



District Initiates Spending Freeze

Brunswick Central School District has instituted a spending freeze for the remainder of the current school year as officials look to cut costs in anticipation of reduced state education aid next year.

The spending freeze includes areas such as staff development not funded by grants, out of district sports scrimmages, field trips, and supply purchases that are not in critical areas.

"These are certainly worthwhile expenditures in normal times, but we're not in normal times," said Superintendent Lou McIntosh. "While mid-year cuts in state education aid now appear unlikely, we need to take a hard look at our costs now to prepare for next year when New York likely will reduce state aid."

The school district has already started planning the 2009-2010 school budget. Initial meetings were recently

held with building principals, administrators, and leadership from the CSEA and Brittonkill Teacher Association to discuss expenditures for next school year.

"Everyone knows we have to collectively tighten our belts given New York State's budget deficit," McIntosh said. "But we also have to maintain the great schools we have. We will look everywhere we can to cut costs before we consider academic programs."

The district should have a good indicator of what state aid will be for the 2009-2010 school year when Governor Paterson releases his executive state budget on December 16. That date is earlier than in past years and should help the district prepare its budget.

As the budget is developed, the district will keep the community updated through its school website (www.brittonkill.k12.ny.us) and upcoming newsletters.

Students Treat Senior Citizens



More than 200 local senior citizens came out for a morning of music followed by a free lunch prepared by students as Tamarac High School held the 14th annual Senior Citizen's Concert and Luncheon on Friday, November 14.

As in past years, the event proved a big hit with senior citizens from the community who packed the district auditorium to hear the High School Jazz Ensemble, Choralaires, and Concert Band perform.

Seniors were all smiles as they tapped their feet to such crowd favorites as "Mister Sandman," "Scarborough Fair," and "Johnny B. Goode." The concert finished with a medley of patriotic songs that audience members sang and clapped along to.

"Everyone was just awesome, I'm so proud of the students," said Ruth Forsythe, who came to the event with her husband Robert. "It's a wonderful, wonderful thing for them to do. You hear so much negative these days and this was just wonderful."

Once the concert finished, senior citizens were treated to a luncheon of sandwiches, soup, and desserts as students served beverages and helped community members find places to sit. The High School Senate organized much of the luncheon efforts, just as they have for each of the 14 years the schools has held the event. Students worked afterschool the day before to prepare the food and then came in the morning of the event to assemble hundreds of sandwiches.

Superintendent Lou McIntosh, who welcomed community members to the event, praised the students, faculty and staff who volunteered so much of their time to make the event a success. He noted how excited the students clearly were to put on the event for the community.

"You can see it in their faces," McIntosh said. "And it's amazing how talented our student musicians are."

NEW LOOK FOR:

the communicator

In an effort to provide our community with more timely news, Brunswick Central School District has changed the format of the *Communicator* newsletter.

This switch to a smaller newsletter will allow the district to mail newsletters more frequently with school news that's more current. Because the new *Communicator* uses about 70 percent less paper, the district can produce more frequent newsletters at a cost similar to the previous format.

The district is also utilizing the school website more to share stories about student achievement, school news and important announcements. But recognizing that not everyone uses or has access to the internet, the district remains committed to producing a school newsletter to ensure the entire community can read about its schools.

We hope you enjoy this new *Communicator* format and find the more timely news helpful.

New Pre-K Class Begins

In a bright, welcoming classroom at Tamarac Elementary, the district's new pre-kindergarten program is helping 16 area children get the extra help they need to succeed in school.

The district started its new pre-kindergarten program in October. It began small as a way to help children in the district who are most in need of extra help and who otherwise might be behind their peers when they start kindergarten.

"It is so important to make sure children who start kindergarten are on a relatively level playing field," said Elementary Principal Karen Lederman. "Our Pre-K program will help bridge the gap for young children so they can become successful lifelong learners."

Barbara Baker teaches the pre-kindergarten class, using a curriculum that involves a lot of play-based learning which instills a love for learning with a focus in areas such as reading, art, and music. Expanding language skills is also a central focus.

"Everything I do is based on best practices," Baker said. "I strongly believe in reading, reading, reading. A lot of research shows that the acquisition of language plays an important part in a child's ability to learn."



Baker has been with Tamarac for 10 years, previously working as a special education teacher for K-2. Prior to that, she had experience as a Pre-K teacher, working for 21 years for the Center for the Disabled.

The children's development is monitored closely with parents receiving quarterly reports which show how their children are progressing. By helping students early, the district believes they'll need less help in school when they're older.

"Early intervention is the key" Baker said. "The earlier you get them, the quicker they catch up to the rest of their peers. If you catch them up early, you'll save money in helping them later."

School Bus Drivers Honored by AAA

Two bus drivers for Brunswick Central School District were honored by AAA Hudson Valley for their "outstanding" driving records during the 2007-2008 school year.

Debbie Phillips and Rocco Valenti were two of just 15 bus drivers in the Hudson Valley region that were recognized by AAA, which presented the drivers with awards and mentioned them in the organization's "Going Places" magazine.

"School bus safety is serious business" said Roger Dames, AAA Hudson Valley Traffic Safety Coordinator. "Each and every employee in the Transportation Department plays a critical role in the smooth and efficient operation of the system's school bus service. One of the most important parts of this complex mechanism is the bus driver."

AAA Hudson Valley chose Phillips and Valenti for the awards based on their exemplary driver safety record, exceptional attendance, good interaction skills with students, and overall job performance.

"Debbie and Rocco certainly deserve recognition for their outstanding work," said Transportation Supervisor Whitney Colvin. "They are great examples of the commitment our entire staff has for providing safe, reliable transportation for our students."

Dear friends in the Brittonkill Central School District,

I want to thank everyone for the warm welcome you've given me and my family and share how excited I am to join such a wonderful school district and community.

This is truly one of the warmest communities I've ever been in. My wife Kathy, my son Joshua, and I are living in Raymertown and I can't tell you how many people have offered to help us. We already feel like it's home.

If you ever have a concern or question about our school district, please contact me. It's been great meeting people out in the community and at school events and I enjoy hearing your thoughts about how we can improve. I've also started a blog on the school website to provide residents another opportunity to ask questions and offer comments.

I can't say enough about the tremendously talented students, faculty and staff here. They're team players, always willing to work together and chip in whenever needed. The community involvement is incredible too, particularly with active groups like the PTSA, Brittonkill Educational Foundation, and Booster Club. And we're all so fortunate to have had John Yagielski here who worked so hard with our faculty and staff to create a vision that will continue to guide our district.

I think a main reason our students are so successful is it's such a well rounded district. Of course we'll continue to strive to improve. We want our students to be lifelong learners and civic minded individuals who are successful no matter what they choose to do in life.

So thank you again and please don't hesitate to contact me with a question.

Sincerely,
Lou McIntosh, *Superintendent*

Pumpkin Carving Brings Dads to Tamarac

Fathers of kindergartners recently took advantage of the opportunity to spend an afternoon with their children in school as Tamarac Elementary held its annual pumpkin carving event on Oct. 31.

Students had trouble containing their excitement as their dads came into school, with some children hopping up and down as they entered classrooms. Their faces beaming as they worked alongside their fathers, children anxiously helped draw faces on the pumpkins, pulled out the insides, and watched as their dads carved away.

The annual event is specifically organized for fathers, explained Principal Karen Lederman, because mothers are commonly more involved in school activities.

"This is a wonderful way for fathers of our children to get involved in our school community," Lederman said. "And as you can see, the students absolutely love it."



New Student Mentoring Initiative Showing Results

A new program at Tamarac that pairs students in grades 7 through 9 with volunteer mentors and other educational opportunities is proving valuable to the 60 students involved in the program.

"Students are always asking 'When can I meet with my mentor again?'," said program coordinator Mary Gilpatrick. "They can't believe there's one person who's always there in their corner for them."

The Reaching Academic and Personal Potential (RAPP) program was started this school year. It offers students a mentor they can meet with to discuss the challenges of school and adolescent life as well as an academic consultant teacher who offers guidance with homework and studying habits.

"These students were chosen because we believe they are very, very capable but for whatever reason, they're not ready," said Gilpatrick.

"We're providing them services and strategies to be successful so they can look at school a little differently and find it more rewarding."

Staff and faculty volunteer their time to be mentors. "We believe the more you give the more you get back," Gilpatrick said.

Service projects are also part of the program, including a recent food drive that students organized. The donated food items were given to local charities to help those in need through the holiday season.

Principal Rich Pogue said he's pleased with the initial success of the program. He noted that grades 7 through 9 are often critical school years in ensuring students graduate with an excellent education.

"Our goal is to provide the resources students need to be successful going from Middle School to High School," Pogue said.

Grants Help Improve P. E. Programs

When Tamarac Elementary received its new climbing wall this past summer, the school was buzzing as children eagerly waited to attend PE class.

Using hand and foot holds to climb, students make their way around the gym walls, never more than a few feet from the protective mats below.

"They love it and it's something they can accomplish on their own," said teacher Susan Turner. "They're using a lot of muscles they don't normally use and also problem solving when they are faced with more difficult climbing challenges."

The climbing wall is just one addition to Tamarac's K-12 physical education program which was paid for through a \$300,000 matching grant program. The fitness room at the Secondary School was also upgraded this year with much needed strength and aerobic equipment.

The Carol M. White Physical Education for Progress grant also helped fund workshops at Tamarac last year teaching good nutrition and leadership. The district plans to use remaining funds to provide additional equipment, programs, professional development and extra-curricular opportunities.





District Excels in State Report Card

Tamarac's High School graduation rate for the 2006-07 school year far outpaced the state average and both Tamarac schools are meeting state proficiency goals for education, according to the State Education Department's latest School Report Card.

"Our students and faculty should be commended for their hard work," said Nicole Lindeman, the district's Director of Curriculum and Assessments. "But the District still has work to do. Our goal is for every student who walks through our doors to walk across the graduation stage with a solid education that prepares them to succeed in the 21st century."

According to the State Report Card, Tamarac's graduation rate for the 2006-2007 school year held relatively steady at 86 percent compared to the state average of 69 percent. Of Tamarac's 87 graduates, 92 percent earned a Regents Diploma with 62 percent earning a Regents Diploma with Advanced Designation, according to the report.

New York State's graduation figures only include students who graduate high school in four years. Students who need an extra summer or year in school aren't counted in the report figures even if they graduate.

Lindeman also pointed to increasing test scores for students entering 9th grade in 2003, an important indicator in the State Report Card. The percentage of students displaying proficiency in math increased from 7 percent over the previous year; English proficiency scores increased 8 percent.

Students to Perform Holiday Concerts

Tamarac Elementary and High School students will perform in local televised holiday specials this year in addition to the school's own series of winter concerts.

On Nov. 18, Tamarac's Elementary Select Choir recorded a performance at the WMHT studios for "Music for the Holidays," a program featuring recorded choir performances from area schools. The program will be broadcast Dec. 24 from 2 to 4:30 p.m. and Dec. 25 from 10 a.m. to 12:30 p.m.

"The children represented Tamarac Elementary school very well," said music teacher Chris Siegenthaler. "They captured the hearts of the WMHT employees with their professional attitudes, smiling faces, and new snazzy uniforms!"

Tamarac Senior Choralaires members Amy Ritrovato and David Fox were also selected from more than 200 singers to participate in WRGB's "Melodies of Christmas Concert" at Proctor's Theater in Schenectady. The concert will be held the week of Dec. 15 and broadcast the week prior to and on Christmas Day (dates unavailable).

And don't miss the annual winter concerts at Tamarac this year! Please check your district calendar or www.brittonkill.k12.ny.us for dates and times.

Receive School News in Your E-mail Inbox

The next time school closes early due to weather, would you like an e-mail instantly telling you?

How about an announcement when the school offers a program your child is interested in?

Then sign up for Brittonkill eNews, the school district's new parental e-mail notification system.

Just visit the school website at www.brittonkill.k12.ny.us for information and an opportunity to subscribe.

Once you subscribe, we'll e-mail you important information throughout the school year. All e-mail addresses are kept completely private and will not be released to anyone. Brittonkill eNews was launched at the beginning of the school year with nearly 300 parents and community members already signed up.

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