

# Making a Difference

February 2012

## *Budget Update*

On January 11<sup>th</sup> I presented my recommended budget to the Board of Education. The total proposed budget amount was \$6,231,029 which represents a 3.96% increase from the 2011-12 Board of Education (BOE) operating budget. If you have not yet had the opportunity or time to view my presentation it is on the Sayles School Website. The budget book that details each requested amount in the operating budget is also online for your information. Since the January 11<sup>th</sup> meeting the BOE has held two budget workshop meetings to discuss the various components of the budget in detail.

The administration recommended reductions in the area of substitutes and transportation. The reduction in transportation was based on a recommendation to continue the bus 7A, 7B shuttle plan, that is being piloted this year, in the 2012-13 school year. Continuing the shuttle plan would result in removing the extra bus proposed in the budget. The cooperation of students, parents and the staff in making the pilot shuttle a success made this a viable budget reduction recommendation.

To achieve a reduction in the area of substitutes, the administration recommended using one university education intern as a substitute for the year. In return for tuition, this intern provides daily substitute coverage at Sayles School. In addition to cost savings, there is the benefit of having the same person for the entire year as well as the fact that the intern is studying the latest best practices in education as part of their preparation for becoming an elementary or middle school teacher.

The remaining reductions were achieved by actual changes in staffing benefits and/or students' educational expenditures that occurred after the January 11<sup>th</sup> presentation. The budget that the BOE will review for possible adoption at its February 1<sup>st</sup> meeting is now a 2.59% increase from the 2011-12 budget. In addition to the BOE meeting on February 1<sup>st</sup>, the BOE has scheduled two additional budget workshops if the budget is not adopted on February 1<sup>st</sup>.

## *Positive School Climate*

At the January 11<sup>th</sup> BOE meeting, the BOE adopted a new bullying policy together with a policy for developing a positive school climate at Sayles School. As part of the School Climate Plan, Sayles School has formed a School Climate Committee that consists of teachers, administrators, parents and community members. Members of this committee include: Ms. Babcock, Ms. Sharpe, Ms. Labbe, Mr. Lumpkins, Ms. Sechen, Ms. Snoke, Ms. Sullivan, Mr. Scarpelli and Mrs. Wierzbinski.

To further the work of this committee, all parents are being invited to complete a School Climate Survey in the month of February. Parents can learn more regarding these surveys and have the opportunity to complete the survey during the parent-teacher conferences scheduled for February 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup>.

The input received in response to these surveys will be summarized and used as a basis for formulating the next steps in the development of an enhanced positive school climate at Sayles School. In addition to committee work, the entire staff of Sayles School has been participating in monthly meetings dedicated to the development of programs that will reinforce a consistent positive discipline philosophy at Sayles School. You will receive additional information from Mrs. Wierzbinski as the programs are selected and developed.

## *Wellness*

In addition to parents and community members serving on the School Climate Committee, we are fortunate to have parent and community member involvement on the Wellness Committee. Membership on this committee includes: Dr. Benson-Clarke, Ms. Enslow, Mr. Fitzgerald, Ms. Houle, Dr. Leake, Ms. Sullivan, Mrs. Turner, Ms. Wierzbinski, Ms. Williams, Ms. Woronecki and Ms. Zimmerman.

In addition to developing and monitoring the District Wellness Policy, which will be presented by the BOE Policy Subcommittee for approval by the BOE at the February 1<sup>st</sup> meeting, this committee will be involved in the development of a comprehensive Wellness Curriculum that, when completed, will include components that provide enhanced educational programming for all students in the areas of physical education, social skills development and health education. Initial work on this curriculum will begin this year with the majority of the work anticipated to take place next year.

## *Curriculum Development*

In March, I will present the BOE with a 5-year plan for the development, implementation and evaluation of all curriculum programs at Sayles School. I have invited the administrative team and certified staff to collaborate in the development of this plan. After informal discussions with staff, initial efforts in the areas of mathematics, science and to a lesser extent social studies are being initiated this year. Although the improvement of curriculum is a continuous process, I will present the BOE with a K-8 Curriculum Planning Guide for review and approval, for each area, as each plan is designed. I have included some brief highlights of work in progress.

**Math Update:** Our administration and teachers have been working on the development of a curriculum planning guide that is aligned with the Connecticut Common Core Standards that must be fully implemented during 2012-14 and will be assessed at the State level in 2014-15. We have included the dollars in the 2012-13 budget needed to purchase Singapore Math Program materials for grade 5. These materials are consistent with those previously purchased for grades K-4. These materials are aligned with the Connecticut Common Core Standards and will provide a major resource for our math curriculum. In addition, in the area of mathematics, we are pleased to announce the reintroduction of the algebra program in grade 8. Mrs. Wierzbinski will be providing students and parents in grade 7 information regarding selection for participation in this program.

**Social Studies Update:** We recently established a new partnership with the staff at Mystic Seaport. As a result of this partnership our students this Spring will begin participating in a carefully orchestrated series of activities that will take place at Sayles School and at the Seaport. Students in the intermediate and middle level grades will be involved in visiting the planetarium and investigating primary source research documents at the Seaport, as well as receiving visits from role-players from various time periods at Sayles School.

**Science Update:** Our staff and administration, in partnership with LEARN, a Regional Educational Service Center, has been involved in the development of a science curriculum program that is consistent with the state frameworks as well as national standards for science education. We hope to pilot the first of many exciting, new inquiry-based units in several grades this spring.

If you are a parent or community member who has expertise and or interest in participating in the development of any curriculum project please contact me either by phone at [860.822.8264](tel:860.822.8264) x107 or email me at [dleake@saylesschool.org](mailto:dleake@saylesschool.org). In addition to work in specific areas I hope to begin, in the Spring, a District Curriculum Committee which will meet 3-4 times a year to review the current status and progress of each curriculum area. If you would like additional information regarding membership on this committee please contact me.

## The following are the remaining 2011-2012 Board of Education meeting dates:

February 1, 2012

(Meeting in Sayles School Cafeteria)

March 7, 2012

April 4, 2012

May 2, 2012

June 6, 2012

All are welcome to attend our BOE meetings. I will be available for open conversation during the half hour prior to each BOE meeting. I look forward to meeting members of the Sprague Learning Community.

[www.saylesschool.org](http://www.saylesschool.org)