasing or high in the school or your community.
- The school or ECE program is not able to monitor the vaccine status of children, teachers, or staff.
- The school or ECE program cannot enforce mask policies that are not universal.
- The number of students OR people in your community who are vaccinated is low.
- The school or ECE program is not able to monitor the vaccine status of children, teachers, or staff.
- The school or ECE program cannot enforce mask policies that are not universal.
- The number of students or people in your community who are vaccinated is low.

Schools and early care and education programs can make exceptions for children who cannot wear a mask or cannot safely wear a mask.”

Based on these guidelines, the state of the district related to COVID exhibited below and the fact that other developed nations don’t require masking of school children, there is should be flexibility for the school district to allow parents to make the decision for their own children.

Ventilation

One of the opportunities that the district can avail itself of to combat the spread of viruses, not only currently, but in the future, is to address the CDC’s recommendation of ventilation. The district currently has an \$8.9M capital reserve and a \$4.6M maintenance reserve that can be employed to upgrade the districts HVAC systems, as recommended by the CDC, in the schools. This provides a variety of benefits:

- Reduction in the number of virus particles that are airborne
- Reduction of surface contamination
- Upgrade of the air conditioning and heating systems in the district schools to be more effective and less maintenance intensive
- Common sense use of the escalating capital reserve for the benefit of Bernards’ Children

Summary

The topic of vaccinations and masks seem to be the most “politically charged” topics facing school boards today and the root of these issues are personal choice, lack of consistent guidance and communication causing concern within the community and failure to “follow the science” due to those failures in guidance and communications. Due to these factors, including the most recent statistics evaluating the community risk, flexibility should be allowed for parents to make appropriate and informed decisions based on the medical needs of their children and the school district should look at implementing the flexibility provided by the existing N.J. Executive Order 251 and CDC guidelines.



Curriculum

Curriculum

Our platform is based on the Hillsdale College 1776 Curriculum. “One of the main purposes of education is to build the next generation of American citizens. Our students need to have a clear understanding of our shared history, **good and bad**, but in a manner consistent with unifying our nation, celebrating our shared heritage, traditions, holidays, and its achievements while guiding the next generation to further improve the Republic.

Education begins with reflection upon the common humanity of its students. These common characteristics point to the virtues and vices that are common to all human beings, and education leads students to know, practice, and love the virtues. A classical education takes a content-rich approach to the study of important subjects. As students mature in the curriculum, classical education teaches them to ask, analyze and develop their own thoughts to the big questions.

America’s foundational ideas and institutions were born of reflection and choice, not accident and force. It is essential that our students learn these ideas and how their country has sought to live up to its founding ideals. Through practice, affection, and knowledge, classical education educates citizens with a refined and rational love of their country.” ~Hillsdale College website

Recent mandates in New Jersey related to Social Emotional Learning and other issues arising around the nation due to Critical Race Theory, have caused a great deal of concern in the community. This diversion from the core curriculum reduces the quality of education by diverting time and resources away from the basics. The tenants of these programs are already being taught and experienced by our students and community due to the diverse make-up of Bernards Township, the commitment to Diversity & Inclusion by our Mayor and monitoring though the Harassment, Intimidation and Bullying policy of the school district. These factors create a community of **inclusivity**.

Summary

Our district needs to promote and respect the diversity of thought in the classroom, natural intellectual curiosity, individual character development and develop critical and independent thinkers. We believe in equality and meritocracy for all students and that every student has the same opportunity to succeed with hard work and focus. We believe that parents play a special role in the success of their children and support their role to be involved in every step in the decision making for their children.

Bernards Township Mission Statement

We need to take political ideology out of operating the school district. This is a non-partisan role that should help develop a mission statement for the community and to defend that against intrusions from political motivations. That may mean challenging the mandates by sitting State, County and Local leadership and being a leader in bringing proactive solutions to the table.

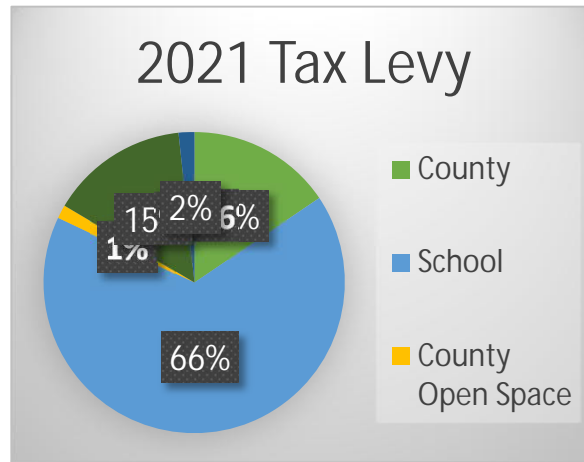


LIGHT AND NASTRO FOR BERNARDS CHILDREN

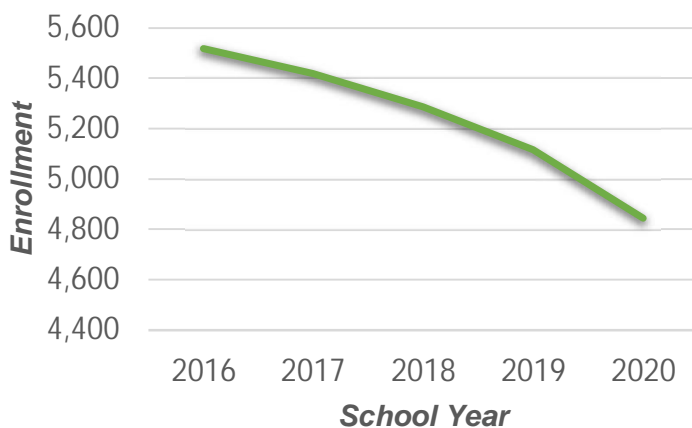
Bernards Township School District

How do we compare?

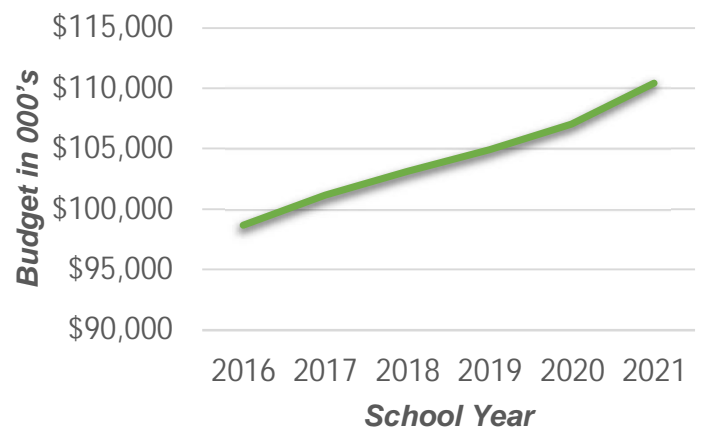
Source: Individual District 2016-2022 User Friendly Budgets



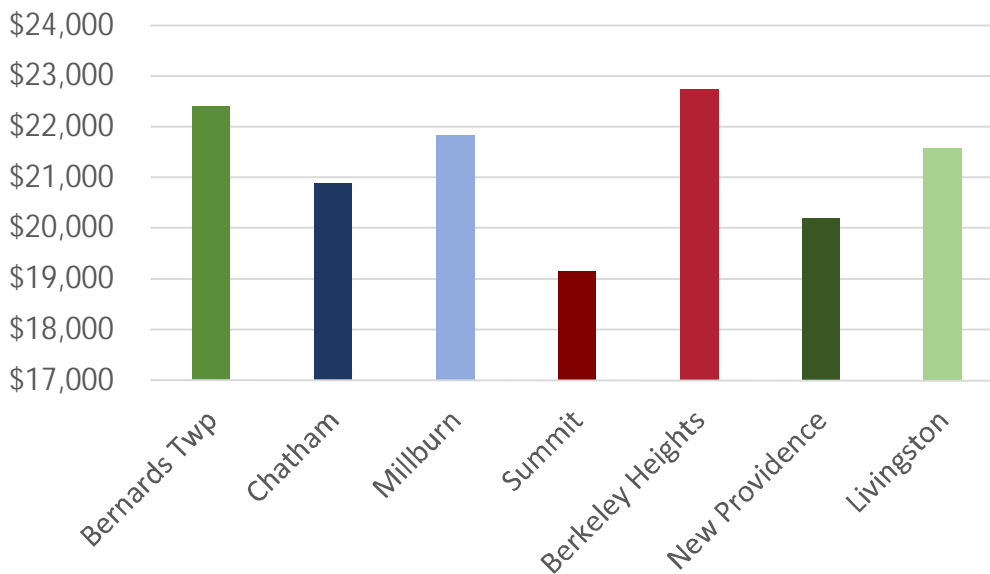
Student Enrollment



School Budget



2021-2022 Cost per Student



Average = **\$21,059/student**

Bernards Twp Excess =
\$1,327/student

OR

\$6,546,357

OR

\$680
average/household

LIGHT AND NASTRO FOR BERNARDS CHILDREN

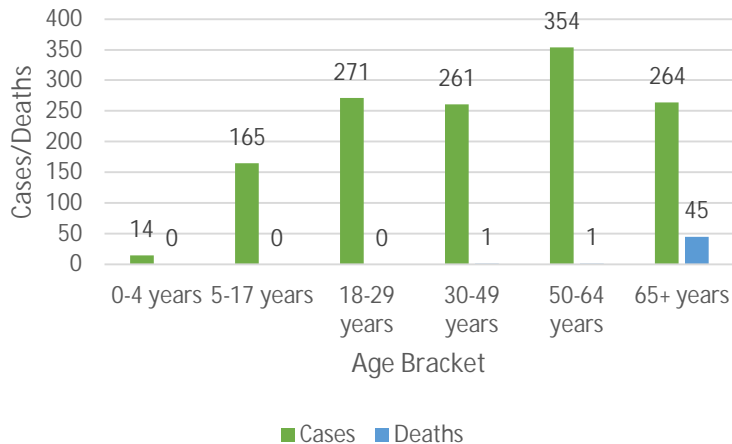
Bernards Township School District

COVID-19 Statistics, as of September 15, 2021

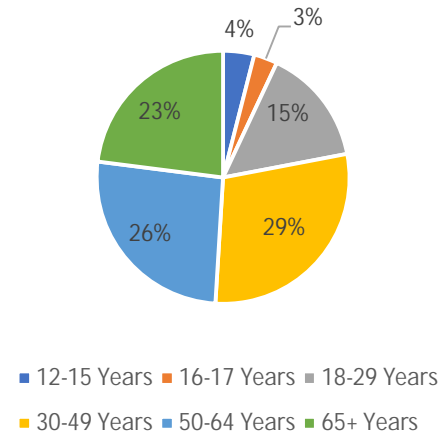
* [Source: New Jersey COVID-19 Data Dashboard \(nj.gov\)](https://nj.gov/health/eid/ocdc/njdash/covid19/)

As of September 15, 2021, here are some key data points to consider since the beginning of the pandemic:

Bernards Township COVID Data as of September 15, 2021 *

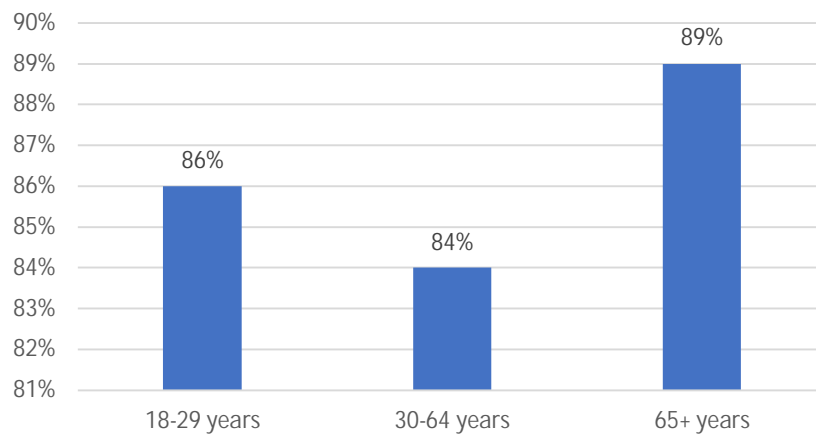


NJ Statewide Vaccination % *



NOTE: Hospitalizations in Bernards Township are less than 10 people throughout the entire pandemic

Bernards Township Vaccination Rates *



| Metric | *Per State of NJ | Per BT Public Health |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------|----------------------|
| % Death/Positive Cases | 3.54% | 2.94% |
| % Deaths/Positive Cases < 65 Yrs Old | 0.19% | 0.34% |
| % Deaths/Total BT Population (27, 014 residents per Statistical Atlas) | 0.17% | 0.22% |