



# MONTCLAIR PUBLIC SCHOOLS

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*Superintendent of Schools*

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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## **MONTCLAIR BOARD OF EDUCATION CALLS 2022 BOND REFERENDUM A COMMUNITY INVESTMENT**

**March 22, 2022 (Montclair, NJ)**—Montclair Board of Education invites the community to attend its Special Meeting on March 28 at 6:30 PM when a proposal for a bond referendum will be presented. The bond proposal focuses on critical health and safety facility needs and invests in structural enhancements that impact student instruction. Funding this bond referendum will allow for all Montclair’s 11 public schools to improve their operations for the best interests of students and families. This investment in schools is an investment in the community of Montclair.

The district faced a significant challenge during the COVID-19 pandemic because of its very old buildings and antiquated ventilation systems. District administration immediately engaged architects and engineers to mediate these structural problems in such a way as to protect the health and safety of its personnel and students and maintain teaching and learning. However, the following issues still need to be addressed:

- Inadequate ventilation systems
- Antiquated roofs
- Heating systems and boilers that must be replaced and other items that have deteriorated over decades of use
- Upgrades to classrooms for 21<sup>st</sup> century learning

The Board’s Finance and Facilities Committee has spent many months exploring and investigating the buildings’ needs with the administration and the district’s architects, Parette Somjen. Beyond addressing the infrastructure which is foundational to this plan, the referendum includes upgrading classrooms to afford our students opportunities to benefit from 21<sup>st</sup> century teaching and learning strategies. Committee Chair Eric Scherzer said, “Approving this bond is a necessary step to ensure our students have the benefits of safe, quality learning environments. Our facilities have been neglected for too long, and it is time to address the present needs and to prepare for the years to come.”

Superintendent Jonathan Ponds along with School Principals and architects from Parette Somjen have been engaged in building walk-throughs and meetings since last year to optimize a plan that thoroughly addresses facility projects in need of immediate action. “Security features and indoor air quality projects are critical and non-negotiable,” said Ponds. “Our students deserve safe and healthy environments to learn and achieve their highest potential. As you know, I believe all kids can learn and all kids are special, and now, in Montclair, we have an opportunity to prove that we will put our full weight behind this theory, and give our students the spaces and learning environments they need to make this theory a reality.”

**The Board encourages residents as well as town officials to attend the meeting to learn about the proposal and hear firsthand what the renovations and improvements would mean for the schools and community. The Finance and Facilities Committee and the full Board are eager to get the input of the community on this proposal before making final decisions on exactly which items should be included. The improvements that can be made with approval of this bond referendum are the backbone of assuring that Montclair maintains the excellence expected of its school community and all points of view are welcome.**

**This Special Board Meeting will be held in person March 28, 6:30 PM, at the George Inness Annex Atrium, 141 Park St., with parking on No. Fullerton. It can also be streamed live by using the link on our [website](#) found the day of the meeting or watched on Verizon TV33. Questions from the public will be taken both in person and virtually. For in-person comments or questions, use the sign-up sheet at the meeting and for virtual comments use the link provided on the website the day of the meeting.**

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