

in

south
colonie
central
schools

focus

May
2009

Preparing World Class Citizens

The 2009-2010 budget

South Colonie residents to vote May 19th on proposed \$88.6 million school spending plan

South Colonie Central School District residents will go to the polls on Tuesday, May 19th, to vote on a proposed \$88.6 million budget for the 2009-10 school year. The budget continues to support South Colonie's key educational initiatives while taking a two-to-three-year financial planning approach to the long-term fiscal problems facing the state and nation.



The polls will be open from 11 a.m. to 9 p.m. at the district's five elementary schools (see *voting locations on page 2*).

Next year's proposed budget totals \$88,610,700 and represents a **less than 1 percent (+0.38%) spending increase** over the current school year (see *complete figures on page*

3). Though equalization rates will not be known until July, the district estimates about a **1.92 percent** Colonie residential property tax increase next year based on the budget submitted to voters. This means that the average Colonie homeowner whose property is assessed at \$150,000 would pay an additional \$65.15 in school property taxes next year or about \$5.43 more per month to finance education. This is a base increase and does not reflect any STAR exemption savings a homeowner may be entitled to.

This year's budget development process began earlier than ever before. Based upon the negative financial forecasts facing New York State and the nation, the South Colonie Board of Education and district administration began the initial stages of budget planning for the 2009-10 school year back in October (see *full budget timeline on page 4*).

Continued on page 2 ... budget

NEW BUDGET AT A GLANCE

- **Total 2009-10 budget: \$88,610,700**
- **Budget-to-budget increase: 0.38%**
- **Estimated property tax increase of 1.92%**
- **Keeps district's key educational initiatives moving forward**
- **Takes a two-to-three-year financial planning approach to the long-term fiscal problems facing state & nation**

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Veeder Elementary children staying fit



Veeder Elementary students participate in Radio Disney's "Move It" program — learning about the importance of exercise in their lives. The 2009-10 proposed budget supports an expanded Physical Ed/Wellness program that will enable the district to meet all of the NYS Physical Education mandates.

Who can vote on Tuesday, May 19?

You are eligible to vote if you are a U.S. citizen, 18 years or older, and a resident of the school district for at least 30 days prior to the vote. Residents may vote at any location listed below.

Voting Sites

FOREST PARK ELEMENTARY

100 Forest Drive (869-3006)

ROESSLEVILLE ELEMENTARY

100 California Ave. (459-2157)

SADDLEWOOD ELEMENTARY

100 Lorelee Drive (456-2608)

SHAKER ROAD ELEMENTARY

512 Shaker Road (458-1440)

VEEDER ELEMENTARY

25 Veeder Drive (869-4661)

PLEASE NOTE:
All of the voting will take place in the elementary schools. Also, there is NO voting at the high school or either middle school.

... Budget

Continued from page 1

By December, the financial forecast became even worse when Governor Paterson proposed in his Executive Budget \$698 million in state aid cuts to schools state-wide in 2009-10 to help reduce New York State's growing deficit. His Deficit Reduction Plan (DRP) included about \$2.5 million in state aid cuts for South Colonie over the current school year — the highest reduction percentage in Albany County.

The district began putting together a new budget based on the Governor's "worse-case scenario" for schools, and taking into account that the state's economic downturn could last for several years.

More than \$2 million in difficult budget reductions and program adjustments were made for 2009-10 (*see full list on page 5*), keeping in mind that "the quality of South Colonie programs should be protected and that the fewest number of students should be impacted by those reductions," explained Superintendent Jonathan W. Buhner.

"Throughout this long process our efforts have focused on protecting internal programs, key initiatives, and educational opportunities for our students while keeping expenses at a minimum," Buhner added.

In February, President Obama signed off on a \$787 billion federal stimulus bill that included \$2.7 billion to help New York State schools. In April, the Governor and state lawmakers agreed to use this federal money to restore South Colonie's \$2.5 million in proposed aid cuts under the Deficit Reduction Plan. But it's important to note that even without the DRP, state aid for South Colonie in 2009-10 remains virtually the same as the current school year or "flat", not taking into account rising inflationary costs.

Did you know?

The Governor proposed a \$2.5 million cut in aid to South Colonie next school year in his Executive Budget in December. New York State lawmakers used the federal stimulus aid you may have heard about to restore that money. But it's important to note that state aid to the district will still remain virtually the same ("flat") as the current school year, not taking into account normal inflationary costs. The Legislature has also informed school districts that due to the state's growing deficit, state aid for education will remain flat for the 2010-11 school year as well.

School districts have also been told that state aid will remain flat for the 2010-11 school year as well.

In spite of next year's budget reductions, unfunded state mandates for school districts continue to drive up education costs.

But the district has found ways to save, too. In addition to the proposed staff reductions in 2009-10, South Colonie has lowered its overall debt service payments by nearly \$218,000 next year by taking the remaining unused funds on the last capital project to reduce overall debt thus controlling and reducing expenditures. The district also expects to save about \$39,000 in energy costs next year by converting the high school library from electric to hot water heat, and \$30,000 in midday transportation costs when it introduces full day kindergarten at all five elementary schools next year (*see story on page 6*).

Why not come out to one of the five elementary schools on the evening of Tuesday, May 19th, and see what fun and educational events are taking place? While you are there, why not consider taking a minute to vote?

Estimated revenues

	2008-09	2009-10	Dollar Change
Appropriated Fund Balance	\$ 1,900,000	\$ 1,400,000	- 500,000
Continuing Education	78,650	78,650	0
Interest on Investments	1,050,000	500,000	- 550,000
Miscellaneous	941,700	1,069,000	+ 127,300
Rental-BOCES	26,250	68,500	+ 42,250
State Aid*	22,553,942	22,685,380	+ 131,438
Local Taxes	61,157,370	62,331,403	+ 1,174,033
Youth Detention Center	417,288	367,567	- 49,721
Medicaid Reimbursement	150,000	110,000	- 40,000
TOTAL	\$88,275,200	\$88,610,700	+ 335,500

* As required by Education Laws 1608 and 1716, the district estimates its 2009 - 2010 State Aid to be \$22,685,380 or 25.6 percent of total expenditures.

Proposed expenditures

	2008-09	2009-10	Dollar Change
Board of Education	\$ 117,310	\$ 105,213	- 12,097
Central Administration	226,226	231,391	+ 5,165
Finance	668,277	667,478	- 799
Legal/Personnel/Public Information	540,855	534,797	- 6,058
Operation & Maintenance	5,967,347	6,009,342	+ 41,995
Information Technology	421,115	439,389	+ 18,274
Special Items	1,079,955	1,006,260	- 73,695
Instructional Improvement/Admin	2,798,313	2,903,259	+ 104,946
Regular Instruction	31,335,767	31,181,186	- 154,581
Special Education	10,830,621	11,228,215	+ 397,594
Summer School	267,700	302,018	+ 34,318
Library/Technology Instruction	2,099,556	2,137,699	+ 38,143
Pupil Services	2,521,555	2,561,789	+ 40,234
Community Services	495,938	446,217	- 49,721
Interscholastic Athletics/Co-Curricular	909,121	884,304	- 24,817
Transportation	4,178,767	4,300,138	+ 121,371
Employee Benefits	17,881,736	17,966,144	+ 84,408
Debt Service/Interfund Transfer	5,935,041	5,705,861	- 229,180
TOTAL	\$88,275,200	\$88,610,700	+ 335,500

District works to control energy costs

How are we saving?

- Since 2001, South Colonie has had an aggressive energy conservation program in place, avoiding more than \$2.5 million in energy usage.

- South Colonie has an Energy Educator who continually monitors energy usage and researches the latest technology available to keep costs under control. As a result, six schools have earned an Energy Star label from the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) – signifying that they operate more energy efficiently than 75 percent of the schools in the United States.

- South Colonie is among 18 school districts, businesses and organizations recognized by the EPA for achieving significant energy savings and leading their fields in responding to the agency's Energy Star Building Challenge.

- The district capitalized on additional New York State Excel Aid available to schools in 2006 to replace antiquated roofs and approximately 35-year-old school boilers and heating systems to make them more energy efficient, thereby lowering district-wide utility costs.

- Installing energy-efficient, auto-on, auto-off lighting fixtures in many schools and offices has substantially lowered lighting costs.

- The district uses a computer-automated system to monitor and control heating and lighting in all of its schools, and expects to continue modernizing this equipment in coming years.



Return on investment

▶ South Colonie is ranked 9th out of 85 school districts in an 11-county area for overall achievement in an analysis performed by the *Albany Business Review* newspaper.

▶ Lisha Kill Middle School and Roessleville and Veeder Elementary Schools are among 1,759 public schools, 19 charter schools, and 288 public school districts named “High Performing/Gap Closing” under the NCLB Act.

▶ South Colonie has been named a Blue Ribbon District by *Expansion Magazine* — which ranked it in the top 33 percent of school districts in the United States.

▶ 96 percent of the Class of 2008 earned a New York State Regents diploma, 54 percent of the class earned an Advanced Regents diploma, and 40 percent of the class had a Grade Point Average of 90 or higher.

▶ Nine out of 10 graduates continue their education at two- and four-year colleges, earning more than \$1.6 million in scholarship money last year.

▶ CCHS students are well rounded with three-quarters of graduates, on average, getting involved in athletics and/or student clubs and organizations. The district takes pride in developing opportunities for all students.

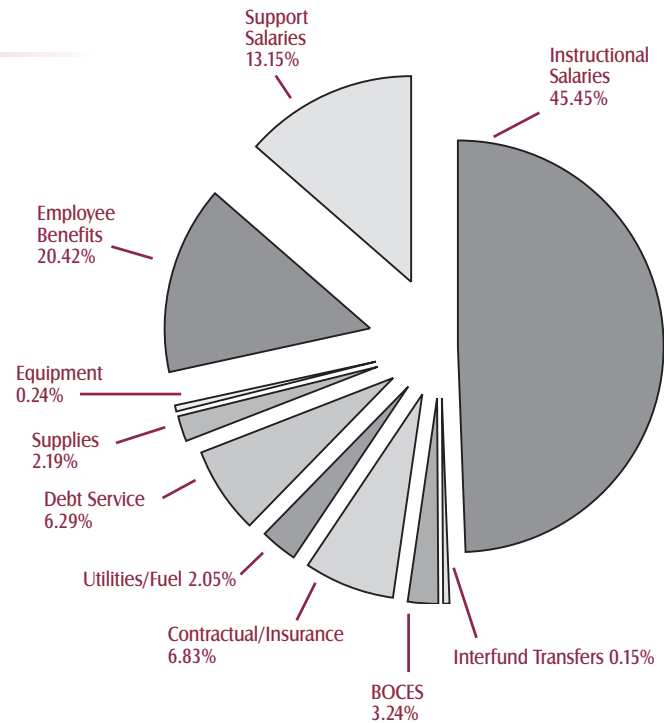
▶ In May of 2008, 179 CCHS students completed 245 Advanced Placement courses with 76 percent earning a score of three or higher on their AP exams.

For more examples visit the Expecting Excellence — Delivering Results link on the district web site

Looking back at a long budget process

- **October, 2008:** District officials begin the initial stages of budget planning for 2009-10 school year based upon negative financial forecasts.
- **November 12, 2008:** Governor David Paterson announces two-year deficit reduction plan for state with midyear cuts to education for the current school year totaling \$836 million state-wide and \$2.2 million for South Colonie.
- **November 21, 2008:** New York State lawmakers take no action on Governor’s proposed midyear budget cuts to education during special legislative session. Governor withdraws his proposal.
- **November 26, 2008:** Governor sends letter to New York State School Board Presidents and District Superintendents warning them to expect more reductions in education spending in his 2009-10 Executive Budget to help reduce the state’s debt which could reach \$47 billion in four years.
- **December 2, 2008:** Faced with these economic challenges, the South Colonie Board of Education officially begins the 2009-10 budget development process earlier than ever before “to give us more time to evaluate and find creative ways to save,” says Superintendent Jonathan Buhner. “That includes starting at ‘zero’ and rebuilding the district budget department by department.”
- **December 16, 2008:** Governor unveils 2009-10 Executive Budget calling for \$698 million in state aid cuts to schools to help reduce New York State’s growing deficit. This Deficit Reduction Plan (DRP) includes \$2.5 million in aid cuts for South Colonie over the current school year — the highest reduction percentage in Albany County.
- **January 13, 2009:** District and Board of Education begin formal 2009-10 budget development process with the first of several public meetings.
- **Mid-January, 2009:** Superintendent Buhner sends letter to South Colonie residents notifying them of the proposed state aid cuts for 2009-10 and emphasizing that the district will develop a conservative budget based on the Governor’s “worst case scenario.” In doing so, the district begins the process of planning school finances several years ahead as the economic outlook for the state and nation “is not likely to correct itself over night,” Buhner warns.
- **February 12, 2009:** District takes 2009-10 budget development process into community with the first of two public Question and Answer sessions. Superintendent Buhner unveils budget information at Veeder Elementary School. More than \$2 million in budget reductions and program adjustments are being considered, he says, to balance Governor’s proposed state aid cuts.
- **February 17, 2009:** President Obama signs off on \$787 billion federal stimulus bill that includes \$2.7 billion to help New York State schools.
- **February/March, 2009:** Local Superintendents and Board of Education members lobby state lawmakers to reinstate state aid for schools and not rely on federal stimulus funds to finance education. “While the limited federal funding sounds helpful, it is important to understand that the money is not state aid and will more than likely disappear,” Buhner said. “The real danger is if you attempt to use this temporary revenue for long-term needs such as staffing, you set up the district for a funding shortage in the next budget when the funding disappears.” District continues to develop a 2009-10 budget based on the Governor’s proposed cuts.
- **April 7, 2009:** Governor and lawmakers agree on 2009-10 state budget using federal stimulus money to eliminate proposed deficit reduction plan for schools. State budget restores the \$2.5 million in proposed cuts to South Colonie but state aid remains virtually the same as the current school year, not taking into account normal inflationary costs. State aid is frozen at 2008-09 levels for next two years. State budget also eliminates STAR rebate program for homeowners but keeps Basic STAR exemptions and Enhanced STAR senior citizen exemptions in place.
- **April 21, 2009:** South Colonie Board of Education adopts \$88.6 million proposed budget for the 2009-10 school year keeping more than \$2 million in budget reductions and program adjustments in place as it looks to budget planning for future years. The proposed 2009-10 budget has less than a 1 percent budget-to-budget increase (+ 0.38%) over the current school year and an estimated property tax increase for South Colonie homeowners of 1.92 percent. It is also important to note that the proposed budget is \$3.1 million under the state contingency budget allowance.

Proposed Budget by Percentages



ADMINISTRATION:

8.75 percent (\$7,748,422)

Administration includes: Board of Education, central administration, finance, legal services, personnel, records management, public information, central services, special items, curriculum development and supplies, regular school supplies, instruction supervision and employee benefits.

PROGRAM:

77.11 percent (\$68,328,768)

Program includes: instruction, transportation and garage, contract transportation, community service, employee benefits and transfers.

CAPITAL:

14.14 percent (\$12,533,510)

Capital includes: Operation of buildings, maintenance of buildings, judgments and claims, employee benefits and debt service.

Budget reductions & program adjustments

District and Board of Education worked to reduce costs for the 2009-2010 school year

Many experts predict that the economic downturn facing New York State and the nation is likely to stretch out for several more years. That is why the District Administration and Board of Education have developed a 2009-2010 budget with a two-to-three-year perspective in mind in regards to fiscal planning. All budget reductions and program adjustments have focused on protecting internal programs, key initiatives, and educational opportunities for our students while keeping expenses at a minimum.

- **\$955,000**

Elimination of 17 K-12 teaching positions (4% reduction) – some through hiring freezes, retirements, and attrition

- **\$350,000**

Reduction in the New York Teachers' Retirement System rate/expense for 2009-10

- **\$320,334**

Elimination of Energy Performance debt service

- **\$275,000**

Limited use of Reserve Fund to reduce costs of Workers Compensation Insurance, Tax Certioraries & Unemployment Insurance

- **\$225,000**

Elimination of 10 temporary monitor positions district-wide

- **\$217,957**

Reduction in total Debt Service, including \$600,000 less in borrowing due to unused Capital Project funds. Board of Education made the decision to use remaining funds to reduce overall debt service, helping to control/reduce expenditures in 2009-2010.

- **\$73,000**

Reduction in Teaching Assistants

- **\$60,500**

Reduction in instructional and transportation equipment

- **\$60,000**

Elimination of one Administrative Internship position

- **\$50,000**

Elimination of one social worker

- **\$39,000**

Reduction in electricity costs at the high school due to transition from electric heat to hot water heat in the library

- **\$30,000**

Elimination of one clerical position

- **\$30,000**

Elimination of one Operation & Maintenance vehicle

- **\$30,000**

Reduction of midday transportation expenses due to the transition to full-day Kindergarten in all five elementary buildings

- **\$11,400**

Elimination of Lisha Kill Administrative Aides

- **\$10,000**

Reduction in summer part-time clerical support

- **\$10,000**

Reduction in interscholastic athletic expenses due to NYS PHSA (New York State High School Athletic Association) rule changes. All teams will remain intact but follow the new reduced events schedule – decreasing travel costs, expenses for officials, etc.

- **\$ TBA**

Reductions in use of air conditioning when appropriate

Budget includes funding for full day Kindergarten in all elementary schools next fall

All five South Colonie elementary schools will begin offering full-day kindergarten next fall as supported by the 2009-10 district budget.

The district-wide program will replace half day sessions now offered at Forest Park and Veeder Elementary schools, and the Transitional Kindergarten program at Saddlewood, Shaker Road and Roessleville schools. Beginning in September 2009, South Colonie kindergarten students will begin their school day in the morning and end it in the afternoon, just like all of their elementary peers in grades 1-4.

Since 2006, the New York State Board of Regents has supported a statewide movement toward full day kindergarten for New York State school districts. The Regents believe that requiring children to start school sooner and spend more time in school will help to improve overall student achievement. The strategy is to intervene early and give all students a solid head start toward early literacy.

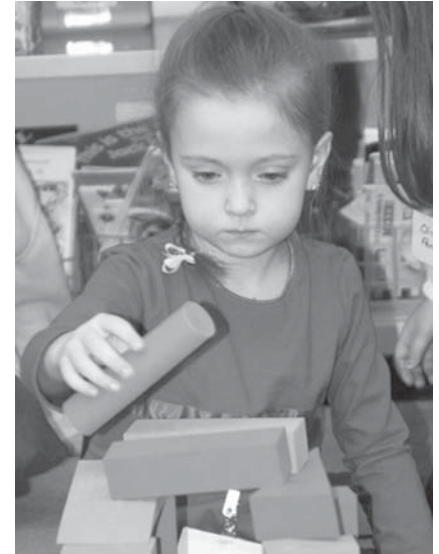
Educational research shows that early intervention such as preschool and full day kindergarten can make a significant

difference in how well children perform later on in school.

There are financial advantages to offering full day kindergarten as well. Next school year, South Colonie expects to receive additional "Full Day Kindergarten State Conversion Aid" to move to a full day program. The district also expects to save about \$30,000 next year by eliminating the need for midday transportation runs.

Educational advantages include:

- Helping children with limited or no preschool experience. For some children, kindergarten is their first school experience. These students quickly gain academic skills in literacy rich classrooms and progress socially as they interact with their peers.
- Expanding on the preschool experience. Many children who enter South Colonie kindergarten have already attended a preschool program for one or two years. These students will remain challenged and will grow academically with differentiated instruction designed for their specific needs.



- Limiting the number of students being referred to long term remediation. The district's goal is to have students "on grade level" early and feeling successful about school.
- Increasing instructional time by allowing teachers to use additional strategies and implement a comprehensive curriculum.

June textbook Return Schedule for South Colonie Private and Parochial Students

Textbooks loaned to private and parochial school students for the 2008-09 school year must be returned to the textbook depository located at Veeder Elementary School, 25 Veeder Drive, Colonie, no later than June 30, according to the following schedule:

- Monday, June 22- Thursday, June 25, 9 a.m. to 6 p.m.
- Monday, June 29- Tuesday, June 30, 9 a.m. to 6 p.m.

Questions should be directed to Textbook Coordinator Madonna Katsares at 869-3576, Ext. 2454 or 464-1009.

Did you know?

The proposed budget being submitted to voters is \$3.1 million below the Contingency Budget cap – the maximum increase allowed by law. This cap is tied to the Consumer Price Index (CPI) increase which this year is 3.8%. South Colonie budget-to-budget increase, however, is less than 1% (+0.38%). What this means is that should the budget be defeated and a contingency budget is adopted, no new equipment may be purchased and, by law, the district would have to charge outside groups for use of school facilities for normal expenses which are incurred.

May 19 Board of Education races

Theodore Thompson, David Kiehle and George Penn are running against one another for the school board seat vacated by former school board member Vernon Fonda, who resigned last December. Incumbent James 'Tim' Ryan is running unopposed for the second open board seat. New terms begin July 1.



Theodore A. 'Ted' Thompson

Theodore A. "Ted" Thompson, of 4210 Buckingham Drive, has lived in the district for 24 years. He earned a PhD in Geography from Syracuse University, a master's degree in Secondary Education and a bachelor's degree in History from Cornell University. He taught in the Peace Corps in Ethiopia for two years and in Averill Park Schools for one year.

After finishing his formal education, Thompson managed school transportation services for two school districts in central New York for six years. He then worked 23 years for the New York State Department of Transportation, retiring in 2006. He continues to do part-time transportation work in both the private and not-for-profit sectors.

Thompson has served on the district's Strategic Planning Committee, and on the Citizens Superintendent's Search Committee. He has also volunteered as clerk at numerous budget and bus votes. Thompson has been a volunteer truck driver for the Regional Food Bank since 1989. He and his wife, Norrine, have one son, Ian, who attended South Colonie Schools, graduating in 2002.

David Kiehle

David Kiehle, of 6 Fuller Place, has lived in the district for more than 38 years. Now retired, he had been employed for 39 years as a mathematics teacher at Shaker High School in Latham, and still works part time as an adjunct mathematics teacher at Siena College for the past eight years.

Kiehle earned master's degrees in Advanced Classroom Teaching of Mathematics and Educational Administration, and a bachelor's degree in Mathematics Education, from the State University at Albany. He also earned an associate's degree from Corning Community College.

Kiehle is a former President of the North Colonie Teachers Association and member of the Town of Colonie Community Partnership. He is a former Cub Scout pack leader and football coach at Shaker High School, and has helped over the years with South Colonie PTA and Friends of Music activities. He and his wife Sheila's two children, Matthew and Kara, are South Colonie graduates.



George J. Penn

George J. Penn, of 70 Mary Hodge Drive, has lived in the district for four years. He has worked since 2006 as a Government Affairs Consultant at the firm of CraneSanders. Prior to that he was employed for nine years at the New York State Assembly in various positions focusing on educational issues. He was an Assembly researcher for Communication Information Services, an analyst on Speaker Sheldon Silver's central staff for the Education Committee, and Legislative Director for Assemblyman Steven Sanders, Chairman of the Assembly Education Committee.



Penn is currently enrolled in the Masters of Policy Administration program at Marist College, and a 1995 political science graduate from the State University at Geneseo. He served four years in the U.S. Air Force as an Inventory Management Specialist from which he was honorably discharged in 1990.

Penn was recently appointed to the Board for Family and Children's Services of the Capital Region, is a member of the Veeder Elementary School PTA and the planning committee for the Capital District Triathlon Club. He is married to Jill Penn and has a stepdaughter, Lauren, who attends Veeder School.



James 'Tim' Ryan

James Tim Ryan, of 12 Windsor Drive, is seeking his fourth term on the South Colonie Board of Education.

A graduate of South Colonie Schools and Siena College, Ryan was employed as the Director of Transitional Programs for the New York State Office of Temporary and Disability Assistance until his retirement in 2005.

Ryan has served four terms (years) as South Colonie Board of Education President and two terms as board Vice President. As current President, he serves on and oversees all board committees. Ryan has been a presenter at National and New York State School Boards Association meetings/conferences and is active in the community. He and his wife, Deborah, have three children, all Colonie Central High School graduates.



Jonathan W. Buhner
Superintendent of Schools

Tim Backus
Assistant Superintendent for Instruction

Beverly Miller
Assistant Superintendent/
Management Services

David Seaver
Director of Human Resources

Board of Education
James (Tim) Ryan, President
Brian Casey, Vice President
Robert Domenici
Rick Dunn
Paul Gordon
Shelle Jaquish
Neil Johanning
Leonard Motto

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Please Don't Forget to Vote!
Tuesday, May 19th • 11 a.m. to 9 p.m.
Any of the five elementary schools



South Colonie Central School District Budget Notice

Overall Budget Proposal	Budget Adopted for the 2008-09 School Year	Budget Proposed for the 2009-10 School Year	Contingency Budget for the 2009-10 School Year*
Total Budget amount	\$ 88,275,200	\$ 88,610,700	\$ 88,395,850
Increase/decrease for the 2009-10 school year		\$ 335,500	\$ 120,650
Percentage increase (decrease) in each proposed budget		0.38%	0.14%
Change in the consumer price index		3.8%	
Resulting est. property tax levy for the 2009-10 school year		\$ 62,331,403	\$ 62,116,553
Administrative component	\$ 7,626,576	\$ 7,748,422	\$ 7,742,190
Program component	\$ 67,923,595	\$ 68,328,768	\$ 68,150,200
Capital component	\$ 12,725,029	\$ 12,533,510	\$ 12,503,460

* Statement of assumptions made in projecting a contingency budget for the 2009-10 school year, should the proposed budget be defeated. ¹

Elimination of instructional and maintenance equipment and computer purchases.

Basic STAR Exemption Impact

Estimated Basic STAR ² Exemption Savings

	Budget Proposed for the 2009-10 School Year
Basic STAR tax savings	\$ 487

The annual budget vote for the fiscal year 2009-10 by the qualified voters of the South Colonie Central School District, Albany County, New York, will be held at Forest Park, Roessleville, Saddlewood, Shaker Road, and Veeder Elementary Schools in said district on Tuesday, May 19, 2009 between the hours of 11:00 a.m. and 9:00 p.m., prevailing time in the above listed schools, at which time the polls will be opened to vote by voting ballot or machine.