



## Monthly Bulletin

May 2009

Dr. Patrick Michel  
Superintendent of Schools

[www.monticelloschools.net](http://www.monticelloschools.net)

## From the desk of the Superintendent: Stay Informed with New Blog

In the next few weeks I will be launching a blog concerning issues in education and how those issues impact the Monticello School District. After all our work with the community to get through this year's budget crisis, I realized that there is far too much misinformation circulating about the public education system in NY State. I am extremely pleased with the open dialogue that has been established and it is important to keep this on-going conversation. The blog will allow me to do that. It will also give people an opportunity to ask questions and quell rumors.

Some of the important issues I will address include the reasons why we have made substantial changes in our schools and why we must be committed to keeping our student programs strong even through the economic crisis. In a recent NY Times editorial (dated 4/21/09) by Thomas Friedman, he addressed this issue as follows:

*"Credit bubbles are like the tide. They can cover up a lot of rot. In our case, the excess consumer demand and jobs created by our credit and housing bubbles have masked not only our weaknesses in manufacturing and other economic fundamentals, but something worse: how far we have fallen behind in K-12 education and how much it is now costing us. That is the conclusion I drew from a new study by the consulting firm McKinsey, titled "The Economic Impact of the Achievement Gap in America's Schools."*

The McKinsey report that Mr. Friedman refers to had several other relevant quotes:

*"Actually, our fourth-graders compare well on global tests with Singapore...our high school kids really lag, which means that the longer American children are in school, the worse they perform compared to their international peers." There are millions of kids in modern suburban schools "who don't realize how far behind they are. They are being prepared for \$12 an-hour jobs, not \$40 to \$50 an-hour."*

The analysis in their studies concerning the economic impact is eye-opening:

*"If America had closed the international achievement gap between 1983 and 1998 and had raised its performance to the level of such nations as Finland and South Korea, U.S. Gross Domestic Product (GDP) in 2008 would have been between \$1.3 trillion and \$2.3 trillion higher. If we had closed the racial achievement gap and black and Latino student performance had caught up with that of white students by 1998, GDP in 2008 would have been between \$310 billion and \$525 billion higher. If the gap between low-income students and the rest had been narrowed, GDP in 2008 would have been \$400 billion to \$670 billion higher."*

It is essential to note that the countries to which we are being compared have extensive requirements in art and music. Notably, we are one of the few school districts in the state with a Fine Arts Academy.

This will be one of the issues discussed on my new blog. I look forward to hearing your thoughts on this topic.

### What is a blog?

A blog is a type of web site, usually maintained by an individual with regular entries of commentary, descriptions of events or other material such as graphics or video. (Wikipedia)

**The School Budget Vote will be held on Tuesday, May 19**

All polling locations are open from 8 a.m. to 8 p.m.

## Special Budget Edition

**A public budget hearing will be held on Tuesday, May 12 at 7 p.m. in the RJK Middle School cafeteria.**

Monticello School District residents will go the polls on May 19 to vote on a proposed \$76,685,227 budget for the 2009-10 school year. The plan, which represents an increase of 3.44% over the current budget, is the lowest budget increase in 20 years. If the budget is not approved by voters, the Board of Education has the option to put the same budget up for another vote, put a revised budget up for vote or adopt the contingency budget. Because district officials and the Board of Education were very cautious with spending and created a budget below the contingency budget, the difference in the proposed tax levy increase between the proposed budget and the contingency budget is only about 1%.

On May 19, residents will also vote to elect candidates for three seats on the Board of Education.

### Absentee Ballot Information

Absentee ballots are available at the office of the District Clerk, Mary Ryan Buchholz. For full details about the absentee ballot process, call her at 794-7700, ext. 70501.

Absentee ballots must be filed in the office of the District Clerk no later than 5 p.m. on May 19.

### Pennies for Peace at Cooke Elementary

The Pennies for Peace program is designed to encourage children to learn philanthropic values by collecting pennies for global peace. The coins that are collected will be donated to students in remote communities of Pakistan and Afghanistan as a way to provide them with educational opportunities. Collection containers have been placed throughout the Cooke building for easy access. For more info, contact Cherise Barasch at cbarasch@k12mcsd.net or visit [www.penniesforpeace.org](http://www.penniesforpeace.org).

### Voter Registration Information

District residents who wish to register to vote may do so, by appointment, 9 a.m. - 4 p.m. daily, except weekends and holidays, at the office of the District Clerk, Central Office Administration, 237 Forestburgh Road in Monticello. Registration must take place at least five (5) days preceding the Tuesday, May 19, budget vote and Board of Education election.

### Voter Registration at District Schools

Residents can also register to vote with the main office secretary at each district school beginning May 4. Registration hours will be the same as the daily schedule of each school. *Please bring valid identification and current proof of residency with your present address listed.*

### Voter Registration Day - Tuesday, May 12

A Voter Registration Day will be held on May 12. On that day, residents have the opportunity to register to vote, 4 - 8 p.m. at each of the district polling locations (*see location chart below*).

### Voter Qualifications

In order to be legally qualified to vote in the annual school district budget vote and Board of Education election, a person must be:

- A citizen of the United States;
- Eighteen years of age or over;
- A resident of the Monticello School District for a period of at least 30 days immediately preceding the vote; and
- Registered to vote. (*The registration of voters is valid for a period of four years. If the resident has not voted within that period, they must re-register. All new residents must register to vote.*)

Residents of the district who are registered to vote in a general election are eligible to vote at school district meetings and elections without further special school district registration.

### District Polling Locations

*If you have a question about where you should vote, please call the District Clerk at 794-7700, ext. 70501.*

**Forestburgh** (District #5) Forestburgh Town Hall

**Thompson (Rock Hill area)** (District #4) Rock Hill Fire Department

**Mamakating** (District #3) Chase School, Wurtsboro

**Bethel** (District #2) Duggan School, White Lake

**Thompson (Remainder of district)** (District #1) RJK Middle School

**Polls are open on May 19, from 8 a.m. to 8 p.m.**

**FYI:** Nutritional information about many school meals is now available on the district web site at [www.monticelloschools.net](http://www.monticelloschools.net).

**Board of Education meetings will be held on Thursday, May 7 and Tuesday, May 19.**