



Soaring Eagle

BUDGET CARRIES AN ESTIMATED 2.68% TAX RATE INCREASE

Voters to decide on \$14.6 million proposed budget

Duanesburg Central School District residents will go to the polls on Tuesday, May 18, to vote on a \$14,616,629 proposed budget for the 2010-11 school year. This is a spending decrease of \$248,284—or 1.68 percent less than the current year. The proposal is expected to carry an estimated tax rate increase of 2.68 percent.

Polls will be open from 1 to 9 p.m. at Duanesburg Elementary School.

Despite a decrease in spending, the tax rate will increase due to a \$1.5 million gap between expenses and revenues in next year's budget.

This is due, in large part, to a \$1.2 million Gap Elimination Adjustment proposed in the governor's executive budget to help close the state's growing deficit. It is also the result of rising operating costs districtwide, such as health insurance, pension contributions and other contractual obligations.

"Nearly half of our revenues come from state aid so a reduction of this magnitude really impacts our schools," said Superintendent Christine Crowley.

To close this gap through local property taxes alone would have required an estimated tax rate increase of 13.9 percent.

"This was never considered a viable solution, especially given the financial pressures many seem to be experiencing at this time,"

said Crowley. "Subsequently, the board worked to find a balance that preserves programs and services as much as possible and is sensitive to the economic struggles that our neighbors and families are facing."

A COMBINATION OF SOLUTIONS HELP BALANCE THE 2010-11 BUDGET

In addition to a proposed tax rate increase, other measures were required to bridge the budget gap, Crowley explained. One such measure was a decision to use a portion of the district's undesignated reserves—a "rainy day" fund set aside to pay for emergencies—as revenue in the 2010-11 school year.

"The board continues to take a conservative approach to using these funds to ensure the district's long-term financial stability and ability to respond to emergencies," said Business Administrator Brenda Kane. "We are aware of and preparing for the state's fiscal problems to continue beyond 2010-11."

The board made \$325,340 in reductions districtwide to personnel, equipment and supplies. Five teachers also agreed to accept a retirement incentive, which will generate \$104,000 in additional savings.

Through a combination of these efforts, the board was able to lower the impact on property taxes and restore several items that had been identified as potential cuts in an earlier draft of the budget.

Community members voiced opposition to many of the previously identified cuts, which included significant changes to sports, foreign language, band and clubs.

"We appreciate the community taking time to share their input and concerns with us throughout the budget development process—through attendance at board meetings and budget forums as well as via e-mail," said Crowley.

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Budget Vote At-A-Glance

**Vote Tuesday, May 18, 1-9 p.m.
Duanesburg Elementary School**

- ▣ Proposed budget: \$14,616,629
- ▣ Budget decrease: (-\$248,284)
- ▣ Percent decrease: (-1.68%)
- ▣ Estimated tax rate increase: 2.68%





Budget

(continued from page 1)

“Unfortunately, there were no easy solutions, and difficult decisions had to be made.”

PROPOSED REDUCTIONS/ADDITIONS

The proposed budget includes reductions to teaching and support staff positions, equipment and supplies (see right).

Two of the teaching positions will be reduced through attrition while other personnel changes are being made due, in part, to an expected drop of 50 students at the high school next year.

“There are proposed cuts that will not be easy to manage, and we’ll have to make accommodations for these less than ideal situations,” said Crowley, referring to the elimination of a custodian and one kindergarten teacher—who was hired on a one-year basis with federal funding—and sharing a librarian between two school buildings.

To that end, the district may need to encourage more parent/community volunteers and restructure the custodial department for increased efficiency.

The proposed budget includes \$19,377 in additions (see right), which will be funded through cost-saving measures.

A part-time maintenance worker will be hired to accommodate proposed changes in the custodial department for a total savings of \$25,600. Two part-time lunch monitors are needed at the elementary school to replace the teacher aides who previously held this responsibility. ▲

Proposed budget reductions for 2010-11

Personnel changes:

Eliminate one full-time librarian and share one librarian between the middle/high school library and elementary school

Eliminate one full-day kindergarten teacher position, which was funded temporarily this year through federal stimulus aid

Eliminate one full-time English teacher through attrition
Position to remain vacant due to decreased enrollment at the high school

Eliminate one full-time music teacher through attrition.
Position to be reduced to part-time due to decreased enrollment in band

Eliminate two teacher aides for Academic Intervention Services

Eliminate one full-time custodian

Continue to reduce custodial overtime

Eliminate staff training for Project Lead the Way, pre-engineering program

Other changes:

Reduce contractual health services for private/parochial students due to a decrease in participating students

Reduce budget for supplies by 4 percent

Reduce budget for supplies by 7 percent in transportation and operations & maintenance departments

Reduce budget for equipment

Eliminate purchase of textbooks not eligible for state aid

Eliminate purchase of software not eligible for state aid

Eliminate purchase of hardware not eligible for state aid

Reduce the use of diesel fuel

Proposed budget additions for 2010-11

These additions would be offset by cost-savings identified above.

Add two part-time lunch monitors at the elementary school for supervision

Add one part-time maintenance worker to be utilized as needed for facility and building maintenance. Position will not include benefits.

ABSENTEE BALLOTS AVAILABLE

Residents who will be out of town or are unable to vote in person due to illness or disability can vote by absentee ballot. Applications and more details are available by visiting the district Web site or calling the district office at 895-2279.



Three-Part Budget Summary

New York state law requires all school districts to present their budgets divided into three expenditure categories—program, administrative and capital—and compare them to last year's amount:

ADMINISTRATIVE 2009-10 2010-11

AMOUNT \$1,327,051 \$1,326,760
 PERCENT OF TOTAL 8.9% 9.0%

Includes salaries and benefits of administrators, supervisors and administrative clerical staff, school board costs, tax collection, legal and auditing costs, property insurance costs, BOCES administrative costs and central data processing.

PROGRAM 2009-10 2010-11

AMOUNT \$11,068,461 \$10,957,496
 PERCENT OF TOTAL 74.4% 75.0%

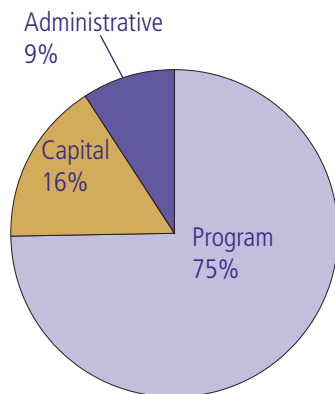
Includes salaries and benefits of all teachers and staff who deliver pupil services (guidance, health, library/media etc.), BOCES programs, special education services, textbooks, equipment, athletics and transportation costs (except bus purchases).

CAPITAL 2009-10 2010-11

AMOUNT \$2,469,401 \$2,332,374
 PERCENT OF TOTAL 16.6% 16.0%

Includes salaries and benefits of maintenance and custodial staff, debt service on buildings, bus purchases, utilities, general insurance and tax certiorari, & court-ordered costs.

2010-11 BUDGET SUMMARY



Projected expenses: Where the money goes

	2009-10 Budget	2010-11 Proposed	Dollar Change
Instruction	\$7,942,948	\$7,465,436	-\$477,511
Employee Benefits	\$2,736,353	\$3,009,937	\$273,584
Transportation	\$1,102,023	\$1,135,621	\$33,598
Operations	\$796,496	\$729,548	-\$66,948
Maintenance	\$241,985	\$256,177	\$14,192
General Support	\$787,584	\$808,178	\$20,594
Debt Service	\$1,132,526	\$1,186,732	\$54,206
Interfund Transfer	\$125,000	\$25,000	-\$100,000
Total Expenditures	\$14,864,913	\$14,616,629	-\$248,284

Revenue summary: Where money comes from

	2009-10 Budget	2010-11 Proposed	Dollar Change
State Aid (all sources)	\$7,225,505	\$6,639,104	-\$586,401
Local Revenues			
Medicaid	\$30,000	\$40,000	\$10,000
Interest on Investments	\$20,000	\$10,000	-\$10,000
Fund Balance	\$470,700	\$795,700	\$325,000
Interfund Transfer	\$100,000	\$0	-\$100,000
Penalties: Taxes	\$6,000	\$6,000	\$0
Services & Rentals	\$9,000	\$9,000	\$0
Miscellaneous Revenues	\$167,699	\$74,000	-\$93,699
Property Taxes	\$6,836,009	\$7,042,825	\$206,816
Total Revenues	\$14,864,913	\$14,616,629	-\$248,284

Estimated tax rates

The tax rates, shown below per \$1,000 of assessed value in all seven towns within the district's boundaries, are estimates only. The district will set final tax rates in August based on property assessments established by each town and equalization rates set by the state.

	2009-10 Final	2010-11 Estimated	Dollar Increase
Duanesburg	\$53.46	\$54.99	\$1.53
Charleston	\$15.29	\$15.73	\$0.44
Knox	\$28.45	\$29.26	\$0.81
Wright	\$18.71	\$19.25	\$0.54
Princetown	\$48.38	\$49.77	\$1.39
Florida	\$26.35	\$27.10	\$0.75
Schoharie	\$18.71	\$19.25	\$0.54



Q & A on the proposed budget

Q. WHAT PROGRAMS ARE MANDATED BY THE STATE?

A. The overwhelming majority of the district's budget goes toward meeting state and federal mandates and requirements—from areas of study to building climate issues to transportation regulations. Elementary school mandates include instruction in math, science, technology, English language arts, social studies, health, physical education, art, music, and library in addition to specific topics as varied as state history and fire prevention. Middle school students are required, among other mandates, to have a certain amount of units of study for English, social studies, math, technology, science, physical education, home and career skills, the arts, library skills, and second language. In high school, the academic mandates differ depending on which diploma a student pursues.

Q. HOW MUCH OF THE BUDGET DO RESIDENTS VOTE ON?

A. Residents vote on the entire budget. This is a "YES" or "NO" vote giving the district permission to spend the budgeted amount in the coming fiscal year. The district can not spend any more money than the public approves.



Visit the Eagle's Nest on the district Web site for more budget-related questions and answers.

Q. WHAT HAPPENS IF DUANESBURG GETS ADDITIONAL STATE AID?

A. If the state budget includes additional aid for the district, and it is adopted before the district must set its tax rates in August, then the additional revenue could be factored in when determining the tax rates. If the state budget is adopted after the tax rates are set, any additional monies could be applied to the district's undesignated fund balance.

Q. WHAT IS AN UNDESIGNATED FUND BALANCE?

A. This is a "rainy day" fund set aside to pay for emergencies. A fund balance is created when the district is able to generate a surplus by either receiving more revenue than expected and/or by spending less than the amount budgeted. Typically, \$470,000 of the available fund balance is designated and used to balance the operating budget each year. As part of the proposed budget, an additional \$325,000 will be used to help lower the tax impact on district residents and minimize the number of cuts in the coming year.

Q. HAVE THE STOLEN FUNDS BEEN RECOVERED?

A. No. The FBI is still actively investigating the unauthorized transfer of district funds, which occurred in December 2009. The district is also in the process of interviewing law firms with litigation experience specific to this crime. The district used \$497,200 of its undesignated funds to compensate for the stolen money

during the current school year to help mitigate any impact on district programs and operations. This kind of one-time, unforeseen fiscal emergency demonstrates the importance of having such reserve funds available. If the money is not recovered it would have a long-term effect on the district. However, the district remains optimistic and committed to its recovery efforts.

Q. WHAT HAPPENS IF THE BUDGET IS DEFEATED?

A. Under state law, if a school budget is defeated, the Board of Education can propose the same or a revised budget for a revote, or move directly to a contingency budget. If the board decides to present the budget—revised or not—for another vote and it is defeated a second time, the board must adopt a contingency budget.

Q. WHAT IS A CONTINGENCY BUDGET?

A. State law mandates that under a contingency budget a school district may not increase spending in most expenditure areas by more than 120 percent of the Consumer Price Index or 4 percent, whichever is less. Because CPI was a negative number last year, the State Education Department is currently reporting a contingency budget cap for 2010-11 of 0 percent. If forced to adopt a contingency budget under current law, the district will be required to make **\$15,062 in additional cuts** from the proposed budget. The district would also be subject to various limits and controls on how the money within a contingent budget is spent. ▲



Taxpayers' return on investment in Duaneburg schools

The community's investment in Duaneburg schools is making a difference! View a sampling of the district's achievements below.

- **Highest graduation rate in Schenectady County.** The district's 95 percent graduation rate is the highest in Schenectady County and significantly higher than the state average of 72 percent for the 2008-09 school year.
- **Commitment to student safety.** Duaneburg received the 2010 School Safety Excellence Award from the Utica National Insurance Group for making safety a top priority in its schools.
- **Advanced placement courses and college credit opportunities.** High school students get a head start on college-level work and college credits through the district's rigorous Advanced Placement and University in the High School course offerings.
- **Student-athletes excel on the field and in the classroom.** Sports teams consistently earn the NYS Public High School Athletic Association's Scholar-Athlete Team Award for having a set number of members who carry a grade point average greater than 90.
- **Course offerings that better prepare students to compete in a new kind of world.** Courses such as journalism, forensics and environmental science provide students with hands-on learning that will translate to on-the-job success in the future.
- **Community service and education go hand in hand.** Each year, students, staff and community members work together to help

Duaneburg wrestler named national champion



Junior Nick Gwiazdowski won a national title for his weight division at the High School Coaches Association National Wrestling Championships. Go Eagles!

those who are less fortunate. For example, more than \$1,000 was raised in one week this year to help Haiti earthquake victims.

- **Distance learning expands course offerings.** Through distance learning, the district has been able to expand its course offerings at a fraction of the cost. The high school's fully-equipped distance learning lab includes two-way, fully-interactive video and audio systems that allow students to "attend" courses taught by teachers in participating school districts throughout the state.
- **Students make informed decisions.** Many graduates who pursue a career in education at the college-level base their decision on participation in the district's Basic Education for Student Teachers program. Juniors and seniors are eligible to apply for the full-year program, which places accepted students into an elementary classroom, art, music or gym class to assist teachers with classroom activities.
- **Good academic standing.** The most recent New York State Report Card rates Duaneburg as being "in good standing" academically based on state and federal education standards.
- **Preparing students for post-secondary education.** In 2009, 92 percent of students went on to post-secondary education. Of those 51 percent enrolled in 4-year colleges or universities.
- **Recognized as a high-performing school district.** Duaneburg is consistently ranked high among 85 school districts in an 11-county area in an analysis performed by the *Albany Business Review* newspaper. These rankings are based on graduation data and results on state tests in English, math, social studies and science.
- **Recognized for excellence.** Duaneburg educators and students have been honored by local media outlets and business organizations, such as YMCA's Outstanding Educator and Student Awards. ▲



District works to control costs

The Duanesburg Central School District is constantly exploring ways to reduce costs and improve efficiency when delivering programs and services, as outlined below.

TRANSPORTATION SAVINGS

- **Taking advantage of technology.** The use of sophisticated routing software identifies the most efficient bus routes to help save on gas, mileage and other transportation costs.
- **Coordinating shared schedules.** The district actively seeks ride-sharing opportunities with neighboring schools to significantly cut fuel and overtime costs as well as wear and tear on vehicles for students traveling to vocational schools, private schools and special needs programs.
- **Finding innovative solutions.** Harry Folckemer developed an innovative and economical method of capping storm drains in the event of a spill. Specifically, he fabricated caps at a much lower cost than they can be purchased.

- **Eliminating non-essential bus runs.** With the transition to full-day kindergarten in 2008, mid-day bus runs for half-day kindergarten students were no longer needed. In addition, late bus runs have been eliminated two days per week due to poor attendance—further reducing costs.

PROGRAM AND SERVICE SAVINGS

- **Maximizing grant funding.** The district receives several federal grants, such as the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) Sections 611 & 619 for special education and preschool education. Many teachers apply for and receive grants independently from organizations, such as Schenectady County, Tobacco Free Schools and WalMart.
- **Participating in several consortia.** The purchase of health insurance, workers' compensation insurance, municipal energy and other consumable products with other districts provides considerable savings by leveraging the power of several buyers.

- **Partnering with state organizations.** To identify areas for improvement and cost-efficiency, the district partnered with the New York State School Boards Association to audit special education policies and procedures.
- **Purchasing cost-effective Capital Region BOCES services.** The purchase of cooperative services, such as risk management, communications and special education, is significantly less expensive than hiring people outright, particularly since the district is reimbursed for a portion of the costs through state aid.
- **Concentrating on energy efficiency improvements.** The district joined Capital Region BOCES Energy Management Service this year. The new program helps smaller school districts by allowing them to qualify for assistance from Energy Education, Inc.—a company that helps schools learn how to save on energy costs.
- **Greater reliance on electronic communications.** The district is committed to using less paper by taking greater advantage of online technologies and beginning the transition to electronic communications to reduce ink and cartridge expenses.
- **Relying more on in-house staff.** District maintenance staff conduct a majority of facility tasks, such as cleaning boilers and roof repairs—eliminating the need to hire expensive outside contractors.
- **Going green.** Green Fiber, the district's recycling partner, pays the district for recyclable materials collected. ▲

Alternative funding sources enhance learning opportunities



A middle-schooler shows off his recording skills during an after-school media immersion program at Proctor's Theatre. In addition to this program, an arts-in-education grant has afforded students districtwide the opportunity to attend live performances, educational programs, films and an in-depth residency at the theatre this year. Learn more at duanesburg.org.



Incumbents run unopposed for three seats on the school board

Voters will be asked to elect three candidates to the Board of Education while at the polls on May 18. Board incumbents Carlos Moreno, Cecilia Tkaczyk and Henry "Gus" Geidel are running unopposed for three seats on the board. The positions are unpaid and become effective July 1, 2010. The candidates are listed below as they will appear on the ballot.

Carlos Moreno



Carlos Moreno is seeking his third term on the board where he served most recently as president. He and his wife, Sheri, have three children—a son who attends preschool, a son who attends the elementary school and a daughter who attends the middle school. Moreno is a graduate of New York University and Boston University Law School. He is an Assistant U.S. Attorney for the Northern District of New York.

Cecilia Tkaczyk



Cecilia Tkaczyk is seeking her second term on the board. She and her husband, John, have a son who attends the elementary school. Tkaczyk received a bachelor's degree from Rutgers University in New Jersey. She is currently a legislative analyst for the New York State Senate. Previously, Tkaczyk spent 15 years advocating at the New York state level on behalf of not-for-profit organizations engaged in affordable and supportive housing.

Henry "Gus" Geidel



Henry "Gus" Geidel is seeking his first full term on the board. He previously filled an eight-month vacancy left when John Iseman resigned. Geidel is manager of information systems at Albany Medical Center and owner of ConnX Consulting. Geidel founded the Duanesburg Chapter of the American Youth Soccer Organization in 2007. Since then, he has served as a coach, administrator and assistant regional coordinator. Geidel attended St. Lawrence University where he earned his bachelor's degree. He lives in Delanson with his wife, Heather. ▲

VOTERS TO DECIDE ON BUS PURCHASE PROPOSITION

District residents will vote on a separate proposition on May 18 to purchase two 65-passenger buses at a maximum cost of \$198,925.

If approved by voters, the district would be reimbursed approximately 80 percent of the total purchase price over four years through state aid. This will reduce the total cost to less than \$10,195 per year for four years. Two old buses will also be traded—resulting in additional savings.

The proposition is part of the district's ongoing bus replacement plan, which is designed to keep the district's fleet in safe, working order. The new buses will replace older vehicles that are becoming more costly to maintain due to repairs and less efficient to run.

If the proposition is defeated, the district would not be able to take advantage of the available state aid reimbursement to purchase the vehicles. Existing district vehicles would continue to be used, age and decrease in trade-in value over time. ▲

EXIT SURVEY TO BE AVAILABLE

Following the budget vote, residents will be asked to complete a voluntary and anonymous exit survey. This will help the district gather feedback from the community and help inform future budget decisions.

Digital voting machines to be used May 18

The Schenectady County Board of Elections has introduced new voting machines, which will be used for the first time at the school budget vote and election on Tuesday, May 18.

The new machines are Digital Image Scanners, which read and tabulate a completed paper ballot.

Upon registration, voters will receive a paper ballot and a privacy sleeve. Privacy booths will be available for voters to use. Once the voter has marked their selections, the voter must insert the ballot into the scanner. A digital screen will display any errors on the ballot, which can be corrected before the vote is cast.

Once the private ballot has been marked, scanned and deposited in the ballot bin, it will be retained by the Board of Elections in the event a recount is necessary.

New York State Election Law and the Help America Vote Act mandate that all lever machines be replaced with a new digital scanning system that is accessible to all voters, including voters with disabilities.

For more information, including a video demonstration, visit the district Web site. ▲

Board of Education

Carlos Moreno <i>President</i>	<i>Superintendent</i> Christine Crowley
Bridget Holmes <i>Vice President</i>	<i>Business Administrator</i> Brenda Kane
Paul Munson III Cecilia Tkaczyk Christina Loukides John McKeeby Henry Geidel	<i>High School Principal</i> Beth DeLuke <i>Middle School Principal</i> Peter Reyes
<i>Editor</i> Audrey Hendricks	<i>Elementary School Principal</i> Erica Ryan
	<i>Transportation</i> Harry Folckemer/ Pegi Venter

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Duanesburg CENTRAL SCHOOL DISTRICT

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CURRENT RESIDENT

8 Duanesburg CENTRAL SCHOOL DISTRICT



Please don't forget to vote!

- Tuesday, May 18, 1-9 p.m.
- Duanesburg Elementary School
- Voters must be U.S. citizens, at least 18 years old and a resident of the school district for at least 30 days before the vote.

The information below is the "School District Budget Notice" as required by New York State law. School districts must distribute this notice, as prescribed, to all district residents.

SCHOOL DISTRICT BUDGET NOTICE

Overall Budget Proposal	Budget adopted for the 2009-10 school year	Budget proposed for the 2010-11 school year	*Contingency budget for the 2010-11 school year
Total budgeted amount	\$14,864,913	\$14,616,629	\$14,601,568
Increase for the 2010-11 school year		-\$248,284	-\$15,061
Percentage increase in each proposed budget		-1.68%	0.10%
Change in consumer price index		-0.4%	
Resulting estimated property tax levy for the 2010-11 school year		\$7,042,825	\$7,027,764
1. Administrative component	\$1,327,051	\$1,326,760	\$1,324,777
2. Program component	\$11,068,461	\$10,957,496	\$10,949,077
3. Capital component	\$2,469,401	\$2,332,374	\$2,327,714

* A contingency budget is limited by law to a growth cap of 120 percent of the consumer price index or 4 percent, whichever is less, excluding certain budget categories. It is anticipated that a contingency budget would require \$15,062 in additional cuts to non-contingent expenses.

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Learn more about other ballot items.

Basic STAR Exemption Impact

Estimated Basic STAR exemption savings based on a hypothetical home within the Town of Duanesburg with a full value of one hundred thousand dollars (\$100,000).

	Budget proposed for the 2010-11 school year
Basic STAR tax savings	\$482

The annual budget vote for the fiscal year 2010-11 by the qualified voters of the Duanesburg Central School District, Schenectady County, New York, will be held at **Duanesburg Elementary School** in said district on **Tuesday, May 18, 2010**, between the hours of **1 and 9 p.m.**, prevailing time, at which time the polls will be opened to vote by digital machine.