

CONEMAUGH TOWNSHIP AREA SCHOOL DISTRICT

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Dear Conemaugh Township Families:

I hope you and your family have enjoyed a wonderful summer. As we prepare to welcome our students back for the first day of school on **Wednesday, August 26**, I want to take a moment to share some important updates and express how excited we are for another outstanding school year at Conemaugh Township Area School District. Throughout the summer, our administrators, office staff, maintenance team, and custodial employees have worked diligently to prepare our buildings and grounds for the return of students. Their commitment behind the scenes helps ensure that our schools are safe, welcoming, and ready for learning on the very first day.

Conemaugh Township continues to be a highly sought-after school district because of the outstanding opportunities we provide our students. Our strong academic programs, successful extracurricular activities, dedicated employees, and supportive community are all reasons we continue to be recognized as a district of excellence. Recently, the **Pittsburgh Business Times** ranked Conemaugh Township Area School District **#1 in Somerset County**, an accomplishment that reflects the hard work of our students, staff, parents, and community.

As with every school year, there are some staffing changes. This summer, six teachers left the district to pursue other opportunities or enjoy well-earned retirement. Rather than filling each of these positions, we have thoughtfully redistributed classes among our remaining faculty. This has been possible because of a gradual decline in student enrollment over time. In 2010, Conemaugh Township Area School District served **1,044 students**. This August, we anticipate welcoming approximately **815 students**, a decline of **229 students over the past 16 years**. While enrollment has changed, our commitment to providing exceptional educational opportunities has not. Students will continue to benefit from a robust curriculum that includes Advanced Placement and Dual Enrollment opportunities, a wide variety of electives, and career and technical education programs through the **Greater Johnstown Career and Technology Center**. We remain committed to ensuring every student has access to meaningful academic pathways that prepare them for success after graduation.

At the same time, I believe it is important to be transparent about the financial challenges facing our district. **Like many school districts across Pennsylvania, Conemaugh Township is experiencing what can best be described as a tsunami of budgetary pressures**—many of which are beyond our local control.

AN EQUAL OPPORTUNITY EMPLOYER

It is the policy of the Conemaugh Township Area School District not to discriminate in employment or program services on the basis of race, color, age, religious creed, religion, sex, sexual orientation, ancestry, national origin, marital status, genetic information, handicap/disability, or pregnancy, childbirth or pregnancy-related medical conditions.

Some of the most significant financial challenges include:

- **Cyber charter tuition**, which is projected to cost the district approximately **\$700,000** this school year.
- **Special education expenditures**, which have increased by more than 43% and now exceed **\$800,000** annually as we continue to meet the needs of all learners.
- **Employee health insurance costs**, which have increased by more than **\$840,000** over the past three years. The annual cost of health care this year is \$2,100,000.
- **Transportation costs**, which have risen by more than **\$300,000**, while state transportation reimbursement has declined.
- **Declining student enrollment**, which reduces state funding while many of our operating costs remain fixed.

These increasing costs were largely unexpected and continue to place significant pressure on our budget. Please know that every financial decision we make is guided by our commitment to being responsible stewards of taxpayer dollars while protecting the educational opportunities our students deserve.

In the coming months, we will host a community budget information session where residents will have the opportunity to learn more about these financial challenges, ask questions, and hear firsthand about the plans we are developing to maintain the long-term strength of our district. We believe that open communication and community partnership are essential as we work together to build a solid pathway for Conemaugh Township's future.

As we begin another school year, I remain incredibly proud of what our students, employees, and families accomplish together. The strength of our district has always been our people, and I am confident that by continuing to work together with transparency, respect, and a shared commitment to our children, the very best days for Conemaugh Township are still ahead.

Thank you for your continued support of our schools. We look forward to welcoming our students back on **August 26** and wish each of you a safe, successful, and rewarding school year.

Sincerely,

Nicole M. Dull

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