



May 7, 2025

The Manchester Education Association is very proud of the efforts its members made to influence the Board of Mayor and Aldermen to reject the Mayor's proposed budget and increase it significantly. Although the Aldermen would not increase it to the proposed budget as presented by the Superintendent and unanimously approved by the Board of School Committee, the MEA is weighing the positives and negatives about the increase. Originally, the Mayor's budget would have removed 38 educator positions. Attrition or not, it is a loss of educators, and some positions may be difficult to fill.

The Mayor chose to present the budget as an increase in funds over the past two years that he has been in office. The real truth is that for both years, the District asked for budget increases within the tax cap, following the Charter. The District has had to use \$9M from their Rainy Day Funds for the 2024-25 School Year, and now they will be taking another \$8M from those funds to pay for one time funds for the 2025-26 School Year. Masking the budget cut by calling it an increase is poor form, and shows that there is knowledge that the District could have and should have received the entire 4.27% of the tax cap. Casting shade on the District's transparency regarding the budget, or anything else, is laughable. The Superintendent, her team, and the BOSC, reveal everything about what the District is doing and how much they spend in every meeting. They hold public forums regarding the facilities plan. They include the community in all major projects, and inform parents about curriculum and expectations.

The community deserves to have a public education system that thrives, that implements best practices and research-driven curricula. Our students deserve to be able to experience their education in classrooms that are not overcrowded, have a qualified educator to teach them, and that have up to date technology and materials to best prepare them for their future. Our educators deserve to be confident and secure in their careers, and be able to spend their time in class working with their students and enjoying the a-ha! moments that help our students succeed. The Manchester School District employees deserve to have enough people in their respective departments to run the District well, and have the backing of the community to trust that they will do their best and be fiscally responsible, as they have shown themselves to be for many years.

The proposed budget by the Superintendent was created meticulously, with the knowledge that there are students counting on her to make sure their needs are met. It will be difficult to do that now, with deep cuts to the budget. The question is often asked, "Why is it that the District needs more money but has less students?" The District's



number of students has leveled off, but we must remember that the Manchester School District also services students in area Catholic schools, public charter schools, and students who are homeless who may not be staying anywhere near Manchester (who are transported to and from Manchester schools daily). We must remember that inflation and tariffs are increasing prices for food, transportation repairs and parts, supplies and materials, utilities, and contracted services. We must remember that the District pays for students who are placed out-of-district to the tune of six figures each. We must remember that the District employs over 2000 people, which is roughly 40% more than the 1200 that the City of Manchester employs, and the District is required by law to pay into the New Hampshire Retirement System for many of them. We must remember that the District has been building its "Rainy Day Fund" on advice of counsel and financial advisors, to make sure they can pay for unfunded liabilities and can maintain a quality bond rating for capital projects. (And yes, the District has more in its Rainy Day Fund than the City, but if we compare the number of employees and property size, the District must have more in this fund than the City.) We must remember that some of the budget is federally and state funded, so the citizens of Manchester are not footing the entire bill for the District. We must remember that the Manchester School District has the largest percentage of MultiLanguage Learners in the state, and that they are federally mandated to receive specialized services. We must remember that our Special Education students are required, by law, to receive specialized services as outlined in their Individualized Education Plans. We must remember that providing technology and computers to all 11,000+ students carries high costs to buy, maintain and repair hardware, and to buy and maintain educational subscriptions and software, while maintaining digital safety. And we must remember that the BOSC, and the Superintendent and her team have worked very hard to save money with community partnerships, bringing the transportation team in house, and bringing the school nurses in house.

Today's students are NOT like the students with which you attended school, even just 6 years ago. Districts have to provide differently. Costs don't go down because the student population goes down. This is not a simple division problem, although some politicians want to make you believe that. Listening to speakers during public comment regarding the school district budget, I was disappointed in the cherry-picking of old and random numbers from the DOE website that were not relevant to the District today. I was appalled at the people who claim to know so much about the District, yet their comments showed that they don't, and that they believe whatever is told to them by others who have control issues. (And I was angry at the rudeness of the Alderman who was napping during public comment.)

The approved budget will still yield job losses, and will still yield deep cuts. It was obvious that the Aldermen had a previous agreement at the \$3.5M mark before the



meeting ever started. It was troubling that the Mayor wouldn't vote in the positive for the \$4M improvement to his budget, breaking the tie to vote no. As the Chair of the BOSC, he knows the needs of the District. We fear the loss of trust with him will be devastating.