

South Colonie Schools

EXPECTING EXCELLENCE — DELIVERING RESULTS

District Confronts Budget Challenges Again

- **2010-11 budget-to-budget spending increase of less than 1%**
- **Next school year's tax levy increase anticipated at 3.25% for Colonie residents**
- **District continues to work toward academic excellence despite facing major reductions in state aid**

The South Colonie Central School District will experience changes as a result of flat state aid in 2009-2010 and significantly reduced state aid (- \$3.7 million) for 2010-2011.

Over the last two years school leaders have had to balance trying to maintain academic gains and important initiatives with constructing budgets which hold down local property taxes. This year, under Governor Paterson's Executive Budget proposal, South Colonie is facing a **\$3.7 million or 15 %** reduction in state aid.

"Our goal has always been to develop a budget which includes the quality programs parents and community members expect at a cost we hope they can support," said Superintendent Jonathan Buhner.

To do this, a number of difficult decisions have been made on the expenditure side of the 2010-11 budget. Additional fund balance will need to be applied to offset the loss in New York State school aid.

Not knowing if the economic downturn facing New York State and the nation will continue, the South Colonie District Administration and Board of Education plan on using about half of the fund balance in the event that we face another year of flat (0%) or additional state aid reductions in 2011-12.

The 2010-11 budget development process began in January and has continued for three months. Throughout this process our efforts have focused on protecting academic integrity, internal programming, key initiatives, and as many student activities as possible.

"As a District we are sensitive to the financial challenges that our community is facing in this recession and we realize that the massive reduction in state aid (\$3.7 million) should not result in significantly higher property taxes," Buhner explained. "With that said, we have made approximately **\$3 million in reductions** to the District's overall expenses. This is certainly one of the most challenging years that districts have faced in decades."

Next year's budget-to-budget increase is projected at less than **1% (+0.89%)**. It is estimated that the overall **tax levy will increase of 3.25% for Colonie residents, 5.05% for Niskayuna residents, and 7.15% for Guilderland residents.** Increases have been caused by the overall reduction in state aid.

Important Budget Dates to Remember

Public Hearing on Budget

Tuesday, May 4, 7 p.m.,
Saddlewood Elementary
School Cafetorium

Voting on the Budget

Tuesday, May 18, 11 a.m. to 9 p.m.,
Voting held at the District's five
elementary school buildings

District Budget Reductions and Program Adjustments

- ▶ Elimination of BOCES Safety Administrative position
Duties will be rolled into existing administrative positions.
- ▶ Elimination of the Operation & Maintenance Supervisor position
Job description adjusted and responsibilities have been reallocated.
- ▶ Elimination of 8 teaching positions, Grades K-6
- ▶ Elimination of 8 teaching positions, Grades 7-12
- ▶ Elimination of two Teaching Assistant positions
- ▶ Elimination of 6.9 Special Education Teaching positions
- ▶ Reduction of 20 Temporary/ Probationary Monitor positions District-wide)
- ▶ Elimination of one Guidance position
The District has been working to address staffing reductions with hiring freezes, retirements and attrition. Adjustments will continue to be made.
- ▶ Reduction in part time evening building monitors
Duties to be reassigned to Head Building Custodians.
- ▶ Reduction in clerical support at the high school
Assignments and duties will be adjusted.
- ▶ Reduction in overall energy costs across the District
Due to ongoing energy management strategies, the District projects a reduction in overall utility expenses.

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Budget Reductions/ Program Adjustments

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- ▶ Elimination of one, full time bus run

Routes will be changed to absorb previous stops and savings will be realized in fuel and personnel savings.

- ▶ Reduction in Transportation Department clerical support

- ▶ Reduction in overall capital project payments

The District restructured bond payments to get lower rates.

- ▶ 20% Reduction in building supply expenses

Supplies, equipment and other expenses

- ▶ Reduction in Athletic expenses/coaching positions

All teams will remain intact, but duties will be adjusted based upon participation and overall student numbers.

- ▶ Reduction in Operation & Maintenance supplies and equipment

Adjustments have been made.

- ▶ Elimination of student field trips for the 2010-2011 school year

Adjustments to be made District-wide based upon specific building/student needs. Additionally, the District will explore opportunities through the use of technology for virtual field trips.

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Summarizing the Budget Process

While some indicators are positive and we all hope the economy turns around, some experts predict that the recession facing New York State and the nation is likely to last a little longer. For this reason, the South Colonie District Administration and Board of Education have developed a 2010-2011 budget with a three-year perspective in mind regarding fiscal planning.

Throughout this long and detailed process, our efforts have focused on protecting internal programs, key academic initiatives, and fundamental educational opportunities for our students. **Next school year's budget-to-budget increase is projected at less than 1 percent (+0.89 percent). The estimated tax levy increase will be 3.25 percent for Colonie residents, 5.05% for Niskayuna residents, and 7.15% Guilderland residents.**

In summary, we believe we have developed a budget which continues to provide the quality programs and services our parents and community members expect while adjusting to less financial support from New York State. Finally, we will continue to work with our elected officials to advocate for reasonable levels of state support.

- ▶ Elimination of K-6 summer school
Academic intervention will be provided during the regular school year.

- ▶ Reduction in professional development
Critical training will still take place using federal funding and the District will work to develop more turn key in-house training.

- ▶ Elimination of BOCES Arts in Education and enrichment programs
In-house programming will be preserved in art and music as well as internal enrichment support in our different buildings.

- ▶ A 20% reduction in after school clubs and activities
Restructuring as needed. Academic support clubs will have first priority.

- ▶ Reduction in substitute expenses
This is a result of a reduction in conferences and field trips.