

The 2008-2009 budget

South Colonie residents approve \$88.2 million district budget on May 20 by a 1,439-910 vote

South Colonie Central School District residents went to the polls on May 20, 2008, and approved a \$88.2 million budget for the 2008-09 school year by a vote of 1,439-910. The budget continues to support a strong educational program, small class sizes and a wide range of academic intervention services to help all students succeed.

The 2008-09 budget totals \$88,275,200 and represents a 5.26 percent spending increase over the current school year (see complete figures on page 2). Though equalization

NEW BUDGET AT A GLANCE

- **Total 2008-09 budget: \$88,275,200**
- **Budget-to-budget increase: 5.26%**
- **Projected property tax increase of 3.92%**
- **Maintains facilities and most existing educational programs**
- **Continues wide range of academic intervention services**

rates will not be known until July, the district projects about a 3.92 percent Colonie residential property tax increase next year based on the budget approved by voters. This means that the average Colonie homeowner whose property is assessed at \$150,000 would pay an additional \$125.73 in school property taxes next year or about \$10.48 more per month to finance education. This is a base increase and does not reflect any STAR savings a homeowner may be entitled to.

"We thank everyone for their continued support of our schools and our children especially in these difficult economic times,"

said Board of Education President James Tim Ryan. "The school board and district administration devoted a significant amount of time formulating a budget that would meet the needs of our students and still be acceptable to our taxpayers. Every line of the budget was scrutinized from day one."

A lengthy process

The South Colonie Board of Education and administration had been working since January to put together a district budget for the 2008-09 school year. This included three rounds of spending reductions made in March and April. Those reductions lowered the original proposed budget figure for next school year from \$90,696,784 to \$88,275,200, or by more than \$2.4 million.

Since 80 percent of all school budgets are related to personnel costs (salaries, health insurance, retirement expenses), the district looked for ways to reduce these costs without dramatically affecting class sizes and the overall instructional program.

Major budget increases

Benefits	+ \$536,290	+3.0%
Instruction	+ \$1,476,550	+4.9%
Special Ed	+ \$804,988	+8.0%
Operation & Maintenance	+ \$306,552	+5.4%
Transportation ..	+ \$118,148	+2.9%
Library/Media Instruction	+ \$53,617	+2.6%

Twenty-three instructional and non-instructional positions were to be eliminated in the 2008-09 budget saving approximately \$1,415,474 in salary and benefit costs. These positions are spread out over South Colonie's eight schools, and include regular and special education teachers and teaching assistants (some are retirees who won't be replaced) and 10 (full time equivalent) school monitors. Some of the teaching cuts are also necessitated by reduced student enrollment.

The district will also save in other areas in 2008-09 by reducing some after school program hours and evening library hours, field trips, staff development and conferences, and athletic chaperones, equipment and coaching clinics. All together, this will save the district nearly \$80,000 (See chart on page 2).

In spite of the cutbacks, unfunded state mandates for school districts continue to drive up education costs. For instance, the district will pay about \$194,000 more to send students to area charter schools (required by law if their parents request it) and special education costs are increasing over \$800,000.

Several other factors are pushing up the cost of education here and in most school districts across the state. Employee health insurance continues to escalate from one year to the next and legally-required district contributions to New York State retirement systems are increasing as well.

Employee benefits alone account for a \$536,290 increase in the 2008-09 budget. Making up some of the rest of the projected increase are instruction (+\$1,476,550), student transportation (+\$118,148), operations and maintenance (+\$306,552), and library & technology instruction (+\$53,617).

Budget reductions

District/School Board work to reduce costs in 2008-2009 school year

The South Colonie district administration and Board of Education worked for several months to reduce costs and expenditures for the 2008-09 school year.

The first draft of the proposed budget presented to the public in January totaled \$90,696,784 and called for a 9.25 percent spending increase over the current school year. Several adjustments were made before a budget was adopted by the school board. The result: the 2008-09 budget approved by voters was scaled back by \$2,421,584. It now totals \$88,275,200 and calls for a 5.26 percent spending increase. The chart below illustrates some examples of budget savings realized from the original draft.

\$1,415,474

Salary and benefit cost reductions for eliminating 23 instructional and non-instructional positions

\$41,750

Reduction in hours of after school programs (Elementary Computer Assisted Instruction, Homework Clubs, middle school study halls, Saturday Detention)

\$18,000

Cuts in staff development and travel conferences

\$8,000

Field trip reductions

\$7,000

Eliminating library evening hours

\$4,500

Cuts in athletic chaperones, equipment and coaching clinics

Estimated revenues

	2007-08	2008-09	Dollar Change
Appropriated Fund Balance	\$ 1,900,000	\$ 1,900,000	0
Continuing Education	85,000	78,650	- 6,350
Interest on Investments	1,055,000	1,050,000	- 5,000
Miscellaneous	880,350	941,700	+ 61,350
Rental-BOCES	26,000	26,250	+ 250
State Aid*	20,569,633	22,553,942	+ 1,984,309
Local Taxes	58,848,417	61,157,370	+ 2,308,953
Youth Detention Center	300,000	417,288	+ 117,288
Medicaid Reimbursement	200,000	150,000	- 50,000
TOTAL	\$83,864,400	\$88,275,200	+ 4,410,800

* As required by Education Laws 1608 and 1716, the district estimates its 2008 - 2009 State Aid to be \$22,553,942 or 25.5 percent of total expenditures.

Proposed expenditures

	2007-08	2008-09	Dollar Change
Board of Education	\$ 118,326	\$ 117,310	- 1,016
Central Administration	213,836	226,226	+ 12,390
Finance	638,608	668,277	+ 29,669
Legal/Personnel/Public Information	511,356	540,855	+ 29,499
Operation & Maintenance	5,660,795	5,967,347	+ 306,552
Information Technology	407,764	421,115	+ 13,351
Special Items	1,112,335	1,079,955	- 32,380
Instructional Improvement/Admin	2,497,791	2,798,313	+ 300,522
Regular Instruction	29,859,217	31,335,767	+ 1,476,550
Special Education	10,025,633	10,830,621	+ 804,988
Summer School	263,096	267,700	+ 4,604
Library/Technology Instruction	2,045,939	2,099,556	+ 53,617
Pupil Services	2,306,629	2,521,555	+ 214,926
Community Services	383,217	495,938	+ 112,721
Interscholastic Athletics/Co-Curricular	836,547	909,121	+ 75,574
Transportation	4,060,619	4,178,767	+ 118,148
Employee Benefits	17,345,446	17,881,736	+ 536,290
Debt Service/Interfund Transfer	5,557,246	5,935,041	+ 377,795
TOTAL	\$83,864,400	\$88,275,200	+ 4,410,800

The budget by Administration, Program and Capital Expenses

**ADMINISTRATION:
8.64 percent (\$7,626,576)**

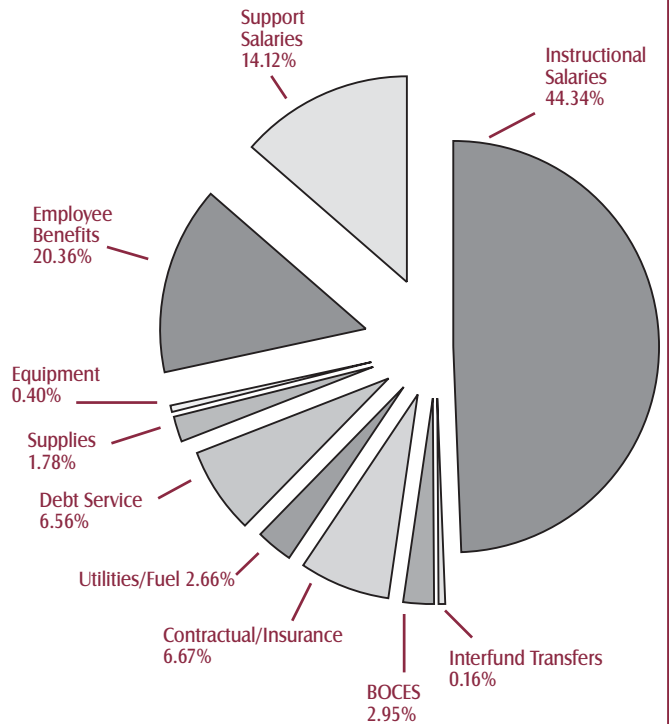
Administration includes: Board of Education, central administration, finance, legal services, personnel, records management, public information, central services, special items, curriculum development and supplies, regular school supplies, instruction supervision and employee benefits.

**PROGRAM:
76.95 percent (\$67,923,595)**

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

**CAPITAL:
14.41 percent (\$12,725,029)**

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



**2008-2009 Budget
by Percentages**

Domenici/Jaquish re-elected to school board

Robert L. Domenici

Robert L. Domenici, of 38 Ausable Forks, was re-elected to a third, five-year term with 1,610 votes. He has lived in the district for 12 years. Domenici is CEO of Strategic Response Initiatives, a homeland security training company. He retired in 2003 as a Lieutenant Colonel in the U.S. Army, and was presented a Legion of Merit Award from President Bush. He was formerly assigned as the Weapons of Mass Destruction/Homeland Security Liaison Officer for the Division of Military and Naval Affairs, and is a former member of the New York State and Governor's Weapons of Mass Destruction Equipment Grant Program Task Force.

He began his military career in 1981 and is a distinguished military graduate of St. Johns University's ROTC program. He earned a bachelor's degree from Queen's College and a master's degree in Public Administration from Marist College. He also earned a master's degree in Strategic Study from the U.S. Army Senior Service College. Domenici is a full Colonel in the New York State Army Guard, a member of the Knights of Columbus and a volunteer for veterans.

Shelle E. Jaquish

Shelle E. Jaquish, of 26 Oliver Street, was re-elected to a second, five-year term with 1,486 votes. She has lived in the South Colonie Central School District for 37 years.

Jaquish worked as an assistant in Special Education at Roessville Elementary and Sand Creek Middle School from 1977 to 1985. She worked for the New York State Lottery for 11 years before accepting a position at New York State Agriculture and Markets. Jaquish has one daughter, Cashell, who is a graduate of Colonie Central High School.

A former PTA president at Maywood Elementary School, Jaquish is also a former member of the Midway Fire Department Auxiliary and a communicant of St. Clare's Church. She has been very involved in church activities over the years serving on the Parish Council and the Social Concerns Committee. She was also a facilitator of St. Clare's Divorced and Separated Group. She is currently teaching religious education classes for seventh graders.