

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

Over the last several days I have been contacted by parents and staff members with regard to a variety of budget-related questions. Most notably, individuals were questioning the Town meeting process, the potential budget reduction that could take place at the meeting, and the general impact of further budget reductions. Please consider the following as part of our continuing effort to offer accurate information with regard to the FY2009-10 proposed budget.

Tom Forcella  
Superintendent of Schools

### **Town Meeting Procedures**

As you are aware, the annual Town Meeting regarding the FY 2009-2010 budget is scheduled for tonight (Tuesday, April 7) at 7:30 p.m. at the Community Center. After a conversation with First Selectman Carl Balestracci and Town Attorney Peter Barrett, the following is my understanding of the process that may be used at tonight's Town meeting.

- The budget that will go to referendum can be reduced at Town meeting. By Charter it can only be reduced not increased at the meeting.
- In order for that to happen there must be at least 300 registered Guilford voters in attendance for a motion to reduce to be made from the floor.
- The motion will have a specific reduction amount and if it passes that will be the amount that will go to referendum.
- For the motion to pass, at least 200 votes in favor of the motion are required. That does not mean that 200 represents 2/3. A simple majority is required but the majority must be at least 200. Should there be 500 registered voters in attendance then 251 votes in favor of the motion are needed.

### **Impact of Additional Budget Reductions**

Obviously, the notion of additional budget reductions would have a significant impact on our educational program. The proposed budget has already been reduced in services, supplies and materials, technology, site improvements, and other areas to levels that are below that of the current budget. If reductions were required, the Guilford Public Schools' Leadership Team would meet and discuss possible program and staff reductions. After significant dialogue with administrators and program leaders, my role would be to recommend reductions to the Board of Education. The Board and the Administration have always worked collaboratively with regard to budget issues and I am sure that will be the case if we are faced with additional reductions.

At this point in time I would rather not predict the dollar amount of a potential reduction but I will offer my opinion regarding areas that will be reviewed if and when that discussion takes place.

Over the last several years the Board of Education has made a significant effort to bring our class sizes to a level that meets the needs of classrooms that attempt to engage students in their learning. The Board of Education traditionally has not been in favor of increasing class size by reducing teaching staff but if significant cuts are required, teaching staff – even though it would have an impact on class size – would be an obvious way to reduce costs.

Also included in the staffing arena, our support staff including paraeducators, secretaries, maintenance and custodial crew will be examined. Administrators and certified staff such as social workers and guidance personnel will also be reviewed.

Other areas that might very well be investigated include the athletic and extracurricular programs and an additional reduction to our technology initiative. Unfortunately, the K-12 world language initiative that was phased in over the last three budgets will also be part of the discussion.

Upon reading the above, it is clear that all programs and the related staff to support them will be part of the discussion if substantial budget reductions are required.



In conclusion, it is important to continue to move our school district in a positive direction. The work and commitment of the GPS staff has made the difference. The unanimous support of the proposed budget by the BOE and the positive vote of the Board of Finance send a message that education matters in Guilford. Those of us charged with creating budgets will always make every effort to recognize current economic realities while at the same time placing the educational needs of Guilford's children at the forefront in a cost effective manner.

## Potential Impact Areas of Additional Budget Reductions

Reduction in Staff:  
Teachers

Paraeducators

Secretaries

Maintenance

Administrators

Social Workers

Guidance

Athletics

Technology

K-12 World  
Language

Increased  
Class Sizes

