

# LaFayette Central School District

*Four Schools, Three Buildings, Two Nations, One Goal: Excellence!*

LaFayette Jr./Sr. High School  
3122 Route 11 North  
LaFayette, NY 13084

Big Picture School  
3122 Route 11 North  
LaFayette, NY 13084

C. Grant Grimshaw Elementary  
5957 Route 20 West  
LaFayette, NY 13084

Onondaga Nation School  
Route 11A RR#1 Box 270  
Nedrow, NY 13120

February 10, 2019

Dear NYS State Representatives for the LaFayette Central School District:

LaFayette Central Schools serves 844 students in grades pre-kindergarten through twelve. The district's central office is located at "the crossroads of Central New York" at the intersection of routes 20 and 11 in the heart of apple country. LaFayette Central School district is comprised of four schools: Grimshaw Elementary, the Onondaga Nation School, LaFayette Big Picture School, and LaFayette Jr/Sr High School. LaFayette is served by a seven-member elected board of education and works in consultation with Gaweñnahawi's, the Onondaga Nation Education Board, to serve our school community.

Our school district is proud of the following accomplishments on behalf of our students:

- 96% graduation rate
- Access to 15 dual credit courses and a variety of online college credit courses
- Internship opportunities for students and a focus on personalized learning
- Strong participation in the visual and performing arts
- Competitive athletic programs
- Extracurricular opportunities for students focused on STEM
- Students can earn a scholarship towards a paid for two-year degree at Onondaga Community College through the OCC Advantage Program

We are proud of the accomplishments of our students and we are proud to partner with our elected officials to maximize tax dollars for the benefit of our students and school community. LaFayette is a rural community with a small tax base and the district relies on state funding for 60% of the school operating budget. The district is faced with the challenge of improving academic results in the elementary and junior high levels, improving student participation on state exams, and reducing chronic absenteeism rates. LaFayette CSD has been identified as a "targeted district" and both LaFayette Jr. High and the Onondaga Nation School have been identified as "comprehensive support and improvement schools". The district leadership team is committed to partnering with staff, students, parents, and the greater school community to improve student participation and performance on the grades three through eight ELA and math exams. In order to make these improvements and continue to offer high quality programs to our students, we need the continued support of adequate state funding for our school programs.

Based on district budget projections for 2019-20, we anticipate school district expenses to increase by 2.79% or \$529,040. We have projected a property tax increase of 2.49%, in compliance with the property tax cap limit,

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**Mission:** *At LaFayette, we put students first. Our mission is to educate, honor, and develop students to have self-respect, a commitment to the community, and a passion for excellence.*

**Vision:** *Inspire, empower, and prepare all students to achieve excellence.*

which would allow the district to increase local revenues by \$149,040. **This means that LaFayette CSD would require an additional \$380,000 in NYS aid for the 2019-20 school year.** Based on Governor Cuomo's executive budget proposal released in January 2019, LaFayette is projected to receive an additional 1.3% or \$92,639 in state funding. The executive budget proposal leaves LaFayette CSD short of adequate funding to meet state mandates by \$287,361. Additionally, the Governor has announced an anticipated revenue shortfall and has hinted at potential cuts to his original school aid proposal.

LaFayette, like many other rural districts, has fallen victim to the inequities in school aid funding. While the executive budget proposal still continues to reference the foundation aid formula enacted in 2007, LaFayette has not received the full measure of foundation aid stipulated in statute. For the past 12 years, elected officials continue to not allocate sufficient funds to the foundation aid formula. LaFayette and many other small rural districts are left to subsist on minimal increases in school funding. **If NYS were to allocate adequate funding to the foundation aid formula, LaFayette would be entitled to receive an additional \$365,854 in foundation aid funding.** This amount is in alignment with the budget requests from the New York State Board of Regents and the New York State Educational Conference Board. In addition, it should be noted that the district suffered a total loss of \$3,808,488 in funding during the years when the gap elimination adjustment was enacted.

LaFayette operates the Onondaga Nation School which serves students from the Onondaga Nation. The district has worked diligently to improve outcomes for Native American students. The Onondaga Nation school uses a state building which is in need of improvements. Recent building condition surveys estimate that the cost of repairs and needed additions at the school total \$25 million. Governor Cuomo's budget has historically allocated \$3 million to address the facility needs at the three schools on sovereign Native American lands. Unfortunately, the executive budget proposal has not allocated any additional money to address the facility needs at the Onondaga Nation School. Please consider increasing the funding allocated for repairs and additions needed at the Onondaga Nation School.

In order to maintain student programs, and lessen the school funding burden on local property owners, the district needs the help and support of our state representatives. Please pass a responsible state budget which provides for a sound, basic education for LaFayette students as guaranteed in the New York State Constitution.

Thanks in advance for your continued support of the students in the LaFayette Central School District.

Sincerely,

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