

Board acts unanimously to send \$206.7 million proposal to voters

The City School District of Albany Board of Education voted unanimously this spring to approve a proposed budget of \$206,741,488 for 2008-09 that would continue and expand educational, social, health and extracurricular services for all of the district's students.



The proposed budget that will be presented to voters May 20 includes a 2.49 percent tax levy increase and a 9.52 percent increase in overall spending. The proposal represents an estimated increase of \$39 per \$100,000 of assessed value for city residents, \$23 for those with Basic STAR savings and \$9 for seniors with the Enhanced STAR.

It reflects the district's continued efforts to seek out and obtain external funding that helps maintain strong programs in every school while minimizing the burden on Albany taxpayers.

“The budget proposal reflects the board's attempt to recognize the realities of fiscal prudence, while not compromising on our top priority – the education of all of the district's students,” said board President William Barnette. “The board views the proposed budget not merely as a cost, but as an investment that supports a comprehensive blend of the high-quality educational, social and emotional services that our students need and deserve as they prepare to become the leaders of tomorrow.”

The budget proposal includes:

- Expanded prekindergarten programs
- Enhanced acceleration opportunities for middle school students
- Enhanced programming for students at every level, including those in need of extra academic and emotional support.

“The unanimous support of the Board of Education for this proposal is an indicator of our efforts to match our fiscal responsibility to the community with our primary mission as a school district – to educate and nurture all students to be responsible citizens, critical thinkers and life-long learners,” said Superintendent Eva C. Joseph, Ed.D.

If approved by voters, the budget will restore funding to allow community organizations to use school facilities free of charge, both during and after school hours. The district adopted a contingency budget for 2007-08 after voters turned down the proposed budget, which prevented the district from making its facilities available without charging for the operational expenses during those times.

Voters will have a variety of opportunities to learn more about the 2008-09 proposed budget and to ask questions during community meetings in the weeks leading up to the May 20 vote, beginning with the May 6 budget hearing at 7 p.m. at Albany High School.

“It is our goal to assure that every child receives the best we have to offer, and we welcome questions and dialogue with students, parents and the broader community,” Mr. Barnette said.