

Our vision is a professional learning community where instruction invites effort and supports academic rigor for all students and educators.



Guilford Public Schools Focused on Learning

Charting the Course

In an effort to keep staff and the parent community informed regarding current school related issues, the following communication will be offered periodically throughout the year. This issue of "Charting the Course" will focus on the proposed 2009-10 budget and school facilities.

Tom Forcella
Superintendent of Schools

FY 2009-10 Budget Update

It will come as no surprise to anyone that the preparation of the 2009-10 budget was a most difficult task considering the economic climate that exists today. At its February 2 Special Budget Meeting, the Board of Education approved forwarding a budget to the Board of Finance that includes a 3.46% increase over the prior year's budget.

Over the last several years a needs-based approach focusing on establishing priorities within the budget has been utilized in the Guilford Public Schools. The difference this year was that the established needs were defined as basic maintenance and the continuation of existing programs. Our goal was to make every effort to submit a budget that would continue the fine work that has been accomplished over the last several years while at the same time submit a budget that was responsive to the reality of the current fiscal situation.

The increase in the proposed 2009-10 budget over the prior year is \$1,667,804.00. Fixed costs including contract salary and insurance obligations, transportation, and required special education tuition increase the budget by \$2,208,404.00. Obviously, decreases were necessary in the other accounts of purchased services, capital, and supplies in order to realize the 3.46% increase. For more detailed information, please go to the GPS website where the entire proposed budget is posted (www.guilford.k12.ct.us/~gpsbudget/budgetpb).

Although the above picture seems to paint a dismal scenario, I do believe that the proposed budget does meet the minimum needs of the district and keeps our professional learning community model moving in a positive direction. Classroom teaching positions have been maintained at current levels, the technology initiative, although slowed a bit, will continue, and funds have been provided to assist with academic interventions for struggling learners.

Finally, all those involved in the creation of the proposed 2009-10 budget have worked in a collaborative manner to create an educationally sound budget while remaining sensitive to the fiscal realities of the Town of Guilford.

Facilities Update

As most of you are aware the Board of Education has supported the recommendation of the Community Task Force on School Facilities (CTFSF) to build a new high school. Most recently, the School Board has agreed in concept with the Educational Specifications that were presented to the Board on several occasions over the last several months. The Educational Specifications clearly define the facility needs based on the goals of the overall school academic and co-curricular programs. The Educational Specifications inform the architects so they may begin the preliminary design work for a new GHS. These specifications are a direct result of conversations among the architect, Superintendent, school staff, and administrators who are most familiar with the program. The most recent issue of "The Compass" includes a number of articles that will provide additional detailed information with regard to the facility needs. (www.guilford.k12.ct.us/Compass_1_09.pdf).



Most recently the Board of Education has charged the architectural firm of Fletcher-Thompson with examining the possibility of incorporating the 25,000 square foot addition to the high school built in 1997 into the plan for a new school. The desire of the Board is to take advantage of the one section of the building that would require the least amount of renovation and would hopefully lower the initial proposed \$112,093,550.00 cost.

The proposed option for integrating the 1997 addition into a new school will be presented to the Board of Education at a special meeting to be held on February 26 at 7:00 p.m. in the Adams Middle School Chorus Room.

For additional information on the proposed GHS building project, please visit the link provided on the GPS web site. (www.guilford.k12.ct.us/Facilities.dwt.php)



The School Board also agreed with the CTFSF's recommendations for Adams Middle School to address the the most urgent safety and health repairs to the facility. A list of these repairs and cost estimates have been prepared and will be presented to the Board of Finance to consider as a bond question at the time of the Town Budget Referendum in April 2009.

A Middle School Task Force has been formed to fully investigate and recommend permanent solutions to the building needs of the Adams facility. The Board has stated that this process is not to exceed one year.

Impact of Facilities on Learning

Obviously, buildings are not the driving force for improved learning or the accomplishment of our educational goals. The staff that works in our buildings in both professional and support positions make the majority of the difference. That being said, the facility does have an impact on learning in a variety of ways and the research clearly supports that position.

