Dear Eatontown Community Member:

Over the last few years, Eatontown Public Schools has carefully listened and participated in the school funding debate that has carried the day for many years now. The Board of Education and I have written letters on behalf of the school system, submitted information to various government officials about our school district, and attended many meetings with local legislators as well as the Governor’s Team in order to demonstrate the negative impact the elimination of Adjustment Aid would have on our schools in the future. Unfortunately, on Friday, July 13th, we were informed through a state broadcast that Eatontown would experience a $250,000 reduction in its state aid package for upcoming school year and further reductions will occur over the next 5-7 years. In 5-7 years, once all the reductions are enacted, Eatontown Public Schools will lose up to $2.4 million dollars in state funding.

The purpose of this writing is to inform you of the changes in school funding which were codified in this year’s state budget. The Board of Education and I have made reductions in expenditures this year in order to balance the 2018-2019 school budget. Unfortunately, more cuts in school spending will be required in the future to balance our future budgets.

As a resident of Eatontown, you are aware of the impact the closure of Fort Monmouth had upon our community and schools. When Fort Monmouth closed in 2010, student enrollment decreased. In addition, the Eatontown economy was impacted as well. Over the last 8 years, our schools have committed to providing effective services to students from a diverse array of educational backgrounds and learning styles. The success of our school system is its ability to provide appropriate programs from Gifted and Talented to Basic Skills services to our diverse student community.

Our chief concern was and continues to be the reduction of Adjustment Aid without any consideration of other portions of the school funding formula that may be due to Eatontown based upon our rapidly changing district. The Board of Education and I recognize that student enrollment has decreased. However, the students who make-up those enrollment figures have changed as well. According to Rutgers University, Eatontown is one of 18 communities in NJ that has a population that is perfectly correlated to the entire NJ population. In addition, here are a few ways our student enrollment has changed:
1. Currently, our Free and Reduced Lunch percentage is 43%.
2. Our special education population is about 23%.
3. Our ELL population is about 8%.
4. Eatontown provides services to about 42 homeless students.

By removing Adjustment Aid from the funding formula for Eatontown, and not accounting for other changes besides total enrollment, the state funding plan severely limits our district's ability to provide a “thorough and efficient” education for Eatontown students in the future. According to the NJ Constitution and past NJ Supreme Court decisions, a “thorough and efficient” education is defined simply as a requirement that the State ensure equal educational opportunity for school children in our state.

Eatontown receives about $3.7 million dollars in state aid. When $2.4 million in state aid is phased out from our budget, the remaining state aid provided to Eatontown will be about $1.3 million. If all other pieces of the school funding formula hold, Eatontown would only receive $1.3 million in state aid to help fund a $20 million dollar budget. In this analysis, our state aid is reduced by almost 65%, accounting for less than 6.5% of the total budget.

Moving forward, the Board of Education and I hope that the state will reconsider other factors in addition to enrollment numbers. Eatontown is not the same community it was when Fort Monmouth was thriving. Our needs have changed. The Board of Education and I will continue to work with local and state stakeholders to address this challenge and work to minimize the impact of these state budget decisions on our students.

There are no easy answers to this complex problem. Under the current rules, Eatontown Public Schools will need to change in order to respond to this funding crisis. With the state not listening at this time, the Eatontown community may need to solve this problem at the local level. The Board of Education and I will be exploring options to address this concern over the next few months.

I appreciate your time and consideration. If you would like to support our schools, please consider contacting your local legislators as well as the Governor’s Office.

Sincerely,

Scott T. McCue
Superintendent of Schools

Bob English
Eatontown Board of Education President
Government Contacts

Assemblyman Eric Houghtaling
Assemblywoman Joann Downey
Senator Vin Gopal

802 West Park Avenue
Suite 221
Ocean Township, NJ 07712

Phone: (732) 695-3371
Fax: (732) 695-3374

AsmHoughtaling@njleg.org or AswDowney@njleg.org
sengopal@njleg.org

Governor Murphy
https://www.nj.gov/governor/contact/all/