

BY THE NUMBERS

A Look at the 2019-2020 South Park School District Budget

First Issue in a Series

South Park School District Faces Rising, Mandated Charter School Costs

As South Park School District administrators prepare a final 2019-2020 budget, the district, and South Park taxpayers, face a significant increase in charter and cyber charter school tuition. Charter schools receive funding from the district of residence of each charter and cyber charter school student. These charter and cyber charter schools often market themselves as “tuition-free.” And while the families who choose to send their children to charter and cyber charter schools do not pay tuition, South Park taxpayers are required to pay the tuition based on formulas set by the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania.

As of May, approximately 50 students who reside in South Park attend charter and cyber charter schools. The South Park School District will pay approximately \$865,000 for these students to attend charter and cyber charter schools in the 2018-2019 fiscal year. That is equivalent to 1.14 mills. One mill equals approximately \$765,000.

Charter and cyber charter school tuition costs are expected to increase dramatically in the 2019-2020 fiscal year. The 2019-2020 tuition rate for a regular education student to attend a charter or cyber charter school is expected to be approximately \$13,300 per student, pending the finalization of the district’s budget. That is an increase of more than 5% from the 2018-2019 school year. The 2019-2020 tuition rate for a special education student to attend a charter or cyber charter school is expected to be approximately \$28,000 per student, pending the finalization of the district’s budget. That is an increase of 25% from the 2018-2019 school year. As a comparison, the anticipated per-student expenditure for students attending South Park Schools is approximately \$10,800 for the 2019-2020 school year. This figure is calculated by dividing budgeted instructional expenditures by projected enrollment. The South Park School District receives approximately \$4,440 per district student in education funding from the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania.

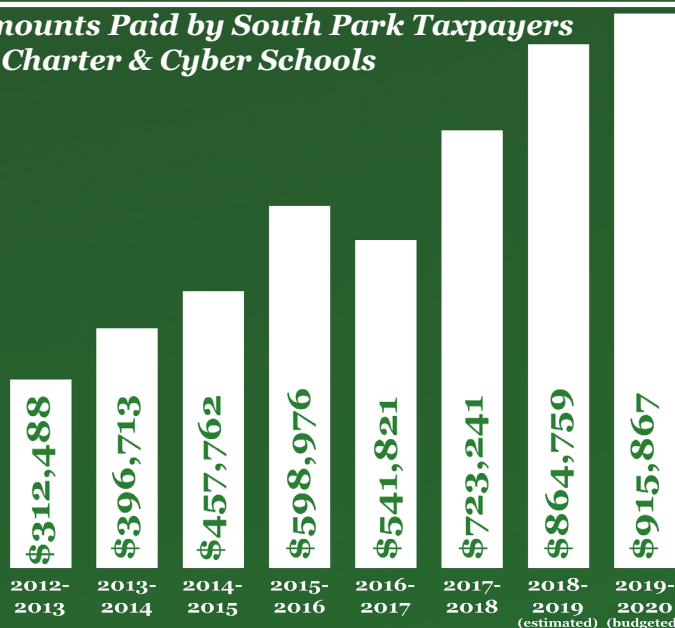
Tuition for a Regular Education Charter School Student

2012-2013 **\$8,643**

2019-2020
(estimated) **\$13,327**

Based on the increased tuition rates that the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania requires South Park taxpayers to pay and expected new enrollments in charter and cyber charter schools, the South Park School District must budget approximately \$916,000 for charter and cyber charter school tuition in the 2019-2020 school year. That is approximately a \$193,000 increase from the 2018-2019 final budget. This increase is equivalent to .25 mills. The total cost for charter and cyber charter school tuition is equivalent to nearly 1.20 mills.

Amounts Paid by South Park Taxpayers to Charter & Cyber Schools



The \$916,000 budgeted for cyber and cyber charter school tuition represents a 193% increase from the 2012-2013 school year. The South Park School District is required by the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania to pay these rising costs. The district is unable to control this rapid increase.

Two bills being discussed by lawmakers in Harrisburg would help school districts control these costs and would, in turn, help local taxpayers. The bills would require parents who wish to send their children to a cyber school to pay their child’s tuition if their district of residence offers a full-time cyber education program. Taxpayers are encouraged to contact their state legislators and ask them to support these two bills. Representative Michael J. Puskaric’s office can be reached at (412) 382-2009. Representative Puskaric serves on the House Education Committee. Representative Bill Kortz’s office can be reached at (412) 466-1940. State Senator Pam Iovino’s office can be reached at (412) 831-0250.