

Saddle River Board of Education

Saddle River, NJ 07458

June 19, 2017

Dear Wandell Parents,

As the end of the school year is fast approaching we want to review our progress on the key issues that the Board of Education identified during the January 17th BOE meeting:

- Renew Northern Highlands Regional High School Send/Receive Contract,
- Improve Financial Condition,
- Consistency of Results, and
- Declining Enrollment

Northern Highlands Send Receive Contract

The Saddle River School District is fortunate to have send/receive contracts with two excellent high schools: Northern Highlands and Ramsey. At the May 16th meeting, the Board of Education passed a new 10 year send/receive contract with Northern Highlands, which commences on the 2018/2019 school year. In the new contract: the annual tuition increase has been reduced from 3% to 2%, which is in line with the state mandated 2% cap on school district's tax levy increase; there is a ceiling on debt service (principal and interest) Northern Highlands could incur that Saddle River would be responsible for; and there is a more extensive program for incoming Saddle River students.

Special thanks are in order for both Mr. Delisio and Dr. Beckman as both superintendents worked effectively in directly negotiating the contract, thus saving both districts tens of thousands of dollars on external advisory fees that are better used for our students.

Improve Financial Condition

Despite lower projected revenue than the previous year and significantly higher tuition and special education costs, the Board of Education passed a balanced budget for next year while staying within the state mandated 2% maximum increase in the district's tax levy at the May 16th meeting. The budget was balanced due to the significant contributions from the teachers, aides, and administrative and custodial staffs, rationalization of resources, elimination of unnecessary expenses, increased efficiencies and retirements.

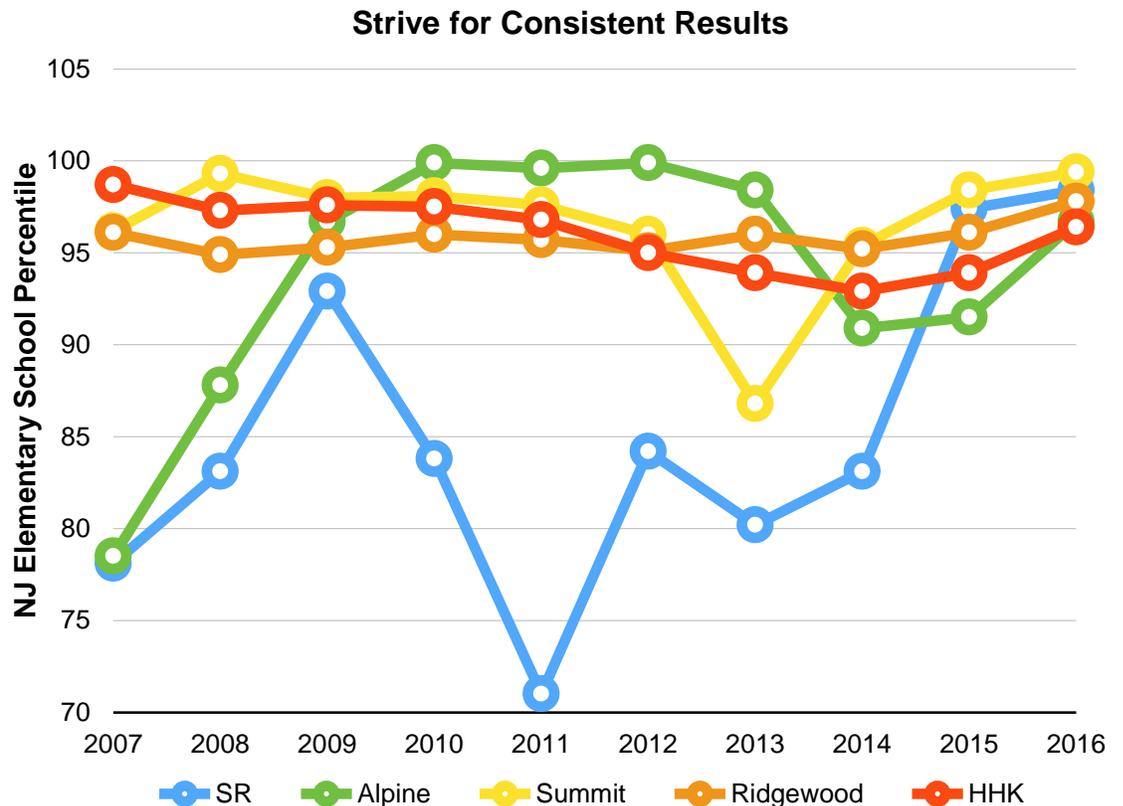
Revenues are projected to be lower due to declines in grants, entitlements and aid, less budgeted fund balance and excluding funds from school connected organizations in the district's budget.

We expect to see improvement in our financial condition next year through a combination of increases in ancillary revenue and identified cost savings. The improvement in our financial condition in the coming years will be directed towards: new educational initiatives, professional development and improvement of our facilities.

Consistency of Results

For the second consecutive year Wandell has performed above the 90th percentile on an academic basis. More specifically, Wandell ranked in the 97th percentile for 2014/2015 and 98th percentile for 2015/2016, which means only two to three percent of New Jersey elementary schools performed better than our school in Math and English Language Arts the last two academic years.

Source: New Jersey Department of Education and schoolidigger.com

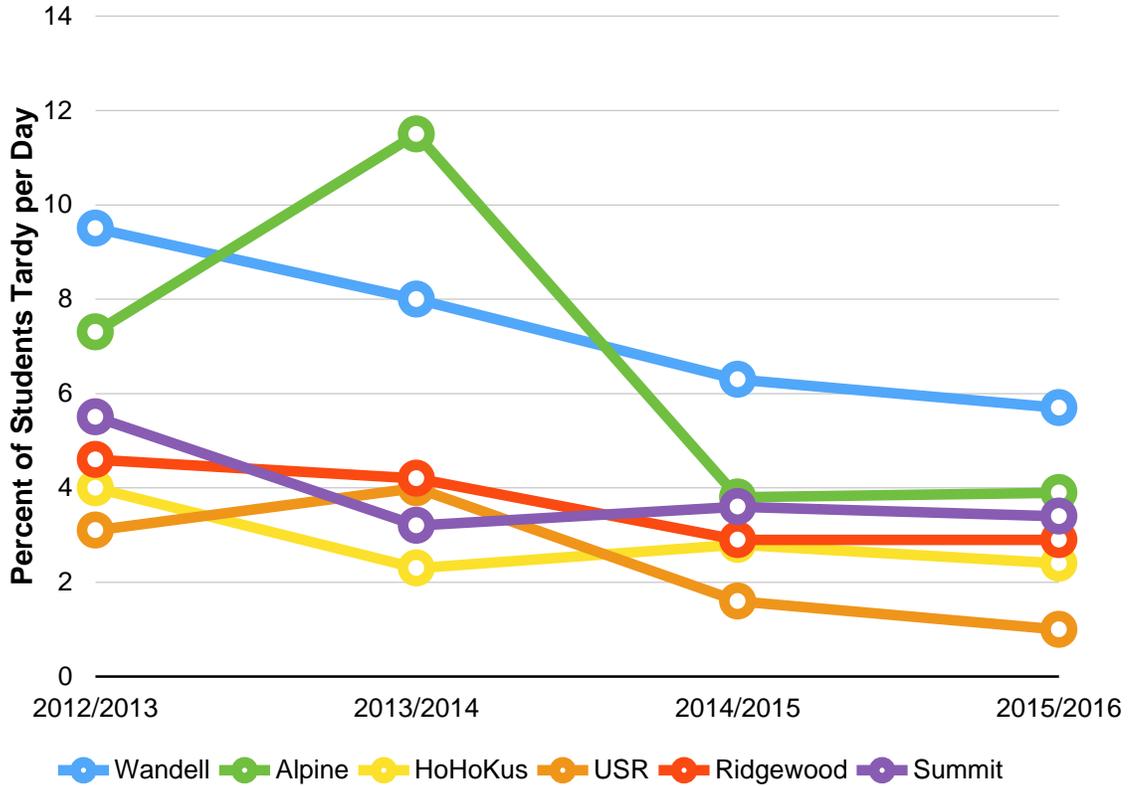


Wandell's strong results are attributable first and foremost to the dedication and hard work of our teachers, teacher aides and students with the strong support of their respective parents; an improving curriculum; and significant reductions in tardiness and chronic absenteeism.

In the 2017/2018 school year, we will be utilizing a new English Language Arts program which will result in the updating of our curriculum. In the coming years, we will be reviewing both our Math and Science programs. We will also be significantly expanding upon our STEM curriculum, which we initiated this year.

Our longer term goal is to maintain our performance in the 90th percentile and above. With a smaller student population there are some extraordinary factors which can cause some volatility, but over an extended time frame we hope to consistently meet our goal.

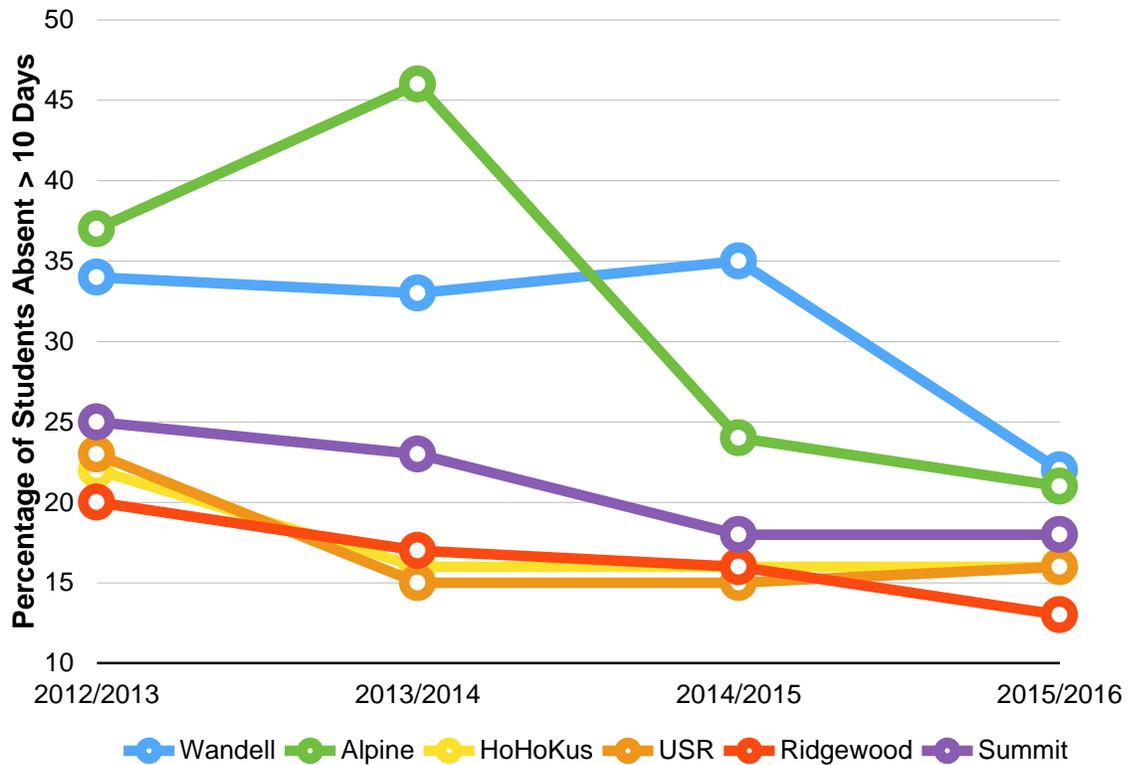
Student Tardiness



Source: New Jersey Department of Education for Both Charts

While still on the high side of tardiness and chronic absenteeism, we have improved over the past few years, which intuitively has a direct correlation to the improvement of our academic

Chronic Absenteeism



performance. The days where students come 1 to 2 hours late have been put in the past.

Declining Enrollment

Over the past five years, Wandell's enrollment has declined 35% from 232 students in 2011 to 150 today. During this same period, public school enrollment in both the state of New Jersey and Bergen County has remained relatively stable. In fact, most school districts within Bergen County, save a minority including Upper Saddle River and Franklin Lakes, are generally up or down 5% in elementary school enrollment during that time frame. All data in this section comes directly from the New Jersey Department of Education or the US Census Bureau.

While demographics may have some impact on our declining enrollment, as Saddle River has one of the more mature populations in the county, it is only one contributing factor as Saddle River's population growth exceeds that of both New Jersey and Bergen County. Furthermore, an increasing number of students have matriculated to religious and private schools.

Several initiatives have been undertaken this year to address the declining enrollment. First, faculty, administration and Wandell parents have helped revise and/or pro-actively market our Pre-school and Kindergarten programs. Based on current data, our Pre-school program will more than double in size next year and next year's Kindergarten class already exceeds our current one in size with summer enrollments still to come.

Second, we have begun to introduce new and exciting educational initiatives. We will be significantly expanding our STEM curriculum in our new state of the art STEM Lab and we will begin the introduction of Latin to our younger grades.

Third, we are working to develop a greater sense of community at Wandell.

Finally, we need to work with our local government and real estate brokers in touting to current and prospective residents the accomplishments of Wandell and its students:

- Ranked in the top 3% of NJ elementary schools in academic performance the last two years,
- Five current or former Wandell students in the last three years have received High Honors from Johns Hopkins Global CTY Talent Search which tests both Math and English,
- Several of our Wandell alumni have recently received full athletic scholarships to Division I programs,
- Several of our Wandell alumni, who are still progressing through the educational system, are putting their performance art skills on display on both a regional and national basis.

We are proud of all our students and their respective accomplishments. What the above shows is that Wandell provides a strong overall education that forms the basis for success in the years to come in academics, athletics and the performing arts.

We wish you all a wonderful summer.

Saddle River Board of Education