

# HUNTINGTON UNION FREE SCHOOL DISTRICT

*A tradition of excellence in education since 1657*



## **Budget Includes Tax Levy Below State-Mandated Limit** *while maintaining and enhancing district programs*

Dear Huntington Resident:

I am honored to provide you with the proposed 2015/16 school district budget that includes a tax levy below the state-mandated limit, while broadening educational programs for our students.

Superintendent James W. Polansky, his administrative team and faculty members have worked together to realize cost efficiencies and keep expenses stable. Measures were taken to reduce transportation costs. The district has continually kept its debt service to a minimum and has recently experienced an upgrade in its Moody's rating as a result of its conservative fiscal approach.

This year was no less impressive for our student body. Huntington High School remains among the top three percent of the Washington Post's "America's Most Challenging High Schools"; the Blue Devil marching band won first place at the state field band competition in Syracuse; we have three National Merit Scholarship finalists; students earned over \$19 million in scholarship money in 2014; the robotics team enjoyed its second year of competition, winning best industrial design at the regional FIRST competition; our STEM magnet school increased enrollment and STEM initiatives continue to expand throughout the district; several athletic teams and individual athletes won county and state-level championships; Huntington received honors as "Best Music Community in America"; elementary student science fair winners will vie for awards at Brookhaven National Laboratory, among so many other achievements.

This proposed budget includes: class sizes at all grade levels that are below district guidelines, expanded enrollment in electives and Advanced Placement courses at the high school, including new Engineering Design and Allied Health Science programs, a formal STEM component at Finley Middle School and continuation of the district's 1:1 computing device initiative.

The proposed capital proposition includes plans to add air conditioning to the high school auditorium. This will enable the district to better utilize the space and make it available for rent to other groups during the hot spring and summer months.

As always, this budget supports the tools, equipment and supplies necessary to maintain and improve our buildings and grounds used continuously by our students and authorized community organizations.

These are challenging times in public education, but in Huntington we continue to focus on providing excellent educational experiences to all of our students. Our board of education thanks you for taking the time to read this brochure and understand our budget.

Sincerely,

*Emily Rogan*

Emily Rogan

President, Board of Education

# Voter Information

## Election Day:

Tuesday, May 19, 2015

6:00 a.m. - 9:00 p.m.

Huntington High School

Oakwood & McKay Roads

Huntington, New York

## Board of Education:

Residents will have an opportunity to elect four members to the Huntington Board of Education on Election Day, Tuesday, May 19.

## Eligibility:

- U.S. citizen.
- 18 years of age or older.
- Resident of Huntington School District for at least 30 days.
- Registered to vote in a general election or with the school district.

**Questions? Call the District Clerk's Office at 673-2126 during regular business hours.**

## Absentee Ballots:

Applications for absentee ballots may be applied for at the District Clerk's office at the Administrative Offices, 50 Tower Street, Huntington Station, at least seven days before the election if the ballot is to be mailed to the voter or up to the day before the election if the ballot is to be delivered personally to the voter. Absentee ballots must be returned by 5 p.m. on Tuesday, May 19 for them to be counted in the 2015 election and budget vote.

## Inspection of Budget:

The public may inspect a copy of the proposed budget on the district website ([www.hufsd.edu](http://www.hufsd.edu)), the District Clerk's office (District Office, 50 Tower Street) or at any school building on school days between 10 a.m. and 3 p.m.

Visit us on Facebook at <https://www.facebook.com/pages/Huntington-Union-Free-School-District/566089583408611>

## Important Capital Project Proposition on the Ballot

Protecting the substantial investments taxpayers have made over the years in our school facilities requires constant vigilance. In order to keep our buildings and grounds well maintained, safe and efficient, school trustees have placed an important capital project proposition on the ballot. **Passage of this proposition will not increase taxes.**

Since the funds for the proposed projects already exist in the capital reserve, the district will not have to borrow any money, incur interest or raise taxes. The district will also be eligible for state aid on a percentage of the expenditures associated with the projects.

The projects on the May 19 ballot include:

### Huntington High School

- Replace the auditorium heating and ventilation system and install air conditioning: \$300,000
- Replace the auditorium lighting system: \$175,000
- Replace classroom doors throughout the second floor of the building: \$50,000

**Building total: \$525,000**

### Jack Abrams STEM Magnet School

- Replace the building's original public address and clock systems, which date to 1968/69.
- Complete reconstruction of the rear parking field.

**Building total: \$506,000**

**District total: \$1,031,000**



# *Your Vote Counts on Tuesday, May 19*

**Vote at Huntington High School 6 a.m. – 9 p.m.**

## **Sample Ballot**

On Election Day voters will be asked to vote on Proposition No. 1 to fund school district operations from July 1, 2015– June 30, 2015:

**RESOLVED**, that the Board of Education of the Huntington Union Free School District, Town of Huntington, Suffolk County, New York be authorized to expend \$120,394,737, the amount set forth in the proposed budget and to accumulate the balance proposed in the said budget during the school year beginning July 1, 2015, and to levy the necessary tax therefore.

Residents will also be asked to vote on Proposition No. 2 to expend monies that already exist in the Building Improvement Fund for a variety of projects in district buildings. Passage of this proposition will not result in a tax increase:

**RESOLVED**, that the Board of Education be authorized, to expend from the Capital Reserve (Building Improvement) Fund, which was established on May 21, 2013, for the following capital improvement projects: (1) a public address, clock systems and rear parking lot renovations at Jack Abrams STEM Magnet School in the approximate amount of \$506,000; (2) heating, ventilation and air conditioning at Huntington High School in the approximate amount of \$300,000; (3) second-floor door replacements at Huntington High School in the approximate amount of \$50,000, and (4) auditorium light replacement at Huntington High School in the approximate amount of \$175,000, and other work required in connection therewith; and to expend from the Reserve Fund therefor, including preliminary costs and costs incidental thereto an amount not to exceed the estimated total cost of \$1,031,000, provided that the Board of Education may allocate funds amongst the various projects within the overall total expenditure at its discretion.

The complete line-by-line proposed budget is available for public inspection on the district website at [www.hufsd.edu](http://www.hufsd.edu), in each school building, at the central administrative offices located at 50 Tower Street in Huntington Station and at the Main Street and New York Avenue branches of the Huntington Public Library.

Call 673-2126 for more information or to request a copy of the budget.

This year's transportation budget reflects the costs associated with transporting 5,224 eligible students residing within in the Huntington School District, primarily to the eight district schools, but also to 29 parochial/private schools and 24 special needs schools on Long Island as required by law. The district currently contracts for 51 large buses and 77 vans to transport students. The 2015/16 budget maintains all current mileage limits for student transportation.

More information about the budget and capital reserve fund propositions can be found on the Huntington School District's website at [www.hufsd.edu](http://www.hufsd.edu).

# Huntington School District

## 2015/16 Proposed Budget

Description	Approved Budget 2014/15	Proposed Budget 2015/16	Amount Change
<b>General Support</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Board of Education</li> <li>• Central Administration</li> <li>• Buildings Operation and Maintenance</li> </ul>	\$10,528,368	10,943,956	\$415,588
<b>Instruction</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Supervision</li> <li>• Curriculum</li> <li>• Salaries</li> <li>• BOCES</li> </ul>	61,668,114	63,806,544	2,138,430
<b>Transportation</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Public, private and parochial school</li> </ul>	9,809,541	10,109,881	300,340
<b>Employee Benefits</b>	34,048,159	33,986,417	(61,742)
<b>Debt Service/ Inter-fund Transfers</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Interest/Bond Principal</li> <li>• Capital</li> <li>• Special Aid</li> </ul>	1,560,188	1,547,939	(12,249)
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>\$117,614,370</b>	<b>\$120,394,737</b>	<b>\$2,780,367</b>
<b>Budget % Increase</b>		2.36%	

Visit the Huntington School District's website at [www.hufsd.edu](http://www.hufsd.edu) for the latest news and information about our schools and students.



## Budgeted Revenues

Description	2014/15	2015/16	Amount Change
State Aid	\$12,561,982	\$14,061,588	\$1,499,606
Miscellaneous Revenue	1,789,374	1,338,584	(450,790)
Appropriated Fund Balance	2,049,074	1,584,014	(465,060)
Reserves	800,000	1,175,000	375,000
Property Taxes (Levy)	100,413,940	102,235,551	1,821,611 (1.81% increase = below cap)
Total	\$117,614,370	\$120,394,737	\$2,780,367

## Estimated Tax Rate to Fund the Budget

Description	2014/15	2015/16
Estimated tax rate per \$100 of assessed valuation for school district	\$223.78 (actual)	\$228.86
Estimated percentage of increase (for school district taxes only)		2.27 %
Projected increase per household based on average home assessment for school district		\$184.00 Before the STAR program
Total Assessed Value (Tentative for 2015/16)	\$44,871,097	\$44,671,097

Since New York State imposed the Gap Elimination Adjustment to help address a multi-year fiscal crisis, the Huntington School District has sustained a loss of more than \$11 million in aid over the past six years. The loss of these monies coupled with rising expenses and a declining property tax base has required the district to tighten even further its financial operations and search for additional efficiencies.

The new state budget restored \$868,000 in GEA cuts for the 2015/16 school year. However the district will still be shortchanged nearly \$960,000 in state aid that it would otherwise be receiving if not for the GEA. The loss of millions in state aid over the past six years has put upward pressure on tax rates.

# School Budget Supports Student Learning and Achievement ...

- The proposed school budget continues Huntington's 358 year commitment to providing a top notch education for the young people of our community by maintaining our exceptionally strong academic program for approximately 4,500 students in grades K-12.
- Maintains the district's full day kindergarten program.
- Provides for an extensive line-up of Regents, Honors and Advanced Placement courses in every academic area.
- Allocates \$372,661 for new textbooks, \$171,633 for new workbooks, \$47,514 for new library books, \$191,000 for new computer software and \$319,342 for new instructional equipment, including computers and tablet devices.
- Funds 65 athletic teams for high school and middle school students, 99 coaching positions and a full-time athletic trainer.
- Provides a complete program of adult-supervised after-school extracurricular activities, including dozens of clubs for students.
- Funds comprehensive art, music and physical education opportunities, including band, orchestra, chorus, marching band, music ensembles and specialized art courses.
- Funds student drama club productions, newspapers, concerts, science fairs and the district art show.
- Includes a comprehensive special education program for students with disabilities and support services for all students.
- Funds the purchase of 330 Google Nexus 7 tablets, 34 computers, 28 printers, 23 SMART Boards, six laptop carts, 34 projectors and 25 other tablet devices.
- Continues the SEARCH and Math Olympiad programs for academically talented fifth and sixth graders.
- Continues the district's commitment to the high school science research program and robotics programs at several levels.
- Adds elective programs in Engineering Design and Allied Health Sciences at Huntington High School.
- Furthers STEM initiatives throughout the district, including Finley Middle School.



The Huntington School District mirrors our nation's population, with students and teachers of every race, creed and ethnic background. It is in this atmosphere that our young people are challenged academically, artistically, musically and athletically and where they grow socially and culturally. Lasting friendships are frequently forged. New experiences are enjoyed and personal horizons are expanded. Our schools are a model of brotherhood and understanding. Our diversity makes us stronger.



# Huntington School Board Candidates

**Christine Biernacki**



Christine Biernacki is a longtime Huntington School District volunteer and serves as the PTA Council's president.

A partner in a New York City law firm, Mrs. Biernacki holds a Bachelor of Arts in Economics from the University of Connecticut and a Juris Doctor from Hofstra University's School of Law.

Mrs. Biernacki and her husband, David, a 1983 graduate of Huntington High School, live in Halesite with their two children; a daughter in sixth grade at Woodhull School and a son in fourth grade at Southdown School.

A past president of the Huntington Sanctuary Project's advisory board, Mrs. Biernacki and her husband offered their house as a host home for Sanctuary, opening their doors to runaway youth so that the families could participate in mediation to resolve their issues and bring the youngster home.

Mrs. Biernacki served as president of the Town of Huntington's Youth Bureau Board and was recognized for her work with runaway and homeless youth by the Assn. of NYS Youth Bureaus and the Empire State Coalition of Youth and Family Services.

A longtime attendee of school board meetings, forums and conferences, Mrs. Biernacki has become well versed in many education issues. She has advocated for reforms in school aid, teacher evaluation and special education, among other areas. She comes from a family filled with educators and hopes to work in a manner that will honor that tradition.

**Thomas DiGiacomo**



Tom DiGiacomo is completing his first term on the Huntington School Board. His family has been involved in the district for three generations.

A 1979 Huntington High School graduate, Mr. DiGiacomo holds an associate's degree in business from SUNY Farmingdale. He has a professional background in the technology field, providing solutions for businesses ranging in size from small to Fortune 50.

Mr. DiGiacomo's experience includes project and budget management, finance and implementing technology solutions. As the Northeast regional director of sales for a global technology firm, he was responsible for six regional offices and management of a \$100 million budget. He is currently the director of technology sales for a Long Island based firm that provides the federal government with products and solutions.

A member of the district's audit and policy committees, Mr. DiGiacomo and his wife, Nancy are the parents of a son, Casey, who is in the ninth grade at Huntington High School.

Mr. DiGiacomo's father, Al, was a member of Huntington High School's Class of 1941. Al DiGiacomo was the architect who designed the replacement for Roosevelt School on Lowndes Avenue. The building is currently named Jack Abrams STEM Magnet School.



# Huntington School Board Candidates

Xavier Palacios



Xavier Palacios is completing his first term on the Huntington School Board. A member of Huntington High School's Class of 1988, he earned a Bachelor of Arts degree at Columbia University and a Juris Doctor at Boston University's School of Law. He is the owner and managing partner of a Mineola-based law firm.

Mr. Palacios and his wife, Laura have three children, including a daughter who is a junior at Huntington High School, a daughter in first grade at Flower Hill Primary School and a daughter not yet of school age.

In 2008, Mr. Palacios purchased and renovated a distressed property in Huntington Station where he established a satellite law office along with a community revitalization non-profit organization.

Mentoring has been a priority throughout Mr. Palacios' life. At Columbia, he taught SAT prep and biology courses to inner city students. He has continued mentoring young people and families in the community and encourages parents to be actively involved in their child's education. He has been recognized for his work in the community and his efforts to strengthen opportunities for young people.

Mr. Palacios volunteered as a legal advisor to Huntington High School's mock trial team this past winter and spring.

Emily Rogan



Emily Rogan is completing her third term on the Huntington School Board. Her fellow trustees chose Mrs. Rogan to serve as president of the Board of Education during each of the past four school years.

An award winning journalist, Mrs. Rogan grew up in the community and graduated from Huntington High School in 1983. She went on to earn a Bachelor of Arts at Cornell University and a Master of Arts at New York University.

Eighteen years ago Mrs. Rogan returned to Huntington from New York City with her husband Bob, a member of Huntington's Class of 1979. Together they have a son Henry, a freshman at Kenyon College in Ohio and a daughter Julia, a freshman at Huntington High School.

Mrs. Rogan has an especially fierce passion for the district and a particular interest in the health and wellness of all students. She enjoys visiting schools across the district and attending academic and co-curricular events, where she regularly speaks with students, teachers and parents.

Professionally, Mrs. Rogan is a freelance writer, frequently authoring articles for newspapers and magazines about subjects affecting children and families. In her free time she enjoys running, yoga and playing golf and is also an avid reader, known to keep a pile of books nearby.



# Huntington: Providing Quality Education Since 1657

## Huntington High School Ranked in the Top 3% Nationally

A new set of rankings compiled by *The Washington Post* newspaper puts Huntington High School in the top three percent of all public high schools in the United States and among the best in the state.

Led by Principal Dr. Carmela Leonardi and Assistant Principal Brenden Cusack, Huntington is ranked No. 60 in New York out of about 2,160 high schools and No. 735 in the country out of more than 22,000 high schools. Huntington's Challenge Index was 2.796 placing the school in the top tier in the country.

"While the Index is but one measure of a school's success, it clearly reaffirms the ongoing increase in the number of Huntington High School students who challenge themselves with rigorous college level, Advanced Placement coursework and who thrive in such a learning environment," Huntington Superintendent James W. Polansky said. "Huntington High School's Index has increased significantly over the past several years. This is a testament to the motivation and hard work demonstrated by our students and also demonstrated by their teachers and administrators."

Huntington placed No. 7 in the ranking among all Suffolk high schools.

## The Arts in Huntington

Huntington's music and art programs are well known throughout New York State for the high achievement of our student musicians and artists and the exceptional course offerings in both subject areas.

From kindergarten through high school, Huntington students are able to develop music reading and performing talents as well as drawing, painting and ceramic skills while working with outstanding teachers in a creative and fun environment.

By the time students reach high school, they have had many opportunities to explore their interests and talents in the arts. The secondary program provides them with ways to demonstrate skills at a professional level in our award-winning performing groups and state of the art video, graphic and fashion design, photography and fine arts classes.

Huntington students are always well represented at competitive music festivals and art exhibits.

The theater arts program presents dramatic and musical productions annually.

Huntington's arts programs provide many ways for students to discover their creative talents, while building skills in self-esteem, discipline and effective communication.

The proposed budget also provides transportation, textbooks and related services as required by New York State law to approximately 1,000 Huntington School District residents who are students attending private and parochial schools in Nassau and Suffolk Counties.

# School Budget/Tax Cap Questions and Answers

## How does the New York State property tax cap work?

New York's new property tax cap law establishes a tax levy limit for each school district. The limit allows an increase from one year to the next of two percent or the rate of inflation, whichever is less, based on a multi-step formula. School districts are then allowed to take certain exemptions that result in a limit (cap) of more than two percent or the inflation rate. If a school district's proposed tax levy increase is at or below its limit, a simple voter is needed for budget approval. If a district's proposed tax levy increase exceeds the levy limit, a supermajority of voters – 60 percent or more – would be required for budget passage. Note that HUFSD's proposed 2015/16 budget does not exceed the established limit.

## What was the Huntington UFSD permitted to exempt from its tax levy limit?

There are a limited number of specific exemptions to the tax cap that school districts may take. For 2015-16, there were no exemptions for which HUFSD qualified.

## Does the tax levy indicate how much my taxes will rise?

**No.** The tax levy is the amount of money the school district can raise through property taxes. The amount an individual will pay to contribute to the levied amount is the *tax rate*. Tax rates paid by individual taxpayers may differ greatly from one household to another, based on assessed property values and equalization rates, and may exceed two percent.

## Why did I recently receive a tax credit and will I receive one next year?

The Property Tax Freeze Credit is a two-year tax relief program that reimburses qualifying New York State homeowners for increases in local property taxes on their primary residences. District taxpayers received the credit in 2014/15 because the school district developed a budget that included a tax levy at or below the established "cap." Next year, district taxpayers should receive a similar rebate because the budgeted tax levy is well below the cap and the district will develop the required Government Efficiency Plan—an added mandate for 2015/16.

## How was the proposed budget developed?

School administrators and teachers, after extensive planning and study, submitted budget requests in the fall. These requests were extensively reviewed and reduced wherever possible and a draft budget was developed and submitted to the school board. The administration and trustees examined the budget line-by-line, debating priorities, discussing goals and finalizing the proposed budget.

## What will happen if voters reject the proposed tax levy and the school budget does not pass?

If district voters reject the proposed budget on May 19, the school board may put up the same or a revised budget for a second vote, or adopt a contingency budget with a tax levy no greater than that levied the previous year – essentially a zero percent cap. If voters reject the spending plan twice, schools must adopt the contingency budget with that same zero percent cap. Should the district operate under a contingency budget, certain items, including the purchase of equipment, cannot be included. For 2015/16, the difference between the proposed budget and a contingency budget amounts to \$1,821,611.

## Has the district done anything to trim spending and costs to hold down taxes?

During the budget process, the administration and school board examined every single program and position. Efforts have been made to reduce costs, especially those not affecting classroom instruction. Budget managers are under strict instructions to look for savings wherever they can be found and to keep costs down. Budget requests were reduced and all areas of spending were subject to economizing.

## How does this budget improve the district's classroom education?

This budget maintains the district's full-day kindergarten program, maintains class sizes at or below established guidelines at all levels and funds a wide range of course offerings and co-curricular activities at the secondary level. Every school will be provided with the supplies and materials that our academic program demands. This budget also contains funds to purchase 330 Google Nexus 7 tablets, 34 computers, 28 printers, 23 SMART Boards, six laptop carts, 34 projectors and 25 other tablet devices.

## Does this budget reduce the district's debt?

The Huntington School District has one of the lowest debts levels on Long Island and in the state. There are monies included in the proposed budget to reduce the district's long term debt to just \$2,314,901 in principal and interest by July 1, 2016. The debt will continue declining until it is eliminated within 10 years.

A campaign to save energy continues to provide results. Since February 2001, the district avoided \$4,269,716 in energy costs through ongoing conservation efforts. The drive has not impacted classroom instruction. At Huntington High School alone, \$2,004,286 in costs have been averted.



# Focus on Huntington's Top Students

Caitlin Knowles



Huntington's Class of 2015 valedictorian Caitlin Knowles will attend the University of Virginia. The teenager has been accepted into the Echols Scholars and College Science Scholars programs.

"The Echols Scholars program is predicated upon the Jeffersonian ideal of freedom of inquiry and the development of critical thought," the University of Virginia website states. "It offers special opportunities to those undergraduates in the College of Arts & Sciences who are its most avid learners."

As a College Science Scholar, Ms. Knowles will have direct access to the university's best laboratory research facilities and faculty. She will have a senior faculty member as her advisor/mentor and will be given an opportunity to join a research lab or group during her first college semester.

Ms. Knowles plans to pursue a double major in environmental science and economics. She has participated in summer internships at the National Institute of Environmental Health Sciences and the Silent Spring Institute, studying environmental causes of breast cancer. She worked with the Huntington Breast Cancer Action Coalition to share her findings with high school students to encourage toxin-free lifestyles.

President of Huntington's National Science Honor Society chapter and a member of six other honor societies, Ms. Knowles is a National Merit Scholarship finalist. She even won the high school's spelling bee.

A starting player on the Blue Devil varsity soccer, basketball and lacrosse teams, Ms. Knowles captained the soccer and basketball squads. The teenager has also been an officer in the student government, served on the Relay For Life's planning committee and volunteered with Huntington's Habitat for Humanity chapter.

The academic and athletic star has also found the time to shine as a musician. Ms. Knowles is the first chair trombone in the pep and concert bands.

Joseph Saginaw



Huntington's Class of 2015 salutatorian Joseph Saginaw has narrowed his college choices to the University of California, Berkeley or the University of Michigan. He plans to study mechanical engineering.

Mr. Saginaw was elected president of his class three times and is currently president of the high school's student government. The founder of Huntington's robotics team, the teenager led the group as a junior and senior. The team advanced to the national championships last year and won General Motors' Industrial Design Award earlier this spring.

The teenager has played a key role in many school initiatives, even helping to build winning Homecoming Day parade floats. Mr. Saginaw was crowned Homecoming Day king last fall.

A four-year member of the Blue Devil spring track and field team, Mr. Saginaw specializes in pole vault. He played on the varsity soccer team for two seasons before deciding to work at Huntington Village based RMS Engineering as a senior.

A National Merit Scholarship finalist, Mr. Saginaw has blazed a trail of academic excellence over the past four years. A member of seven different academic honor societies, the teenager has been *The Dispatch* student newspaper's technology editor for the past three years.

Mr. Saginaw has competed on Huntington's Quiz Bowl team since tenth grade. He's been a Natural Helper throughout high school, helping classmates work through difficult personal issues. The senior has served on the Huntington Public Library's Teen Advisory Board for the past five years and has captained a Relay For Life team since the sprawling fundraiser debuted at the high school in June 2012.

The owner of a long list of academic honors, Mr. Saginaw is a National AP Scholar with Distinction. He has earned the National Hugh O'Brian Youth Leadership Award and been a finalist in the NASA REEL Science communication competition.

Huntington Union Free School District  
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Business*

School Budget Vote and Trustee Election  
Tuesday, May 19, 2015  
6:00 a.m. – 9:00 p.m.  
at Huntington High School

**\*\*ECRWSS\*\***  
**To: POSTAL CUSTOMER**

# Huntington Union Free School District



**Our Mission:** Recognizing the strengths of our district's traditions, its history of community support, the diversity of our population and our commitment to educational excellence, the mission of the Huntington Union Free School District is to educate students by effectively teaching an enriched body of knowledge through the active participation of all students, building upon their unique talents and abilities to produce creative, self-assured, responsible citizens who are capable of critical thought and action.