



CAPITAL education

NEW
polling
locations,
see page 8.

VOTE

**Tuesday,
May 18
7 a.m. - 9 p.m.**

**What will I
be voting on?**

- A \$147.9 million spending plan
- Student transportation & property sale propositions
- Albany Public Library budget & two seats on Board of Trustees

Estimated tax impact (for homeowner with \$100,000 assessment)

Present tax bill with Basic STAR	\$1,455
2004-05 Tax bill with Basic STAR	\$1,600
Tax bill dollar increase	\$145

Budget vote set for May 18 Residents to vote on a \$147.9 million budget

On Tuesday, May 18 Albany residents will go to the polls to decide on a \$147,918,715 spending plan for the 2004-05 school year.

Voters will also decide on two school propositions, an Albany Public Library budget, and a library Board of Trustees election. (See page 6.)

Spending in the proposed budget is up \$10.6 million, or 7.7 percent over the current year, resulting in an estimated tax rate increase of 10 percent. If proposition #3 (to sell property at 60 Colvin Ave.) is approved, the tax rate increase could change to 9.4 percent.

What's driving the budget increase?

The proposed budget includes the first full debt

service payment installment for the facilities improvement plan (approved by voters in December 2001) of \$4.6 million. This makes up almost half of the estimated tax increase, or 4.6 percent. Without the debt payment, the actual operating budget—the amount needed to run the district (i.e., educational program, salaries, transportation, utilities)—reflects a property tax rate increase of only 5.4 percent.

“When we began the budget process, we were looking at a tax rate increase in the ‘high teens’ just to hold on to what we have,” explains Board of Education President Scott Wexler. “Despite mandated increases and stagnant state aid, we’re able to propose a budget that not only maintains—even expands in some cases—the present programs, but also one that includes a substantial portion of debt payments.”



Charles Mathews learns to play chess—and speak another language—in the new Spanish-Chess Enrichment class offered at PS 16 and Arbor Hill.

State aid picture

According to Governor Pataki’s proposed budget, the district’s state aid will remain about the same as the current year’s except for building aid. This aid will appear as an increase on the revenue side of the budget, partially offsetting the larger payment for capital construction.

Mandated increases

As in the past, other budget increases are driven by rising costs in areas over which the district has little or no control—health insurance (\$887,000), state-mandated pension fund contributions

Continued on page 2



CAPITAL education

MAY 2004

Proposed budget ...

(continued from page 1)

(\$884,000), and special education costs (867,500).

Albany, unlike many other districts in the area, is also required to pay the tuition for students attending charter schools. Next year, the required payment per student increases, resulting in a total of nearly \$8 million in payments to charter schools. Moreover, 150 students will be returning next school year to Albany schools from the New Covenant Charter School at an additional cost to the district. (See "Budget highlights" to the right.)

Savings sought

Recognizing the impact mandated increases have on the 2004-05 proposed budget and the goal to put forth a budget that maintains programs and services, the board sought alternative funding sources to support many of the new educational programs and services proposed in this budget. (See "Other program improvements carry no budget, tax increase" on page 3 for details.)

The board also trimmed the budget in areas that will maximize management and administrative efficiencies:

- **Materials & supplies** were reduced districtwide by 10%, for a savings of \$93,472.
- **Equipment** districtwide was reduced by 50%, or about \$106,000, meaning only essential equipment purchases will be made next year.
- **Travel & conferences** was reduced by 50%, or \$25,000. District officials will apply for grants to fund staff development opportunities and conferences beyond the budgeted amount.
- **Contractual expenses** for specific building repairs and improvements have been eliminated by hiring two speciality mechanics to do the work in-house for a savings of \$44,000 annually.
- **Staff retirements** in the coming year have reduced costs by \$884,000. One administrative and 13 teaching positions will not be filled. Class sizes, however, will remain within board established guidelines. The savings will allow for the growth of some existing programs and for the expansion of the Career Academy to include grade 11. ♦

Budget highlights

Special education services \$867,500

This amount funds the addition of 7.5 special education teachers and 11.5 teaching assistants needed as a result of the increased enrollment of special education students and accompanying services.

Returning charter school students \$422,000

This amount funds the addition of six middle school teachers, two teaching assistants, and the supplies and textbooks needed to educate the influx of 150 seventh- and eighth-grade students returning to Albany public schools next year from New Covenant Charter School.

Kindergarten testing & assessment \$25,000

Identifying students' academic levels in Kindergarten will allow the district to target academic deficiencies and provide the appropriate educational support at an early age, thus possibly reducing the need for remediation later. This amount covers testing materials and funds substitutes while classroom teachers are administering exams.

Expand College Center hours \$22,000

A College Center was constructed at Albany High School this year to provide students with one central place to research colleges via the Internet, learn about scholarships, get assistance with financial aid, meet with college representatives and much more. The overwhelming use of the center prompted the need for evening hours. Evening hours also are needed to allow students in the Abrookin Extended Day Program access to the center. This amount funds a part-time guidance counselor to run the center from 5-7 p.m., four days a week.

Athletic coaches & uniforms \$49,200

This amount funds a bowling, track, volleyball, soccer, two gymnastic, and three drill team coaches as well as drill team uniforms. The drill team was added to the extracurricular offerings this school year and gymnastics will be a new offering next year.

Two specialty mechanics \$102,000

In the past, the district has used private contractors for specific building repairs and improvements. The district will actually save \$44,000 annually in outside contract expenses by hiring its own mechanics to do the work.

E-Rate technology purchases \$100,000

This funds the district's 10 percent portion of purchases made through a federal telecommunications program (E-Rate) that directly pays the remaining 90 percent. This amount allows the district to acquire \$1 million in computer networking equipment, wiring, cabling, and new fiber optic and high-speed communication hardware.



When it's science time at Arbor Hill Elementary School, students go to a lab where they slip on headphones and turn on a computer rather than just flip open a textbook. That's because the school's new Living With Science lab uses a hands-on, computer-based program aligned with NYS standards to teach kids the fundamentals of science. "It's important we prepare our students for the challenges they will face in terms of the New York State Science Exams," says Superintendent Johnson.

- New Netherlands Museum *Halfmoon* field trips for all grade 4 students.

- Social studies instructional materials for Pre-K and Kindergarten classes.

- Professional development for math programs, art, alternative reading programs, and Teachers College Writing Project.

- A Reading Recovery training site. Reading Recovery is an early intervention program designed to boost first-grade students' reading and writing skills to the appropriate level, and hopefully ward off future remedial services. ♦

Other program improvements carry no budget, tax increase

"Even in tight financial times when mandated costs are rising and state aid is essentially stagnant, we can't turn our backs on our mission to provide quality instructional programs and services to students," said Superintendent Michael A. Johnson.

Several spending proposals in the 2004-05 budget to fund new services, staff development opportunities, and other program improvements would be financially supported through outside funding sources, and, therefore, have no impact on the local taxpayer-supported general fund budget.

Federal Title I, II, V and other grant monies are being proposed to fund these program improvements, some of which are listed below:

- Tutoring services for elementary students.
- After-school programs to provide students with additional Academic Intervention Services.
- Support for the district-wide literacy initiative *Readers to Leaders*.
- Classroom libraries at Elementary Schools 16 and 18 to help students meet the *Readers to Leaders* challenge.
- Science labs at every elementary school and middle school. These high-

tech labs are aligned with the state standards and will better prepare students for the NYS Grade 4 & 8 Science Exams, which now have an accountability level similar to the ELA and Math Exams.

- Saturday and summer science programs for middle school students.
- Math, K-6 science, and social studies curriculum development.

School district leader reads to "future leader"

Superintendent Michael A. Johnson reads "Lyle, Lyle Crocodile" to a Giffen Elementary School student during the Readers to Leaders



kickoff. Readers to Leaders is a districtwide literacy initiative that challenges students to read 100 books in a year. Superintendent Johnson started this initiative as a way to encourage students to read: "I want children to turn off the TV and video games and discover the joys of reading. I want them to become lifelong readers."



CAPITAL education

MAY 2004

Three-part budget summary

New York State mandates that school districts release their proposed budget in a three-part format.

• Program budget:

All expenses for providing instruction to students are in this component. This includes salaries and benefits for classroom teaching personnel (teachers, aides, and teaching assistants); instructional materials and services; interscholastic sports; extra-curricular programs; and student transportation.

• Capital budget:

This component funds all costs for building maintenance including custodial salaries and benefits; supplies and utilities; capital expenditures and debt service.

• Administrative budget:

This component contains all administrative salaries and benefits (superintendent, deputy superintendent, assistant superintendents, principals, curriculum directors, and office staff) as well as office and program costs for directing and supervising the instructional activities of the school district.

PROPOSED EXPENDITURES: Where the money goes ...

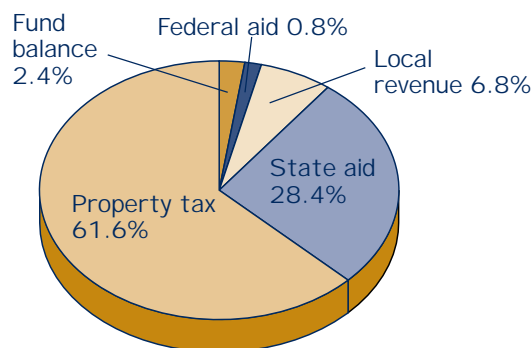
	2003-04 Budget	2004-05 Proposed	\$ Change
Program budget	\$105,427,575	\$112,245,143	\$6,817,568
Instruction	91,968,640	97,726,903	5,758,263
Charter school payments	7,724,000	7,979,300	255,300
Pupil transportation	5,132,825	5,784,508	651,683
Athletics	602,110	654,432	52,322
Lunch program assistance	0	100,000	100,000
Capital budget	\$19,408,796	\$22,106,046	\$2,697,250
Debt payments & borrowings	8,791,024	11,080,961	2,289,937
Building rentals	321,717	331,280	9,563
Operations & maintenance	6,724,555	6,766,305	41,750
Utilities	3,571,500	3,727,500	156,000
Tax refunds & judgments	0	200,000	200,000
Administrative budget	\$12,470,281	\$13,567,526	\$1,097,245
School supervision	11,139,449	11,984,940	845,491
Property & liability insurance	421,000	480,000	59,000
Printing, mailing & data processing	771,132	953,246	182,114
Legal & other services	138,700	149,340	10,640
Total Expenditures	\$137,306,652	\$147,918,715	\$10,612,063

ESTIMATED REVENUE: Where the money comes from ...

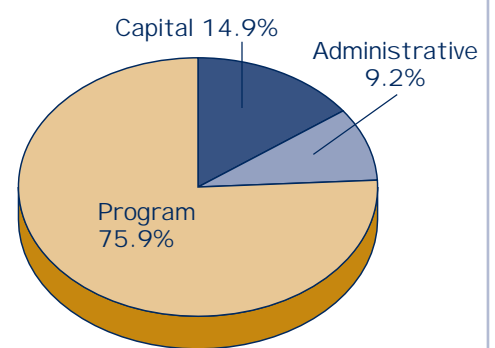
	2003-04	2004-05	\$ Change
Federal aid	\$1,256,500	\$1,256,500	\$0
Fund balance	3,500,000	3,500,000	0
Local revenue	8,845,500	10,000,000	1,154,500
State building aid	1,179,180	1,922,509	743,329
Other state aid	39,598,222	40,098,761	500,539
Property tax	82,927,250	91,140,945	8,213,695
Total Revenue	\$137,306,652	\$147,918,715	\$10,612,063

How school dollars are spent ...

ESTIMATED REVENUE



ESTIMATED EXPENDITURES





School tax savings under the STAR program

ESTIMATED TAX BILL for a property assessed at \$100,000	2003-04	2004-05	Estimated Change
Without STAR exemption	\$2,078	\$2,285	\$207
With Enhanced STAR for senior citizens	1,039	1,143	104
With Basic STAR for other homeowners	1,455	1,600	145

Estimated tax rate

Under the proposed budget, the tax rate for homeowners is estimated to be \$22.85 per \$1,000 of assessed property value. For business owners, the new rate is estimated to be \$28.08 per \$1,000 of assessed property value. ◆

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

The STAR program is projected to continue this year at the same level both for qualifying senior citizens and other property owners. Senior citizens with incomes up to \$60,000 who qualify for the Enhanced STAR exemption will continue to have the state pay property taxes for \$50,000 of their full-value assessment. Homeowners who qualify for the Basic STAR exemption will have the state pay for \$30,000 of their full-value assessment.

Please note: STAR does not add new money to school tax coffers or result in a loss of tax dollars. New York State reimburses Albany dollar-for-dollar for the tax relief it provides district homeowners. ◆



Debt payment, operating budget summary

The proposed 2004-05 budget includes the district's first full debt service payment installment for the facilities project, which results in a onetime spike in school taxes. Future debt payments for the voter-approved facilities project will be included in Albany's school budgets, but will be offset, for the most part, by a decrease in payments for older debt as it is retired.

Separating the cost of the existing facilities project from the rest of the proposed budget shows more typical tax rate and budget-to-budget increases.

	Budget \$ increase	Budget % increase	Tax rate % increase
Operating budget	\$5,951,063	4.3%	5.4%
Facilities improvement project	\$4,661,000	3.4%	4.6%
Total increase	\$10,612,063	7.7%	10%



CAPITAL education

MAY 2004

Other propositions on the May 18 ballot

Along with the \$147.9 million proposed school budget, which is proposition #1, voters will be asked to consider three other propositions as follows:


Proposition #2

Public library budget

Although this proposition is unrelated to the school district budget and operations, the school district is required to put it on the ballot. This proposition has no impact on school taxes.

This proposition asks voters to approve a 2004-05 Albany Public Library budget of \$4,160,000, which represents a 4 percent increase. This library budget increase will help offset increases in the mandated contributions to the New York State Retirement System, previously negotiated raises for library personnel, and double-digit health care cost increases.

The school district has no control of 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



Proposition #2

Shall the sum of \$4,160,000 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?

X
YES
NO

collector. The library tax is listed on school tax bills as a separate item.

Two 5-year term positions on the Albany Public Library Board of Trustees also will be on the ballot. Voters are being asked to vote for any two of the candidates listed on the ballot.

Questions about the proposed increase in the library's operating budget or the Board of Trustees election should be directed to Library Director Jeff Cannell at 427-4379. ♦


Proposition #3

Sell unused property at 60 Colvin Avenue

If approved, this proposition will allow the district to sell unused property at 60 Colvin Avenue for no less than \$500,000. Further, if approved, the proceeds of this sale will be used to reduce the district's debt service appropriation included in the proposed 2004-05 budget. This could reduce the property tax rate increase by six-tenths of a percent (0.6 percent), resulting in an estimated tax rate increase of 9.4 percent.

The district purchased the Colvin Avenue property in 2002 when the construction of the third middle school was slated for a site in Westland Hills Park, Colvin Avenue.

Last June, voters approved construction of a third middle school at Kelton Court, thus eliminating the need for the property at 60 Colvin Ave.



Proposition #3

Shall the Board of Education of the Albany City School District be authorized to sell the real property commonly known as 60 Colvin Avenue, Albany, New York for a price not less than \$500,000?

X
YES
NO

Construction at the site of the third middle school is currently underway. As part of the lot clearing process, trees were removed. New trees and shrubbery will be planted as indicated in the original design plans for the facilities project. Construction of the new middle school is expected to begin this summer and is slated for a phased opening in September 2005. This means the classrooms, cafeteria, and main offices will be ready for occupancy in September while the gymnasium is expected to be ready in October, the cafeteria in November, and the pool in December. For more information, please visit our web site at www.albanyschools.org/facilities. ♦



CAPITAL education

MAY 2004

Proposition #4

Transportation eligibility policy modifications

This proposition will not have an impact on the 2004-05 proposed budget. It would allow the Board of Education to modify the transportation eligibility policy based on temporary circumstances such as construction at school buildings or other short-term emergency conditions.

For example, as the voter-approved facilities improvement plan continues, some elementary schools will be closed for renovations. The students and staff of those schools will be temporarily relocated to Philip Schuyler Elementary School, which is the “swing space” —or a temporary location—for schools being renovated or rebuilt.

If this proposition is approved, it would allow the district to provide transportation to students who must attend Philip Schuyler and who live one-half of a mile (0.5 mile) or farther from the school on North Lake Avenue.

Specifically, beginning in September 2004, students currently attending Schools 20 and 27 will be the first to move into Philip Schuyler. Therefore, transportation would be provided to those students who live more than one-half mile (0.5 mile) from the school.

School 20 and 27 students and staff are expected to stay at Philip Schuyler for one full school year. They would return to their respective schools for the 2005-2006 school year. The next schools to move into Philip Schuyler are TOAST, PS 16 and PS 18. ♦

What happens if the school budget is not approved?

If the proposed 2004-05 budget is defeated on May 18, the Board of Education, under state law, can put the same budget up for a re-vote, present a revised budget for a vote, or adopt a contingency budget.

If the budget, revised or not, is defeated a second time, the board must adopt a contingency budget.

State law mandates that, under a contingency budget, a school district’s budget increase must be closely tied to changes in the Consumer Price Index.

For Albany, this means reducing the proposed budget by \$4,614,389.

However, debt service payments and mandated

items such as charter school payments and special education expenses must still be fully funded in a contingency budget.

To reach a contingency level while maintaining mandated increases, all programs would be under consideration for reduction or elimination.

Specifically, this could mean teacher, support staff, and administrative layoffs; larger class sizes at all levels; the elimination or reduction of extracurricular activities and sports programs; and the elimination of some of the proposed budget additions. ♦



Proposition #4

Shall the City School District of Albany modify its public school transportation eligibility policy effective September 1, 2004 to provide transportation for district students who are assigned to a new school building on a temporary basis due to construction at their regularly assigned school, as part of the voter-approved facilities plan, who reside one-half mile (0.5 mi) or more from the temporary school assignment, or for other emergency, short-term situations which may arise and be approved by the Board of Education, and to levy the necessary tax therefore?

YES NO

Special education requests for non-public school students

In planning for the 2004-05 school year, the City School District of Albany is continuing, as required, to offer special education services to students with disabilities enrolled by their parents in non-public schools. Please be advised if you plan to enroll your child in a non-public school next year and may be requesting services for your child, we must receive your request in writing no later than June 1, 2004.

Requests should be sent to: Mr. Ken Cioffi, Director of Special Education, Sunshine Building, Lincoln Park, Albany, NY 12202.



CAPITAL education

MAY 2004

NEW polling locations

There are changes in polling locations this year. The polling place for each ward and election district is shown below. If you do not know your ward or election district, contact the county Board of Elections at 487-5060 or the district clerk at 462-7200.

1st Ward Montessori Magnet School, Park Ave. & Eagle St.	2nd Ward Giffen Memorial Elementary School, 274 South Pearl St.
3rd Ward Church of God of Prophecy, 57 Lexington Ave.	4th Ward Election Districts 1-5 & 12 School 20, 570 North Pearl St.
4th Ward Election Districts 6-11 Arbor Hill Elementary School, Arbor Dr.	5th Ward Philip Livingston Magnet Academy, 315 Northern Blvd.
6th Ward Thomas O'Brien Academy of Science & Tech., Lincoln Park	7th Ward St. James School, 50 Summit Ave.
8th Ward Election Districts 1-3, 9, 11 & 12 Albany School of Humanities, 108 Whitehall Rd.	8th Ward Election Districts 4-8 & 10 St. Catherine of Siena School, 35 Hurst Ave.
9th Ward School 19, 369 New Scotland Ave.	10th Ward Albany High School, 700 Washington Ave.
11th Ward First Lutheran Church, 646 State St.	12th Ward Election Districts 1, 3, 5 & 11 Harriet Gibbons High School, 75 Watervliet Ave.
12th Ward Election Districts 2, 4 & 9 School 20, 570 North Pearl St.	12th Ward Election Districts 6-8 & 10 Armory Center, 64 Colvin Ave.
13th Ward Pine Hills Library, 517 Western Ave.	14th Ward School 27, Western Ave. @ Russell Rd.
15th Ward Election Districts 1-3, 5, 8 & 9 School 27, Western Ave. @ Russell Rd.	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 462-7200.

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 due to illness, hospitalization, vacation, studies, business, or incarceration should contact the district at 462-7200. Unless you are permanently disabled, you must reapply for an absentee ballot prior to each vote.

Board of Education

Scott Wexler, *President*
 Barbara I. Gaffuri, *Vice President*
 Patricia Fahy, *Secretary*
 William R. Barnette
 Edward Brown
 Susan Kushner
 Paul Webster

Michael A. Johnson
Superintendent
 Eva C. Joseph, Ed.D.
Deputy Superintendent
 Roger W. George
Assistant Superintendent for Business Affairs
 Linda Jackson-Chalmers
Assistant to the Superintendent for Human Resources
 Tara Mitchell
Editor

Produced by the City School District of Albany with the cooperation of the Capital Region BOCES Communications Service.



City School District of

Albany

Academy Park
Albany, New York 12207

Non-Profit Org.
 U.S. Postage
 PAID
 Permit No. 149
 Albany, NY

POSTAL CUSTOMER