



Mark Masseo of Masseo Landscape, Inc. shows off a grub he found while planting a tree at Duzine Elementary School.

## Elementary Students Plant Trees in Honor of Arbor Day

This year, students at Duzine and Lenape elementary schools celebrated Arbor Day in an appropriate fashion—by planting trees on the grounds outside of their buildings.

The trees were a gift from Sande Ferrante of Wallkill View Farms and Mark Masseo of Masseo Landscape, Inc.

Masseo visited the children at each school on April 24 to hand-deliver trees. The following week, Ferrante stopped by Lenape to help them plant a young maple.

"This is one of my favorite trees," Masseo told the Duzine students, as he presented them with a young red maple, one of the most common deciduous trees found in eastern North America. "It's going to get very big and it's going to attract lots of animals. It will provide you with shade—and in the fall, its leaves will turn a bright orange color."



Lenape Elementary School students lend a helping hand as Sande Ferrante of Wallkill View Farms plants a tree he donated in honor of Arbor Day.

*continued on Page 2*

## Special Budget Issue 2015-2016

### Budget Increase Limited to 0.4 Percent to Meet Tax Levy Limit Criteria

On Tuesday, May 19, voters in the New Paltz Central School District will go to the polls to participate in the annual school budget vote and Board of Education election. This year's ballot will also include a second proposition for the purchase of six new school busses as part of the District's strategic vehicle replacement program. New Paltz High School will serve as the voting location and polls will be open for an additional six hours from 6 AM to 9 PM.

The proposed budget of \$54,625,000 represents an increase from last year of 0.4 percent and carries a 2.96 percent tax levy increase, which meets the criteria of New York State's Tax Levy Limit legislation for a simple majority voter approval. The 2.96 percent increase also includes the additional one percent increase to support the financial plan for the recently approved Capital Project.

Unfortunately, some program cuts were necessary in this year's budget in order to stay at the levy limit level required for simple majority voter approval. **The Capital Project is NOT responsible for these cuts.**

The formula for computing the tax levy limit includes the debt service from Capital Projects and allows for a higher tax levy increase to cover these expenses. Without the project, the allowable levy limit would have been reduced and the same cuts would have been necessary. In fact, it is likely that additional cuts would have been needed to provide additional funding for emergency repairs and the replacement of the most critical systems.

"We are very grateful that the community approved the Capital Project so the operating

budget would not need to fund capital expenses for repairs or replacement of failing systems. Instead, funds can be borrowed and the project will have the added benefit of State Building Aid reimbursement," said Superintendent Maria C. Rice. "This allows us to keep our operating budget focused on students."

### Declining Revenues Continue for New Paltz

The school budget reflects the amount of money needed to support the annual expenses of operation. To pay for these expenses, various revenues are applied. Examples of revenues include taxes, State Aid, grants, and the use of fund balance or reserves.

When New York State enacted the Levy Limit legislation, the ability to support school expenses through taxes was drastically changed. Budget development became a revenue-driven process instead of a process based on student need.

Unfortunately, at the same time schools were facing tax levy restrictions, they were also receiving reduced State Aid contributions from New York State due to frozen Foundation Aid formulas and the implementation of the Gap Elimination Adjustment (GEA).

The GEA was introduced eight years ago as a means for the State to balance its budget deficit by withholding State Aid payments to schools. While this reduced the State's expenditures to help them balance their budget, it shifted the tax burden to the local level and generally has resulted in either cuts to school budgets,

depletion of reserves, or the need to seek a supermajority voter approval to override the cap and levy more taxes. New Paltz has applied a combination of these options to balance its budgets in a manner that considers both students and taxpayers. Since 2009, New Paltz has lost more than \$11 million in State Aid due to the GEA.

Things were finally looking up as the State developed its budget this year. New York no longer has a deficit, and is even predicting a surplus in excess of \$4 billion. Knowing this, community members across the State participated in lobbying efforts to convince lawmakers to eliminate the GEA and increase Foundation Aid.

As a result of these efforts, many school districts saw a restoration of funding, with a statewide average of 67 percent of the GEA being returned to schools. Unfortunately, the State's budget did not



Superintendent of Schools  
*Maria C. Rice*

Board of Education  
*Brian Cournoyer, President*  
*Ruth Quinn, Vice President*  
*Steven Greenfield*  
*Aimee Hemminger*  
*Dominick Profaci*  
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*More About the Budget on Page 2*

## Duzine Students Celebrate Earth Day

To celebrate Earth Day on April 22, students at Duzine Elementary School participated in a springtime Garden Festival. The outdoor event, which has become an annual tradition at the school, was once again organized by members of the Green Classroom Committee.

The Grade K-2 students spent hour-long sessions outside, rotating among several different activity stations that were designed to be both educational and fun. There was a gardening station, where students used magnifying glasses to observe plants and other living creatures, and an arts and crafts station, where students helped decorate a large paper mache globe.

Other favorites among the students were a story time station, where they listened to a reading of the book *Pickin' Peas* by Margaret Read MacDonald, and a music station, where they learned a bilingual Earth Day song.

Students also got to engage in some physical activity by competing in a relay race that helped teach them how to sort trash. They each walked away from the race understanding what items should be recycled, which could be reused, and which should be composted.

According to Green Classroom Committee Chair Matthew Elkin, a Grade 1 teacher, each activity station was carefully developed to address a specific content area, such as art, music, science, English language arts, math, and physical education. He said the overall goal of the event was to give students a renewed appreciation for the environment and the planet on which they live.



Kindergarten students use magnifying glasses to study plants and creatures found in the school's garden.

## Budget

*continued from Page 1*

provide for this restoration evenly across all school districts, and New Paltz only received a 38 percent restoration of the existing \$1,312,652 GEA. While schools across the State also experienced an increase in Foundation Aid, New Paltz received only a minimal increase of \$32,000. After reductions based on expense-driven aid and the impact of retiring State Aid payments for debt, New Paltz is actually receiving less State Aid in 2015-2016 than was provided in 2014-2015.

This is contributing to another year of revenue shortfalls. Last year, the Board consciously decided to apply almost \$1.7 million of fund balance to preserve programs for students by filling the revenue shortfall and mitigating the need for budget cuts.

"The use of the additional fund balance was done with the hopes that the GEA would be fully restored this year, so the cuts would not be necessary," explained Assistant Superintendent for Business Richard Linden. "We thought very carefully about this decision, but in the end decided that the best option for students would be to preserve their programs for another year and fight hard to get all of the GEA restored."

Unfortunately, this was not the case for New Paltz. The decision saved programs for an additional year, but the use of that much fund balance couldn't be replicated for the proposed budget. Approximately \$1 million is available to apply to the levy, leaving a shortfall of almost \$700,000. To close this revenue gap, cuts were necessary.

### For More Information

Please contact Assistant Superintendent Richard Linden at 845-256-4010 or [rlinden@newpaltz.k12.ny.us](mailto:rlinden@newpaltz.k12.ny.us) with any questions you may have about the budget.

### Staffing Changes in 2015-2016 Budget

The proposed 2015-2016 budget includes several staffing changes. These changes fall into three basic categories:

#### Positions added during the current year to meet unfunded mandates or student needs, which now need to be incorporated into the budget

- ❖ 0.8 ESL Teacher added 9/2014
- ❖ 1.0 Psychologist added 7/2014
- ❖ 0.2 Occupational Therapist added 7/2014
- ❖ Increase in bus driver hours for additional Special Education runs added 7/2014

#### Reductions based on a decrease of need due to changes in student population and level of mandated services

- ❖ -1.0 LPN/Teacher Aide
- ❖ -3.0 Special Education Teachers (out of 7 that were added 7/2014)
- ❖ -0.3 Speech Language Disabilities Teacher
- ❖ -0.5 Teacher of Visually Impaired
- ❖ -3.0 Special Education Teacher Aides
- ❖ -1.0 Sign Language Interpreter

#### Reductions based on limited revenues

- ❖ -1.0 Elementary Teacher
- ❖ -1.0 Elementary Librarian (Lenape and Duzine will now share)
- ❖ -3.0 Grades 7-12 Teachers (to be determined based on schedule analysis)
- ❖ -0.3 Elementary Foreign Language (shifting instruction schedule to every third day instead of every other day in Grades 1 and 2)
- ❖ -0.5 Director of Technology (currently unfilled)

### Other Budget Changes

The proposed 2015-2016 budget includes several other budget changes, which also fall into three basic categories:

#### Increases to support unfunded mandates or to meet student needs

- ❖ Provide two student placements in the new Ulster BOCES P-TECH program
- ❖ Addition of BOCES and out-of-district Special Education placements
- ❖ Increase in summer school Special Education bus runs
- ❖ Increase in BOCES administrative costs for mandated post-retiree benefits
- ❖ Additional Bias Awareness Training

#### Additions to the budget based on cost

- ❖ Increase in electricity costs due to rate increases
- ❖ Participation in new BOCES personnel services

#### Reductions based on limited revenues

- ❖ Eliminate the replacement of an Operations & Maintenance vehicle
- ❖ Reduce Operations & Maintenance Repair budget by \$30,000 (from \$100,000 to \$70,000)
- ❖ Eliminate participation in BOCES Forecast 5 personnel program
- ❖ Eliminate participation in BOCES Central Business Office service (provide internal services with part-time staff)
- ❖ Eliminate alternative education placements at BOCES (no students identified)
- ❖ Transportation reductions (modify one-mile walkout for secondary students where centralized pick-up/drop-off locations can safely be established)

"In honor of Earth Day, we wanted to reinforce the importance of taking care of the Earth," explained Elkin, adding that by spending time in the garden, students are also learning about healthy foods and where they come from.

Principal Debra Hogencamp thanked all of the volunteers who helped make the Garden Festival happen, calling it a wonderful tradition at the school. "It's an event that we hope to continue for a long time," she said.

## New Paltz High School Ranked Among 100 Best High Schools Teaching Personal Finance

New Paltz High School (NPHS) has once again earned high marks when it comes to teaching financial literacy! For the second year in a row, NPHS has made it on to the national 100 Best *w|se* High Schools Teaching Personal Finance ranking. The initiative, Working in Support of Education or *w|se*, seeks to shine the spotlight on the importance of personal finance education. To learn more about *w|se*, or to view the complete list, go to [www.wise-ny.org](http://www.wise-ny.org).



## Arbor Day *continued from Page 1*

That afternoon Maseo presented Lenape students with a young flowering cherry tree.

Students at both schools showed their appreciation to their guests by singing them songs, reading them poems, and performing skits, all having to do with nature. Then, much to their delight, a few lucky students at each school got the chance to pick up a shovel and help plant their trees in the ground.

Maseo, who calls Arbor Day his "favorite holiday," sees the donation of trees to the school as a great way to help students form a connection with the environment and the local area in which they live.

"Mr. Maseo is a very kind and generous member of our community and we're extremely thankful to him for giving us our tree," said Duzine Principal Debra Hogencamp.

Lenape Principal Jacqueline Sinatra expressed similar sentiments towards Ferrante and was grateful for the addition to the school grounds. "We love our tree and we promise to take very good care of it."

## New Paltz Middle School Presents:

# The WIZARD of OZ



On February 27 and 28 and March 1, more than 150 members of the New Paltz Middle School (NPMS) Drama Club performed this year's production of *The Wizard of Oz*.

Specifically tailored for elementary and middle school aged children, the adaptation told the familiar story of Dorothy Gale of Kansas (played by NPMS's Kiah Saxe), who dreams of what lies over the rainbow. One day, a tornado hits Dorothy's farm and carries her and her dog, Toto (Emily Barbato), away to a magical land called Oz. While there, she meets Glinda the Good Witch (Ella Skye Franks), who tells her to travel to the Emerald City

to ask the Wizard (Ryan Kelso) to help her get back home.

As she sets off on her journey down the Yellow Brick Road, Dorothy befriends the Scarecrow (James Hyland), the Tin Man (Cormac Stutzman), and the Cowardly Lion (Will Lawrence-Paine), and the group is eventually forced to take on the Wicked Witch of the West (Azalea Rusillon).

The musical featured several of the well-known songs written by Harold Arlen and E.Y. Harburg, such as "Over the Rainbow," "Yellow Brick Road," "We're Off to See the Wizard," and "Ding Dong! The Witch is Dead."

According to Director and Producer Mary Holmes, a NPMS Spanish teacher, the Drama Club members were involved in all aspects of the show. "Some students were on stage performing, others were backstage moving sets or on the sides of the stage working on sound and lighting," said Holmes, adding that several teachers and parents also lent a helping hand.

"I'd like to thank everyone who worked together to help make this production a success," she said.

## Lenape Students Get Hands-on Lesson in History

Grade 4 students at Lenape Elementary School got to experience the oldest museum in New York City without ever having to leave their classrooms, thanks to a special presentation by Sue Williamson.

Williamson, an educator for the New-York Historical Society Museum & Library in Manhattan, visited the school on April 9 and 10 and brought along with her written documents, maps, and artifacts to help deepen the students' understanding of what life was like in New Amsterdam, the early Dutch settlement that became modern day New York City.

During the lesson, students were surprised to learn that New York City served as the first capital of the United States and that it was originally inhabited by a Native American tribe that bore a familiar name—the Lenape. Williamson also shared information on how life in the area began to change after Henry Hudson arrived on his ship, the *Half Moon*.

When it came time to split into groups to examine the artifacts that Williamson brought (just a few of the more than 40,000 that are on display at the museum), the students played the part of young historians, searching for clues that might reveal what the object was or what it was used for. Through their efforts, they discovered how the early settlers made candles and spoons, how they used teamwork to put out fires, and how something called a "hornbook" helped children learn in school.

"Studying artifacts is just one of the many ways historians find out about events that took place in the past," Williamson explained.

According to Lenape teacher Sarah Sebald, who organized Williamson's visit, these hands-on lessons were meant to help supplement the Grade 4 curriculum by giving students the opportunity to go beyond what they would learn from a textbook.

"My hope was that by exploring artifacts from historical New York, history would come alive for them and they would have a deeper understanding



▲ Grade 4 students at Lenape Elementary School work in teams to observe artifacts and record clues to help discover what life was like in New Amsterdam.

◀ Sue Williamson, an educator for the New-York Historical Society Museum & Library, shows off a unique tool used by the early Dutch settlers.

of what life was really like back then," she said.

Williamson will return to Lenape on May 11 and 12 for lessons on life in British New York, and her final presentations on May 13 and 14 will focus on the American

Revolution. The unique learning opportunity is being made possible by the New Paltz Central School District Foundation for Student Enhancement, a non-profit organization that focuses on enhancing educational opportunities for students by funding innovative projects that go beyond the scope of the current curriculum.

"This is a wonderful example of what the Foundation strives to do—enhance the school's current curriculum by adding something extra," said Foundation President Maya Eyer. "We were very pleased to provide this opportunity to so many students, and we hope to fund similar grade-wide efforts in the future."

Message from the Board of Education

Dear Voters of the New Paltz School District,

We would like to take this opportunity to thank you. On March 24, our community made a momentous statement about the future of our schools—"our" schools, because they belong to everyone in our community. They are much more than mere buildings—they're a reminder to us that our parents and grandparents thought our education and our future were of vital importance, and they wanted us to have all that they had and more.

They're also a symbol of our commitment to the generations of students to come. We want to provide them with every possible advantage, a robust and comprehensive education that is suited to the world they will live in. The successful outcome of the Capital Project vote ensures that we will be able to provide them with that, in safe, healthy, up-to-date facilities.

It's been a very long road, and we could not have arrived here without your participation. Your questions, comments, suggestions, scrutiny, skepticism, prodding, cajoling, and encouragement all contributed to the final plan. We thank you for all of it, and are so very grateful to have such an informed and engaged community.

As we prepare to hold the annual school budget vote and election of Board members, we encourage you to keep participating! We need your voice—not only on the local level, but also on the state and national levels. Public education is facing challenges on many fronts: from funding and testing, to evaluation plans and questionable corporate involvement. It has never been more important to speak up. Your voice does make a difference.

Locally, one of the immediate threats to our schools is the continued loss of State Aid revenues through the Gap Elimination Adjustment (GEA). The GEA has starved New Paltz Central School District's operating budget, resulting in the cumulative loss of over \$11 million since it was enacted. On top of this, the basic Foundation Aid formula has provided minimal additional support for the increasing costs or additional unfunded mandates. Throughout the State, community members are speaking up and demanding the restoration of funding and modifications to the Foundation Aid formula. These efforts resulted in a partial restoration of GEA funding and an increase in Foundation Aid for most school districts. Unfortunately, New Paltz was not one of the winners when the State budget was adopted and the final State Aid runs were released; only minimum gains were made in Foundation Aid.

To deal with the multi-year revenue losses, our school programs have undergone dramatic changes. Programs have been cut, class sizes have grown, and the very way we operate has changed. We are fortunate to have passionate and dedicated staff and community who have done a yeoman's job of developing creative solutions and shielding students from these losses.

We understand the impact these cuts have on our students, and are all very upset by the continued need to supplement lost State funding with increases in local taxes or the elimination of opportunities for children. We will continue to fight for the restoration of State Aid and the fair funding of education in New York State.

We would like to remind everyone that the polling times have changed to allow for early morning voting hours and engage more residents. Polls will be open from 6 AM to 9 PM at New Paltz High School on Tuesday, May 19.

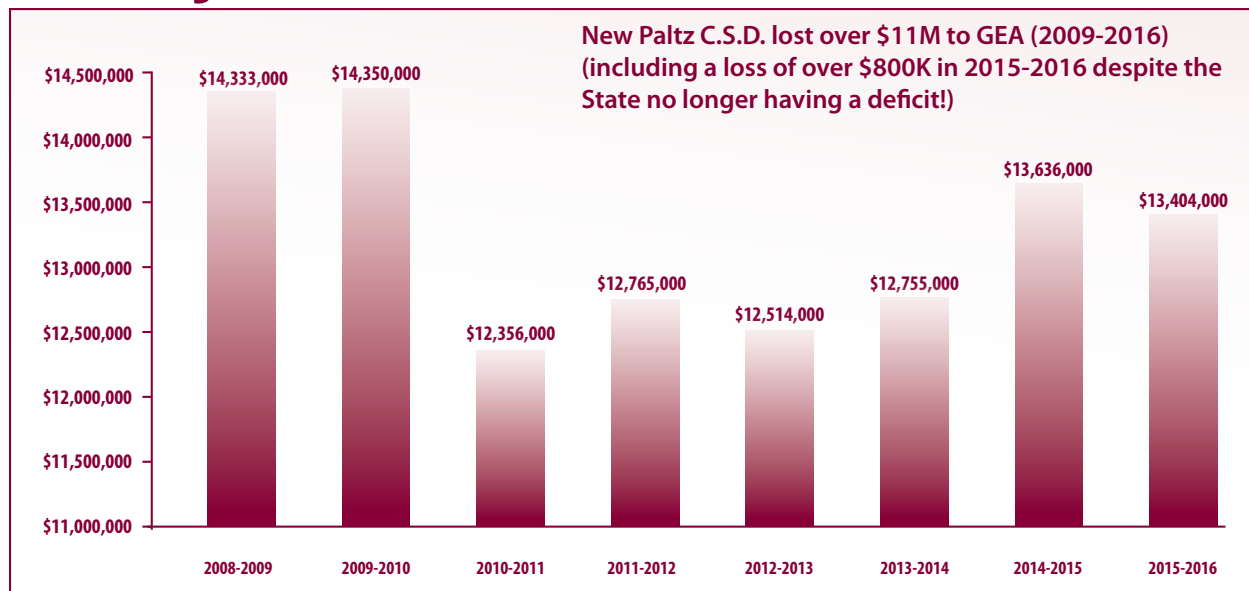
If you have any questions about the budget, please don't hesitate to ask. Assistant Superintendent Rick Linden can be reached at 845-256-4010 or by email at [rlinden@newpaltz.k12.ny.us](mailto:rlinden@newpaltz.k12.ny.us).

Sincerely,

Brian Cournoyer  
Board President

Maria C. Rice  
Superintendent of Schools

## History of New Paltz CSD State Aid



## Impact to the Taxpayer

Revenues to support the New Paltz CSD budget come from various sources: state and federal aid, earned interest, unappropriated fund balance, and local property taxes (tax levy). The 2015-2016 budget calls for a 2.96% increase in the tax levy, the total amount to be collected through local property tax. Examples of estimated increases in the tax bills appear below. To **estimate** your own tax increase, multiply your 2014 tax bill by 0.0296. This is the estimated impact of Proposition 1. To estimate the impact of Proposition 2, multiply your 2014 tax bill by 0.0127.

Please note that a variety of other factors will influence your actual tax rate, including changes in the assessments of all of the properties on your town's tax rolls and/or the equalization rates from New York State (which balances assessments through a formula). **This information is provided as a guide and will not necessarily equate to your final tax increase.**

### Examples of Estimated Increases

#### Impact of Proposition 1 (Budget) on Tax Bill

Amount of 2014 School Tax Bill	2.96% Tax Levy Increase	
\$2,000	\$4.93/month	\$59/year
\$4,000	\$9.87/month	\$118/year
\$6,000	\$14.80/month	\$178/year
\$8,000	\$19.73/month	\$237/year
\$10,000	\$24.67/month	\$296/year

#### Impact of Proposition 2 (Buses) on Tax Bill

Amount of 2014 School Tax Bill	1.27% Tax Levy Increase	
\$2,000	\$2.12/month	\$25/year
\$4,000	\$4.23/month	\$51/year
\$6,000	\$6.35/month	\$76/year
\$8,000	\$8.47/month	\$102/year
\$10,000	\$10.58/month	\$127/year



# School District Budget Notice

OVERALL BUDGET PROPOSAL	Budget Adopted for the 2014-15 School Year	Budget Proposed for the 2015-16 School Year	Contingency Budget for the 2015-16 School Year*
Total Budgeted Amount, Not Including Separate Propositions	\$53,900,000	\$54,625,000	\$53,500,000
Increase/Decrease for the 2015-16 School Year		\$725,000	-\$400,000
Percentage Increase/Decrease in Proposed Budget		1.3 %	-0.7%
Change in the Consumer Price Index		1.62 %	
A. Proposed Tax Levy to Support the Total Budgeted Amount	\$38,022,844	\$39,150,000	
B. Levy to Support Library Debt, if Applicable	\$0	\$0	
C. Levy for Non-Excludable Propositions, if Applicable **	\$0	\$0	
D. Total Tax Cap Reserve Amount Used to Reduce Current Year Levy	\$0	\$0	
E. Total Proposed School Year Tax Levy (A + B + C - D)	\$38,022,844	\$39,150,000	2.96%
F. Permissible Exclusions to the School Tax Levy Limit	\$1,528,616	\$1,971,275	
G. School Tax Levy Limit, Excluding Levy for Permissible Exclusions	\$36,494,228	\$37,178,769	
H. Total Proposed Tax Levy for School Purposes, Excluding Permissible Exclusions and Levy for Library Debt, Plus Prior Year Tax Cap Reserve (E - B - F + D)	\$36,494,228	\$37,178,725	
I. Difference: (G - H); (Negative Value Requires 60.0% Voter Approval - See Note Below Regarding Separate Propositions) **	\$0	\$44	
Administrative component	\$4,760,000	\$4,925,000	\$4,825,000
Program component	\$43,205,000	\$43,720,000	\$42,945,000
Capital component	\$5,935,000	\$5,980,000	\$5,730,000

\*Assumptions made in projecting a contingency budget for the 2015-16 school year, should the proposed budget be defeated pursuant to Section 2023 of the Education Law: Budget reductions to result in a \$0 tax levy increase.

Separate Propositions that are not included in the Total Budgeted Amount: (Tax Levy associated with educational or transportation services propositions are not eligible for exclusion and may affect voter approval requirements):

Description	Amount
2015-2016: SCHOOL BUSES (Three large buses, 2 small buses, 1 suburban)	\$480,000

### Under the Budget Proposed for the 2015-16 School Year

Estimated Basic STAR Exemption Savings <sup>1</sup> \$660

<sup>1</sup> The basic school tax relief (STAR) exemption is authorized by section 425 of the Real Property Tax Law.

The annual budget vote for the fiscal year 2015-2016 by the qualified voters of the New Paltz Central School District, Ulster County, New York, will be held at New Paltz High School in said district on Tuesday, May 19, 2015 between the hours of 6:00am and 9:00pm prevailing time in the New Paltz High School, at which time the polls will be opened to vote by voting ballot or machine.

## Sample Ballot

### Proposition #1 Vote YES or NO

“Shall the Board of Education of the New Paltz Central School District be authorized to expend \$54,625,000 which will be required for school district purposes for the year July 1, 2015 through June 30, 2016 (The Budget), and to levy the necessary tax therefor?”

### Proposition #2 Vote YES or NO

“Shall the Board of Education of the New Paltz Central School District, Ulster County, New York, be authorized to purchase three 65-passenger or larger school buses at a cost of \$114,800 each, for a maximum estimated cost of \$344,400; two 20-passenger or smaller school buses at a cost of \$47,200 each, for a maximum estimated cost of \$94,400; and one 7-passenger suburban at a cost of \$41,200, for an aggregate maximum estimated cost of \$480,000; and that the sum of \$480,000, or so much thereof as may be necessary, shall be raised by the levy of a tax upon the taxable property of said School District and collected in annual installments, as provided by Section 416 of the Education Law, and, in anticipation of such tax, obligations of the District shall be issued?”

## Election of Board of Education Members

You may vote for any three (3) of the candidates listed or write in the name of another person(s) in the spaces provided.

IF YOU VOTE FOR MORE THAN THREE (3) YOUR VOTE WILL NOT BE COUNTED

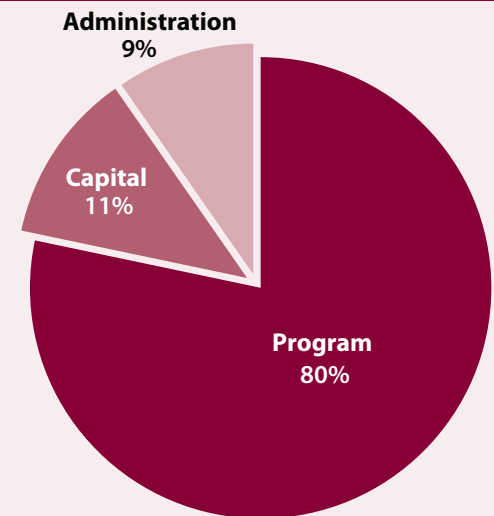
Alison Easton \_\_\_\_\_

Brian Cournoyer \_\_\_\_\_

Michael O'Donnell \_\_\_\_\_

**VOTE TUESDAY  
MAY 19, 2015**  
6 AM - 9 PM at  
New Paltz High School

## The Three-Part Budget

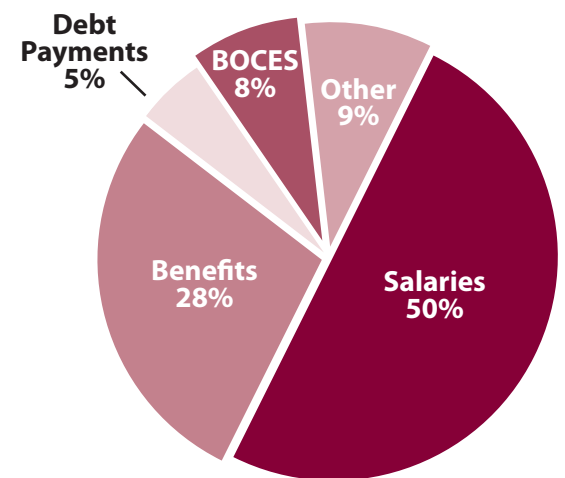


**Administration Budget:** This section includes school building offices and central administration, along with clerical support, salaries and benefits of all school administrators, Board of Education expenses for planning, and other administrative activities.

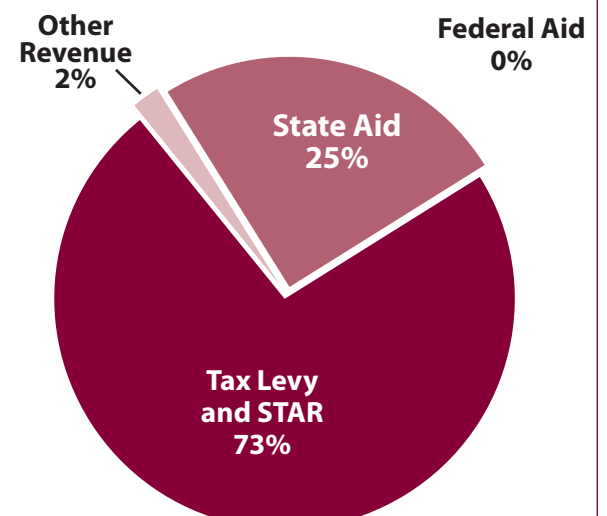
**Capital Budget:** This area refers to all facilities costs such as custodial salaries and benefits, maintenance salaries and benefits, service contracts, custodial and maintenance supplies, utility costs for heating, electricity, communication, water, and annual capital project debt service.

**Program Budget:** This portion covers classroom supplies and equipment, teacher salaries and benefits, all related educational costs, and costs for student transportation services. This program area makes up the largest portion of the budget.

## Expenditures



## Revenues



## Questions and Answers

### Why is the proposed tax increase 2.96% when NYS passed a 2% tax levy limit law?

In actuality, the 2% tax levy limit law is more complex. The tax levy threshold limit is arrived at through a complex formula that takes into account ten different variables and allows for inclusion of certain expenses, such as additional debt service related to the recently approved Capital Project, which called for a one percent tax levy increase in 2015-2016 to support its financial plan. Based on the formula and the exclusions, the tax levy threshold limit for New Paltz this year is 2.96%. The budget being proposed meets the 2.96% tax levy threshold, and therefore requires a simple majority of 50% plus one yes votes to pass.

### Is the Capital Project responsible for the budget cuts?

No. The Capital Project is NOT responsible for cuts that are included in the proposed budget. These cuts are driven by State Aid revenue shortfalls caused by the Gap Elimination Adjustment and the need to develop a budget that meets the threshold of the Tax Levy Limit legislation for a simple majority voter approval.

The formula for computing the tax levy limit allows for the cost of the debt service for the Capital Projects, which has allowed for a higher tax levy increase this year. Without the project, the allowable levy limit would have been reduced and the same cuts would have been necessary. It is actually quite likely that additional cuts would have been needed in order to provide additional Operations & Maintenance funding for emergency repairs and/or replacement of the most critical systems.

### In the past, my tax increase has ended up being different than the increase projected by the district. Why?

The school district projects the tax levy increase, not the actual tax rate. The tax levy is the total amount of all of the monies collected from all of the property taxpayers in the district. A school board arrives at this number after taking into account the other revenues it expects (state and federal aid, earned interest,

unused funds from previous years) and deducting those from the total amount it needs to cover expenses for the year. After a budget is approved, the tax levy is one factor used to calculate the actual taxes for individual towns and villages, or tax rate. The other two factors are assessments and equalization rates. These factors are determined by the towns, villages, and NYS and are not made available to the District until August. They can vary from one town/village to another. Property owners can use the tax levy projection to estimate their tax rate increase; however, they need to understand that the final rate could vary.

### What happens if the budget does not pass?

If the budget does not pass by 50% plus one, the school board can opt to hold a second vote on the budget. They can either place the same proposed budget before the voters a second time, or they can propose a revised budget. If the budget fails a second time, then the district is required to adopt a 0% tax levy contingency budget. NYS law dictates what can and cannot be covered under a contingency budget. A school board can also opt to bypass a second vote and automatically adopt a 0% tax levy contingency budget if the proposed budget fails on the first vote.

### Who can vote in the school budget?

All qualified voters may vote on the school budget. A qualified voter is any U.S. citizen, 18 years of age or older on the day of the vote, who has resided in the district for 30 days or more prior to the day of the vote. If you are registered with the Ulster County Board of Elections, you are automatically registered to vote in school elections. If you are not, you may still register with the school district to vote on the day of the vote. Absentee ballots are also available for any qualified voter who is unable to make it to the polls on the day of the vote. For additional information on voter eligibility and absentee ballots, contact the District Clerk at 845-256-4031.

## About Proposition 2: School Bus Replacement

More than 2,000 New Paltz students both start and end their school day on a school bus. For 2015-2016, the Board of Education has continued to focus on its strategic bus replacement program. This year, the bus replacement has been structured in the form of a separate proposition.

Proposition 2 would allow the purchase of three large buses, two small buses, and one seven-passenger suburban to replace ones that are aged and have high mileage. The total cost of the buses is \$480,000, and the purchase would result in an additional 1.27 percent tax levy increase.

The strategic bus replacement program was implemented in the 2003-2004 school year as a way to manage the bus fleet's lifecycle, allowing the District to maintain the operational and safety standards of the fleet without causing spikes in the cost to taxpayers. The goal of the program is to remove buses from service as they age, thereby reducing maintenance and repair costs and providing insurance benefits in the unfortunate event of an accident. New buses also meet current environmental standards.

The number of buses to be replaced annually has been calculated to allow fleet replacement to occur systematically over a period of ten years.

## NEW PALTZ'S RAE POLICASTRO IS ULSTER COUNTY SCHOOL BUS DRIVER OF THE YEAR

New Paltz Central School District (NPCSD) bus driver Raffeala "Rae" Policastro likes to get flowers and smiles on the job, but she recently earned an even bigger honor for her hard work and dedication.

Policastro has been named Ulster County School Bus Driver of the Year by the Mid-Hudson Transportation Supervisors Association. The award is given in recognition of the skilled and dedicated drivers who safely transport thousands of Ulster County students to and from school every day. An 11-year veteran driver, Policastro has worked for New Paltz since 2007 and for a private contract bus company for four years prior to that. After losing her job in the printing industry in 2002, she decided that being a school bus driver would be a good second career. "I like to drive and I can talk to kids better than adults," she said.

It's a good thing she likes to drive, because on her current runs to New Paltz High School and Lenape Elementary School, Policastro logs about 12,000 miles behind the wheel every year.

In addition to making sure students get to school safely, bus drivers are also the first person from the District that many students interact with every day. And it's a moment that Policastro enjoys. "I like when I get dandelions from the kids in the summer," she said. "It's so nice to see them smile in the morning. Kids are awesome."

NPCSD Dispatcher Jean Bain said Policastro has taught her a lot about making a connection with students. "Rae is very good with her kids and very thorough in her job," Bain said. "We're very proud of her.

## The Washington Post

### Names New Paltz HS as One of America's Most Challenging High Schools

For the ninth consecutive year, New Paltz High School has again been included on the *Washington Post's* Most Challenging High Schools list. Of the 22,000 U.S. public high schools, only 11 percent managed to reach the *Washington Post's* standards and earn placement. New Paltz was ranked 48th in New York State, 84th in the northeast region, and 606th in the nation! The ranking is computed using the number of students taking college-level tests compared to the number of graduates each year.

New Paltz High School's philosophy toward its students and most challenging courses is simple: its courses are open to all students. Many schools have entrance criteria in to high-level courses, and if a student doesn't do well while enrolled, he/she may be withdrawn from the course and directed to a less challenging level program instead. This is not the case at New Paltz High School, where practicing one of the District's most important guiding principles—a focus on learning and success for all—is paramount.



Rae Policastro

Knowing her has been a pleasure and a learning experience for me."

New Paltz Superintendent Maria Rice said the honor reflects well on both Policastro and the District's entire transportation department. "Our students are precious cargo and their safety, both on the bus and in the classroom, is our top priority," Rice said. "Rae is an outstanding driver who truly cares about children. We are all very proud of her and congratulate her on a well-deserved honor."

When NPCSD Transportation Director Maureen Ryan called over spring break to let her know she had been selected as School Bus Driver of the Year, Policastro said the news made her "very emotional." "I'm so thrilled," she said. "It's very exciting."

When she's not driving a school bus, Policastro, mom to a 20-year-old son, can be found reading current affairs magazines and action novels. In good weather, she hits the road on her Kawasaki motorcycle, often accompanied by fellow bus drivers who also ride. Policastro said that having her colleagues support her is part of what makes working in New Paltz so enjoyable. "It's such a team effort," she said.

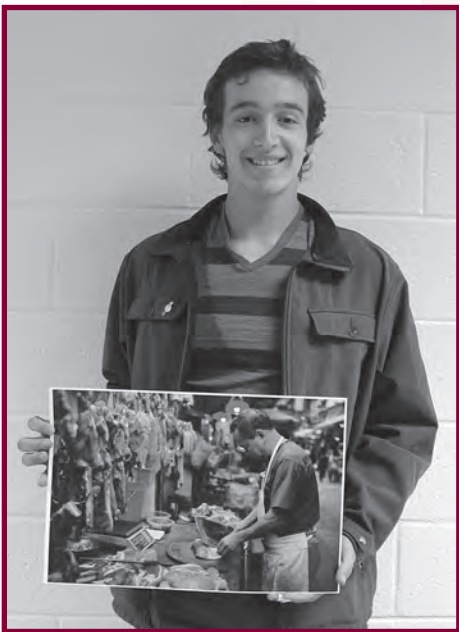
# Spotlight on Extraordinary Achievements

## Student Artist Earns National Recognition

New Paltz High School senior Ben Hayes has earned national recognition in the 2015 Scholastic Art & Writing Awards, which honor the most talented young artists and writers in the country. Two of Ben's works, titled "The Butcher" and "The Muse," won gold medals in the contest's photography category.

"We're all very proud of Ben. Winning a Scholastic Award on the national level is a really big deal," said NPHS art teacher Laurene Pountain, noting that famous authors and artists such as Andy Warhol, Sylvia Plath, Truman Capote, Richard Avedon, and Lena Dunham all received the honor while in high school.

More than 300,000 works of art and writing, which were reviewed by a panel of creative professionals, were submitted. Only the top one percent was recognized at the national level. Ben has been invited to join other Grades 7-12 Scholastic Award recipients at a ceremony at the world-famous Carnegie Hall on June 11.



New Paltz High School senior Ben Hayes holds a print of "The Butcher," one of the photographs that earned him a 2015 Scholastic Art Award.

## Top of the Class of 2015

New Paltz High School recently announced the selection of Jimmy McColgan as the Class of 2015 valedictorian and Kenrick Cai as salutatorian.

Jimmy has an impressive 102.319 GPA. He excels in leadership, math, and sports; he is a member of the varsity swim team and varsity golf team, and is team captain in Mathletes, a school club for students who excel in math.

Jimmy also swims with the Hawks Swimming Association. He swims and is a volunteer coach for the Rosendale Rapids Swim Team. He also tutors young students in math.

Son of John McColgan and Kelley O'Sullivan-McColgan, this busy 17-year-old scholar is also the vice president of the National Honor Society as well as vice president of Student Government. Jimmy was selected to participate in the American Legion's Boys' State program, which provides youth training in practical citizenship and government.

Both a National Advanced Placement Scholar and a National Merit Scholarship Commended student, Jimmy has received a Brandeis University Book Award in recognition of his civic leadership, social engagement, and volunteer community service.

He received the Mid Hudson Association of School Business Officials scholarship, which is given to a student interested in pursuing a degree in Business, Finance, and/or Education.

Jimmy will be attending Dartmouth College in the fall, where he will pursue a degree in Economics. He looks forward to a career in either finance or investment banking.

"To me, being valedictorian is a reflection of all the opportunities that I have been offered," says Jimmy. "For

those, I am very grateful."

This year's salutatorian, Kenrick Cai, is another very accomplished and busy student. This 16-year-old is a member of the National Honor Society, the Varsity cross country team, and is vice president of Mathletes. He is co-editor-in-chief of the school's newspaper, *The Maroon*.

Kenrick is also president of the Science Olympiad club, and serves as treasurer of the Class of 2015. As a junior, he qualified for and took part in New York State Math League state-wide competition. Kenrick has earned an impressive 99.409 GPA.

Son of Weilong Cai and Juying Zhu, Kenrick also volunteers at St.



Class of 2015 Salutatorian Kenrick Cai and Valedictorian Jimmy McColgan

Francis Hospital emergency department and at the Woodland Pond adult community. In school, he does peer tutoring in Algebra 2/Trigonometry and Chemistry.

Kenrick is a National Merit Commended Scholar and is also a National Advanced Placement Scholar with Distinction. He has received the University of Rochester's Bausch + Lomb Honorary Science Award.

Kenrick plans to attend Duke University and major in Biology. He will follow Duke's pre-med track, with the ultimate intention of entering medical school and becoming a physician.

## Student Vocalist Performs in Prestigious All-Eastern Mixed Chorus

NPHS senior Jenny Rich joined 300 other talented vocalists from 12 different states as a member of the All-Eastern Honors Mixed Chorus that performed at the National Association for Music Education's (NAfME) biennial conference on April 12 in Providence, Rhode Island.

Jenny earned her All-Eastern spot with her high-scoring solo performance at the New York State School Music Association (NYSSMA) All-State Festival.

According to Jenny, part of her success can be traced to the support of NPHS vocal music teacher Nicole Foti, who makes time both before and after school to make sure students rehearse for their NYSSMA solos with an accompanist. She also credits her family, who fostered a love of music and theater. While she was generous with her gratitude towards others, anyone who knows Jenny also knows she is a talented performer with a strong work ethic.



## Exemplary School Librarianship Recognized by Regional Association

Lenape Elementary School's Library Media Specialist MaryAnn Lis-Simmons has been awarded the 2015 School Library Media Specialists of Southeastern New York (SLMSENY) Bea Griggs Memorial Incentive Grant. Based on her submission, the SLMSENY committee called Lis-Simmons an "Exemplar of School Librarianship."

Acquiring this grant allows the school's library to purchase a class set of the multi-award winning book, *Brown Girl Dreaming* by Jacqueline Woodson. Lis-Simmons created a specific literary program that implemented lessons that would connect to the thematic concepts of the book and allow students to develop an awareness of the historical and cultural environment of the 1960s and 70s in America during the Civil Rights movement, as well as the influence of that era on our current society.



## Educators Named New York State Master Teachers

Congratulations to New Paltz High School (NPHS) math teacher Matthew Paley and New Paltz Middle School (NPMS) science teacher Susanna O'Brien, who were two of just 29 educators from the region to be named 2015 New York State (NYS) Master Teachers. Paley has taught at NPHS for 14 years, while O'Brien is a 30-year veteran educator at NPMS.

