

Nutley Public Schools

Academic Vision and Plan

Vision Statement

The Nutley Public Schools' Academic Action Plan serves as a blueprint for elevating student achievement, expanding educational opportunities, and aligning the district's infrastructure with modern learning needs. This plan responds to current academic performance data, community needs, and evolving state mandates, and lays the groundwork for transformative change.

This plan includes a vision to:

- **Expand Universal Preschool** access to all three- and four-year-olds in Nutley through the NJDOE-sponsored initiative. Research shows that high-quality early education lays a critical foundation for academic success, improving literacy and numeracy outcomes, especially for students from economically disadvantaged backgrounds.
- Ensure that **all students are reading and performing on grade level by the end of third grade**, a key milestone that predicts long-term academic success and high school graduation.
- **Transition sixth grade to a 6–8 middle school model**, supporting academic and social-emotional development by aligning programming and supports with adolescent needs. This reconfiguration will allow for more focused instruction, smoother curricular transitions, and access to subject-specific educators and resources.
- Establish more deliberate **career pathways CTE fields, especially in technology fields** at Nutley High School, enabling students to explore high-demand fields such as computer science, cybersecurity, and engineering.
- **Expand dual enrollment and AP offerings** to provide rigorous college-level coursework and greater postsecondary readiness for all students.

II. Data-Driven Needs Assessment

Nutley Public Schools reviewed multiple quantitative and qualitative data sources to inform this action plan:

Early Childhood / Grade 3 Proficiency

- Less than 50% of Nutley students enter Kindergarten demonstrating full readiness (based on K screening data and anecdotal PK teacher feedback).
- 2023 NJSLA ELA results show that only **54% of third-grade students** met or exceeded expectations.
- Disparities in early literacy outcomes among English Language Learners and economically disadvantaged students persist.

Grade 6 Transition & Middle School Configuration

- Current K–6 model places sixth graders in an elementary setting with limited access to specialized instruction and extracurricular offerings.
- Benchmark data (i-Ready, NJSLA) shows academic dips in grade 6 performance, suggesting a need for improved alignment and supports.

Technology Career Pathways

- Current elective offerings in tech-related fields are limited, with only 12% of students enrolled in computer science or STEM-focused electives.
- Industry trends show increasing demand for skilled workers in coding, cybersecurity, and data analytics.

College and Career Readiness

- Only **18% of NHS students** participate in dual enrollment programs.
- AP participation remains at **22%**, with equity gaps in access for students from underrepresented groups.

- PSAT and SAT data indicate that fewer than 60% of students meet the college readiness benchmarks

III. Strategic Goals and Objectives (SMART Goals)

1. Expand Access to Universal Preschool

- **Goal:** By September 2027, enroll 100% of eligible 3- and 4-year-olds in NJDOE-sponsored preschool programs across Nutley.
- **Objective:** Increase PK capacity by 25% annually through the addition of classrooms and community provider partnerships.

2. Ensure Grade-Level Proficiency by Grade 3

- **Goal:** By June 2027, increase the percentage of students meeting or exceeding expectations on the Grade 3 NJSLA ELA to 65%.
- **Objective:** Implement a structured literacy program K–3, including Tier II interventions and progress monitoring every 6 weeks.

3. Implement a 6–8 Middle School Model

- **Goal:** By September 2026, reconfigure the district's grade configuration to house Grades 6–8 in a dedicated middle school setting.
- **Objective:** Complete curriculum alignment, staffing adjustments, and facility redesign by June 2026, with community and stakeholder input.

4. Develop Career Tracks in Technology

- **Goal:** By September 2026, establish at least 3 career pathways in tech-focused areas such as coding, cybersecurity, and engineering.
- **Objective:** Increase enrollment in tech electives by 30% by 2026; partner with local industry and higher ed for certifications and experiences.

5. Expand Dual Enrollment and AP Participation

- **Goal:** By June 2027, increase dual enrollment and AP participation to 35% of the student body, with at least 90% of students earning a passing grade or score.
- **Objective:** Add one dual enrollment partnership and three one AP courses over by June 2027.

IV. Action Steps / Key Initiatives

1. Universal Preschool Expansion

Action	Responsible	Timeline	Resources
Identify and renovate available district spaces or partner with local providers for additional classrooms.	Director of Early Childhood Education, Business Administrator	Begin site identification Fall 2025, open new classrooms by September 2026.	NJDOE Preschool Expansion Aid (PEA), staffing for certified early childhood teachers and paraprofessionals.

2. Grade 3 Proficiency Initiative

Action	Responsible	Timeline	Resources
Continue to Develop and Implement a Tiered Intervention System of Support based on performance data; Including Professional Development for Tier 1 Supports, and Increased Efficiency	Director of Student Support and Director of Curriculum, Elementary Principals, Classroom Teacher, Strategies Teachers	Professional Development Plan during Summer 2025; rollout in Fall 2025.	Title I funds, ESSA/NJDOE grants, embedded coaching, data dashboards

for Tier 2 Supports based on available resources			
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3. Middle School Reconfiguration (6–8 Model)

Action	Responsible	Timeline	Resources
Convene stakeholder task force; review facilities; design 6–8 instructional model; realign staff and support services.	Superintendent; Central Office Personnel, Middle School Principal	Planning 2025, implementation in Fall 2026.	Capital improvement funds, reallocation of existing personnel, community engagement sessions; Curriculum writing Sessions

4. Technology Career Pathways

Action	Responsible	Timeline	Resources
Develop pathways in partnership with county colleges and dual enrollment universities; work within Perkins funding to develop 3 level CTE programs; launch elective	Director of Curriculum, Supervisor of CTE/FPA, Supervisor of Counseling; Secondary Building Principals	Design 2025, pilot courses in 2026–27.	Perkins grant funding, workforce development partnerships, technology upgrades.

sequences in high school.			
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5. Expansion of Dual Enrollment / AP

Action	Responsible	Timeline	Resources
Partner with additional colleges (e.g., Montclair State, Essex County College); train teachers for AP certification; identify underrepresented students for participation; develop pathways to prepare students for advanced courses of study	High School Principal, Director of Curriculum	Partnership development in 2025, course expansion by 2026	College agreements, teacher stipends for AP training, state AP expansion funding.

V. Accountability and Monitoring

- **Quarterly Data Reviews** at district and school levels (literacy progress, course enrollment, proficiency scores).
- **Annual Progress Reports** to the Board of Education and community.
- **Formative Checkpoints** using benchmark assessments (i-Ready, NJSLA Map, Common Assessment) and early literacy screeners.

- **Central Office team** will review implementation progress monthly and adjust supports/resources.
- **Equity Audits** to monitor participation across demographics in AP, dual enrollment, and tech pathways.

VI. Stakeholder Engagement

- **Community Forums & PTO meeting** scheduled annually to provide updates and gather feedback.
- **Parent Advisory Councils** for early childhood and middle school transition
- **Student Focus Groups** to evaluate career pathway and AP course offerings.
- **Regular Updates** via board meeting presentations, superintendent's corner, and social media with highlights

VII. Budget and Resources

- **Preschool Expansion:** Funded through NJDOE PEA
- **Grade 3 Literacy:** Title I, Title II, local funds.
- **Middle School Reconfiguration:** Capital improvement funding
- **Tech Pathways:** Perkins CTE funds
- **Dual Enrollment / AP:** College partnerships reduce costs; local funds



STATE OF NEW JERSEY DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

Eligibility to Apply for Additional Expenditures Pursuant to Language Provision Included in Proposed FY 2026 State Budget

A language provision included in the proposed FY 2026 State Budget provides certain school districts the opportunity to apply to the Commissioner of Education (Commissioner) to increase expenditures, including an allocation of Tax Levy Incentive Aid, in order to satisfy the thoroughness and efficiency standards established pursuant to N.J.S.A. 18A:7F-46. Specifically, a school district is eligible to apply to the Commissioner if the district: 1) has an FY 2025 general fund tax levy that is less than its FY 2026 local fair share, as calculated pursuant to N.J.S.A. 18A:7F-52; and 2) is spending below adequacy as determined pursuant to N.J.S.A. 18A:7F-70.

Based on the Department of Education's review of the relevant data, your district is eligible to apply for this additional authority. If you are interested, you can find more detailed application information by selecting the "Expenditure Increase Application" on the [NJDOE Homeroom](#) portal. Enter the 4-digit LEA code in the district ID, then enter the username and password as assigned by the district Homeroom Administrator. Click the "Sign In" button to open the system.

Questions regarding the application process should be submitted to levy_incent@doe.nj.gov.

MEMORANDUM

From: Kent Bania, Superintendent of Schools
To: Mike DeVita, Business Administrator; Jeannette Makus, State Monitor
Date: April 2, 2025
Subject: Friday's Tax Levy Incentive Waiver Release

The Department of Education notified us (Friday Afternoon, March 28th) that we are eligible for the Tax Levy Incentive Waiver. This waiver would give us a one-time opportunity to increase taxes above 2%. The full amount of the waiver is \$16,535,033. Using a part of this waiver would allow us to restore high school programs that were removed in the preliminary budget as well as restore and maintain services to some of our neediest students.

The Nutley School district currently has an adequacy gap of \$16,535,033. This is the additional amount the state has calculated would be required for Nutley to provide for a thorough and efficient education. The adequacy budget is determined based on student enrollment, weighted for grade level, at-risk status, and English language learners, along with additional costs for special education.

When preparing the current FY 24/25 budget, the district cut \$6.5 million which included over 40 staffing positions, critical support technology and other programs. For the FY 25/26 budget, we had cut an additional \$5.3 million to get to cap. This included reducing an additional 14 positions, cutting crisis counseling services, additional support services, extracurricular programs and additional technology programs currently used by staff.

Friday's NJDOE waiver gives us a rare and much-needed opportunity to secure a permanent, increased base that will allow us to restore programs and services and to add an additional two Strategies/Reading elementary positions.

We are requesting a \$2,615,000 waiver. Raising the tax levy through the NJDOE waiver is a fiscally responsible and necessary step to ensure Nutley Public Schools can continue to provide high-quality education and essential student services without disruption. The additional revenue will help align per-pupil spending more closely with neighboring districts, sustain key programming, and position the district for long-term stability. This waiver will allow the district to raise the tax levy responsibly an additional 3.85% to a total of 6.58% (an additional \$130/year on the average assessed house of \$493,362)

This chart below highlights items that have been lost in next year's budget (Fiscal Year 2025-26), and will impact a thorough and efficient education. The \$2,615,000 waiver will allow the district to restore the following resources for SY 2025-26:

Resource	Cost	Rationale
Maintain CST Member	\$70,000	This resignation is not in the SY 2025-26 budget. Current Caseload is: 54; Without maintaining position this caseload is: 57; Nutley has 18.5 Case Managers; Belleville has 36, Kearny has 24, Bloomfield has 23.5 (All of these towns have similar number of Special Education Students approx 995)

Benefits for CST Member	\$40,000	The benefits for this position were removed from the budget.
Maintain Supervisor of Counseling	\$120,000	This current resignation is not in the SY 2025-26 Budget. School Counseling is a critical K-12 department. Supervisor of Counseling Current Task List
Benefits for Supervisor of Counseling	\$40,000	The benefits for this position were removed from the budget.
Maintain TV/Video Production Teacher	\$70,000	This retirement replacement is currently not SY 2025-26 Budget. Not replacing would eliminate this program, reduce Perkins funding, a dual enrollment offering. Currently (83 students in program)
Benefits for TV/Video Production Teacher	\$40,000	The benefits for this position were removed from the budget.
Maintain Social Studies Teacher	\$70,000	This retirement replacement is currently not SY 2025-26 Budget. Not replacing would increase class size in required social studies classes (world history 2 sections less) and would most likely prevent Archeology (85 current students), and other Social Studies electives from running.
Benefits for Social Studies Teacher	\$40,000	The benefits for this position were removed from the budget.
Maintain Business Teacher	\$70,000	This retirement replacement is currently not SY 2025-26 Budget. Not replacing would reduce electives (business education) and increase class size. Most likely, the following electives would not run: Entrepreneurship, Business Administration, and Business Law
Benefits for Business Teacher	\$40,000	The benefits for this position were removed from the budget.
.5 Latin Teacher to Full Time	\$35,000	This position was reduced in the 2024/25 budget. There is a high need for Latin instruction in Nutley. Currently multiple levels are being taught in the same class, with class sizes over 30.
Benefits for Latin Teacher	\$40,000	The benefits for this position are not in the budget as the position is part time.
Maintain 10-Month Secretary without collapse/transfer - Lincoln	\$40,000	This position was not being replaced from this retirement in next year's budget, rather secretaries would be shifted from other critical areas of the school district. The

		district is understaffed in this area from SY 2023/24 cuts.
Benefits for 10-Month Secretary	\$40,000	The benefits for this position were removed from the budget.
Maintain 10-Month Secretary without collapse/transfer - Washington	\$40,000	This position was not being replaced from this retirement in next year's budget, rather secretaries would be shifted from other critical areas of the school district. The district is understaffed in this area from SY 2023/24 cuts.
Benefits for 10-Month Secretary	\$40,000	The benefits for this position were removed from the budget.
Crisis Clinician and Support	\$70,000	This current budget replaced the psychiatrist with someone broader, this difference would support partnering with Nutley Family Services Bureau, and having a shared service with the health department to continue critical on site crisis counseling.
Maintain Math Special Education Teacher	\$70,000	This retirement replacement is currently not SY 2025-26 Budget in the math department. Due to many dually certified people in the department, shifts would reduce elective 4th year math offerings to accommodate special needs students.
Benefits for Special Education Teacher	\$40,000	The benefits for this position were removed from the budget.
Maintain Speech Therapist	\$70,000	This position is a cut in the SY 2025-26 Budget. Best Practice Caseload is: 45 students (American Speech-Language-Hearing Association) Current Caseload is: 49 students; Without Replacing this caseload is: 57 Students
Benefits for Speech Therapist	\$40,000	The benefits for this position were removed from the budget.
Maintain Athletics - Assistant Coaches	\$50,000	8 Assistant Coaches were removed from the budget including Football, G/B Crew, G/B Basketball, Baseball and Softball
Special Education Contingencies for Out of District Placements and In-District Sections	\$220,000	Currently there are no contingencies for special education, out of district placements, and/or transportation. Special education numbers change frequently.
2 Additional Strategies Teachers/Reading Specialists	\$140,000	This supports the growth of MTSS systems and support Tier 1 (coaching) and Tier 2

(WASH/LINC)		interventions
Benefits for 2 Additional Strategies Teachers/Reading Specialists	\$80,000	The Benefits for this position are not in the budget.
PEA Preschool Paraprofessional Benefits (12)	\$480,000	In next year's budget, all class paras including PEA paras were moved to part time, an email from our Preschool Liaison indicates that this is not best practice and not recommended.
Special Education Paraprofessional Benefits (13)	\$520,000	Continue attrition, and includes a reduction as well as moving staff to part-time, revise job descriptions for full time and part-time paras, and allow current paras to fill positions, allowing attrition to move paras to part time.
Total	\$2,615,000	
5% State Aid	\$130,750	Recommend Maintenance/Capital Project