



April 2006
Budget Issue

CAPITAL education

**POLLING
SITE
CHANGES,
see page 8**

VOTE

**Tuesday,
May 16**

7 a.m. - 9 p.m.

Budget Presentations

- **May 2 at Albany High School, 7 p.m. (Budget Hearing)**
- **May 9 at ASH, Whitehall Road, 7 p.m.**
- **May 10 at PLMA, Northern Blvd., 7 p.m.**
- **May 11 at AHS, Washington Ave, 7 p.m.**

For more information about the City School District of Albany, please visit www.albanyschools.org

Proposed budget funds educational plan focused on student achievement

Residents to vote May 16 on \$169,975,932 spending plan

On May 16, voters will decide on the City School District of Albany's proposed \$169,975,932 budget that maintains current academic programs and funds new educational initiatives.

The proposed 2006-07 spending plan carries an estimated 8.87 percent tax rate increase.

The estimated tax rate is based on aid included in the recently adopted state budget. However, the tax rate increase could be reduced to an estimated 7.2 percent if the state Legislature overrides the Governor's veto of \$1.5 million in magnet school aid for the district. (For more about how the state budget affects the tax rate, see page 6).

New initiatives funded in the school district's spending plan include: adding a grade to make a complete elementary dual language enrichment program, which will be housed at the new School 18 when it opens in January



More than half of the \$12.9 million spending increase in the proposed budget is tied to mandates such as charter school payments or necessary costs such as utilities.

The district reduced spending in the proposed budget by eliminating a net total of 41.4 positions and cutting supplies, materials and equipment by 10 percent

Continued on page 2

2007; additional support for students in alternative education settings; and data management tools to help more efficiently monitor student progress and evaluate programs.

The district will continue its current math and literacy programs at all levels, as well as the elementary foreign language program, which gives students multicultural awareness at an early age.

"The strength of our proposed budget is that it expands our focus on a strong education program for all our children despite rising costs beyond the district's control," said Superintendent Eva Joseph.

What are the largest spending increases?

The spending increases in each category, as well as the percentage of the total proposed \$12.9 million spending increase each represents:

Charter Schools Payments:
\$5.7 million (44.2%)

Benefits:
\$2.5 million (19.7%)

Utilities:
\$1.6 million (12.7%)



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Education goals drive budget plan

(continued from page 1)

districtwide.

The result of the spending cuts is that regular education spending in the proposed budget is \$1.7 million less than in the current budget.

The proposed budget is structured around specific educational goals the Board of Education set last fall.

“Clearly the district has financial challenges, but once again, the board has demonstrated its commitment to education by fine tuning the budget to reach our key educational goals,” said Board President Edward H. Brown Jr.

The following are some highlights of how the budget plan meets these goals.

Budget goals

Goal 1: All schools will meet and exceed New York State education standards.

Successful programs and practices, such as full-day prekindergarten and kindergarten, and elementary foreign language instruction, will continue. The budget also calls for new math standards at the middle school level.

A new initiative is the implementation of primary grade assessments, which will measure elementary students’ growth and identify

those who need early academic help.

Goal 2: Eliminate the achievement gap among all students districtwide.

The budget funds a full continuum of special education services, as well as efforts to increase integrated special education services.

The district will continue to emphasize literacy through programs such as Reading Recovery and the Columbia Writing Project.

Also, the district recently announced a partnership with the National Urban Alliance for Effective Education (NUA), a nonprofit organization dedicated to enhancing success for all students. District officials plan to further this initiative through state and federal special aid funds, which are not included in the general fund budget that voters will consider May 16. (For more information on the NUA partnership, see page 3).

Goal 3: Continue establishing smaller learning communities, including alternative education programs, at the middle and high school level.

The district will continue its efforts to develop smaller learning communities within its schools by implementing



a plan for these environments at Albany High School, an initiative which does not carry a spending increase.

The budget calls for Harriet Gibbons High School to be redesigned as a program with academic and social support to prepare ninth graders to later meet academic challenges at Albany High School.

The district will also continue to provide alternative programs with partners such as the University at Albany, and additional support for students enrolled in middle and high school programs at the Adult Learning Center.

Goal 4: Safe schools and student health will remain a priority.

The proposed budget funds current safety programs, including recently introduced security initiatives. The “Know Your Body” health curriculum in grades K-6, as well as school nursing and breakfast programs will continue.

Goal 5: Continue the facilities project.

In the coming year, the district plans to open the new School 16 and the new School 18.

Additionally, the complete renovation and historic preservation of Hackett Middle School will begin this summer.

(For a facilities project update, see page 4). ◆



What's new in the budget?

An additional grade level will be added to the dual language enrichment program, meaning the district will now have a full K-5 dual language program, which provides students with immersion instruction in both Spanish and English. The program is currently housed at the Philip J. Schuyler Achievement Academy and will be located at the new School 18 when it opens in January 2007.

Revamping alternative education programs will help the district continue to provide a variety of educational settings for students with different learning styles. The plan includes a program that prepares ninth graders at Harriet Gibbons High School for success at Albany High School, as well as more academic and social support in programs in settings such as the Adult Learning Center.

Primary grade level assessments will help staff evaluate the academic progress of students in grades K-2, allowing them to identify students who need academic intervention services as early as possible.

A student management software system will give district staff the ability to monitor individual student progress, meet state reporting requirements, and evaluate the effectiveness of programs for both student achievement and financial value.

A look inside the education plan: Some of what Albany's public schools offer:

- Summer education programs at all levels
- Elementary foreign language instruction in French, Spanish and Latin
- Magnet programs, a specialized, theme-based curriculum in three elementary schools and one middle school
- GEAR UP, a college readiness program for all 7th graders with district partners such as local universities and colleges
- Math Trailblazers, a nationally recognized elementary math program
- Academic assistance at all schools, including tutoring before and after school
- A literacy program focused on reading, writing and measurable results
- A wide range of musical opportunities including such as chorus, band and orchestra
- A full athletic program, including 13 interscholastic sports
- The International Baccalaureate Programme, a prestigious, focused curriculum for Albany High School students
- A wide range of Advanced Placement courses at Albany High School and accelerated learning opportunities in middle schools
- A full continuum of special education services for students with special needs

District aims to eliminate achievement gap with national partner

In early April, the City School District of Albany began a partnership with the National Urban Alliance for Effective Education (NUEA) to address the underlying causes of the district's achievement gap and related safety issues.

including founder and President Dr. Eric Cooper, a recipient of a MacArthur Foundation Award – were in Albany on April 6-7 for an initial visit. The partnership will develop as NUEA executives and staff return for hands-on work in the district's schools.

historic opportunity to transform a school district that has had long standing challenges, and to create a model for other urban school districts and other cities with similar challenges," Dr. Cooper said during his first visit.

NUEA consultants will work with the district, the community and parents to provide

professional development activities for teachers and administrators, improve classroom instruction, raise expectations and ultimately accelerate student achievement. NUEA has successfully worked in schools across the country, including in major cities such as Chicago, Seattle and New York. ◆

NUEA executives –

"Albany represents a



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How do charter schools affect the proposed school budget?

New York state education law requires school districts to pay a per-pupil amount for each resident student enrolled in charter schools. In the proposed budget, the cost of charter school payments and other required services

and supports is again increasing, by \$5.7 million to \$16.55 million in 2006-07.

The budget is based on projections that 1,457 students will attend the city's seven charter schools next year, up from 1,007 in the current school year.

The \$16.55 million in charter school payments and services accounts for 9.74 percent of the proposed budget, and 44.2 percent of the proposed spending increase. It is also a 52.7 percent increase in the amount that was budgeted

for charter school payments in the current budget.

District officials continue to work with state legislators toward obtaining financial relief for the City School District of Albany from the impact of charter schools. ♦

Facilities project moves forward: District to welcome students at new School 16, new School 18 and begin Hackett renovation

After a year in which the district opened four new or newly reconstructed schools, officials will cut the ribbon at two new schools during the 2006-2007 school year.

A brand new School 16 and a brand new School 18 are slated to open in January 2007.

Five years after its approval, the facilities project is about 75 percent complete.

The new buildings will be wired for today's technology, and each will feature a gymnasium, cafetorium, and a library and media center.

"The facilities plan, which voters approved in 2001 to modernize the city's public

schools, is about 75 percent complete," said Ken Gifford, district director of facilities planning.

The complete renovation and historic preservation of William S. Hackett Middle School will also begin this summer.

Necessary repairs to the Thomas O'Brien Academy of Science and Technology and Giffen Memorial Elementary School will also take place this summer. ♦



A rendering of what the cafeteria is expected to look like after the renovation and historic preservation of William S. Hackett Middle School, which is completed. The work will begin this summer.



Construction work continues on School 16, above, and School 18, below.



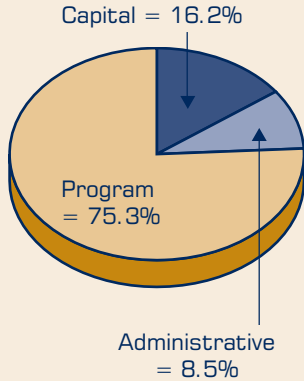


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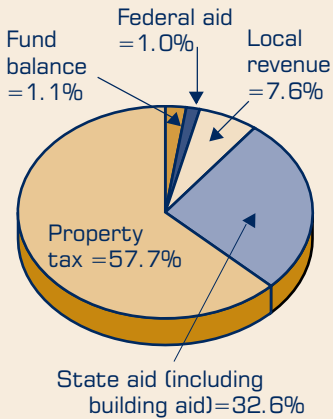
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PROPOSED EXPENDITURES: Where the money goes

ESTIMATED EXPENDITURES



ESTIMATED REVENUE



	2005-06 Budget	2006-07 Proposed	\$ Change
Program budget	\$120,179,970	\$128,041,220	\$7,861,250
Instruction	102,753,611	104,258,310	1,504,699
Charter school payments	10,838,128	16,551,776	5,713,648
Pupil transportation	5,723,883	6,323,401	599,518
Athletics	664,348	707,733	43,385
Lunch program assistance	200,000	200,000	0
Capital budget	\$23,127,642	\$27,455,197	\$4,327,555
Debt payments & borrowings	10,183,701	10,469,056	285,355
Building rentals	315,000	412,394	97,394
Operations & maintenance	8,215,941	9,058,108	842,167
Utilities	4,013,000	5,603,639	1,590,639
Tax refunds & judgments	400,000	1,912,000	1,512,000
Administrative budget	\$13,730,020	\$14,479,515	\$749,495
School supervision and support	12,307,740	12,827,310	519,570
Property & liability insurance	457,000	528,250	71,250
Printing, mailing & data processing	773,280	913,145	139,865
Legal & other services	192,000	210,810	18,810
Total Expenditures	\$157,037,632	\$169,975,932	\$12,938,300

ESTIMATED REVENUE: Where the money comes from

	2005-06	2006-07	\$ Change
Federal aid	\$1,347,000	\$1,742,500	\$395,500
Fund balance	5,000,000	1,900,000	- 3,100,000
Local revenue	10,975,000	12,850,916	1,875,916
State building aid	3,589,044	4,402,527	813,483
Other state aid	45,187,341	50,944,065	5,756,724
Property tax	90,939,247	98,135,924	7,196,677
Total Revenue	\$157,037,632	\$169,975,932	\$12,938,300

What happens if residents do not approve the budget?

If a majority of residents vote no on the proposed budget on May 16, under state law the Board of Education can:

- put the same budget up for a re-vote,
- present a revised budget

for consideration, or

- adopt a contingency budget.

If a majority of residents vote no the second time, the board must adopt a contingency budget.

State law mandates that, under a contingency budget, the spending increase can not exceed 4 percent of the 2005-06 budget (certain exclusions are allowed). For Albany, this would mean reducing the proposed budget by \$704,666,

which would translate into three-quarters of one percent being cut from the tax levy.

By comparison, a contingency budget last year would have meant cuts of \$7 million in the \$157 million spending plan voters approved.



District to lower tax rate if more state aid is received

Although this budget newsletter indicates a projected tax rate increase of 8.87 percent, if the district receives additional magnet aid, the tax rate could be further reduced to an estimated 7.2 percent increase.

When the Board of Education unanimously approved the proposed budget, it also unanimously approved a resolution stating that any additional state aid received up to \$6,263,652, or the difference between the initial Executive budget proposal and the Legislative budget proposal, including magnet

Estimated Tax Rates

Homestead:
\$24.88 per \$1,000 of assessed property value

Non-homestead:
\$33.35 per \$1,000 of assessed property value

These tax rates are based on an 8.87 percent tax rate increase, and assume no additional magnet aid.

school aid, would be utilized to lower the tax rate.

The budget that the state Legislature proposed included \$1.5 million in additional magnet aid and an

additional \$4.75 million in state aid for the district beyond the Executive budget proposal. The Governor did not veto the additional \$4.75 million, but did veto a grants package that included the additional magnet aid.

If the Legislature overrides the Governor's veto of that grant package, it would allow the district to reduce general fund expenses by \$1.5 million by moving those expenses to the special aid fund.

This would reduce the estimated tax rate increase to 7.2 percent for a homestead tax rate of \$24.50 per \$1,000 of assessed property value.

This means that the owner of a home assessed at \$100,000 would pay an estimated \$1,736 in school taxes taking into account the state's Basic STAR exemption, or \$27 less in the total school tax bill for the same home at an 8.87 percent tax rate increase.

The total budget put forth to voters on May 16 will be \$169,975,932, which is the total budget the Board of Education adopted on April 10. This total may be reduced by \$1.5 million to \$168,475,932, through a budget amendment in July, if the \$1.5 million in magnet aid is approved. ◆

School tax savings under STAR program

STAR savings are not automatic. Homeowners must apply through the city assessor's office to be eligible for the tax break. Senior citizens who qualify for Enhanced STAR must reapply each year. Contact the city assessor at 434-5155 if you have questions.

The STAR program is projected to continue this year both for qualifying senior citizens and other property owners. Senior

ESTIMATED TAX BILL for a property assessed at \$100,000	2005-06	2006-07	Estimated Change
Without STAR exemption	\$2,285	\$2,488	\$203
*With Enhanced STAR for senior citizens	1,175	1,279	104
*With Basic STAR for other homeowners	1,619	1,763	144

**Estimated calculation based on an 8.87 percent tax rate increase and 2005 equalization rates*

citizens with incomes up to \$66,050 who qualify for the Enhanced STAR exemption will continue to have the state pay property taxes for \$50,000 of their full-value assessment. For homeowners who qualify for the Basic STAR exemption, the state pays for \$30,000 of

their full-value assessment.

Please note: STAR does not provide the district any additional revenue, nor does it result in a loss of tax dollars. New York State reimburses Albany dollar-for-dollar for the tax relief it provides district property owners.


Also, the STAR and Enhanced STAR exemptions of \$30,000 and \$50,000, respectively, are subject to adjustment because of equalization rates set by the New York State Office of Real Property Services. ◆



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Two propositions on the May 16 ballot

Along with the proposed \$169,975,932 school budget (Proposition #1 at right), voters will be asked to consider a proposition related to the Albany Public Library's operating budget (see below).

 **Proposition #1**

Shall the resolution adopted by the Board of Education on April 10, 2006, authorizing the City School District of Albany to expend the sum in the amount of \$169,975,932 during the 2006-07 school year and a levy tax therefore be approved?


YES **NO**

Residents will also vote on tax levy for public library

This proposition is unrelated to the school district budget, and therefore, has no impact on school taxes.

This proposition asks voters to consider a 2006-07 Albany Public Library tax levy of \$4,359,600.

The school district has no control over the library's budget and does not receive any of the taxes associated with the library's funding. The school district merely serves as the tax collector. The library tax is listed on school tax bills as a separate item.

 **Proposition #2**

Shall the sum of \$4,359,600 be raised by annual levy of a tax upon the taxable real property within the City School District of Albany for the purpose of funding the operating budget of the Albany Public Library?

YES **NO**

Also on the ballot will be two five-year terms on the Albany Public Library Board of Trustees.

If you have any questions, please contact the Albany Public Library Director Jeff Cannell at 427-4379.



Jodi Commerford, a 6th grade teacher at School 19, works with Emanuel Pollard on a compare-and-contrast essay as part of the Columbia Writing Project.

Special education requests for non-public school students

The City School District of Albany will offer special education services, as required, to students with disabilities enrolled by their parents in non-public schools. If you plan to enroll your child in a non-public school next year and may be requesting services, we must receive your request in writing no later than June 1, 2006. Send requests to:
Mr. Ken Cioffi, Director of Special Education,
Sunshine Building, Lincoln Park, Albany, NY 12202.



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Polling locations CHANGES

Because of building unavailability, a few polling sites have changed for this year only. A ★ is next to those sites. If you do not know your ward or election district, contact the county Board of Elections at 487-5060 or the district clerk at 475-6010.

1st Ward School 18 (previously Montessori) 75 Park Ave. & Eagle St.	9th Ward School 19, 369 New Scotland Ave.
2nd Ward Giffen Memorial Elementary School, 274 South Pearl St.	10th Ward Albany High School, 700 Washington Ave.
★ 3rd Ward Sheridan Preparatory Academy 400 Sheridan Ave.	11th Ward First Lutheran Church, 646 State St.
★ 4th Ward Election Districts 1-5 & 12 North Albany Academy (previously School 20) 570 No. Pearl St.	12th Ward Election Districts 1, 3, 5 & 11 Harriet Gibbons High School, 75 Watervliet Ave.
4th Ward Election Districts 6-11 Arbor Hill Elementary School, Arbor Dr.	★ 12th Ward Election Districts 2, 4 & 9 North Albany Academy (previously School 20), 570 No. Pearl St.
5th Ward Philip Livingston Magnet Academy, 315 Northern Blvd.	★ 12th Ward Election Districts 6-8 & 10 Montessori Magnet Academy (previously School 26), 65 Tremont St.
6th Ward Thomas O'Brien Academy of Science & Tech., Lincoln Park	13th Ward Pine Hills Library, 517 Western Ave.
7th Ward St. James School, 50 Summit Ave.	★ 14th Ward Eagle Point Elementary School, 1044 Western & Russell Road
8th Ward Election Districts 1-3, 9, 11 & 12 Albany School of Humanities, 108 Whitehall Rd.	★ 15th Ward Election Districts 1-3, 5, 8 & 9 Eagle Point Elementary School, 1044 Western & Russell Road
8th Ward Election Districts 4-8 & 10 St. Catherine of Siena School, 35 Hurst Ave.	15th Ward Election Districts 4, 6 & 7 Teresian House, Washington Ave. Ext.

Voting requirements

To vote on the school district budget, you must be:

- Registered to vote with either the county Board of Elections or the Albany City School District;
- At least 18 years old; and
- A citizen of the United States and a resident of the City of Albany for at least 30 days prior to the vote.

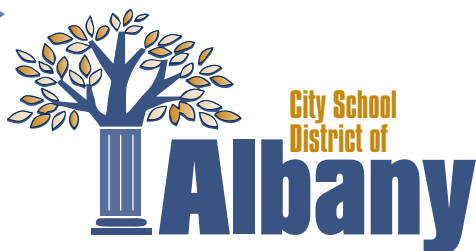
You must also provide identification at the time of registration and voting. For more information, please contact the district clerk at 475-6010.

Absentee ballots

The district will automatically send absentee ballots to individuals designated by the county Board of Elections as having a permanent disability. Others who require an absentee ballot because of illness, hospitalization, vacation, studies, business, or incarceration should contact the district at 475-6010. Unless you are permanently disabled, you must reapply for an absentee ballot prior to each vote.

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