



Forest Hills
School District

ENGAGE • EMPOWER • EXCEL

FINANCIAL *Report*

LETTER FROM THE TREASURER

DEAR RESIDENTS:

Thank you for taking a moment to read our Forest Hills School District Financial Profile. Inside these pages we share what the financial picture looks like at FHSD and how our focus on strong fiscal management provides a great value to our residents.



This year has been full of changes and adjustments for our staff, students, families and community. Similarly, our finances have gone through constant changes due to drastic state funding cuts and federal emergency funding that is restricted to specific purposes like PPE.

This report seeks to explain through graphs, charts and answers to frequently asked questions how our schools have managed our precious resources through all the uncertainties and continue to provide excellent opportunities to all students at a great value to our residents.

One of the biggest unknowns facing our school finances right now is Ohio's nonexistent state funding formula and the passage of a new biennial state budget this summer. What remains clear is that we cannot count on those unknowns right now. However, we can—and will—continue to operate in a frugal manner.

We will continue to manage our finances the way we always have—with a focus on the classroom. We are grateful for our community's support and the value our residents place in educating our students. This report shares how we stretch our resources and invest in our future—our students.

Should you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact me. I appreciate feedback and welcome the opportunity to discuss the district's finances with our community.

Sincerely,



ALANA CROPPER

Treasurer, Forest Hills School District

231-3600 | alanacropper@foresthills.edu

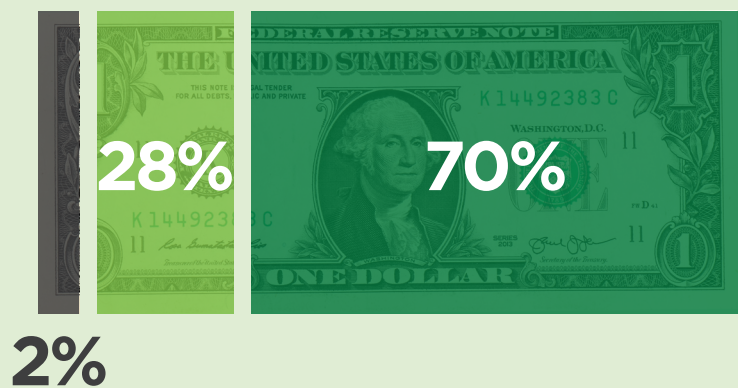
What funds our schools?

Ohio's system to fund schools is supposed to provide adequate funding to educate each child in a district and equitably share funding between the state and local community. The current system to fund schools in Ohio is broken; and has been for decades. As a result, districts like Forest Hills rely on local support to provide the quality of education students receive.

Seventy percent of Forest Hills's General Fund revenues are generated through local property taxes. Those taxes either are remitted directly to the district or through the Township in the form of service payments due to tax increment financing agreements.

FHSD only receives about twenty-eight percent of the district's revenue from state funding. Additional funding comes from other miscellaneous sources such as tuition, rental, and Medicaid reimbursements.

General Fund Revenues FY20



- PROPERTY TAX/TIF
- STATE
- OTHER LOCAL

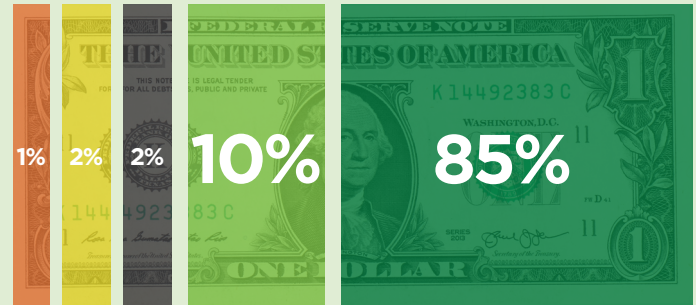
What are our funding priorities?

OUR TOP PRIORITY IS INVESTING IN OUR FUTURE—OUR STUDENTS.

Delivery of high-quality instruction and opportunities for our students is our top priority and we understand that FHSD must remain competitive to hire and retain high-quality professionals. Salaries and benefits are one of the largest district expenditures because our staff makes the largest impact on student learning. It is important to invest in our staff who deliver the high-quality education our community expects.

Ten percent of the district's expenditures are purchased services; these are costs related to specialized professionals contracted to provide services that are not on district payroll, utility payments and other services. About two percent of expenditures are dedicated to supplies and materials and currently two percent is spent on capital outlay which includes land, buildings, ground maintenance, and equipment including furnishings, technology and buses.

General Fund Revenues FY20



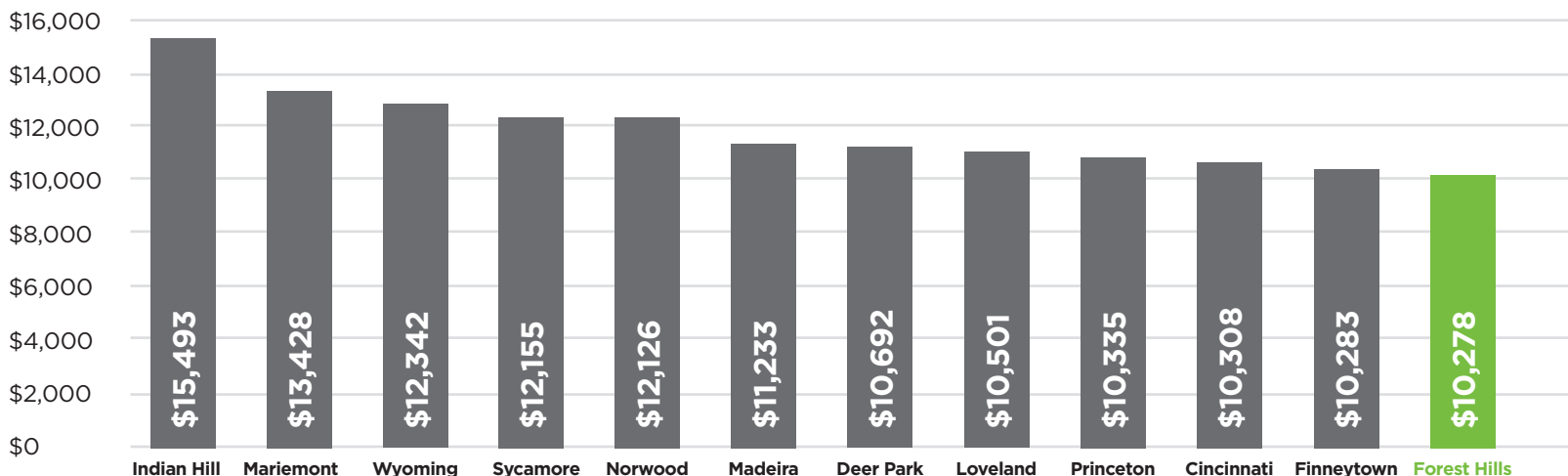
- SALARIES & BENEFITS
- CAPITAL OUTLAY
- PURCHASED SERVICES
- OTHER
- MATERIALS & SUPPLIES

How does our spending compare?

Spending per pupil is a financial benchmark calculated by the Ohio Department of Education for all school districts in the state. As you can see, FHSD ranks 12 out of 23 districts in Hamilton County and spending per pupil is below average in the county. **Moreover, FHSD spends 73.7% of our dollars in the classroom whereas the average school district in the state spends only 68.4%.**

Hamilton County Schools

COMPARISON OF SPENDING PER PUPIL—2021



SOURCE: OHIO DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION REPORT CARDS

What was the impact of COVID-19?

We sprang into action as soon we learned in March 2020 of the Governor's school shutdown. FHSD tightened our financial belts and began working through how we would continue to deliver services to our students uninterrupted.

As the district continued to adjust and adapt our educational response and plan for reopening our buildings safely, we navigated through constant financial changes. We operate on a tight budget because we value each dollar our community invests in our schools. In the Spring of 2020, we learned the unexpected news of \$3.3 million in immediate cuts to our state funding. Later, a small portion of the funding (\$908,000) was restored to the district.



The federal, one-time emergency CRF and ESSER funds enabled our schools to reopen safely and covered additional costs that were not part of our original budget. These funds have been instrumental in keeping our buildings open safely this year.

We designated the use of these funds to benefit all students in a variety of ways; FHSD: provided face to face instruction with increased sanitation, developed new teacher support and additional staffing positions to deliver instruction in virtual settings with smaller class sizes; and equipped students and teachers with the equipment and technology that allowed for flexible instruction.

Overall, we were proud that we were able to keep our buildings open to students in the 2020-21 school year despite all of the uncertainty and changes. Our strong financial practices in place prior to COVID-19 and maintained through our response allow our district leaders to focus their decision-making on what students need to be successful today and into their futures.



How does state funding impact our budget?

State funding is an important piece of every school budget. Ohio has a complicated and, frankly, unconstitutional formula for funding schools. In fact, this system has been ruled unconstitutional on several occasions since 1997 because the way Ohio funds schools creates an over-reliance on local taxes.

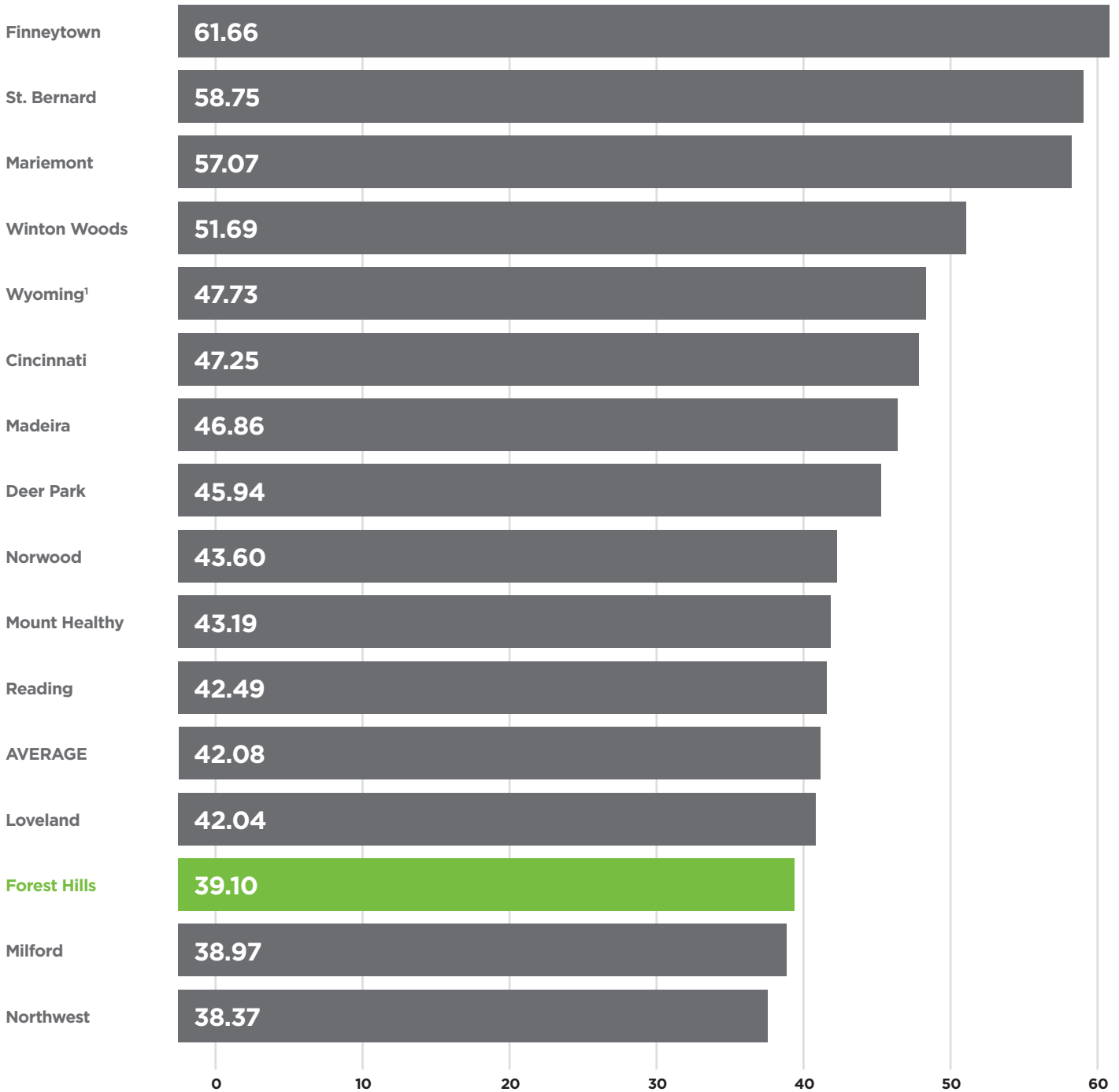
Currently, the legislature is considering a different way to fund schools, but the new formula still takes into account a “wealth index” or the perceived ability of a community to fund its own schools. Even under this new formula that seeks to decrease reliance on local taxes, FHSD will see minimal increases in state funding. Some calculations show the district could see funding for two, maybe three, additional teachers if this plan passes. It’s a drop in the bucket.

This tells communities like ours that the quality of our local schools is up to our local taxpayers and voters. We continue to advocate for more funding at the state level, but it remains clear—Forest Hills cannot rely on Columbus to support or fund what our community expects locally.

Are we getting a good return on our investment?

Forest Hills School District is one of the highest performing schools in Hamilton County and at the same time is **below** the average residential tax in the area! This is one way our district provides a good return on the investment residents make in the Forest Hills School District and the community. We take pride in our ability to deliver high quality instruction to our residents.

SOURCE: HAMILTON COUNTY AUDITOR
 1-Also has a 1.25% income tax



How do we maximize every dollar?

We value and respect the investment our community makes in our schools and students. That is why we stretch every dollar, are constantly looking for cost-savings that don't impact the quality of experience and provide regular updates on our finances to our community. The search for cost efficiencies is ongoing and includes every facet of our district. **SOME OF THE MOST RECENT EXAMPLES OF SAVINGS INCLUDE:**



**Reduction of employee positions,
\$750,000 per year.**



**The district has been awarded an
EPA project for 3 handicapped buses,
saving the district \$341,331 in our
upcoming fiscal year.**



**Reduction of building/departmental
budgets, \$60,000 per year.**



**Contracting with a new power supplier to
reduce electricity rates, saving the district
approximately \$44,400 per year.**

The value of the Forest Hills experience

We are proud FHSD continues to be a high-performing district! Once again, Turpin High School and Anderson High School are among the top ranked schools not only in Ohio, but also the nation! In fact, the 2021 U.S. News and World Report "Top High Schools" report ranks Anderson and Turpin in the top 4.4% of high schools in the state and in the top 6.5% in the nation. Ranking is based upon reading and math assessments, graduation rates, and college readiness.

Our district consistently receives the coveted Auditor of State award, most recently for our fiscal year ending in 2020. The award from Keith Faber, Auditor of State says, "The citizens you represent are well-served by your effective and accountable financial practices."

Forest Hills School District also continues to maintain high ranking Niche scores, based on community and staff reviews, throughout all nine buildings. The district ranks in the top 11% for best places to teach in Ohio, has A+ ratings for academics and college readiness, ranks in the top 8% of best districts for student-athletes, and the top 6% of best overall school districts statewide.

Additionally, 83% of students in Forest Hills schools are proficient or above in math and in reading, according to state test scores. We know this is because of our dedicated staff and our shared vision for student success.

We will continue to honor the tradition of excellence at Forest Hills School District, celebrate the accomplishments of our staff and students and provide the high-quality experiences our community expects at a great value.

Our schools belong to our community and Forest Hills School District is committed to open communication with our community. If you have any questions about the details in this report, please send them to us at ask@foresthills.edu.





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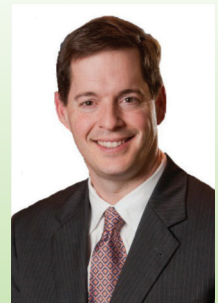


FOREST HILLS SCHOOL DISTRICT BOARD OF EDUCATION

The Forest Hills School District Board of Education remains committed to maintaining sound fiscal practices district-wide that enable a strong tradition of high-performance and top-notch quality in academics, athletics and the arts. **FOR MORE INFORMATION, VISIT WWW.FORESTHILLS.EDU**



DEMETRIA CHOICE



DR. FOREST HEIS



ELIZABETH MAIER



DR. LESLIE RASMUSSEN