

*Protect*

**ARTS ED**

**NOW!**

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**SCHOOL  
BUDGET  
PROCESS**  
*Guide*

**Planning for Fall 2021/22 School Year**

**ARTS ED NJ**  
Many Partners. One Voice.



In many schools the arts are taught fully remotely, even if the school uses a hybrid model. In other schools, arts educators have been told it is not safe, or the facilities have been repurposed and arts instruction has been disrupted. Even in schools doing their best to follow proper mitigation strategies, student enrollment is lower and arts opportunities have been significantly reduced or eliminated.



With the promise of wide availability of a vaccine by the Spring of 2021, **now is the time** to begin to plan for what our arts education programs will look like for the start of the 2021/2022 school year.

## And planning starts with the School Budget.

As part of our responsibility as concerned citizens and parents, we need to monitor school planning for the new year. By becoming involved early in the cycle, the budget outcome will never be a surprise.

By monitoring the following eight-step process you may ensure there are no surprises.

To be successful it is important to have a representative of your group **ATTEND EVERY BOARD MEETING.**

It does not have to be the same person. **SOMEONE** representing the arts should be attending to pick up on any early warning signs regarding future funding issues or potential budget concerns.

### Reality Check



School boards are meeting NOW about plans for **mental health, social and emotional learning** and student engagement during this challenging time. Making arts education a priority will address all of those items.

### IMPORTANT



For 2021/2022 you should pay attention to see if the budget being devised is based on the 2020/2021 school year (COVID) or the 2019/2020 school year (budget before COVID). This is important since the 2020/2021 school year is nothing like a “normal” year and you want to ensure that program adjustments because of COVID do not become permanent.

**Short term enrollment declines in arts programs because of COVID should not be used as justification to reduce staffing or cut programs!**

### Tip

**How can I let my school district know that arts education is essential for students?**

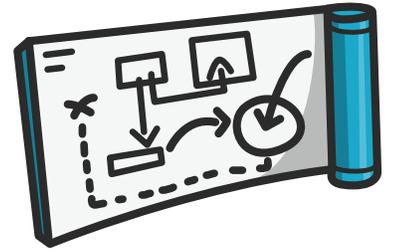
Find out when and where your local school board meets by checking the website of your local district. Then put the meetings on your calendar and plan to show up!



Step  
#1

## Starting the Budget Process

In most school districts, the budget process is initiated by the superintendent or the chief business officer. Under that person's leadership, district employees assigned to budget development spend much of the fall gathering data, selecting from available scenarios, and making recommendations.



Two documents may be available during this early portion of the eight-step budget process. The first is the "assumption statement" which describes or outlines key assumptions and formulas to be used in the development of the budget. The second document is a budget calendar of major steps in the budget process. If the school district does not publish a calendar, the person in charge of the budget process can provide information on the timetable.

During this early part of the budget process, people who monitor the process (i.e. community members and parents) should make it a point to get to know board members, and learn "how they stand on music and arts education." They should not be strangers.



**If you cannot attend all the meetings**, it is important to identify and connect with other advocates who support arts education in your district. Plan ahead to have someone present and to report back to you.



Step  
#2

## Board Operations Committee Meets

The operations committee of the board will review budget concepts and proposals presented by the administration. The operations committee members will ask questions, request additional information and discuss spending priorities for the new year. The administration takes the feedback and adjusts or revises the budget and identifies board members who serve on this committee. During this process, the state provides local districts with state budget guidelines (including projected local share of state aid to fund education). These guidelines are used to help solidify revenue projections for the school district.



Reality  
Check

You do not have to have a question or comment to attend the School Board meeting. Your presence (even with your camera turned off) is essential! You need to be present and informed. We will help you with the rest.

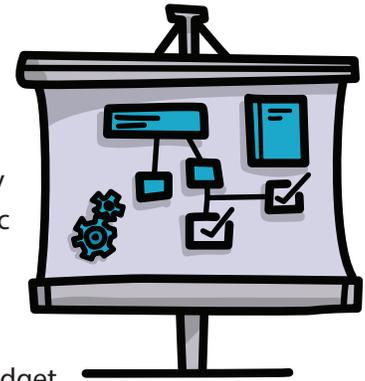
*Note: This year state aid may be impacted by the availability of federal funding to help off-set budget losses due to COVID-19. No additional federal funding may be a sign of significant reductions in state aid to local districts.*

EARLY  
FEB  
2021

Step  
#3

## Preliminary Budget Presentation to the Public

During a public meeting of the Board of Education the preliminary budget will be presented and discussed. The documents are public and should allow advocates to discover areas of concern like staff reductions, program cuts, and resource reductions. Board members may be approached by the public with specific questions or concerns once they have received the preliminary budget.



Tip

**Report back if you hear something that is questionable** regarding the visual and performing arts in your district. We are here to guide you and support you with next steps.



LATE  
FEB  
2021

Step  
#4

## State Aid is Released

State funding for local school districts (state aid) is released following the governor's budget address (tentatively scheduled for February 26, 2021). This will be the first indication of any significant adjustment (positive or negative) to state funding for the local school district. A reduction in state aid may foretell the need for budget cuts. Once state aid is presented, the administration will meet with the operations committee again to discuss any adjustments that may be required.



Reality  
Check

**Do not hesitate to ask questions or ask us for help!**

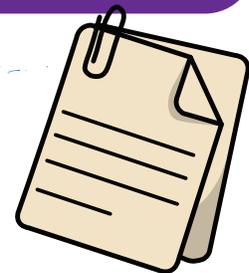
Questions and concerns should be raised early in the process, since adjustments are less likely to occur late in the budget process.

EARLY  
MAR

Step  
#5

## Public Presentation of the 2021/2022 School Budget

This is the formal publishing and public viewing of the detailed budget. Again, this usually occurs relatively late in the budget process. There are only a few weeks to read it, ask questions, and propose changes. Any areas of concern should be identified and addressed immediately with the superintendent and members of the Board of Education.



Tip

**Don't be intimidated!** Your presence is important to share a message that the arts are valued and your presence will demonstrate that in a tangible way. Reach out and invite stakeholders and advocates to join you.



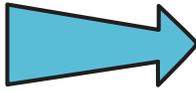
MID  
MAR

Step  
#6

## School Board Approves the Tentative Budget



The budget must then be submitted to the County Superintendent for review.



It is important to note that you can attend school board meetings that are not in your district.

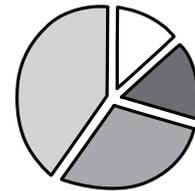


END  
APR

Step  
#7

## Public Hearing

The school board holds one or more public hearings to solicit citizen comments on the budget. However, once it's gone this far, it's difficult to make changes.



**Reach out to the arts educators in your district!**  
Showcasing student performances or students' artistic works at every school board meeting can demonstrate the value of arts education and its impact on students' well-being.



Step  
#7

## Final Budget Approval

**APPROVED**

The final step is budget adoption and funding approval. After the public hearings, the board adopts a budget with whatever amendments it deems necessary. This often occurs at the same meeting as the public hearing.

Reality  
Check

**NJ School Boards are required to hold public hearings.**  
The goal is to get parent and community feedback on their budgeting and plans. You need to be "In the Room Where it Happens".

## IMPORTANT

It takes time and energy to monitor a local school budget. Before you begin, we suggest that you acquire and review online resources (including the prior year's budget which should be available on the district website) to help understand the school budget process. This information will help you strategize.



# EXAMPLE NJ SCHOOL DISTRICT TENTATIVE BUDGET CALENDAR

2021/2022

(sample dates only - your district calendar will be different)

State budget guidelines and state aid release dates are tentative

OCT

**October 15, 2020 2021/21** enrollment data reviewed - determine 2021/22 projection

**October 16, 2020** Budget information provided to supervisors & directors

NOV

**November 30, 2020** Budget documents due into the business office

**Nov - Dec 2020** Administration meets with new admin team to review budget requests

DEC  
JAN

**Dec 20 / Jan 21** Operations committee reviews budget concepts/proposals

**January 22, 2021** Receive 2021/2022 state budget guidelines

**January 25, 2021** Calculate tuition rates

**January 25, 2021** Preliminary budget presentation to public

FEB

**February 26, 2021** State aid release (TENTATIVE)

**February 26 - March 2, 2021** With state aid, Administration meets with Operations Committee

MAR

**March 2, 2021** Public presentation of the 2021/2022 budget to the Board

**March 16, 2021** Board of Education approval of the proposed tentative budget

**March 17, 2021** Submission of tentative 2021/2022 budget to the County office

APR

**April 27, 2021** Public hearing and final approval of 2021/2022 budget