

Welcome to the 2009 2010 Budget Corner

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This Budget Corner is designed to inform you of the budget process and how the District financially tries to meet its goals and objectives.

School budgets are a labor intensive process that include principals, directors, supervisors, teachers, administrators, the Board Finance Committee and ultimately the entire Board of Education. The process starts in November and ends in April. A school budget is put together more than a year and a half before the funds are actually spent.

Building principals are given enrollment projections and a dollar amount based on the number of students enrolled in their buildings. The principals present their individual budget to the superintendent, the Finance Committee, and the Business Administrator. This is the step in the process that we are now engaged in. We have completed Lincoln Roosevelt, Eisenhower Middle School and Roxbury High School as well as the elementary schools.

Other School District Departments such as Transportation, Community School, Special Education, Technology and Buildings & Grounds are also looked at by the administration and Board Finance Committee. These budgets are put together with the district goals in mind as well as State mandates. The Buildings and Grounds Director evaluates potential capital projects that are needed throughout the district in conjunction with the building principals, the Superintendent and Business Administrator. Capital expenditures are necessary for the buildings to be kept open and for the children to be in a safe and healthy environment. The Transportation Director evaluates our routes and vehicles and makes adjustments necessary to meet those needs. The Technology Supervisor assesses the technology needs throughout the District, taking into account age, productivity, and the criteria for obsolescence employed to determine the utility of our machinery. The Community School finances are based on tuition revenue from the various programs that is run by the Community School.

The Central Office meets the needs of the District curriculum through the purchase of textbooks, technology, professional development and other resource applications needed to comply with State mandates.

The major portion of a school budget (approximately 85%) is salaries, benefits, and fixed costs such as utilities, insurance, special education, and transportation. The finance committee met in October to start the budget process and to discuss the priorities and philosophy of what is needed for the school district. Roxbury enjoys a comprehensive school district with a high school that excels academically, in co-curricular areas such as music, and sports. Our goal for the 2009-2010 is to enhance what we already have, keep class sizes small and add programs and technology if possible. In order to achieve that goal, we must look at all possible financial ways to make it happen.

The District's expenditure budget depends on what revenue is generated. The District receives revenue from two major sources: state aid and taxes. State Aid is 22% of the budget and taxes are 68% of the budget. The other 10% comes from miscellaneous revenue sources such as building rentals, interest and gate receipts. We also receive tuition from Mt. Arlington for receiving their high school students.

As you know, The State of New Jersey is having major financial problems and is in a 4 billion dollar deficit which impacts the aid given to school districts. The Governor has just announced that he will not give his annual budget message until mid-March. This message precedes the release of state school aid figures by 48 hours. Normally, we would receive this information in February. This makes budgeting very tricky as we are putting together a budget without knowing the actual state aid allotment.

The district also has to fit into a 4% state mandated cap. This means we can't raise our tax levy more than 4% from one year to the next. Districts can also use excess surplus. The State mandates that the District can only have 2% of its budget in the bank for emergencies. Any funds over 2% in the bank can be used as revenue. Excess surplus is generated in many ways, such as generating more revenue than anticipated, staff acquiring equipment, services and supplies at a lower cost than anticipated, resignations and retirements during the course of the year, etc. Unfortunately, the District does not have any excess funds from year end 2008 to appropriate into the 2009-2010 budget.

The budgeting process will continue and we will look over our school and department budgets, assess our building needs and work up the costs of salaries and benefits.

I will provide more information and updates on the website as the budget process progresses as well as the posting of the entire budget when completed.

If you have questions, please do not hesitate to email me at rquinn@roxbury.org