

# South Colonie Schools

**EXPECTING EXCELLENCE — DELIVERING RESULTS**

## *The Good News and the Bad News ...*

### District Confronts Reductions in State Support for Education But Maintains Focus on Achievement Gains & Student Performance

- **2011-12 budget-to-budget spending increase of 1.99%**
- **Next school year's tax levy increase anticipated at 2.93%**
- **Despite continued losses in state aid, the District continues to move forward on many key initiatives**

The South Colonie Central School District will experience additional adjustments 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 (- \$505,000).

Over the last three years school leaders have worked to maintain academic achievement gains while constructing budgets which limit expenses. This year, under Governor Cuomo's Executive Budget, South Colonie is facing an additional **\$505,000 cut** in state aid — making the two-year total loss in educational state aid about \$4.2 million.

"We continue to look for and implement solutions which allows us to maintain the quality programs parents and community members expect while dealing with significant losses in state support for education," said Superintendent Jonathan Buhner.

In order to accomplish this, a number of difficult decisions have been made on the expenditure side of the proposed 2011-12 budget, and some fund balance will be applied to help offset the loss of state aid.

South Colonie has always used its reserves (fund balance) in a thoughtful manner to help the district get through difficult times. The District will continue to monitor and apply these resources carefully while considering the history of unreliable state education aid.

The 2011-12 budget development process began in November and has continued for six months. Throughout this process our efforts have focused on trying to protect core academic programming, key District initiatives, and as many student centered activities as possible.

"As a District we continue to be sensitive in regard to this deep recession. Despite the \$4.2 million loss in state aid over two years, we have worked very hard to keep our tax rates as low as possible," Buhner explained. "With that said, we have made approximately **\$2.3 million in reductions** to the District's overall expenditures for the next school year."

Next year's budget-to-budget increase is projected **at 1.99%**. It is estimated that the overall **tax levy will increase 2.93% for district residents.**



## District Budget Reductions and Program Adjustments

- ▶ Eliminating, combining and restructuring of administrative positions
- ▶ Reduction of teaching positions District-wide
- ▶ Reduction in Teaching Assistant positions (2)
- ▶ Additional reduction 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 High School
- ▶ Suspend replacement of the Supervisor of Pupil Services
- ▶ Elimination of school psychologist internship position

- continued on back

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## Budget Reductions/ Program Adjustments

*-continued from front page*

- ▶ Savings in salaries due to administrative changes
- ▶ 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

## Did You Know?

Did you know that the Center for American Progress has ranked South Colonie as a 'High Return on Investment' School District? This is the best ranking a District can earn for overall program evaluation and educational productivity.

## Summarizing the Budget Process

Three very difficult years of reduced state financial support have been challenging for the South Colonie. During this time, the District has focused on balancing program needs with cost reductions. The District Administration and Board of Education have developed a 2011-2012 budget with a multiple year perspective in mind which considers unpredictable state aid and long term planning. Throughout this process, our efforts have focused on protecting core academic programming directly related to student achievement. **Next school year's budget-to-budget increase is projected at 1.99%. The estimated tax levy increase is projected at 2.93% for Colonie residents.** In summary, despite significant fiscal challenges we continue to develop budgets which provide the quality programs and services our parents and community members expect while adjusting to considerably less financial support from New York State.

### And there is some good news too!

After the New York State Legislature restored some funding to South Colonie the district was able to reinstate critical academic programming for children. This includes serving the same number of Universal Pre-Kindergarten pupils, maintaining full day Kindergarten and reasonable class sizes, adding K-4 summer school literacy support and maintaining support for children with special needs.

## Important Budget Dates to Remember

### Public Hearing on Budget

Tuesday, May 3, 7 p.m.,  
Saddlewood Elementary  
School Cafetorium

### Voting on the Budget

Tuesday, May 17, 11 a.m. to 9 p.m.,  
Voting held at the District's five  
elementary school buildings