

# Red Clay Consolidated School District

## eNews

July 13, 2018

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#### **Red Clay Cuts Tax Rate**

Expiring debt allowed the Red Clay Board of Education at its July meeting to approve a modest tax rate decrease for the 2019 fiscal year while still increasing services to the community.

Chief Financial Officer Jill Floore presented the tax rate and the 2019 preliminary budget at the July 11, 2018 school board meeting. “This year the very, very good news is that I’m asking you to decrease the tax rate,” she said. (See the tax rate presentation [here](#)). Each year there is usually an increase due to a referendum or for growing costs in special education, but this year those costs were offset by savings in the amount needed for debt repayment. The dip of nearly 5 cents in the debt service tax rate will amount to an average decrease of \$13 annually to Red Clay property owners.

School districts operate with four tax rates: the debt service, current expense, tuition and match tax rates. Combined, the district tax rate will decrease by nearly 2 cents next year, to total \$2.3 dollars per \$100 of assessed value.

The debt service tax is what the district pays to borrow money for major construction projects. The district is nearing completion of the 2012 Capital Improvement Program, where projects were completed on time and on budget. Floore explained until the next capital referendum, the debt service tax rate will continue to decrease slowly over time as other previous debt expires.

The Current Expense rate – which pays for salaries and local expenses – will remain unchanged next year. Voters set the current expense rate. Red Clay held its last Operating Referendum to increase that rate in 2015 and the three-year phase-in expired in the budget that just ended on June 30.

The Match Tax rate was increased by 2 cents, to pay for the district's share of new state funding for K-3 Special Education costs and K-4 reading specialists. The match tax rate also pays for minor capital improvements, technology maintenance, and resource teachers.

Tuition taxes fund special schools and tuition eligible programs including Meadowood, Richardson Park Learning Center, First State School and services in specialized programs such as the Delaware Autism Program. The tuition tax rate will increase by 1 cent in fiscal 2019.

In addition to lower costs for borrowing construction funds, Red Clay was able to end the year in a strong position by keeping in place district-wide cuts made last year when the state cut education funding by \$26 million statewide.

With the goal of minimizing impact to the classroom, Red Clay absorbed its \$3 million in funding cuts by eliminating 18 positions and slashing department budgets by 20 percent. Those cuts will remain in place for fiscal 2019, said Floore.

School Board President Cathy Thompson thanked the finance department and district staff for managing the cuts. "We appreciate the district's fiscal responsibility," she said.

The tax warrant was delivered to New Castle County on July 12, 2018 for tax bills to be prepared and sent. Red Clay will present a three-year financial forecast at a workshop session of the school board to be held Aug. 28, 2018 at 5:30 p.m. in the boardroom at district offices, 1502 Spruce Ave., Wilmington.

### **New Board Leadership Approved**

The Red Clay Board of Education named Cathy Thompson as the new board president and Adriana Bohm as the vice-president at its annual reorganization meeting on July 11, 2018. Jose Matthews, Red Clay's newest board member, was also sworn into office for a five-year term.

Entering her ninth year on the school board, Thompson, a corporate counsel for the DuPont Company, has been an involved parent in Red Clay schools for many years, serving as the PTA president at Alexis I. duPont High School. She has two children who went through Red Clay schools.

Thompson said she is excited about her new role on the board. "I am hoping to pull the Board together to work with the administration, teachers, staff, students and community to meet our mission and ensure that Red Clay is open, transparent, responsive and the best school district in Delaware for all our students and families," she said.

Adriana Bohm, who is beginning her second term on the board, is a professor of sociology at the Delaware County Community College and holds a PhD in sociology. A product of Red Clay schools herself; she has two children currently in Red Clay schools.

"In my personal and professional life I am committed to social justice and activism," she said. "I will bring the passion I have toward equity and justice to the board and to all of our students."

Board members also volunteered to serve on many district committees, a listing of which can be found [here](#).

### **July Board of Education Meeting**

- [Fiscal Year 19 Tax Rate](#)
- [Fiscal Year 19 Preliminary Budget Presentation](#)
- [Fiscal Year 19 Preliminary Budget](#)
- [Draft Diversity and Equity Policy](#)
- [Superintendent's Report](#)

### **Administrative Appointments**

The Red Clay Board of Education made several administrative appointments at its July meeting, including the naming of A.I. duPont High School Assistant Principal Damon Saunders as the new principal at John Dickinson High School and Cab Calloway School of the Arts teacher Holly Golder as the district's new Social Studies Supervisor. Other appointments included:

- Lurleen Black as the principal at Stanton Middle School
- Gregg Johnson as assistant principal at Richey Elementary School
- Michelle Burrows as assistant principal at Richardson Park Elementary School
- Adam Domski as assistant principal at Warner Elementary School

### **Red Clay Supports Summer Reading**

Red Clay is placing a special emphasis on the importance of reading throughout the summer by providing students access to free online books through the MyON and OverDrive programs and by partnering with the Delaware Campaign for Grade Level Reading and Delaware Libraries to celebrate National Summer Learning Day on July 12, 2018.

This summer, students in grades K-5 will continue to have access to thousands of enhanced digital books at their reading and interest levels through the personalized literacy program MyON. Used during the school year, MyON allows students to read or listen to audio online using any Internet-enabled device. In addition, they can read offline using free mobile apps for iPad, Android, Chrome and Kindle Fire HD.

Families are encouraged to spend time this summer reading and learning with MyON which is available anywhere and anytime. Students can log in to [www.clever.com](http://www.clever.com), click "log in as a student", enter their school name and then "log in with Google". For assistance with passwords or more information parents can contact their child's school.

"The MyON reading program was a resounding success this year," said Dr. Judith Conway, Red Clay Supervisor of Unified Arts. "Students spent 33,262 reading hours finishing a total of 138,491 books. This is an element of our overall goal to help students develop strong reading skills so they can pursue a wide variety of personal interests."

Last spring, the online reading program OverDrive was piloted in Red Clay secondary schools. Initially, Red Clay chose the books in the online collection but now students will be able to make suggestions about books they would like to see added. This fall a full roll out of the program is expected.

Secondary students will have anytime, anywhere access to online and audio books from their phone, tablet or computer. To borrow digital books students will be able to go to their school's OverDrive website: [redclay.lib.overdrive.com](http://redclay.lib.overdrive.com), sign in with their student ID or school login, select a book and go to checkouts to click the read or listen button that opens the book in their browser. By downloading the app they will have access to books not only in the Red Clay collection but from the Delaware Division of Libraries as well.

Red Clay is supporting National Summer Learning Day in Wilmington on July 12<sup>th</sup> by providing free food to adolescents 18 and under and free books to Red Clay students. It will take place at the Woodlawn Library, 2020 W. Ninth St., from 11:30a.m. – 1:30p.m.

National Summer Learning Day, celebrates the importance of reading and is a national advocacy day aimed at elevating the importance of keeping students learning, safe and healthy. It is a collaborative effort by community partners, government agencies and business leaders to ensure that more children from low-income families return to school in the fall ready to succeed. Red Clay believes that investing in summer learning can open doors and create brighter futures for students.

The online reading programs, along with Summer Learning Day renew Red Clay's commitment to the importance of reading. The programs help to build a community of successful and confident readers who are engaged with digital learning but still value holding a book in their hand.

### **New Activities Happening at Summer STEM Program**

The 2018 Superstars in Education award winning program S3 STEM Summer Scholars has added several exciting new activities for students to explore this summer. At the middle school level participants will be introduced to forensics and drones while elementary students will work with catapults.

Launched in the summer of 2011, the STEM program was created to provide participating students the experience of applying the principles of STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics) to solve real world problems in a carefully structured environment. Students work with technology and/or math and science teachers to design, create and test a variety of engineering projects. Parents are invited at the end of each week and students present their projects, explaining the processes they used to create their final product.

This summer, rising 7<sup>th</sup>, 8<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup> grade students will be introduced to forensics and work like detectives using fingerprints to solve crimes and mysteries. In addition they will learn how to program drones to perform a series of tasks. Also new for middle schoolers this year is "Science of Science Fiction", an activity where students read science fiction stories and create a model of an element from that story, obeying the laws of science as they assemble their structure. Elementary students will add the building and launching of catapults to their curriculum for this summer.

Currently 337 students have enrolled for at least one of the weeklong sessions. Classes are held Monday through Thursday at Dickinson High School with middle school sessions starting on July 9<sup>th</sup> and elementary students on July 16<sup>th</sup>. The last day for both STEM programs is July 26<sup>th</sup>.

Students in the STEM Summer Scholars program will develop team building, planning and communication skills as they prepare to meet the rigor of the high school STEM expectations that will challenge them in upcoming years. The theme of the program is Making the World a Better Place and students are not only encouraged to consider a career in the sciences, but inspired to use science as a way to solve world problems.

Each year hundreds of students look forward to participating in the Summer Scholars program. More girls have enrolled in the program since adopting the new theme. In addition, the number of students with identified disabilities has increased.

Eddie McGrath, Red Clay Science Supervisor and coordinator of the STEM program said he makes an effort to hire female teachers to teach sessions. "Research has shown that students are more likely to go into STEM careers if they see someone that looks like them who is successful in STEM careers," McGrath explained. "Our program is designed for all students who are curious about the sciences, it allows them to explore a subject without the onus of grades."

He added, "The STEM Summer Scholars program is entering its eighth year, and always amazes me. We see students of all ability and interest levels apply, many for several consecutive years, and they all

come away with a positive outlook. It's encouraging to see siblings of former students come to summer STEM. I truly believe that in a small way, this program and others like it make the world a better place."

### **FAME Students Learn at Dickinson Over Summer**

Roughly 250 rising 4th through 10<sup>th</sup> grade students from Red Clay and other New Castle County schools are participating in two engaging hands-on STEM programs at Dickinson High School this summer. The programs, under the direction of the Forum to Advance Minorities in Engineering (FAME), Inc. began on June 18<sup>th</sup> and are in session Monday through Thursday until July 26<sup>th</sup>.

STEMulate Change provides educational experiences for fourth through sixth grade students and exposes them to STEM learning opportunities. This program motivates young students to enroll in higher level classes, prepares them to pursue STEM related fields and builds their confidence and capacity to be successful.

CORE Enrichment, designed for students in seventh through twelfth grades encourages students to explore real world needs and work toward solving modern day problems. While 7<sup>th</sup> through 10<sup>th</sup> graders attend classes at Dickinson, FAME students in 11<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> grade have the opportunity to participate in a four week professor-led program at the University of Delaware's College of Engineering. FAME students live on campus during the week and return home on weekends. Acceptance to the program is based on a student's GPA, test scores, essay and recommendations.

The programs, developed by FAME Inc. and run by 35 faculty, staff and interns, ignite student interest in STEM activities and focus on girls and underrepresented minorities, encouraging them to see themselves as scientists, mathematicians, engineers and technicians. Former FAME student and new intern Destiny Skinner said "We're a community and very accepting of everyone. FAME provides reinforcement for concepts already learned and makes learning new things easier."

Students learn by collaborating together and working with 3D designs to solve real world problems that are relevant to their lives. This year students will be brainstorming projects centered on irrigation, energy conservation, digital reconstruction, technology and reverse engineering.

Program Director Lokia Belcher explained that students are challenged to look at ideas and remodel them to make them their own. "FAME provides an opportunity for older students to act as role models to mentor younger students and help teach them the art of problem solving. FAME is a village building successful students. We give them the skills and support to be successful," Belcher said.

FAME, Inc., a non-profit education organization providing STEM education since 1976, helps motivate students to succeed in the science and math required for acceptance in colleges of engineering and prepares them to succeed in technical careers. Over 95% of FAME matriculated students have gone on to pursue degrees with 68% specializing in STEM related fields of study. Donald Baker II, Executive Director of FAME, Inc. said, "FAME has 42 years of proven success. Alumni have been successful in education and corporate jobs and that is why parents put their trust and faith in our programs."

Although school's out for many students across the country, the FAME students at Dickinson High School are experiencing a challenging but fun summer session. The STEMulate Change and CORE Enrichment programs are helping today's students become tomorrow's leaders.

### **District Accepting Nominations for Hall of Fame**

In partnership with the Red Clay Education Foundation, the Red Clay Consolidated School District is now accepting nominations for the 4<sup>th</sup> Annual Red Clay Hall of Fame Recognition Gala. The event this year will be held on **Tuesday, October 30, 2018**. The dinner is a way in which to thank educators and community members who have dedicated their time and effort to support Red Clay students throughout their career. This is a wonderful time for the district to honor teachers, administrators and community members for their tireless efforts in supporting YOUR, as well as OUR children!

If you would like to nominate a past teacher, administrator or community member, which you believe meets the criteria below, please click here: <https://goo.gl/forms/RIOSY6kchxtpq2m2> to access the nomination form.

1. *Provided outstanding service or activities for children over a period of time during their career*
2. *Loved, encouraged, and inspired children to be successful*
3. *Dedicated their career to support children and education*

**THE DEADLINE FOR SUBMISSION IS FRIDAY, SEPTEMBER 7, 2018.**

The form must be completed in its entirety. Please ensure all questions are answered. Incomplete forms will not be considered. If you have any questions, contact Maria Stevens at 302-552-3703 or by email at: [maria.stevens@redclay.k12.de.us](mailto:maria.stevens@redclay.k12.de.us)

### **Nutrition Services Summer Feeding Program**

The Red Clay School Nutrition Department participates in the USDA Summer Food Service Program to provide healthy meals and snacks to eligible children, 18 years of age or younger, free of charge when school is not in session. To learn which Red Clay Schools will be offering the summer meals program, please visit [RedClayCafe.com](http://RedClayCafe.com). Families are also encouraged to dial 211 from any phone line or text the word "food" or "comida" to 877-877 to learn about all sites, including Red Clay Schools, participating in the USDA summer meals program.

### **Upcoming Meetings and Events**

- Summer School and STEM Camps End, July 26
- School Board Meeting, Aug. 15, 7:00p.m., Cab Calloway