



Monthly Bulletin

February 2010

Dr. Patrick Michel
Superintendent of Schools

www.monticelloschools.net

From the desk of the Superintendent: Staying focused during fiscal strife

Due to some very serious fiscal issues we are facing, the district is at a crossroad. It is important that the community understands the situation completely and what our options are as we move forward.

New York State is facing unprecedented financial problems. The revenue stream from the state tax system was much lower than anticipated. This has created a large budget deficit at the state level. To stabilize the budget, Governor Paterson proposed a plan that included mid-year cuts in aid to a variety of agencies, including school districts. The state Senate rejected part of the Governor's proposal. The final solution for covering this year's state budget deficit was to use next year's federal stimulus money that had been allocated to schools. To make this perfectly clear - the money we would have received for next year's budget was spent this year by the state to cover its mid-year deficit. Although the state did not spend the whole amount, they spent a large portion of the money.

The Governor recently released his 2010-2011 proposed budget. In the budget, our state aid monies for next year have been significantly decreased and the numbers indicate a reduction in our stimulus money. Last year, we faced a similar situation with cuts to our state aid. When the federal government filled our financial gaps with stimulus money, we ultimately did not have to make difficult choices. It was our hope that the stimulus money would carry us through one more year - that is not the case.

To compound the situation, we now face other stark realities and economic woes. Just as in most homes, our fuel costs are also increasing. In addition, there are increases for labor, supplies and fees charged to us by Sullivan County and the state. All of these issues combined equate to a budget increase of 3.5 percent - that's without adding any new programs or initiatives. Although this may seem like a small increase, because of the cut in state aid, this means a double-digit increase in our tax levy.

We have other problems to consider, as well. The combined state, federal and contractual mandates equal approximately 80 percent of our budget. These mandates require us to teach certain subjects and hold us accountable when our students do not reach certain standards. Due to the high rate of poverty in the district, many of our students need added services and activities in order to succeed. We not only offer emotional support, we have athletics, music, art, home and careers, honors classes and College in the Classroom programs which are not mandated, but provide great support and incentive for our students to stay in school. Taking away these services or activities will result in a higher failure rate and our district will once again be placed on state lists for poor academic performance. During the past five years, the federal government and the State Education Department have made the sanctions for schools on state lists much harsher. Without programs to support student success beyond what is mandated, we will face interventions that could eventually lead to a takeover of our schools by the state.

As we move into this budget cycle, we have much to consider and some very serious choices to make. I welcome your opinions, ideas and suggestions and I thank you for your continued support.

Help Wanted - Attention Parents: The Cooke/Rutherford PTA is in need of volunteers to assist with the Chocolate Lollipop Fundraiser on Wednesday, Feb. 3, 6:30 p.m. at the Rutherford Elementary School. For more information, please call Jane Sorensen at 794-8830.

Citizens' Advisory Budget Committee (CABC) meetings will be held at 7 p.m. in the RJK Middle School cafeteria on Thursdays, Feb. 11, Feb. 25 and Mar. 11.

QuickCLIPS

The Monticello Schools Firehouse Chat series continues for 2010

These open forums are informational meetings that include a presentation by district officials and a Q&A session. Discussions will include the school budget, the status of our state aid and what challenges are ahead. Your opinion and ideas are important to help guide the future path of the district. All are welcome.

Forestburgh Firehouse - Wednesday, 2/10, 7 p.m.
White Lake Firehouse - Wednesday, 2/24, 7 p.m.

Fundraising for the needy

Monticello High School head basketball coach Chris Russo went barefoot to help raise money to provide shoes for impoverished children by participating in the "Barefoot for Bare Feet" fundraiser - a program through the Samaritan's Feet organization. For more information, visit www.samaritansfeet.org.

Project Recognition diploma program for veterans available in Monticello

Initiated in 2005, the Project Recognition program entitles veterans of World War II and the Korean and Vietnam wars to a high school diploma from any New York State public school. Assistant Superintendent Kenneth W. Newman, Sr. along with PPS Director Dr. Edward Escobar created an easy procedure for veterans who would like to get a diploma from Monticello High School. Recently, a local businessman and Vietnam veteran, Eugene Dalpiaz, utilized the program and became the first person to get a diploma from Monticello through Project Recognition. To read the full story and for more details about the program, visit www.monticelloschools.net or call Dr. Escobar at 794-0128.

Important Dates

WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 3:

- KLR/Cooke PTA meeting, 6:30 p.m. at KLR

THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 4:

- Board of Education meeting

FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 5:

- RJK Talent Show, 7:30 p.m. (snow date Saturday, 2/6)

FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 12:

- Half-day Conference - EARLY DISMISSAL

MONDAY-TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 15-16:

- Presidents' Day Break - NO SCHOOL

THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 18:

- Board of Education meeting

WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 24:

- Chase PTO meeting, 7 p.m.

Attention Parents of Monticello High School Students:

Your child could be eligible for free, quality after-school tutoring through the Title I Supplemental Education Services Program. Increase self-esteem through academic achievement and success. For more info, call Assistant Principal Virginia Morse at 794-8840, ext. 10928 or SES Program Coordinator Carl Solomon at 794-7700, ext. 74117.

Chase Elementary School PTO's Free Family Fun & Game Night, Friday, Feb. 26, 6:30-8 p.m.

Chase Honored with IB Status

For three years, the staff and students at the Chase Elementary School have worked to adopt an internationally respected approach to teaching and learning to help prepare students for the challenges of the 21st century. In December, the school was officially authorized to teach the International Baccalaureate Primary Years Programme. Read the full story online at www.monticelloschools.net.