

CAPITAL education

2013 SPECIAL
BUDGET EDITION

Proposed 2013-14 budget seeks balance of student needs, community resources

On May 21, residents in the City School District of Albany will vote on a proposed \$212.9 million budget for the 2013-14 school year.

The proposal calls for a tax-levy increase of 2.95 percent over 2012-13, below the district's state-imposed tax-levy limit of 3.36 percent (*see story at right below*).

The Board of Education approved the plan unanimously on April 11.

"We have tried to preserve the programs that give our students what they need to succeed while staying mindful of what our community can afford," said Board President Alexandra Streznewski.

The district is budgeting a \$2.75 million increase in state aid, although the

amount is still \$5.7 million less than five years ago. Despite the bump in state aid, next year the district still will eliminate 58.5 positions (*see page 3 for related story*). These cuts will bring to almost 360 the number of positions that the district has eliminated over the past five years.

If approved by voters, the plan will provide additional classroom support, including three new teachers to support Albany High School freshmen, and boost technology resources for all schools. It also includes reinstatement of several programs that had been proposed for elimination in earlier budget drafts, including Albany High School electives in art and Chinese and a summer music program.



These prekindergarteners at Delaware Community School dressed as their favorite storybook characters during the school's "Living Literacy Day" on March 21. The 2013-14 budget plan supports full-day prekindergarten in all 12 elementary schools in the City School District of Albany.

Investing in the future of all students

The City School District of Albany remains committed to providing a rich and rigorous education to every student and to keeping spending in line.

Albany public schools serve students from prekindergarten through grade 12 in 16 schools. Within that spectrum, families have a range of choices. Each school offers a variety of resources and services, from fully equipped science and technology labs to specially equipped resource rooms and social worker offices to support students academically and emotionally.

In the early years, families have the option of sending their

children to one of nine neighborhood elementary schools or three themed magnet schools.

In middle school, students attend one of three state-of-the-art facilities: Stephen and Harriet Myers Middle School or William S. Hackett Middle School, both grades 6-8, or North Albany Academy, serving students from prekindergarten-grade 8.

And in high school, students attend one of four themed academies within Albany High School: Citizenship, Discovery, Leadership or Innovation.

SCHOOL BUDGET VOTE

Tuesday, May 21
7 a.m. – 9 p.m.

Where do I vote?

Your voting location may have changed. Check out the story at right and table on page 4 for details, or call 475-6010.

Some 52.6 percent of the budget's estimated revenue – \$111.9 million – would come from local property taxes. State aid will contribute 32.4 percent, or \$69 million, and the remaining 15 percent comes from a variety of sources, including \$11.4 million from the school's fund balance and reserves.

The budget will fund just under \$35 million in payments and services to Albany's charter schools.

See page 2 to learn more about how all this will affect your tax bill. You also will have a variety of opportunities to learn more about the proposed budget and to ask questions during community meetings in the weeks leading up to the May 21 vote.

You can check out a list of upcoming budget presentations on page 2 or the 2013-14 Budget News section at www.albanyschools.org, or call 475-6010 to schedule a presentation for your group.

Your voting location may have changed

You might have a new voting location for this year's school budget vote.

If you live in the 4th Ward, Districts 4-7 and you voted at Arbor Hill Elementary School, you will now vote at the Arbor Hill/West Hill Library.

If you live in the 12th Ward, Districts 6-8 and you voted at Harriet Gibbons, you will now vote at Montessori Magnet School.

If you live in the 6th Ward, District 1 and you voted at the First Lutheran Church, you will now vote at Hackett Middle School.

If you live in the 10th Ward, Districts 6-8 and you voted at the First Lutheran Church, you will now vote at Pine Hills Elementary School.

If you live in the 11th Ward, Districts 4 and 6-9 and you voted at the First Lutheran Church, you will now vote at Albany High School.

You can find your voting location on page 4. You also can visit the 2013-14 Budget News section at www.albanyschools.org for a searchable online directory.

Proposed tax levy below state 'cap'

In 2011, state leaders enacted a law that has become known as the "2 percent tax cap." In reality, the law simply determines the number of votes school districts need to approve a budget.

The tax "cap" is the outcome of a complicated eight-step formula. Last year only five of the state's nearly 700 school districts had a limit of 2 percent.

The vast majority – 587, including Albany – had a limit greater than 2 percent (Albany's 2012 limit of 3.05 percent was more than double the district's approved tax-levy increase of 1.5 percent).

Budgets that don't exceed the limit can pass if they're approved by a simple majority of voters, 50 percent plus one vote (that's the case in Albany again this year). Budgets that surpass the limit need at least 60 percent approval, or a super majority.

And all of this only impacts the tax levy (the total amount of money districts collect each year), not your tax rate or school tax bill (*see page 2*).

For more information about the "cap," check out the video in the 2013-14 Budget News section at www.albanyschools.org.

This year, the district's proposed 2.95 percent tax-levy increase again is below the district's "cap," which is 3.36 percent.

In 2011, the last budget vote before the new law took effect, the district had a zero percent tax-levy increase.

2013-14 school budget proposal at a glance

Total

\$212.9 million

Tax levy

2.95 percent increase (2013-14 tax "cap" – 3.36 percent)

What the budget supports

- Full-day prekindergarten and kindergarten in all elementary schools
- Three magnet elementary schools, each with a unique theme
- The bilingual elementary Dual-Language Program at Delaware Community School
- Band, orchestra and chorus starting in fourth grade and continuing through high school
- Access to technology beginning in prekindergarten
- Competitive interscholastic athletics on 58 teams for grades 7-12, including boys' and girls' modified and JV lacrosse
- Albany High School's 18 Advanced Placement courses and its acclaimed International Baccalaureate Program
- Tutoring and mentoring throughout the grades

- Albany High's groundbreaking NanoHigh partnership with the University at Albany's College of Nanoscale Science and Engineering

What the budget cuts

- 58.5 positions (*see page 3*)
- Albany High electives with low enrollment
- High school Career Explorations programs in Communications and Performing Arts and Engineering, due to low enrollment
- Girls' bowling
- New uniforms for most athletic teams
- Athletic supplies and improvements to athletic fields
- Funding for YMCA after-school programs (the YMCA will continue to operate these programs)

What's new in the budget

- Three new teachers to support Albany High freshmen
- Upgrades to computers in elementary- and middle-school libraries; completion of district-wide move to wireless
- New music equipment

Your tax bill: making sense of the numbers

Q: How are my final school tax bill and tax rate set?

A: Your school tax bill and tax rate are determined by combining three factors, two of which are outside the district's control:

- School tax levy** – the total amount of money a school district needs to collect from property owners each year – \$111.9 million in the 2013-14 proposed budget. The proposed increase is 2.95 percent, below the district's tax "cap" of 3.36 percent (*see related story, page 1*).
- The state School Tax Relief Program, or STAR** – partial school tax exemptions for owner-occupied homes. Last year, the impact of STAR funding decreased your tax bill slightly. This year, the impact of STAR funding will increase your tax bill slightly – 0.25 percent for basic STAR and 0.66 percent for enhanced STAR on an average Albany home assessed at \$153,000.
- Property assessments** – estimates of the value of how much a property would sell for under normal conditions. Each summer, the New York State Office of Real Property Tax Services finalizes the percentages of local taxes to be paid by homeowners and business owners. This is the final factor in determining the school tax rate.

Once all three factors are set, the final tax rate determines how much of the total tax levy each property owner must pay.

Q: How will the proposed budget affect my taxes?

A: While these numbers may vary depending on this summer's changes in assessments, here's an idea of what a typical Albany homeowner might expect.

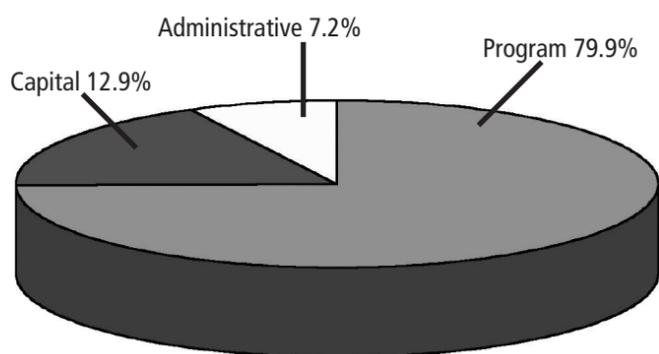
In 2012, the average school tax bill without exemptions was \$3,021. If voters approve the proposed 2013-14 school budget, a homeowner who paid \$3,021 last year could expect to pay an additional \$89 in school taxes (*see box at right for more information*).

Estimated tax bill* for the average Albany home assessed at \$153,000

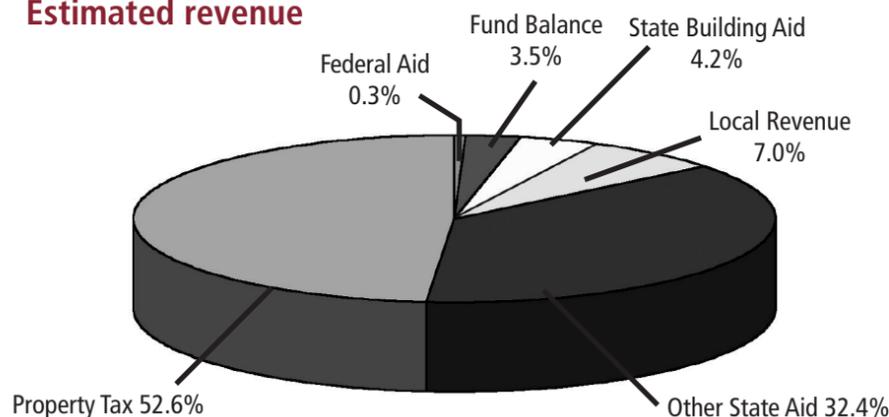
School tax	2012-13	2013-14	Estimated change
Without STAR exemption	\$3,021	\$3,110	\$89
With basic STAR	\$2,413	\$2,490	\$77
With enhanced STAR for senior citizens	\$1,804	\$1,869	\$65

*These estimates are preliminary and ultimately will be adjusted by final assessment data, which are not determined by New York state until the summer.

Estimated expenditures



Estimated revenue



Budget Presentations

Monday, May 13

- Albany High PTSA, Albany High School, 700 Washington Ave., 6:45 p.m.

Tuesday, May 14

- Board of Education budget hearing, Delaware Community School, 43 Bertha St., 7 p.m.

Wednesday, May 15

- Upper Washington Avenue Neighborhood Association, Montessori Magnet School, 65 Tremont St., 7 p.m.
- New Scotland Elementary School PTA, New Scotland Elementary School, 369 New Scotland Ave., 6:30 p.m.

Call 475-6010 for an updated list or to schedule a presentation.



CAPITAL
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Capital Education is published by the City School District of Albany.

Please direct comments about the newsletter, story ideas and questions to

Ron Lesko at (518) 475-6065 or rlesko@albany.k12.ny.us, or Lisa Angerame at (518) 475-6066 or langerame@albany.k12.ny.us.

City School District of Albany
1 Academy Park
Albany, New York 12207

Proposed expenditures, or where the money will be spent

	2012-13 Budget	2013-14 Proposed	Dollar Change
Program Budget	\$165,589,738	\$170,148,826	\$4,559,088
Instruction	121,533,299	126,653,242	5,119,943
Charter Schools	35,716,807	34,872,487	-844,320
Pupil Transportation	7,231,149	7,557,618	326,469
Athletics	773,483	740,479	-33,004
Lunch Program Assistance	335,000	325,000	-10,000
Capital Budget	\$27,910,038	\$27,492,190	\$1,129,121
Debt Payments & Borrowings	14,217,145	14,274,135	56,990
Building Rentals	161,016	549,669	388,653
Operations/Maintenance/Capital	9,696,877	9,363,386	-333,491
Utilities	3,835,000	3,305,000	-530,000
Tax Refunds & Judgments	0	0	0
Administrative Budget	\$14,225,863	\$15,354,984	\$113,009
School Supervision	12,401,328	13,542,468	1,141,140
Property & Liability Insurance	619,000	617,300	-1,700
Printing, Mailing & Data Processing	910,117	899,765	-10,352
Legal & Other Services	295,418	295,451	33
Total Expenditures	\$207,725,639	\$212,996,000*	\$5,270,361

*The total proposed expenditures assume usage of the district's reserves in the amount of \$3,878,000

Estimated revenue, or where the money will come from

	2012-13	2013-14	Dollar Change
Federal Aid	\$815,000	\$650,000	-\$165,000
Fund Balance	7,500,000	7,500,000	0
Local Revenue	15,343,039	15,013,673	-329,366
State Building Aid	9,053,299	8,853,185	-200,114
Other State Aid	66,294,230	69,051,829	2,757,599
Property Tax Levy	108,720,071	111,927,313	3,207,242
Total Revenue	\$207,725,639	\$212,996,000	\$5,270,361

What voters will see on the May 21 ballot

Albany residents will be asked to consider the City School District of Albany's 2013-14 budget on Tuesday, May 21.

The ballot asks voters to consider the proposed \$212.9 million school budget. Here's what will appear:



Proposition #1

Shall the resolution adopted by the Board of Education on April 11, 2013 authorizing the City School District of Albany to expend the sum in the amount of \$212,996,000 during the 2013-2014 school year and to levy a tax therefore be approved?

YES NO

There also will be a vote to fill an open seat on the Albany Public Library Board of Trustees. This vote is unrelated to the school district.

Albany residents will not be voting on a library budget this year. The 2014 library budget of \$6,434,764 is the same as the 2013 spending plan and carries no tax-levy increase. Therefore, the library is not required to seek voter approval.

For more information about the library budget and trustee election, contact Stephanie Simon at 427-4344.



Members of the Albany High School girls' varsity basketball team whoop with joy on March 4 as the final buzzer sounds and signals their Section II championship win over Bethlehem.

Year five of tough times

This year's budget development process marked the fifth year in a row during the state's economic downturn that the City School District of Albany has had to draft a budget proposal with a significant shortfall in state aid. The proposed cutbacks for 2013-14 (*see related story below*) are on top of the following reductions and savings from 2009-12:

- Eliminated 300 positions
- Consolidated six buildings
- Reduced energy costs by almost \$1 million a year
- Implemented new prescription drug plan to save \$250,000 a year
- Overhauled food service operations to save \$750,000 a year
- Negotiated contract savings with all bargaining units

Paying more ...

Issue	What it is	Cost
Charter school expenses	In 2013-14, Albany will have nine charter schools, publicly funded schools that are exempt from many of the rules and requirements guiding public schools.	\$35 million in 2013-14
Gap elimination adjustment	The state's attempt to close its own budget shortfall by reducing school funding.	\$7.6 million in 2013-14
Rising cost of employee health and retirement benefits	Health benefit costs are expected to rise by 10 percent next year and contributions to employee pensions are expected to increase an average of 25 percent.	\$1.9 million in health benefit costs \$3.6 million in employee pensions

... with limited resources

Issue	What it is	Cost
Decrease in state foundation aid dollars	Every New York school district receives foundation aid, which supports staff and programs. The formula the state uses to calculate this aid is complex, but nevertheless, Albany receives only 64 percent of the aid that state law entitles us to.	Loss of more than \$5 million for each of the past five school years
Expired grants and other funds	The district applies for and receives numerous time-limited grants from public and private sources.	\$2.5 million less in 2013-14
Small taxpayer base	In Albany, 57.5 percent of property is tax-exempt.	Owners of 42.5 percent of the property pay 100 percent of the taxes

Staff and program cutbacks in the 2013-14 budget proposal

Rising costs in health care, retirement benefits, salaries and charter school expenses meant the district once again had to find ways to save in preparing the 2013-14 budget proposal.

The plan calls for \$2.6 million in staff and program cuts. These cuts would bring to almost 360 the number of positions that the district has eliminated over the past five years.

The cuts include 58.5 positions, 42 of which are substitutes (16 teachers, 17 teaching assistants and nine security staff). Other cuts include more than 11 teachers, two security supervisors, a clerical position and two maintenance workers.

Three of the teaching positions eliminated will be in prekindergarten classes through retirements. These classes will be operated by community agencies. All 31 pre-K classrooms will continue to provide the same programs and services.

The district will cut \$540,000 for YMCA after-school programs at five schools. However, the YMCA will continue to operate all five programs without changes.

Some athletic programs and supplies will be cut, including girls' bowling, new uniforms for most athletic teams and repairs and improvements to athletic fields.

The proposal also eliminates the Engineering and Communications and Performing Arts electives in Albany High School's Career Explorations program due to low student enrollment. It's one of many examples in which electives with low enrollment at Albany High are being consolidated. This is an effort to right-size the course offerings to align with what the community can afford in these difficult economic times.

Albany's public schools by the numbers

- **1** – Albany High School girls' varsity basketball team's finish in the Big 10 and Section II Class AA playoffs
- **2** – National Merit Scholarship winners from Albany High School this year
- **3** – Themed, or magnet, elementary schools open to children citywide
- **6** – Elementary schools with voluntary uniform policies
- **6.5** – Miles of sidewalk around district schools and grounds
- **7.49** – Seconds it took Albany High senior Blessing Uzoeshi to run the 55-meter dash and win the Big 10 championship in indoor track
- **18** – Advanced Placement classes offered each year at Albany High
- **20** – Date in July for the district's 2013 Summer Celebration in Krank Park
- **26** – Students expected to complete this year's NanoHigh program, a groundbreaking partnership between Albany High and the University at Albany's College of Nanoscale Science and Engineering
- **41** – Clubs and activities at Albany High
- **49** – Different languages spoken by district students
- **54** – Students inducted into Albany High's National Honor Society this year
- **58** – Sports teams at our middle and high schools
- **94.52** – Cumulative GPA earned by members of the boys' varsity swimming and diving team this winter
- **125** – Pieces of artwork by students in kindergarten-grade 8 displayed at the Empire State Plaza during National Youth Art month in March
- **326** – Students who took part in the 2013 New York State School Music Association festival in March
- **589** – People who like the district Facebook page (join them at Albany City Schools)
- **660+** – Elementary school dads and father figures that took part in "Dads Take Your Kids to School Day" last fall
- **879** – Classrooms in district schools
- **2,247** – People signed up for School News Notifier (Join them! Visit www.albanyschools.org, click the Albany SNN logo and follow the easy registration steps.)
- **5,000** – Computers district-wide in 2013-14
- **5,135** – Pieces of pizza served every Friday (it's that good!) in district cafeterias
- **5,500** – pieces of fresh fruit served each day in district cafeterias
- **475-6010** – The number to call if you would like a budget presentation for your organization before the May 21 budget vote

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information in this
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Polling locations

7 a.m. - 9 p.m.

Find your location below, or visit the searchable
online directory in the 2013-14 Budget News section at
www.albanyschools.org. If you have additional
questions, please call 475-6010.

1st Ward, Districts 1 - 6 City Parks and Recreation Building 7 Hoffman Ave.	8th Ward, Districts 1 - 4 Mater Christi School 35 Hurst Ave.
1st Ward, Districts 7 - 12 Hackett Middle School 45 Delaware Ave.	8th Ward, Districts 5 - 9 Albany School of Humanities 108 Whitehall Road
2nd Ward, Districts 1 - 10 Giffen Memorial Elementary School 274 South Pearl St.	9th Ward, Districts 1 - 8 New Scotland Elementary School 369 New Scotland Ave.
3rd Ward, Districts 2 and 4 - 9 Sheridan Preparatory Academy 400 Sheridan Ave.	10th Ward, Districts 1 - 8 Pine Hills Elementary School 41 North Allen St.
3rd Ward, Districts 1 and 3 Arbor Hill/West Hill Library 148 Henry Johnson Blvd.	11th Ward, Districts 1 - 9 Albany High School 700 Washington Ave.
4th Ward, Districts 1 - 3 North Albany Academy 570 North Pearl St.	12th Ward, Districts 1-3 and 5, 6 and 8 Montessori Magnet School 65 Tremont St.
4th Ward, Districts 4 - 7 Arbor Hill/West Hill Library Arbor Drive	12th Ward, Districts 4 and 9 Albany High School 700 Washington Ave.
4th Ward, Districts 8 - 11 Sheridan Preparatory Academy 400 Sheridan Ave.	12th Ward, District 7 North Albany Academy 570 North Pearl St.
5th Ward, Districts 1 and 2 Albany High School 700 Washington Ave.	13th Ward, Districts 1 - 5 Montessori Magnet School 65 Tremont St.
5th Ward, Districts 3 - 7 Arbor Hill/West Hill Library 148 Henry Johnson Blvd.	13th Ward, Districts 6 and 7 Pine Hills Elementary School 41 North Allen St.
6th Ward, Districts 1 - 8 Hackett Middle School 45 Delaware Ave.	14th Ward, Districts 1 - 8 Eagle Point Elementary School 1044 Western Ave.
7th Ward, Districts 1 - 7 Delaware Community School 43 Bertha St.	15th Ward, Districts 1 - 3 and 5 - 6 Teresian House 200 Washington Ave.
15th Ward, Districts 4 and 7 - 9 Eagle Point Elementary School 1044 Western Ave.	

Voting requirements

To vote on the City School District of Albany's proposed 2013-14 budget, you must be:

- Registered to vote with the Albany County Board of Elections by Tuesday, May 7;
- 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 before the vote.

For more information, please contact Catherine Cutting, clerk of the Board of Education, at 475-6010.

Absentee ballots

The City School District of Albany automatically sends absentee ballots to people designated as having a permanent disability by the Albany County Board of Elections.

Others who want to vote with an absentee ballot because of illness, hospitalization, vacation, studies, business or incarceration must apply for the absentee ballot.

You can call 475-6010 to have an application mailed to you, or you can download one from the 2013-2014 Budget News section of our website, www.albanyschools.org. You also can pick up an application from 9 a.m.-4 p.m. Monday through Friday at the district clerk's office in Academy Park on Elk Street.

If you want the absentee ballot mailed to your home, you must mail the completed application to the district clerk seven days before the vote – Tuesday, May 14. If you want to pick up your ballot at the district clerk's office, you must have your completed application to the district clerk by 4 p.m. the day before the budget vote – Monday, May 20, at which time you will complete your vote.

All absentee ballots must be returned to the district clerk by 5 p.m. the day of the school budget vote – **Tuesday, May 21.**

What happens if the budget is not approved?

State law gives the Board of Education three alternatives if voters do not approve the proposed budget on Tuesday, May 21:

- Put the same budget up for another vote;
- Present a revised budget for voter consideration; or
- Adopt a contingency budget.

The board opted for a contingency budget in 2007-08 after voters rejected the proposed budget in May 2007.

If the board presents a revised budget and it is turned down, a contingency budget must be adopted. For 2013-14, a contingency budget would be \$209,788,758 and would hold the tax levy to its current level as required by state law. The district would need to eliminate about \$3,207,242 from the proposed 2013-14 budget to meet those requirements.

The state closely regulates any district operating under a contingency budget, prohibiting spending on student supplies, equipment and certain raises, to name a few items. Also, community groups have to pay to use school buildings during a contingency budget.

This would mean that, in addition to the prohibited spending noted above, the district would have to consider significantly deeper cuts to its staffing and programs to meet the new contingency requirements.