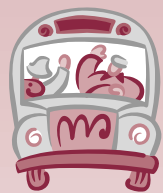


in

south  
colonie  
central  
schools



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# focus

Preparing World Class Citizens



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## The 2011-2012 budget

### South Colonie residents to vote May 17th on proposed \$91.1 million school spending plan

South Colonie Central School District residents will go to the polls on Tuesday, May 17th, to vote on a proposed \$91.1 million budget for the 2011-12 school year. The budget continues to support South Colonie's key educational initiatives despite a second straight year of cuts in state aid to the district over the current school year.



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).

In what has been yet another challenging budget development process again this year, the school board adopted a proposed budget in

April totaling \$91,177,000. The budget represents a 1.99 percent spending increase over the current school year (see complete figures on page 3). Though equalization rates will not be known until August, the district estimates about a 2.93 percent school residential and business 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 \$105.79 in school property taxes next year or about \$8.82 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.

A variety of factors hampered the 2011-12 budget development process, which got underway in

*Continued on page 2 ... budget*

## NEW BUDGET AT A GLANCE

- Total 2011-12 budget: \$91,177,000
- Budget-to-budget increase: 1.99%
- State aid decrease of: \$530,898
- Estimated South Colonie property tax levy increase of 2.93%
- District continues to work toward academic excellence despite facing major reduction in state aid



The Sand Creek Middle School Cast & Crew student actors staged Willy Wonka as their spring musical this year.

## Who can vote on Tuesday, May 17?

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 Time

**11 AM to 9 PM**

## 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*

January with several public planning sessions. Due to the recession and New York State's current fiscal crisis, 2011-12 will mark the third straight year the district experienced a downturn in state support for education. This includes another state aid loss in 2011-12 of nearly \$531,000, on the heels of a \$3.7 million state aid loss for the current school year, and flat state aid in 2009-10. Making up for those lost revenues has been very challenging for the district as costs continue to rise.

As a result of the massive loss in state funding for public education, the district has been forced to make about \$2.3 million in reductions to overall expenses for next school year. This includes cutting administrative positions, reducing teaching positions and restructuring support positions (*for a full list of reductions see page 4*). The district will seek to reduce most of these positions through attrition and the shifting of personnel.

Additionally, the district will continue to carefully apply part of its fund balance next year to offset rising expenses and possible further reductions in state aid.

### **There is good news**

Throughout this difficult time, South Colonie has stayed "student focused" in its budget decision making, said Superintendent Jonathan Buhner, maintaining quality programs that will help students perform academically. This includes maintaining reasonable class sizes, Universal Pre-Kindergarten and Full Day Kindergarten at their current levels, Academic Intervention Services and support for students with special needs. The district will also provide early literacy/reading support for K-4 students during the summer and implement new after school support opportunities at the elementary level next school year to encourage youngsters to explore future studies and careers in the fields of STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics).

## Did you know?

**This is the third straight year South Colonie has experienced a downturn in state support for education. This includes flat state aid in 2009-2010, reduced state aid (- \$3.7 million) for 2010-2011, and reduced state aid in 2011-2012 (-\$531,000). This has made it increasingly difficult for school districts to maintain academic gains and important initiatives while constructing budgets which hold down local property taxes.**

### **Looking ahead**

South Colonie is already bracing for another difficult budget planning process for the 2012-13 school year. The Federal Education Jobs Funds aid, which is a federal grant that totals over \$1.1 million, will expire in 2011-12 and state funding for education could again be reduced in the next New York State budget.

"Due to the overall uncertainty related to the economy and state aid, the District will need to take a multi-year approach to budgeting," Buhner said. "During this recession, and despite losing million of dollars in state aid, we have worked very hard to keep our tax rate as low as possible. Going forward in these difficult economic times, we must continue to be thoughtful about how we use every resource."

**Estimated revenues**

	2010-11	2011-12	Dollar Change
Appropriated Fund Balance	\$ 5,670,000	\$ 5,200,000	- 470,000
Continuing Education	78,250	78,200	- 50
Interest on Investments	200,000	100,000	- 100,000
Miscellaneous	1,709,800	1,900,400	+ 190,600
Rental-BOCES	104,500	93,250	- 11,250
State Aid*	20,105,502	19,574,604	- 530,898
Federal Education Job Fund Aid	0	1,123,029	+ 1,123,029
Local Taxes	60,867,925	62,652,949	+1,785,024
Youth Detention Center	359,023	354,568	- 4,455
Medicaid Reimbursement	300,000	100,000	- 200,000
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$89,395,000</b>	<b>\$91,177,000</b>	<b>+ 1,782,000</b>

\* As required by Education Laws 1608 and 1716, the district estimates its 2011 - 2012 State Aid to be \$19,574,604 or 21.47 percent of total expenditures.

**Proposed expenditures**

	2010-11	2011-12	Dollar Change
Board of Education	\$ 68,344	\$ 71,867	+ 3,523
Chief School Administrator	238,440	237,565	- 875
Finance	710,006	702,019	- 7,987
Legal/Personnel/Public Information	547,406	496,927	- 50,479
Operation & Maintenance	5,786,376	5,696,856	- 89,520
Messenger & Mailing	196,325	192,390	- 3,935
Information Technology	458,933	351,197	- 107,736
Special Items	880,167	860,674	- 19,493
Instructional Improvement/Admin	2,869,431	2,712,419	- 157,012
Regular Instruction	30,845,221	32,032,376	+ 1,187,155
Special Education	11,375,314	11,105,716	- 269,598
Summer School	190,736	230,736	+ 40,000
Library/Technology Instruction	2,196,801	2,230,610	+ 33,809
Pupil Services	2,582,286	2,413,040	- 169,246
Community Services	437,273	432,768	- 4,505
Co-Curricular Activities	196,937	200,105	+ 3,168
Interscholastic Athletics	668,257	644,691	- 23,566
Transportation	4,178,323	4,194,762	+ 16,439
Employee Benefits	19,253,303	20,818,635	+ 1,565,332
Debt Service	5,248,507	5,100,087	- 148,420
Interfund Transfers	145,000	153,000	+ 8,000
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$89,395,000</b>	<b>\$91,177,000</b>	<b>+ 1,782,000</b>

## District recognized for efforts to control energy costs

### How are we saving?

- Since 2001, South Colonie has had an aggressive energy conservation program in place, avoiding more than \$3.3 million in energy usage.

- South Colonie was recognized in 2010 by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) for the "superior energy management of our school."

- 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, South Colonie 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.

- 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.

# Budget reductions & program adjustments

## District and Board of Education worked to reduce costs for the 2011-2012 school year

The South Colonie Central School District will experience additional reductions and program adjustments totaling about \$2.3 million during the 2011-12 school year as a result of a three-year downturn in state support for education. This includes flat state aid in 2009-2010, reduced state aid (- \$3.7 million) for 2010-2011, and reduced aid in 2011-2012 (- \$530,898). 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.

- ▶ **Eliminating, combining and restructuring of administrative positions**
- ▶ **Reduction of teaching positions District-wide**
- ▶ **Reduction in Teaching Assistant positions (2)**
- ▶ **Additional reductions in the Athletic Department budget**
- ▶ **Reduction in monitor positions District-wide**
- ▶ **Elimination of (2) full time bus driver positions through attrition**
- ▶ **Elimination/restructuring of Literacy Coach position**
- ▶ **Elimination of AV/TV position at Colonie Central High School**
- ▶ **Suspend replacement of the Supervisor of Pupil Services**
- ▶ **Elimination of school psychologist Internship position**
- ▶ **Reduction in library monitors**
- ▶ **Additional reductions in Operation and Maintenance (O & M) budget**
- ▶ **Forego the scheduled replacement of an Operations & Maintenance vehicle**
- ▶ **Elimination of the After School Assistance Program**
- ▶ **Reduction in substitute teacher cost**
- ▶ **Salary savings based on Teacher and Teaching Assistant retirements**
- ▶ **Salary savings based on Social Worker retirement**
- ▶ **Reduction in Special Needs expenses — bringing programs back to District**
- ▶ **Reduction in library book purchases**
- ▶ **Savings realized by adjusting bus routes**

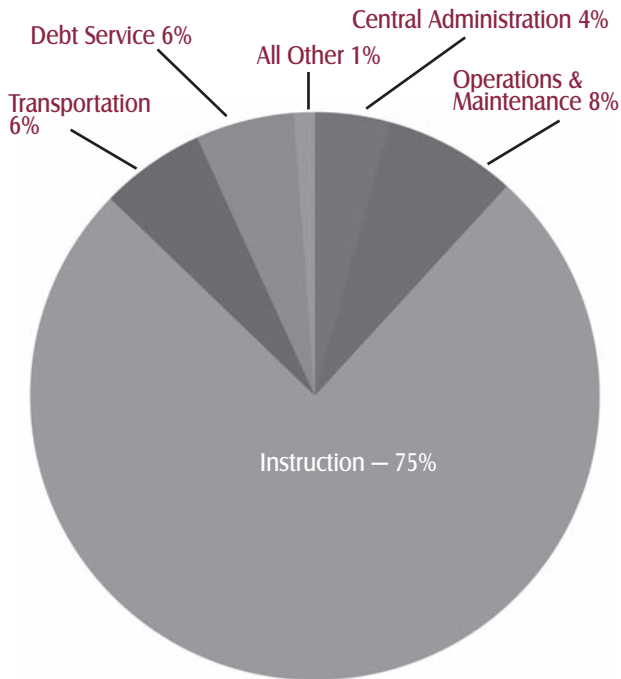


For more examples see the January 2011 newsletter on the district web site.

## A great return on investment!

- ▶ South Colonie is consistently ranked high among 85 school districts in an 11-county area in an analysis performed by the Albany *Business Review* newspaper
- ▶ 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.
- ▶ While all students are now required to graduate with a New York State Regents diploma, 58 percent of the Class of 2010 earned an Advanced Regents diploma, and 26 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.
- ▶ Colonie Central High School students are well rounded with 65% of students, on average, being involved in athletics and/or student clubs and various organizations. The district takes pride in developing a wide range of opportunities for all students.

## 2011-2012 Budget Breakdown



### Contingency Budget Information

Under NYS law, school boards can submit a budget to voters a maximum of two times. If the budget is defeated twice, the board must adopt a contingency budget, which would put a cap on new spending based on the Consumer Price Index. For 2011-12, the state has set that cap at 1.60%. The items exempt for this cap include: debt service, tax certiorari settlements and costs associated with enrollment growth. If South Colonie is forced to adopt a contingency budget, it would require additional cuts of about \$310,087.

### Estimated Property Tax Rate

Beginning in the 2009-2010 school year, South Colonie switched to a single property tax rate. This change benefited families and others who own residential property.

Year	Estimated Tax Rate per \$1,000 of Assessed Value		
	Colonie	Niskayuna	Guilderland
2010-11	* \$24.05	16.11	18.94
2011-12	* \$24.75	16.58	19.50

\* Tax rates and increases for next year are estimates only. The district will set final tax rates in August based on final assessment figures and equalization rates as provided by the NYS Office of Real Property Services.

# Budget Summary

New York State law requires all school districts to present their budgets divided into three expenditure categories – Program, Administration and Capital – and compare them to last year’s amount. South Colonie’s three-part budget breaks down as follows:

### PROGRAM BUDGET CATEGORY

	<u>2010-2011</u>	<u>2011-2012</u>
Dollar amount	\$68,882,587	\$71,345,814
% of Total Budget	77.0%	78.1%

The Program category includes: salaries and benefits of teachers and staff who deliver pupil services (guidance, health, library/media, etc.), textbooks and equipment, co-curricular activities, athletics and transportation costs (except bus purchases).

### ADMINISTRATIVE BUDGET CATEGORY

	<u>2010-2011</u>	<u>2011-2012</u>
Dollar amount	\$8,646,056	\$8,102,486
% of Total Budget	9.70%	8.90%

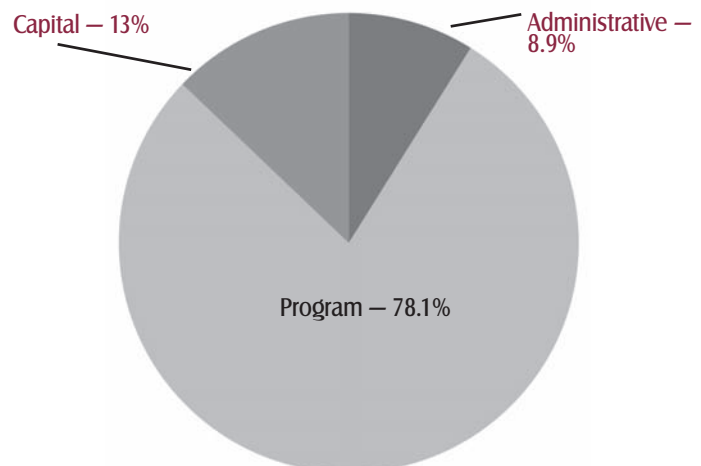
The Administrative category includes: salaries and benefits of administrators, supervisors and administrative clerical staff, public information and printing, curriculum and staff development, school board costs, tax collection and some legal costs.

### CAPITAL BUDGET CATEGORY

	<u>2010-2011</u>	<u>2011-2012</u>
Dollar amount	\$11,866,357	\$11,728,700
% of Total Budget	13.3%	13.0%

The Capital category includes: salaries and benefits of maintenance and custodial staff, debt service on buildings, school bus purchases, utilities, general insurance and tax certiorari and court-ordered costs.

### 2011-2012 BUDGET SUMMARY



## Fisher named next Asst. Superintendent for Management Services

Sherri L.D. Fisher is South Colonie's next Assistant Superintendent for Management Services and Strategic Planning effective July 1. She was appointed to that post by the Board of Education on April 5 and will replace Beverly Miller, who is retiring.

Originally from Potsdam, Fisher has worked exclusively in the field of public school finance for the past 20 years. She comes to South Colonie from the Schodack Central School District (Rensselaer County) where she was appointed Assistant Superintendent for Business and Support Services last July. Prior to that, she worked nine years for Schodack Schools as Director of Business and Support Services.

At Schodack, a three-school, 1,000-student school district in Castleton, Fisher was responsible for financial management, budgeting, facilities, transportation, food service, health and safety, technology and non-instructional personnel administration.

Prior to her employment with Schodack Schools, Fisher was a State Aid and Financial Planning Specialist with the Questar III BOCES from 1990-2000. In that position she provided financial consultation to more than 600 New York State public school districts and BOCES through the State Aid and Financial Planning Service in the projection of state aid revenues, compliance with fiscal mandates and maximization of direct resources.

"We are very pleased to welcome Sherri to our management team," said Superintendent Jonathan Buhner. "She brings a long history of exemplary service in community school districts as well as at the state financial planning level."

Fisher said she is equally excited to come on board and have the opportunity to serve the children and community of South Colonie.

"Education has always, and will continue, to play a major role in my life," Fisher said. "I began my first job in public school finance 21 years ago and haven't looked back. I love it. As an educator and as a parent, I recognize and value the importance of a rich academic, social and cultural experience where children, and the adults around them, continue to learn and grow. I carry this philosophy with me in my work."

Fisher earned a master's degree in Educational Administration and Policy Studies from the State University at Albany, an MBA from Clarkson University and a bachelor's degree in Business Administration from the State University at Oswego. She is permanently NYS certified as a School District Administrator, School Business Administrator and School Administrator/Supervisor. She is a member of the NYS Association of School Business Officials and the Capital Area School Development Association.

The district had 46 applicants for South Colonie Assistant Superintendent for Management Services, a position that opened up earlier this school year when Beverly Miller announced her intentions to retire. She is one of six longtime South Colonie administrators who will retire at the end of the school year. Miller has held her current position since the fall of 2006 and has had a long career serving South Colonie Schools.



Sherri Fisher

### UPK Lottery Application Deadline is May 19

The deadline for applications for next school year's Universal Pre-Kindergarten (UPK) program lottery is 4 p.m., May 19, at the District Office. No exceptions. The lottery will be drawn on the following day and notification letters will be mailed out on May 23.

The New York State Universal Pre-Kindergarten Program (UPK) is a state and district-funded program that provides educationally-based, high-quality pre-kindergarten to four-year-old children. The program is free to all eligible children. UPK provides developmentally appropriate activities to help 4-year olds prepare for Kindergarten. All UPK classes are taught by New York State certified teachers.

For more information on UPK and an application, visit the district web site and select Universal Pre-K from the drop down menu under Academics or contact Registrar David Pace at 869-3576, Ext. 2454.

### June textbook Return Schedule for South Colonie Private and Parochial Students

Textbooks loaned to private and parochial school students for the 2010-11 school year must be returned to the textbook depository located at Veeder Elementary School, 25 Veeder Drive, Colonie, no later than June 30th, according to the following schedule:

- Monday, June 20- Thursday, June 23, 9 a.m. to 3 p.m.
- Monday, June 27- Thursday, June 30, 9 a.m. to 3 p.m.

Questions should be directed to Textbook Coordinator Madonna Katsares at 869-3576, Ext. 2471 or 464-1009.

## Two seats open on May 17th Board of Education ballot

**Edward Sim and Daniel Waters face off for one board seat  
Incumbent Neil Johanning running unopposed for the other**

**There are two Board of Education seats up for election on the May 17th ballot — each carrying new five-year terms beginning July 1. Newcomers Edward Sim and Daniel Waters are running against one another for the seat now held by Paul Gordon. Gordon is not seeking re-election after serving for 24 years. Incumbent Neil Johanning is running unopposed for re-election for the second open seat. The candidate bios are on this page.**

### Daniel Waters

Daniel Waters, of 201 North Amherst Ave., Schenectady, is running for his first term on the South Colonie Board of Education. Waters is a 1991 graduate of Colonie Central High School and is employed as a Design Engineer with the General Electric Co. He has lived in the District as a homeowner for 11 years. Waters earned a bachelor's degree in Engineering from the State University of New York Institute of Technology and an associate's degree in Applied Science from Hudson Valley Community College. He and his wife, Jenifer, have three children: two daughters who attend Veeder Elementary School, and a 4-year-old son.



### Edward Sim

Edward Sim, of 4 Milton Court, is running for his first term on the South Colonie Board of Education. Sim is a lifelong resident of the District, a 1975 graduate of Colonie Central High School and a 1998 inductee into the CCHS Hall of Fame.



Sim is a retired Colonie Police Lieutenant. He joined the department in 1977 as a dispatcher and became a police officer in 1981. He rose up through the ranks to Investigator, Sergeant and Lieutenant. During his career he was prominently involved as a manager in the Traffic Safety Division and worked diligently

to reduce underage drinking accidents. In 1984 he was awarded the Medal of Valor. He retired from the police department in 2004 to take a position as Assistant Superintendent of Public Works for the Village of Colonie. He is still employed there today and involved in many youth activities with the village.

Sim has been a member of the Colonie Volunteer Fire Co. for 36 years working as an ambulance EMT and serving as Chief, President and Treasurer. He was named Firefighter of the Year in 1987. He also served as player agent and a member of the Board of Directors of the Colonie Little League, merit badge counselor for Boy Scout Troop 278, and Chairman of the Village Traffic Commission. He and his wife, Sue, have three children, all CCHS graduates.



### Neil Johanning

Neil Johanning is running unopposed on May 17th for re-election to the South Colonie Board of Education. He has served on the school board since 2005.

Johanning has lived in South Colonie for more than 25 years and is employed as Director of IT Services for the New York State Department of Health. In addition to being a member of the Board of Education, he has been involved with South Colonie schools through the PTAs at Shaker Road Elementary, Sand Creek Middle School, and Colonie Central High School. He has served on many District-wide committees for South Colonie.

He is a past Director for the Capital District PTA and currently the Education Coordinator for the NYS PTA Board of Directors, representing PTA on several New York State Education Department committees. He is involved with lobbying efforts on behalf of education at the New York State Legislature for both the Board of Education and the PTA.

He holds a bachelor's degree in Mathematics from Siena College and a master's degree in Computer Science from Union College.

He and his wife, Maryann, have three children who all attended South Colonie schools.



**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**  
Brian Casey, President  
Leonard Motto, Vice President  
Robert Domenici  
Rick Dunn  
Paul Gordon  
Shelle Jaquish  
Neil Johanning  
David Kiehle  
James (Tim) Ryan

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**Tuesday, May 17th • 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 2010-11 School Year	Budget Proposed for the 2011-12 School Year	Contingency Budget for the 2011-12 School Year*
Total Budget amount	\$ 89,395,000	\$ 91,177,000	\$ 90,866,913
Increase/decrease for the 2011-12 school year		\$ 1,782,000	\$ 310,087
Percentage increase (decrease) in each proposed budget		1.99%	
Change in the consumer price index		1.60%	
Resulting est. property tax levy for the 2011-12 school year		\$ 62,652,949	\$ 62,342,862
Administrative component	\$ 8,646,056	\$ 8,102,486	\$ 8,102,186
Program component	\$ 68,882,587	\$ 71,345,814	\$ 71,037,527
Capital component	\$ 11,866,357	\$ 11,728,700	\$ 11,727,200

\* Statement of assumptions made in projecting a contingency budget for the 2011-12 school year, should the proposed budget be defeated.<sup>1</sup>

Elimination of all non-contingent items: equipment purchases (\$115,204) and reduction in Universal Pre-K program: elimination of 4 teaching/teaching assistant positions (\$194,883)

### Basic STAR Exemption Impact

Estimated Basic STAR<sup>2</sup> Exemption Savings

	Budget Proposed for the 2011-12 School Year
Basic STAR tax savings	\$ 497.70

The annual budget vote for the fiscal year 2011-12 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 17, 2011 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.

<sup>1</sup> Provide a statement of assumptions made in estimating the contingency budget pursuant to section 2023 of the Education Law.

<sup>2</sup> The basic school tax relief (STAR) exemption is authorized by section 425 of the Real Property Tax Law.