

# • Budget Message •

## A Commitment to Excellence

The Hamburg Central School District remains committed to providing every student with an outstanding learning experience every day through excellence in teaching and leadership. The 2016-2017 budget that we are proposing allows us to make good on that commitment while also reducing the tax levy by 4.46% and actually not spending a single dollar more than we are spending this year. This year's budget allocation is \$66,006,811 and next year's proposed budget allocation is also \$66,006,811, resulting in the first reduction in the tax levy (4.46%) in more than 30 years.

Just as importantly, we are not cutting programs or staff, are hiring for most, or all, of the staff positions opened due to retirement, and are adding a small number of positions to bolster existing programs in alignment with our Strategic Action Plan (adopted 2015). Our conservative and prudent budgeting and fiscal management practices are reflected in the fact that we are ranked #2 out of 431 upstate NY school districts in administrative efficiency and #8 in all of upstate in being cost effective. This, combined with the efforts of state representatives to restore some measure of appropriate state funding, has helped contribute to our current financial stabilization. It is worth noting, however, that we still have not recovered any of the \$52 million taken by New York State from the Hamburg Schools since 2008 in the form of the Gap Elimination Adjustment and reduced NYS Foundation Aid payments.

While we have continued to stabilize financially, we have thoughtfully designed and implemented instructional programs to help all students achieve academically, and grow and develop as people. One way to measure our success is by using data that reflects the efforts of our entire school community. Hamburg High School was named by the New York State Education Department as a "Reward School" for the 2nd consecutive year. This rating is based on our 94% graduation rate and our outstanding Regents exam results. Our district is ranked #11 out of 96 WNY school districts and #37 out of 431 upstate school districts for academic excellence, in recognition of excellent student results on NYS Assessments in grades 3 - 8, as well as Regents scores and graduation rate.

Because our focus is on educating the whole person, we can also measure excellence in our schools in ways that are related to how our students are growing and developing as people. For example, our elementary school children have raised and donated thousands of dollars through charitable efforts this year and are participating in the "Walk Across America" program with their parents to promote overall family wellness. Our Middle School hosted the district's Family Reading Night featuring acclaimed author and former NFL football player, Tim Green. His message was that reading not only helps make young peo-

ple smarter for all of the reasons we know to be true, but reading also helps to make us kinder people because the act of reading causes us to be more empathetic as we necessarily experience the story from someone else's perspective.

Our commitment to excellence in learning for all students begins with our commitment to the growth and development of our youngest learners through our Pre-K program. One of the first in all of New York State at its inception in 1966, our Pre-K program is in its 50th year of serving the young people and families of this community. Congratulations and thank you to everyone who has ever played a role in this groundbreaking program.

In our continued pursuit of excellence, we have analyzed our five-year Building Conditions Survey and our District Strategic Plan, and we have proposed a \$9.875 million capital improvement project that will also appear on the ballot on May 17th. The primary goals of the project are to replace the roof at Charlotte Avenue School, to completely renovate the Library Media Centers at the Middle School and High School, and to make much needed structural repairs to areas in, and around, schools which present safety issues if not immediately addressed. Since 74.9% of this project will be reimbursed by New York State, and with a \$1.18 million reduction in our yearly debt service payments starting on July 1, 2016 due to a fully repaid loan on a previous capital project, the approximately \$145,000 yearly payment will have a very minor impact on tax bills when we actually start paying on the project upon its completion.

The Hamburg Central School District has a rich history of success and accomplishment, with excellence in learning outcomes for our young people being coupled with outstanding value for our taxpayers. Our current financial position allows us to propose a 2016-2017 budget that spends not a single dollar more than we did in 2015-2016 and a capital improvement project that reflects our priorities for today and tomorrow. Thank you for your continued partnership in helping the young people of Hamburg develop the skills they need to be the creative and critical thinkers, the effective communicators and the productive collaborators that the world requires.

*Michael Cornell*

Superintendent of Schools

*Tom Flynn*

President, Board of Education

*Cam Hall*

Vice President, Board of Education