

Celebrations of the Fairfield Public Schools

Volume 1 * Issue 4 * January 2011

Superintendent's Message



Dear Faculty and Staff:

I am pleased to report that, on Tuesday night, the Fairfield Board of Education approved my proposed budget of \$148,505,841, a 4.9 percent increase over current spending. The Board held three meetings to ask questions about the budget and discuss its details with me and my staff. In the end, the Board unanimously endorsed the budget as proposed.

One of my goals this year in developing the budget was to simplify the budget document so that it would be easier for everyone to understand. I was pleased to hear so many positive comments from Board members and public speakers that they believed we had met this goal. We especially wanted to be clear about where we currently spend our grant money and the impact on the loss of federal stimulus dollars had on the budget proposal. The so-called "funding cliff" that you may have heard about is real.

On the substantive side, my goal was to preserve our excellent educational program in Fairfield while being sensitive to the fiscal climate. Many worthwhile requests did not make it into my proposed budget for this reason. We have legitimate needs in technology and major maintenance projects, for example, that I could not include.

While I am not due to report to the Board on my reaction to the Operational Audit until March 8, we did identify some savings in the budget that were suggested by the Audit. For example, absorbing some custodial and utility costs into the food service program preserves dollars in the operating budget for valuable services without negatively impacting instruction. Moving the high school start times back to 7:30, while not specifically included in the Audit, will save us \$500,000. Reducing our use of interns and increasing the use of permanent substitutes will save us another \$159,000.

The most noteworthy program improvement is the new Elementary Staffing Model, which is explained in detail in the budget book on pages 157 and 158. We are proposing to increase services for struggling students in mathematics and language arts in each elementary school. Many of the public speakers commented on this proposal as worthy of public support.

Looking at the big picture of this budget proposal, approximately 90 percent of the requested budget increase (4.4 of the 4.9 percent) is attributable to what I would call "fixed costs" – contracted salaries, bus contract increases, medical insurance contributions, pension funding, loss of

grant funding and the like. I believe the Board of Education saw that the budget request represented an effort to maintain a high standard of excellence in our schools while finding savings wherever possible.

There is still a long way to go. The budget will be reviewed by the Board of Selectmen, Board of Finance and Representative Town Meeting before we know what our budget will be for next year.



Osborn Hill launched GenerationOn, a global youth service movement igniting the power of kids to change the world through service. GenerationOn is a newly-created youth service division of the Points of Light Institute and one of the largest youth volunteer action organizations in the nation. The following team from Osborn Hill was instrumental in the launch of this program: **David Hudspeth** - IIT, **Elizabeth Lukas** - SLP, **Pam Williams** - Grade 4 teacher, **Colleen Morello** - LAC, **Paraskevi Rountos** - Literacy Coach, **Ann Marie Soto** - Kindergarten teacher and **Alan Lipman** -Principal.



Burr - Burr Elementary School and Math Resource Teacher/Instructional Improvement Teacher, **Bret Henkel**, were recently recognized at The 17th Annual Connecticut Elementary Schools Program Recognition Banquet sponsored by the Connecticut Association of Schools for their Flexible Grouping in the Mathematics Program in Grades 3-5.

Dwight - Students collected over 100 coats for Waltersville School in Bridgeport. Student Council members helped with the collection and delivery.

Holland Hill - Holland Hill School held an interactive sing-along, led by **Jon Noyes**, Holland Hill Music teacher, that encompassed songs to celebrate many different holidays and highlight different holiday traditions around the world. Parents, grandparents, aunts, uncles and cousins were all invited to come share in the joy of the holiday season and celebrate "Holland Hill style".



Jennings - The school celebrated *Hat Day*. The money raised was used to purchase holiday gifts for families in Fairfield.

McKinley - A class of grade 1, 2 and 3 students traveled to the *Yale Center for British Art* for their first in a series of lessons on visual literacy conducted in the art gallery. The students are learning to carefully observe paintings and then use detailed words to write about their observations. The visual literacy project has been coordinated by **Kathy Reddy**, McKinley Art teacher.



Mill Hill - The Language Arts Challenge Group had a visit from Eliana, an au pair from Colombia, South America who is living in Southport on a 2-year cultural exchange visa. She is also a member of the Global Awareness organization designed to promote multi-cultural understanding and appreciation in elementary and middle school classrooms.



Eliana shared information about her native country, through an interactive PowerPoint and videos, and provided each student with a "passport" to record the information they learned and an inflatable globe.

North Stratfield - The second annual Walk to School Day was held. North Stratfield PE Teacher, **Patti Kassay**, organized this event along with support from the PTA, especially the Wellness Committee. Many teachers supported the event by walking to school with students and their parents.

Osborn Hill - Osborn Hill held its annual *Turkey Trot*. Students donated canned goods and bags of food. There were two "turkey legs" with grades K-2 trotting .21 of a mile and grades 3-5 trotting .43 of a mile around the school's back field. The food was donated to the *Daughters of Charity Food Mission* in Bridgeport to fill their pantry for the holidays. The Daughters of Charity is a rescue mission that ministers directly to the need people of the Bridgeport community regardless of their ethnic or religious background.



Riverfield, Holland Hill, Dwight and **McKinley** are participating in the Elementary Cross Country Team. Students recently ran a challenging, hilly 1-mile course around the campus of Dwight Elementary School. A large crowd cheered all 137 runners on and helped celebrate at the finish line. Unexpected rain prompted last minute changes to the course (to avoid the muddy field and track), and the varying terrain was a hit with all runners.



first annual PTA sponsored Walk-a-thon. Students who received a pledge of \$5 or more received a tee-shirt designed by Tomlinson art teacher David Ward. Students enjoyed an all school walk, tug-of-war competition between homerooms, raffles, prizes and music provided by STAR 99 Radio.

Fairfield Warde HS drama production, *Watch on the Rhine*, recently played to a sold out audience in the Black Box Theater. The production was directed and produced by English teacher, **Amy DiFranco**.



Riverfield - Grade 4 & 5 students and parents recently attended *Riverfield's Nutmeg Book Club* and discussed eight different books. Five years ago there were less than five boys in the club, and this year more than half of the club members are boys. This year, for the first time, there were many dads at the meeting reading with their children.

Sherman - All grade 2 students made a large collection of toys, clothing and blankets for Operation Hope. They sent three boxes, one from each 2nd grade classroom, full of holiday poppers and cards.



Fairfield Woods MS - Lauren Burns, Ben Ehlers and **Daniel Knorr**, will have their winning poetry published in a book. The three are winners of the *Poetry for Peace* contest held by the Fairfield University English Department.

Fairfield Ludlowe HS - Twenty-eight music students were selected to audition for the Western Regional Band, Chorus, Jazz Band, and/or Orchestra. **Cody Bergeron, Emily Fish, and Nick Romano** - were invited to join two ensembles.



Fairfield Ludlowe HS - Photo students took all of the "under 18" prizes at the annual *Easton Photo Competition*. Twelve FLHS students entered the competition, and all of their work is currently on display in the gallery at the Easton Library. The winners were: 1st place, **Emily Guimento**; 2nd Place, **Sarah LeClerc**; and 3rd Place, **Katie Csizmadia**. Also, **Paige Onofreo** was one of 30 students chosen for a juried show at the Westport Arts Center, and her work will be on exhibit in "Kid Kulture" show through February 20.



Layout by Karen Sanborn

Tomlinson Middle School - Students raised \$27,000 in the