

Lyncourt Union Free School District

New York State Aid - Foundation Aid Plan

The 2021-2022 enacted state budget includes language stating that, for the 2021-22, 2022-23 and 2023-24 school years, each school district receiving a Foundation Aid increase of more than 10% or \$10,000,000 in any given school year must post a plan of how the funds will be used to address student performance and need. As part of the 2021-22 final state aid proposal, Foundation Aid has been partially restored to school districts. Lyncourt has a \$761,108 (38%) increase in Foundation Aid as a result of this restoration.

Foundation Aid is the main source of state funding for public schools. A Foundation Aid Formula was created in 2006 establishing a calculation of proper apportionment to each of the state's more than 600 public school districts. Since established this aid has not been held to the formula, rather it has been frozen or has been incremented slightly over the past several decades. Public school districts have never been made whole to this formula since it was set into law.

The fifteen year battle over equitably funding education came to an end this year when lawmakers agreed to fully restore school district Foundation Aid over the next three years. The initial 2021-22 school year of this three year phase in provides New York State public schools 60% of the Foundation Aid's true formula aid calculation. Districts are promised 50% more and in the year 2022-23 with full Foundation Aid restored in the year 2023-24.

What does this mean to Lyncourt's budget and revenue?

The \$761,108 additional Foundation Aid will help to right-size our revenue to cover actual expenses, eliminating the need to fill the gap with fund balance in order to squeak by. This aid will catch Lyncourt up to the budget level necessary to support our increased enrollment. While Foundation Aid has remained steady, our enrollment has increased nearly 20%, our services have kept up with the needs of the community, and our expenses have risen each year. In the past several years, state aid and local tax funds have not provided enough revenue to offset expenses, causing the district to deplete fund balance to a concerning low level.



Fund balance, or the school district's savings, is important. New program and grant opportunities must be funded up front, sometimes for one to two years in advance of getting reimbursed. These new programs include Pre-K and Smart Schools Bond Act technology grants, among other start-up programs. Having a tight budget that is created a year before the spending takes place leaves little room for changes in special education needs, let alone the funds to front additional program opportunities that the district would be remiss in not taking advantage of.

The importance of our school district being fiscally sound is paramount.

It provides the ability to obtain lower interest rates on reconstruction bonds and provides a stable educational environment for our students.

Lyncourt is committed to addressing student performance and need. We will:

- Continue the practice of small class sizes.
- Continue to provide Tier 1 social-emotional instruction to all students and additional Tier 2 and Tier 3 supports to students in need of more intensive remediation.
- Cover the increasing costs of our students attending Charter Schools.
- Provide adequate resources, such as language supports and translator services, to our English language learners and their families.
- Provide high school choice and support the cost of our increased enrollment reaching the high school level.
- Continue to provide academic intervention programs and enrichment for our at risk student population as determined through AIMS Web Plus assessments and progress monitoring, as well as teacher recommendations.
- Retain staff and programs to accelerate student achievement and close learning gaps by providing additional instructional assistance in the classroom.
- Retain staff by affording contractual increases in insurance costs.
- Provide a safe environment by contracting security assistance for both staff and students.
- Provide academic enhancement through the use of technology both in the classroom and at home by retaining a shared Director of Technology and LAN Technician, as well as obtaining hot spots, software licenses, and one-to-one devices.

Lyncourt's 2021-22 budget, including the expected revenue increase in Foundation Aid included plans to:

- Reduce the reliance on fund balance to cover general expenditures by \$375,000.
- Increase the budget by \$490,000 to cover increased expenditures and maintain programs.
- Keep the tax levy increase within the levy limit of 1.85%, an increased revenue of \$114,620.
- Use the Foundation Aid increase of \$761,108 to cover the funding gap that has been created from it being withheld all of these years.

Community input was provided during Budget Committee meetings and board meetings

This spending plan was discussed with the 2020-2021 Budget Committee where attendees were given opportunity to ask questions and provide comments and input. Meetings were held on March 24, 2021 and April 14, 2021.

The Budget Committee was made up of the following representatives:

Mr. Michael Leonardo, Board Representative
Mrs. Kimberly Vespi, Board Representative
Dr. Lawrence Salamino, Alternate Board Representative
Mr. Jay Austin, Superintendent
Mrs. Cathryn Marchese, School Business Administrator
Ms. Yvonne Ramsden, Parent Representative
Mrs. Amy Huff, Parent Representative
Mrs. Amy Borkowski, Staff and Parent Representative
Ms. Judy Wilsch, Alternate Parent Representative

The information herein was shared in a public Board meeting on June 8, 2021, at which time public comment was facilitated.