

## Maintaining excellence in tough budgetary times

Dear Neighbor:

The economic woes affecting both the nation and New York State are well documented and need little explanation herein. As Wall Street suffers, New York State is disproportionately affected because of its reliance on the finance sector payroll taxes for such a large portion of its revenues. And as expected, these declining NYS revenues have indeed translated into stagnant State Aid to schools.

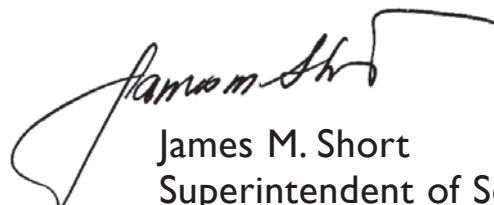
The introduction of federal stimulus money has helped to avoid the massive State Aid reductions which were initially proposed, but flat Aid from the State remains a concern. In approximate terms, PCSD's revenues consist primarily of local school taxes and State Aid. So when State Aid languishes, a greater burden could be shifted to our taxpayers. Our District has a very proud history of tax rate stability, and significant efforts have been made to maintain this stability through this tough fiscal climate. A description of the cost saving strategies is included on page 5 of this document.

I am pleased to report that the spending plan being presented for voter approval reflects just a modest 1.7% increase (well below the 4% increase allowed for in a contingency/austerity budget). Fur-

ther, the appropriation of additional fund balance and the addition of new property to the City's tax rolls have enabled a projected tax rate which is unchanged from this year.

Balancing educational excellence and taxpayer interests is never easy, but we are very pleased with the outcome of this long and trying budget season. This spending plan takes advantage of attrition to minimize spending increases, and effectively protects our fine programs. Holding the line on taxes while maintaining our District's position of distinction was the Board of Education's foremost priority, and it is thus that we present this spending plan.

As always, I wish to express how proud we are of our continued partnership with City residents and businesses. Our District remains exemplary and homebuyers continue to covet City properties for their access to our schools. With your continued support, we will weather these economic problems and seamlessly deliver the same quality education as always.



James M. Short  
Superintendent of Schools

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### Facts & Figures

Projected  
Tax Rate Change  
0 %

Budget Increase:  
1.7 %

Public Hearing  
Duken Building  
Wednesday, May 6  
7:30 p.m.



# It's the extras ...

As school funding is strained, it's often the non-mandatory programs that suffer. We believe that these special, extra programs bring distinction to our District, and we are extremely proud to be able to continue offering these activities. Here are some highlights of our special offerings:



- Expanded aeronautical engineering program at PHS – part of the Project Lead the Way opportunity. This in-house program complements PHS's participation in the new Plattsburgh Aeronautical Institute. Plattsburgh has a proud history and bright future in aeronautics, and we are proud to play an important role in the creation of the PAI.
- Great breadth of clubs and extracurricular activities in our schools. Clubs begin at the primary grades, and continue through PHS, where students can choose from among more than 20 different activities
- New universal pre-kindergarten program (2008) to complement the District's longstanding targeted pre-kindergarten program
- Elementary through High School string instruments music program
- A full age spectrum of enrichment programs for advanced learners, beginning in Kindergarten (Odyssey Program) and extending through Advanced Placement (AP) and College Advanced Placement (CAP) courses at PHS. College credit bearing courses currently offered include: Accounting, Advanced Algebra, Calculus, Chemistry, Microbiology, Economics, Statistics, Math Functions, Technical Drawing, Psychology, English Literature & Composition, Physics, Global History, and US History
- Four foreign languages are offered: French, Spanish, German and Farsi
- Active and engaged parent groups in all of our buildings. With the tremendous ongoing support of these groups, PCSD has acquired a large number SMARTBoard interactive projector systems (100-plus) and is a Statewide leader in the use of SMART-Boards.
- Hornets athletics boasts 22 teams and top-flight facilities. In 2007-2008, Hornet teams earned nine Section 7 Championships and nine CVAC championships, and have already achieved 7 more in 2008-2009, and the Spring season sports season hasn't finished yet (as of the printing date).



- Beyond academics and athletics, PCSD plays an important role in the local arts and cultural scene. PHS musicals and concerts are highly regarded and well-attended, and students have enjoyed great success in NYSSMA, the PHS Drama Club's production of *Bye Bye Birdie*, the Momot Music Theatre's production of *Rats*, *The Story of the Pied Piper*, the Oak Street and PHS Choruses appearance on WCFE-TV's



Holiday Spectacular program, and the many Band, Orchestra and Choral concerts given throughout the year. Many District musicians and singers have also been recognized in regional and state-level competitions.

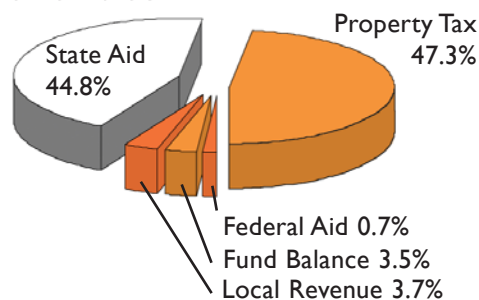


# 2009-10 Proposed Budget

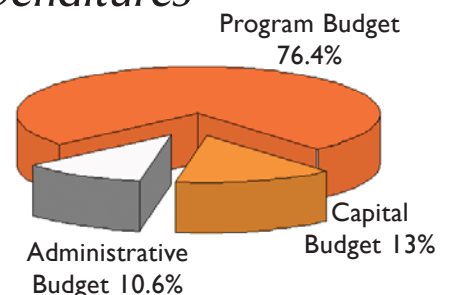
<i>Proposed Expenditures</i>	<i>2008-2009 Budget</i>	<i>2009-2010 Proposed</i>	<i>Change</i>
<b>Program Budget</b>	<b>\$28,095,358</b>	<b>\$28,648,215</b>	<b>\$552,857</b>
Instruction	27,034,205	27,691,326	657,121
Pupil Transportation	504,800	495,892	-8,908
School Bus Purchase	195,000	115,000	-80,000
Athletics	361,353	345,997	-15,356
<b>Capital Budget</b>	<b>\$4,810,937</b>	<b>\$4,857,388</b>	<b>\$46,451</b>
Building Debt Payments	1,925,000	1,925,000	0
Operations & Maintenance	2,322,777	2,369,228	46,451
Utilities	553,000	553,000	0
Tax Refunds & Judgments	10,160	10,160	0
<b>Administrative Budget</b>	<b>\$3,949,801</b>	<b>\$3,978,835</b>	<b>\$29,034</b>
School Supervision	3,694,864	3,723,779	28,915
Property & Liability Insurance	101,301	101,301	0
Printing & Mailing	78,636	78,755	119
Legal & Other Services	75,000	75,000	0
<b>Total Expenditures</b>	<b>\$36,856,096</b>	<b>\$37,484,438</b>	<b>\$628,342</b>

<i>Estimated Revenue</i>	<i>2008-09</i>	<i>2009-10</i>	<i>Change</i>
Federal Aid	200,000	250,000	50,000
Fund Balance	1,138,892	1,300,000	161,108
Local Revenue	1,400,000	1,400,000	0
State Building Aid	1,691,001	1,762,385	71,384
Other State Aid	14,888,080	15,027,461	139,381
Property Tax	17,538,123	17,744,592	206,469
<b>Total Revenue</b>	<b>\$36,856,096</b>	<b>\$37,484,438</b>	<b>\$628,342</b>

*Revenues*



*Expenditures*



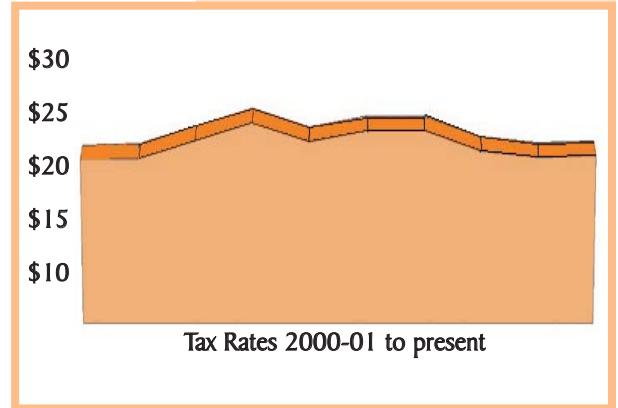
# A decade of tax stability

At the center of the Board of Education's efforts is the balancing of educational excellence with taxpayer sensitivity. Residents of the City of Plattsburgh have long demonstrated tremendous support of their schools, and we continue to hear the importance of this educational quality not only because of the value placed on educating our society's youth, but also because of our School District's role in enhancing the value of the property located within the City. As State revenues and student numbers change, our Board remains focused on stability.

Year after year, our revenues from State sources seem more precarious. While we are extremely proud of the stability in both the District's tax rates and programs, languishing State Aid may eventually threaten this steady pattern. Plattsburgh is a unique City, with great diversity in

its housing stock and an unparalleled amount of tax exempt property. Though incomes in our City are much higher than the State average, we recognize that a relatively small City tax base supports a relatively large amount of property and services.

As such, we continue to appeal to our State representatives, and we are confident that they understand the special factors at play in our City and that they will work to ensure that the State adequately supports education in our District. In the meantime, we are pleased to be able to protect programming and maintain a stable tax rate (illustrated at right).



## *Decisions during challenging economic times...*

We are fortunate that PCSD is home to many enviable and uncommon initiatives such as Odyssey, elementary strings, Project Lead the Way, College for Every Student, and many, many more. While these programs are certainly not mandated, they play a central role in creating our District's position of distinction.

As much as possible, we have focused on attrition as an opportunity to contract our operation and address budgetary constraints. Each cost-saving strategy which we undertake helps to protect our wonderful programs. As retirements – both among staff and faculty – were announced, these positions were critically examined as possible reduction areas. While not each retirement yielded a reduction, our staff demonstrated sufficient vision, cooperation and sacrifice to meet the Board's budgetary goal of a stable tax rate.

Certain teachers at the Middle and

High School (where population has shrunk) will assume roles created by retirements in other buildings. Secretarial and monitor assignments have been reassigned, and some of the vacancies created through attrition will not be filled. Funding for contracted social workers in our buildings will be eliminated and our child advocates will assume the duties previously performed by these individuals. And while the District's in-house elementary summer school will continue, the secondary summer school program will be discontinued in favor of partnering with the BOCES regional summer school program.

So while there is no such thing as a perfect, universally-supported reduction, we feel strongly that the sacrifices outlined above best protect our core operation and the prioritized 'special' programs which are in-place.

# An eye on the future

Changing economic conditions, shifting student populations, and reliance on fragile State Aid funding can make long-range planning a frustrating exercise, but the PCSD Board of Education and Administration remain committed to stability and consistency in our operations. To maintain this quality, we continue to plan well into the future so as to be ready for the many inevitable changes which will arise. Here are some examples of our recent long-range planning efforts:



- Rotation schedule for large equipment items. Our Technology staff aggressively upgrades both our IT infrastructure and computers so that there are always computers available for our students, faculty, and staff. Similar rotation schedules are in-place for computing peripherals (i.e. printers), copiers, buses

and District vehicles (i.e. plow trucks) so as to ensure that our equipment remains current and efficient.

- Creation of numerous self-contained special education classrooms in our buildings. Where placing students in out-of-District programs was once the norm, every effort is now made to establish programs within our buildings and keep students in our schools. Not only does this help ensure that our students are educated in the least-restrictive environment possible, we are now better prepared to accept special education students who transfer into our District – thereby avoiding the mid-year cost surges which can strain District budgets.
- When funding and storage space

permit, we endeavor to advance-purchase supplies. Pre-buying supplies is an effective means of counteracting inflation, and it ensures a ready supply of teaching materials and supplies are always on-hand. When cost allows, we endeavor to purchase from vendors located in the City of Plattsburgh.

- Forecasting enrollment so as to maintain appropriate staffing levels has become critically important. The District conducts multi-faceted enrollment projections (using factors such as cohort retention, local live births, changing employment conditions, major construction starts, etc.) so that we can best predict staffing levels. In recent years, the size of the District's incoming classes have ranged dramatically (consider Bailey Avenue's current student populations: 2nd grade (51), 1st grade (66) and kindergarten (76). Student movement continues throughout the year. And while shifting populations and late registrations make forecasting a challenging endeavor, our class sizes remain enviable and our school boundary zones have remained steady because of our efforts.
- Maintaining 510,000 square feet in our buildings is challenging. The District maintains a Five-year Facilities Plan, as well as a Facilities Needs Assessment to help guide long-range planning regarding our buildings. Further, while ground will be broken this spring for our current capital construction project, planning is already underway for the components of the next project (expiring roof warranties, deferred maintenance, etc.) so that our buildings remain safe, healthy, comfortable learning environments.

# Upcoming construction

While not related to this year's budget update, this correspondence provides a convenient means of updating the community about some upcoming activities. In 2007, voters approved a capital construction project (commonly known as the District's 'EXCEL' project) which authorized work at each of our schools. This project is funded by a combination of State building aid and a special State construction incentive titled Expanding Our Children's Education and Learning (EXCEL).

Following voter approval, projects undergo a long period of review and approval by the State Education Department's Office of Facilities Planning. We are pleased that this approval process is finally complete, and we anticipate that construction will begin this spring. We've included



this message simply as a reminder when you see the equipment and crews on our grounds over the summer.

## *Board of Education Priorities*

- **District Finance**  
Responsible budget management, which reflects the instructional mission of the District while remaining mindful of the local taxpayer effort.
- **Facilities**  
Facility planning to focus on deferred maintenance issues, safety, instructional and student use spaces.
- **Instructional**  
A K-12 curricular focus that prioritizes an articulated curriculum, utilization of instructional technology and educational opportunities such as course selections and program offerings.
- **School Community**  
Supportive of the partnerships between the school and greater community respecting parent involvement, communications, and community needs.
- **Student Achievement**  
Accountability towards student achievement K-12 and supporting efforts to enhance results at all levels.
- **Student/School Culture**  
Holding a particular focus on the importance of understanding the culture of today's student and the resultant school climate. Noteworthy concerns which fall into this area include peer issues, bullying, health/nutrition issues and classroom climate.

# Voting Day FAQ's

## Where do I vote?

Momot Elementary School (60 Monty Street) – Residents living in the area of the City of Plattsburgh south of the Saranac River.

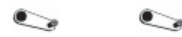
Duken School Building (49 Broad Street) – Residents living in the area north of the Saranac River and south of the following line: centerline of Cornelia Street to centerline of William Street; south on William Street to centerline of Brinkerhoff Street; east on Brinkerhoff Street to centerline of Margaret Street; north on Margaret Street to centerline of Bridge Street; Bridge Street east to Saranac River

Bailey Avenue Elementary School (50 Bailey Avenue) – Residents living in the City of Plattsburgh north of the following line: centerline of Cornelia Street to centerline of William Street; south on William Street to centerline of Brinkerhoff Street; east on Brinkerhoff Street to centerline of Margaret Street; north on Margaret Street to centerline of Bridge Street; Bridge Street east to Saranac River

## Am I eligible to vote ?

Residents of the City of Plattsburgh registered to vote with the Clinton County Board of Elections are eligible to vote (as long as they have been a resident of the school district for 30 days) and their address is current with the Board of Elections.

## On The Ballot



YES

NO

### 2009-2010 BUDGET PROPOSITION

RESOLVED, that the proposed budget of expenditures of the Plattsburgh City School District for the 2009-2010 school year in the amount of \$37,484,438 for the purposes shown in the statement of estimated expenditures adopted by the Board of Education is hereby approved and the amount thereof shall be raised by a levy of a tax upon the taxable property of the school district, after first deducting the monies available from State Aid and other sources as provided by law.

### Budget

- Results in no change in the projected tax rate

the **P**ulse  
of  
Plattsburgh City Schools

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