

Greetings From Our Superintendent of Schools

Dear Maple Run Community,

I am so proud to serve the Maple Run Board, especially this year, which has been a challenge to produce a budget for the school district due to the changes in the statewide funding formula. The board could have added \$5.7 million in one-time expenditures to the budget without impacting the local tax rate due to an oversight in the state funding formula. However, the board and district took the high road and did not increase the budget. Again, doing so wouldn't have increased the local tax rate. However, the board felt they needed to follow the law's intention of equity across the state and wanted to avoid contributing to a significant property tax dilemma across Vermont as much as possible. Please see below for more details on the Maple Run proposed budget for 2024-2025.

It has been a great school year for Maple Run Unified School District. I have seen many indicators of students excited to learn and proud of their work. Just this week, I was at the Maple Run Art Show hosted by Collins Perley and was excited to see such a large gathering of our community. My heart was tickled when I saw one of the young students run over to his parents and say, "Mom, come here! I found it!" He continued to pull her hand to lead her to his work of art. Scenes like these remind me why I work in education, and to see a child so proud of their work is excellent. I wish all our students in the school district this joy of learning.

Last year, the school district committed to working with the community to know what they want for our system. We held over 15 listening sessions. In those sessions, we engaged more than 60 community members and 120 students. These individuals worked with a board sub-committee to recommend a set of district goals. In September 2023, the board adopted the following five goals:

Rigorous Academics and Expectations

All students feel challenged and supported to excel in traditional and nontraditional learning opportunities based on their individual needs and strengths.

Consistent Policies to Address Bias and Behavior Issues

Maple Run procedures on harassment and discipline are consistently applied, while ensuring support and respecting victims, and all involved.

Support Services for Students and Families

All students at each school have access to individualized learning opportunities and flexible pathways.

Opportunities for Family and Community Engagement

All community members will have the opportunity to engage safely with the school and district through two-way communication and feel welcome in our system.

Community Education and Action on Inclusion

All students have meaningful, equitable, structured, and consistent education that embeds skill-building regarding diversity, inclusion, and equity.

Once the school board adopted these goals, they asked the administration to work with the community to develop a five-year strategy plan to realize them.

This fall, we established a Strategic Plan Design Committee of community members, staff, and students charged with developing the plan with the community. The committee has hosted several input sessions with students, staff, and community members to gather ideas for making the plan come to life. In March of 2024, the committee will release a draft to the public to review before it is presented to the board for adoption.



Maple Run is in the final year of our Envisioning Plan. We focus on ensuring every student's social-emotional well-being, engaging students, and providing rigorous academics. The district's staff continue their professional development plans to increase their skills in each area. Throughout the school year, every teacher expands their knowledge of Universal Design for Learning to enhance their ability to reach every child in their classroom. In addition, the pre-kindergarten through eighth-grade teachers received training to support implementing our new literacy program for all students. Educational research is clear. When our professionals enhance their skills, student learning will increase.


We look at our student data to understand if our actions impact the students. Our data in engagement, academic, and social-emotional indicators show growth. Our student district attendance rate has improved 18% from last year, and our behavior, literacy, and math data are also improving. The other area that is encouraging is our students' social-emotional data. We asked students from grades 3 through 12 to assess their perception of their self-management and awareness skills, as well as their perceptions of the supportive relationships they have. The good news is that Maple Run student's perception of all three categories are doing better than the national norms. Eighty-four percent of our students have a trusting adult in the school system they can turn to for support. Seventy-six percent of the students self-report that they have self-management skills. Self-awareness skills, specifically emotional regulation and challenging feelings, are challenging for our students. Approximately 55% of the students are experiencing success in both areas, which still puts well above the national data. Our staff will continue to work to increase student growth in both these areas while supporting the whole child.

For the proposed budget for fiscal year 2025, the board approved a budget that keeps the overall staffing consistent with this current year and meets the needs of our students. It is still a challenge to meet the needs of all of our students and families. Our students and families are still recovering from the combined impact of the pandemic and the closing of schools in 2020, and we still see a need for increased support to help all students reach success.

The Maple Run School Board has created a budget to meet every student's needs while balancing the community's ability to pay. They have recognized that student needs have significantly increased and that the school district must provide more resources to meet the same social and academic goals as before the pandemic. The board set an expenditure budget of 9.8% due to increased salaries, health care, transportation, property, and contracted services. This budget caused an increase in the educational tax rate in Maple Run by almost seven cents, to \$1.43. This educational tax rate is the same as in fiscal years 2019 and 2022. While the educational tax rate is well within our historical averages, the property values in all three municipalities continue to grow rapidly. This change is lowering the common level of appraisal (CLA) in each town, which is the biggest driver in the shift in overall tax rates. In each town, the CLA is causing more than 70% of the increase in tax bills. The tax rate in St. Albans Town is estimated to be 24 cents higher, 25 cents higher in Fairfield, and 32 cents higher in St. Albans City. Due to the new state school funding law, just to cut the tax rate by a penny, the board would have to reduce spending by approximately \$3.26 million, equivalent to reducing 31 teaching positions. If the board were to keep tax rates the same as this year, we would need to reduce the expenditure budget by \$13.6 million, equaling the loss of 130 teaching positions. Throughout February, the board will provide opportunities to review and discuss the Maple Run budget. I urge you to watch our local paper's articles, social media, and website.

I am excited to serve the Maple Run Unified School District as your superintendent. From my first day here four years ago to today, I continue to see a community that fully supports its students and educators to be their best. My core values of the family first, setting high standards, supporting all kids in reaching those standards, and celebrating successes align with what I hear from our community.

Thank you for the opportunity to serve the Maple Run community.


Bill Kimball
Superintendent of Schools