



## MESSAGE FROM THE BOARD OF EDUCATION

In just a few weeks, spring will be here. As the longer hours of daylight and increasing warmth bring renewed life to the world around us, the Board of Education would like to resume our commitment to the residents of Middlebury and Southbury to listen to your suggestions and ideas about our schools.

Spring is also the time when the Board of Education finalizes its operating budget proposal for the following school year. Dr. Frank H. Sippy, Superintendent of Schools, made the first public presentation of his proposed operating budget to the Board of Education on February 26. In March, the Board's Finance Committee will hold public workshops to review the 2007-2008 budget proposal, and on April 9, the Board of Education will hold a public hearing. We encourage you to read the article in this newsletter on the budget process and to become an active participant in these public meetings.

A year ago, we reported that we were beginning a two-year evaluation and revision to our social studies curriculum. In this newsletter, we provide an update on the progress of our curriculum development.

Also included in this newsletter are some of our district accomplishments. We congratulate these students, coaches and teachers for their achievements.

For more information about the Region 15 schools and the 2007-2008 operating budget proposal, go to [www.region15.org](http://www.region15.org) or call the central office at 758-8259 extension 110.

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## Revisions to Social Studies Curriculum Are On Track

The social studies team is currently in the development phase of revising the curriculum for grades K-12. The team is staggering the development of the curriculum to budget instructional resources better. Implementation of the new social studies curriculum for middle school and grade 9 students is planned for the 2007-2008 school year, and implementation of the new elementary school curriculum is planned for the following year.

The middle school teachers are excited about the changes taking place in the social studies curriculum. With the new curriculum:

- Grade 6 students will explore river valley civilizations. Students will see how concepts transfer from Mesopotamia (Tigris and the Euphrates) to the Nile, Indus, Huang He (Yellow River) and Chang Jiang (Yangzi River).
- Grade 7 students will continue to study early American history, but the curriculum will take the students to

## School District Budget Is A Multi-Step Process

Developing an operating budget proposal that supports the educational goals of our community is one of the main responsibilities of the Region 15 Board of Education. The process includes multiple steps that begin in the fall and continue until a referendum is passed:

### Step 1: Determining Projected Expenditures

The budget development process begins in the fall with projections of our operational expenses for the next school year, including personnel requests and costs for teaching materials. Among the factors we consider are program improvements;

diversification of course offerings; enrollment forecasts that may affect class sizes or programs; and potential unanticipated economic factors, such as rising fuel costs.

### Step 2: Determining Priorities

Throughout the fall, Superintendent of Schools Dr. Frank H. Sippy and our administrators discuss the estimated expenditures and perform a cost – benefit analysis to determine priorities. By December, those priorities begin to define the proposed budget.

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the end of the 19th century. Previously, the 7th grade curriculum stopped at Reconstruction following the Civil War. By organizing the curriculum around “Big Ideas,” or concepts, we will help students see relationships across periods.

- Grade 8 students will build on the 7th grade concepts as they study America as a world power in the 20th century and the contemporary issues that it faces. This curriculum will prepare students for high school where they begin two years of World History.

Currently, our middle school social studies instructional leaders are reviewing textbooks to select those that best support the new curriculum. Teachers are looking forward to continued professional development and tighter alignment between middle school and high school social studies courses.

### **Step 3: Presenting the Superintendent’s Budget Proposal**

Following discussions with the administrators, the Superintendent spends several weeks in December, January and February reviewing all the budget information and preparing a proposal to bring to the Board of Education at a public meeting in February. The Board reviews the Superintendent’s recommendations and goals for the budget and listens to public comment. After this meeting, the Board assumes responsibility for the proposed budget.

### **Step 4: Refining the Superintendent’s Budget Proposal**

In March, the Board’s Finance Committee holds workshops to hear public comment on the proposed budget. This subcommittee may then ask the Superintendent to refine the budget proposal further. In April, the Board holds a public hearing on the proposed budget. This year’s hearing will be Monday, April 9. The hearing provides another opportunity for the community to learn about the proposed budget, ask questions and make suggestions. The Board then has about two days to consider community feedback and make further refinements to the proposed operating budget before approving it. This year, the Board will meet on Wednesday, April 11, to approve the 2007-08 budget proposal.

### **Step 5: Scheduling the Budget Referendum**

Because regional boards of education in Connecticut are agents of the State of Connecticut, towns have no direct

governance authority over regional school districts. Instead, Boards depend on voter referenda to approve their proposed operating budgets. By law, regional school districts must hold their budget referendum on the first Tuesday or Wednesday in May. Historically, the citizens of Middlebury and Southbury have held their budget referendum on the first Wednesday in May. This year’s referendum will be May 2.

### **Step 6: Determining Each Town’s Budget Responsibility**

After voters approve an operating budget, the funding goes into effect on the first day of July. Middlebury and Southbury are each responsible for the percentage of the approved budget that corresponds to the percentage of students attending district schools from that town as of the previous October 1. For example, if on October 1, 2006, Middlebury’s total number of students equaled 30 percent of Region 15’s student population, the town would be responsible for 30 percent of the approved budget. With 70 percent of the total student enrollment, Southbury would be responsible for 70 percent of the approved budget. Each town then factors its share of the Region 15 budget in to the mil rate it establishes for its town budget.

Information about our proposed budget will be available on the Region 15 district website at [www.region15.org](http://www.region15.org).

# Operating Budget Balances Fiscal Responsibility with District Goals

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As Superintendent of Schools for the Region 15 school district, Dr. Frank H. Sippy is responsible for managing the Board of Education's operating budget on a day-to-day basis. Each year, he is also responsible for proposing the most effective operating budget for the quality of education expected by the Board and the community. On February 26, Dr. Sippy shared his proposed budget for 2007-2008 with the Board at a public meeting. The Board of Education modifies the proposed budget based on community feedback. Our goal is to present the public with a proposed operating budget at the May 2 referendum that is both fiscally responsible and supportive of Region 15's academic goals. We recently asked Dr. Sippy about how he developed his 2007-2008 budget proposal.

**Q.** What are some of the factors that you had to consider when developing your proposed budget?

**A.** Budget development is challenging because we have to allocate limited resources to meet rising costs and classroom needs. With increased pressures on taxpayers to support school budgets, it's important that we use resources efficiently so that we maintain public confidence.

We have to consider three spheres of influence when creating a budget: what teachers and administrators request, what parents would like for their children's education, and what the community, as a whole supports. In developing a budget, the learning

needs of our more than 4,500 students must be balanced with the fiscal means of our towns. My proposed budget supports our quality teaching with the projected rate of enrollment growth in Region 15. It is consistent with the Consumer Price Index rate of inflation for all goods and services in the Northeast.

**Q.** How does your proposed budget support ongoing curriculum initiatives?

**A.** Our new mathematics program is in its implementation phase and students are very enthusiastic about it. Our new science program is engaging students with higher-order thinking activities and more hands-on scientific experiments. To keep this momentum moving forward, our district will require more teaching materials for students and additional training for teachers to further refine their skills. Next year, we will continue with the development phase of our language arts and new social studies curricula. Students will have many opportunities to apply reading and writing skills in contexts that will expand their knowledge of the global community. We need to have adequate funding to sustain these initiatives, which are included in the budget proposal.

**Q.** Does your budget include any additional staff to support these initiatives?

**A.** This budget does not include any additional staffing. Instead, existing positions are being re-assigned to areas that have more need. In the coming years, however, as our communities continue to grow, class size issues need to be considered. And as we prepare students for the 21st century workplace and a true global community, we will need to provide programs and course offerings that help them learn how to learn.

**Q.** How does your proposed budget support Region 15's five-year capital improvement plan?

**A.** The five-year capital improvement plan addresses maintenance and security issues at each of our seven schools. These issues include the installation of entryway security systems, which we will phase in over four years; fixing ventilation problems; removing in-ground oil tanks; installing a water control system; and replacing windows. As any homeowner knows, delaying maintenance can prove to be much more costly later than it would be if taken care of now. Our capital improvement plan establishes priorities for these maintenance and security issues over a five-year period, and my proposed 2007-2008 budget includes funding for the first year of the plan.

## District Accomplishments

Congratulations to **Pomperaug High School** students for the following achievements in sports and art:

**Girls Field Hockey:** The team ended its season at 18-2 and was both the SWC and Colonial Division Champion. In addition, the team qualified for the CIAC Tournament.

**Girls Volleyball:** The team had a 6-12 season and received the SWC Sportsmanship Award for Volleyball.

**Girls Swimming:** The team was 9-1 and the SWC Champion.

**Football:** The team had 5 wins and 5 losses this year.

**Boys Cross Country:** The team finished the season at 7-5.

**Boys Soccer:** The team had a 6-8-4 season and received the SWC Sportsmanship Award for Boys Soccer.

Four art students from Mr. Firimita's Advanced Placement class were the winners of this year's Scholastic Art Awards. **Jeremy Klemundt** won Gold for sculpture; **Lactitia DeGoul** won Gold for mixed media; **Wen Sun** received Silver for photography; and **Elizabeth Watt** won an Honorable Mention for printmaking. Their art will be featured at the upcoming Scholastic Art Exhibit hosted by the University of Hartford.



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**INFORMATION FOR REGION 15 RESIDENTS  
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