



Inside North Colonie

CENTRAL SCHOOLS



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Winter Edition

Tax cap law changes school budget landscape

For many years, New Yorkers have paid some of the highest property taxes in the country, spurring individuals and business owners to continually seek tax relief. This summer, state leaders responded by enacting a law that places new restrictions on how school districts (and municipalities) may increase their tax levies. But the law isn't as simple as you may think.

As North Colonie leaders continue to analyze the tax cap legislation signed into law by Governor Cuomo last June, Superintendent D. Joseph Corr is projecting that this year will be another challenging budget season for the district.

While factors such as the Governor's budget and state aid projections, due to be released this month, will go a long way in determining the amount of reductions necessary, it is still too early to project what specific reductions will be made.

"We will continue to focus on aligning resources to promote student achievement," Corr said. "Now

more than ever, we need to scrutinize our expenditures to promote student academic performance."

While the tax cap has been billed as a 2 percent cap, it does not in fact restrict any proposed tax levy increase to 2 percent. The law does, however, require at least 60 percent voter approval for a school budget if the proposed levy increase exceeds a certain amount.

That amount, called the "tax levy limit," will be determined by each district according to a complex formula outlined in the law, and will vary by district.

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MEET THE CANDIDATES NIGHT & COMMUNITY BUDGET FORUM SET FOR JAN. 19

On January 19, the district will be holding a Meet the Candidates Night and Community Budget Forum. The evening will get underway at 7:00 p.m. in the SHS Media Center.

Two candidates will be running for one seat in this special board election, which will be held on Jan. 31. More details can be found on page 4 of this newsletter.

The budget forum will follow and will focus on the academic challenges and state mandates facing the district and the financial impact they will have. Currently, the state is not providing any additional money to help pay for the new mandates.

The mandates that will be discussed will include the new Common Core Standards

(see page 2), New State Assessments and Response to Intervention, among others.

"The challenges we face fiscally are also increased by the Regents Reform Agenda," Superintendent D. Joseph Corr said. "The Agenda aims to improve education for students in New York State, but it also means that the district must commit more resources to develop our faculty."

"In order for all students to meet these new standards, we must be proactive as a district in providing a framework of support for students so that they all can achieve the increasingly high standards put forth by New York State," Assistant Superintendent for Curriculum and Instruction Kathleen Skeals said.



NEW STATE MANDATES...

THE NEW ACADEMIC STANDARDS WILL NOT ONLY CHANGE THE WAY SCHOOLS ACROSS THE STATE APPROACH INSTRUCTION, BUT THEY ALSO COME AT A COST TO THE DISTRICT AT A TIME WHEN THE STATE IS NOT PROVIDING ANY ADDITIONAL FUNDING TO SUPPORT THE MANDATES. LEARN MORE ON JAN. 19.

■ A look at the Common Core Learning Standards

On July 19, 2010, the New York State Board of Regents adopted the Common Core Learning Standards (CCLS) for English language arts & literacy as well as for mathematics as new learning standards for all students in New York State. To date, 45 states have adopted similar CCLS. Establishing common education standards throughout the nation ensures that all children - regardless of geography, socioeconomic status, or life history - receive an education that values their potential.

In New York State, the CCLS provide a consistent, clear understanding of what students are expected to learn, so that teachers and parents know what they need to do to help them. The standards are designed to be robust and relevant to the real world, reflecting the knowledge and skills that our young people need for success in college and careers. With American students fully prepared for the future, our communities will be best positioned to compete successfully in the global economy.

NORTH COLONIE NAMED A TOP-20 SCHOOL IN UPSTATE NEW YORK

The North Colonie Central School District placed 14th out of 451 schools in order of academic rank by Buffalo Business First and the Western New York State Business Council.

Ratings were based on “four years of data from the New York State Education Department, covering the period from 2007 through 2010, the latter being the most recent year for which a complete set of test data was available. The formula placed the greatest weight on results from the most recent academic year.”

North Colonie was one of four districts to have more than 50 percent of its students earn superior marks on 11 different Regents exams in 2010.

WHAT DO THE NEW STANDARDS LOOK LIKE? ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS & LITERACY

These standards set requirements not only for English language arts (ELA) but also for literacy in History/Social Studies, Science, and Technical subjects. Just as students must learn to

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Tax cap law changes school budget landscape

Although schools have the option to exceed their “tax levy limits” with voter approval, the reality is that any proposed school tax levy increase will be compared to this levy “limit”—or against the now-prevalent expectation of “2 percent”—adding to the pressures schools face to keep taxes low despite escalating costs, declining state aid and rising expectations for teaching and learning.

“To present a budget with only a 2-percent increase in taxes would mean we would have to wipe out programs that many of our students rely upon for preparation for their futures,” Corr said.

The Board can instead propose

a budget requiring a tax levy before exemptions at or below the Tax Levy Limit prescribed by law, which would require a simple majority (50% + 1 voter approval).

“While we have had strong support from our community for our budgets in the past, if we do not reach that 60 percent approval figure, we will be setting ourselves back as a district, in essence wiping out a year,” Corr said.

Corr is referring to a contingent budget which is still in effect under this new law. The difference is the penalty a district faces should they adopt a contingent budget. Under the new law, a district that adopts a contingent budget

may not increase its current tax levy by any amount—which would impose, in effect, a zero percent cap.

“It’s important that our community understands this new law and how it will affect all those involved,” Corr said. “It’s not as simple as it sounds and the only way we can help to clarify the gray areas is to continue to be out in front of the issue.”

For the most up to date information on the 2012-13 North Colonie budget and the tax cap law, please visit our website, www.northcolonie.org, and click on Budget & Finance.



SHS STUDENTS TO SING WITH GRAMMY AWARD WINNING JAZZ GROUP

The New York Voices will perform a concert Thursday, February 2nd in Shaker High School's auditorium.

The Grammy award winning vocal jazz quartet will be backed up by a jazz trio and perform music from a variety of genres. They will feature SHS Chorus students on two selections.

The ensemble was co-founded by SHS alumna Kim Nazarian. Kim grew up in Loudonville and fell in love with singing when she joined the chorus at Shaker High School under Ned Fleischer's direction. She graduated Magna Cum Laude from Ithaca College and co-founded the New York Voices in 1987.

The concert is a fundraiser for the North Colonie Friends



of Music's piano project. Tickets are \$25 for reserved seating, available first come-first serve. A ticket order form can be found on the district's website: www.northcolonie.org.

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A look at the Common Core Learning Standards

read, write, speak, listen, and use language effectively in a variety of content areas, so too must the standards specify the literacy skills and understanding required for college and career readiness in multiple disciplines.

As a natural outgrowth of meeting the charge to define college and career readiness, the standards also lay out a vision of what it means to be a literate person in the twenty-first century. Indeed, the skills and understandings students are expected to demonstrate have wide applicability outside the classroom or workplace. Students who meet the standards readily undertake the close, attentive reading that is at the heart of understanding and enjoying complex works of literature. They habitually perform the critical reading necessary to pick carefully through the staggering amount of information available today, both print and digitally. They actively seek the wide, deep, and thoughtful engagement with high-quality literary and informational texts that builds knowledge, enlarges experience, and broadens

worldviews. They reflexively demonstrate the cogent reasoning and use of evidence that is essential to both private deliberation and responsible citizenship in a democratic republic. In short, students who meet the Standards develop the skills in reading, writing, speaking, and listening that are the foundation for any creative and purposeful expression in language.

MATHEMATICS

These standards define what students should understand and be able to do in their study of math. But what does mathematical understanding look like? One hallmark of mathematical understanding is the ability to justify, in a way appropriate to the student's mathematical maturity, why a particular mathematical statement is true or where a mathematical rule comes from. There is a world of difference between a student who can summon a mnemonic device to expand a product such as $(a + b)(x + y)$ and a student who can explain where the mnemonic comes

from. The student who can explain the rule understands the mathematics, and may have a better chance to succeed at a less familiar task such as expanding $(a + b + c)(x + y)$. Mathematical understanding and procedural skill are equally important, and both are assessable using mathematical tasks of sufficient richness.

DISTRICT RESPONSE

Since the spring of 2011, district administrators have been working with faculty on implementing these new standards.

The CCLS will impact all students, K-12, and as such, preparing to implement the program will be quite a challenge. While the district is not required to be fully operational under the new standards until September 2012, aspects of the program will be gradually phased into classroom throughout the current school year.

*Details for this piece adapted from
EngageNY.com*

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SPECIAL BOARD ELECTION

TUESDAY, JANUARY 31, 2012
9 A.M. TO 9 P.M.

POLLS OPEN FOR VOTING AT ALL
ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS, THE GOODRICH
BUILDING AND THE FORMER MAPLEWOOD
SCHOOL

MEET THE CANDIDATES

TWO CANDIDATES RUNNING FOR ONE SEAT

MR. W. RONALD VON DELL



W. Ronald Von Dell of 46 Crabapple Lane, Watervliet, is seeking his first term on the Board of Education. Mr. Von Dell is currently employed as a Tap Auditor for Time Warner Cable. He graduated from SUNY New Paltz with a B.A. in Technical Theatre Arts. Mr. Von Dell currently serves as Vice President of Friends of Music and is a three-year member of the North Colonie Budget Committee. He was also the former Maplewood Elementary representative to the North Colonie Parent Advisory Committee.

"The current fiscal environment has provided challenges in recent years. These challenges have led to some difficult choices regarding curriculum and class size. Maintaining a balance between the economic realities and academic excellence is, I feel, one of the primary goals that the board must succeed at. Coming from the Maplewood community, I feel I have a slightly different perspective that I would like to share. I don't believe that money is the only factor that leads to academic excellence, curriculum and professional development, and parental involvement are also factors. We will also need to maintain a positive environment for students, faculty and staff. I would like to be a part of this successful board. It would be an honor to help shape the future of our schools."

MR. DAVID ROSENTHAL



David Rosenthal of 1409 Beryl Way, Watervliet, is seeking his fourth term on the Board of Education. He previously served on the Board from 1995-2008, completing two terms. He resigned from his position midway through his third term. Mr. Rosenthal currently is employed by Regal Cleaners. He graduated from Babson College with a B.S. in Business Administration. He has served North Colonie Schools in a number of capacities, including as two years as Board President, two years as Vice President and chair on numerous Board committees. He also served on two superintendent selection committees and was the co-founder of Friends of Music, serving as president from 1992-1995. Mr. Rosenthal has been a member of the North Colonie AIDS Advisory Council since its inception in 1987 to present. He also served on the Town of Colonie Zoning Board of Appeals for three years.

"My wife Carol and I have been residents of North Colonie since 1977 and both of our daughters attended North Colonie Schools. I have been an active participant in the community and school district for 28 years - since 1984. After a four year absence as a member of the Board of Education, I believe that my experience, knowledge, dedication and caring about the education of all our current and future students will be a valuable asset to all the residents of North Colonie."

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