

About the budget increase

The proposed 2008-09 budget represents an increase of \$17.98 million over the contingency budget the district adopted for 2007-08 after voters turned down last year's budget proposal.

The proposal would not eliminate any programs in a year in which the district again faces elevated costs in many areas, including debt service, special education, charter school payments, employee benefits and utilities.

The district received a state aid increase of about \$13 million. This increase qualified the district to file a Contract for Excellence this year, mandating the fixed expenditure of \$1.5 million on new and expanded programs. Debt service payments increased \$3.24 million, charter school payments increased \$2.47 million, employee benefits increased \$1.87 million and utility costs rose \$1.28 million.

In an effort to minimize the burden on Albany taxpayers, the district's first draft budget March 4 proposed a 3.71 percent tax levy increase. The Board of Education made further reductions to arrive at the final proposed tax levy increase of 2.49 percent.

The board unanimously approved this proposal April 1.