



RPS News

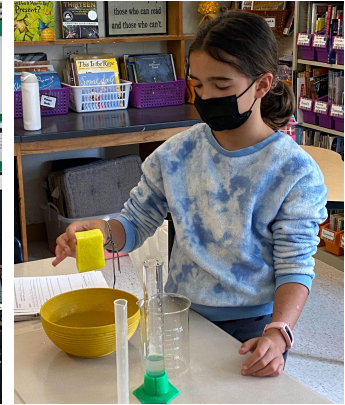
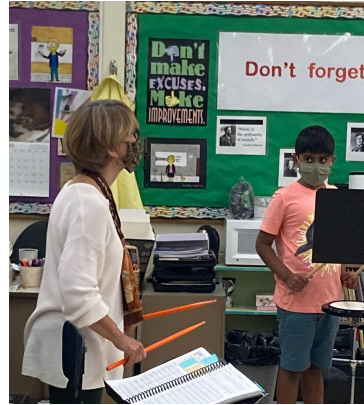
Ridgefield Public Schools Newsletter | Ridgefield, CT | February 4, 2022

FY 2022-23 Superintendent's Proposed Budget at a Glance

"I am forever thankful to each and every staff member at my children's schools literally every day—Also to Susie, Aaron, and the Board of Ed. They've had difficult decisions to make and have done so with expertise and empathy."

—RPS Parent, Shannon Capocci

At first glance, school budget discussions might seem dry but beyond the numbers, a budget is about people and priorities. A budget reflects the District's responsibilities to its families, staff, and taxpayers. It reflects its [vision of the graduate](#). For the past several months, Ridgefield Public School leaders have worked collaboratively with building staff and independently to write the [Superintendent's Proposed 2022-23 Budget](#). In the past several weeks, RPS administrators have presented that budget to the Board of Education members and the public, who have had the opportunity to ask questions about specific cost centers and voice concerns. All of these presentations are available [here](#). The dates for the next steps are at the bottom of this page and will be updated with changes on the [District calendar](#). Superintendent Dr. Susie Da Silva and her leadership team joined Dr. Wes DeSantis's [Ridgefield Tiger Talk](#) podcast last Friday for a more informal conversation about the budget process, hard decisions, and priorities (episode 54). These communications aim for transparency and engagement for all the stakeholders. More information about the budget can be found on the next page and by viewing the [RPS Website](#)..



Calendar

February 5 at 10 am*
BOE Public Hearing
In Person at East Ridge

February 14*
BOE Meeting/Budget Vote
[Link to Live/Recorded](#)

March 2*
BOS Budget Meeting 7 PM

March 28*
BOF Budget Hearing

May 2
Annual Town Meeting

May 10
Town Budget Referendum

*Please check the [Website](#) for weather-related changes

Putting Students First Means Investing in Educators

People matter. Like all school districts, the RPS budget is primarily about people because about 80% of the budget reflects salaries and benefits. The budget reflects BOE goals to be an employer of choice and to continue to both attract and retain exemplary educators. Building leaders are central to supporting families and teachers through the implementation of equitable curricula across all the schools, professional development, and school climate. Social and emotional education and support of the whole child are both central to this budget.



Special Education Is the Law

Special Education is the largest increased cost center in the 2022-2023 budget. Dr. Hannaway explains, “Rising special education costs is a statewide trend. More RPS students qualify for services; these services are increasingly expensive; reimbursement from the State of Connecticut is declining. RPS is required to provide these services by law *and* by our mission and vision of every RPS graduate.” To see Dr. Hannaway’s presentation on the specifics of how her budget is built, please watch [this BOE meeting video](#) starting at the 16-minute mark.

Value to the Community

“My clients are drawn here for our beautiful, culturally rich town and excellent schools. They love that we have small elementary schools and that such a strong community is built from there.”

—Real Estate Agent, Mary Phelps

The strength of the RPS district beckons new families and preserves real estate values. Maintaining class size at the elementary schools is a central priority to this budget. Improvements in the phonics programs and math resources across the elementary schools will strengthen the elementary program. Reduction in pay-to-participate for RHS athletes will ensure that all students can participate in sports regardless of their families’ finances.



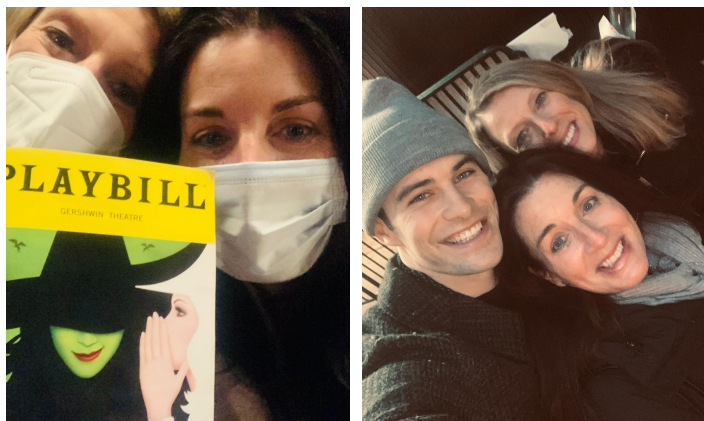
Harnessing Technology and Maintaining Schools

As most homeowners can attest, investments in technology and building improvements over time are much more cost-effective and affordable than deferring purchases with no plan for obsolescence. The Technology Budget introduces a five-year plan to save money while also ensuring that RPS students are equipped with age-appropriate resources.



See Page 3 of *RPS News* for Inspiring Young Alumni and College Lists

Gravitte on Broadway



East Ridge Middle School teachers Marla Kay and Jennifer Roth went to Broadway last month to see ERMS and RHS graduate, Sam Gravitte, in the hit musical *Wicked*. Gravitte, who was a stand-out student, athlete, and actor at RHS, plays the male lead Fiyero.

Smith Medals in Tokyo



Kieran Smith, Ridgefield High School Class of 2018, won a bronze medal in the Tokyo Olympic Games. The decorated swimmer returned to Ridgebury Elementary (photo right) and Ridgefield High School in November to talk to RPS students and staff. In addition to being a state champion swimmer while at RHS, Smith was a principal cellist of the Symphonic Orchestra and an outstanding student.

Mazzilli in Bookstores

"I'm celebrating a success story from a former RPS student turned author. My daughter just received word that her children's book was published. Over the years, I have attributed the successes of both of my girls to their Ridgefield education. Thank you for making this dream come true."

—Former Parent, Yvonne Mazzilli



RHS Class of 2012 Graduate Danielle Mazzilli has just published a heart-warming children's book, *A Broken Crayon Still Colors*. This sweet book addresses the issue of divorce in a positive, inclusive way that would be of comfort to any family going through the end of a marriage or trying to understand the issue. The book is widely available locally and through online vendors. Mazzilli is finishing her Master's Degree in Early Childhood Education.

College and Scholarships

Columbia, Duke, Harvard, Juilliard, MIT, Tufts, University of Michigan, UVA, UC Berkeley, and Yale are just a few of the highly selective schools RHS graduates attended in the past few years. Furthermore, RHS students earned millions of dollars in college scholarships and the opportunity to continue athletics in the NCAA.

[Class of 2021 College Selections](#)

[Class of 2020 College Selections](#)

