

The Board of Education is pleased to present for your consideration and comment the proposed budget for the 2008-2009 school year. In a community committed to outstanding education and to schools that have long been regarded nationally as leaders, we believe this budget will both sustain a tradition of excellence and reflect our common concern for prudent financial management.

In our many meetings with citizens, we hear consistently about *core values* we all share, values embodied in our aspirations for our children and that guide our outstanding school district. What are these values – and how do they shape our program and our budget?

First, we believe all students should have ongoing opportunity to *realize their individual potential*. We work toward this end by differentiating instruction, providing a range of support services (including mandated special education and other extra support in the early years), offering multiple course levels at the high school, and providing many opportunities for growth in extra-curricular areas.

We educate students in smaller learning communities. This begins with small classes in the elementary grades, includes the House system and CHOICE at the Middle School, and continues at the High School with integrated humanities instruction in grade nine. The Alternative School additionally serves about 80 students in grades 10-12. This year's budget includes added staffing to sustain small elementary class size and adds another grade to the elementary foreign-language program. The proposed budget also supports expanded elementary music instruction, implementation of a new elementary math program, an additional math position at the Middle School to help students at both ends of the spectrum, additional staff time at the High School for academic support to at-risk and ESL students, and to meet the demands of increased enrollment in ninth grade art and studio art classes. In addition, we are proposing to add a third assistant principal at the High School in order to meet significantly increased administrative burdens and allow increased interaction with students to help prevent problems.

Buttressing these efforts is a series of structures aimed at creating an environment in which *students are well-known* and in which they feel a sense of context and connection. These include extra-curricular activities, mentioned above, through which young people also explore interests, cultivate talents, and develop leadership skills. The proposed budget includes additional funding for the High School debate and ice hockey teams to bring them to parity with other activities. We provide a network of academic and non-academic support that encompasses the services of psychologists, youth outreach workers, guidance counselors, deans and health professionals.

A first rate school system fosters first rate faculty and staff throughout their careers. This is this first year of the Board's 2007 contract with the Scarsdale Teachers Association, reflecting the Board's view of what was required to recruit and retain the very best teachers. Teacher salaries are budgeted at \$54.6 million, and total salary growth is in line with other Westchester districts. The Board is also proud of the resources we provide to further support our teachers with staff development and continuing professional education. We will see an increase this year in state-mandated contributions to teacher and other employee retirement systems, but recent positive experience with our self-insured health care plan has permitted an overall decrease in the employee benefits budget. In addition, the rate of growth in health insurance has been offset by significant cost sharing increases negotiated with employee groups.

Finally, our district has prudently invested in *bricks and mortar* to provide and maintain appropriate facilities for our students. Because we firmly believe that an up-to-date and well-maintained physical plant is essential to our outstanding instructional program, we are pleased to sustain funding to this category, so as not to put off needed repairs or burden future generations with unanticipated debt. This year we will see a 2.5% decrease in debt service as we make payments on the voter-approved bond issues by which we have funded expansions at six schools, as well as the most-recently financed project at Quaker Ridge Elementary School.

These priorities, which are discussed in detail in this document, translate into an investment of \$128,482,892 for 2008-2009, a 2.91% increase over this year. The property tax rate, which remains the major source of revenue for the District, is estimated to increase 4.94% for Scarsdale residents and 13.73% for Mamaroneck Strip residents. (This discrepancy is due to a funding formula established by New York State based on the relative property values in each area. The average tax rate growth for Mamaroneck residents for the past three years is 3.64%).

Throughout the budget process, we solicited, listened to, and incorporated community feedback. If you have further comments on the proposed budget, you may call us at 721-2410, write to us at the Board of Education office at 2 Brewster Rd., or e-mail us at boardofed@scarsdaleschools.org. A complete copy of the budget is available at the Scarsdale Public Library and the Board of Education offices and online at www.scarsdaleschools.org.

Please remember to mark your calendars for the school budget vote on Tuesday, May 20th, from 7:00 a.m. to 9:00 p.m. at the Scarsdale Middle School. At that time, you will have the opportunity to vote to fill two School Board positions. If you need an absentee ballot, please call the District Clerk at 721-2410. Your participation in this process is vitally important.

SCARSDALE BOARD OF EDUCATION

Jeffrey Blatt, President
Linda Hillman Chayes, Vice President
Marc Carter
Liz Guggenheimer
Barbara Kemp
Jill Spieler
David Yaspan