



## Huntington Union Free School District

*"A Tradition of Excellence Since 1657"*

James W. Polansky

Superintendent of Schools

November 15, 2011

Dear Huntington Students, Parents, and Community Members:

As I reflect on the first quarter of the school year, many things come to mind. To start, there was the unparalleled eagerness among students and staff as we commenced the 2011-2012 school year. It appears that the excitement continues as classes delve further into their respective curricula and classroom learning processes. There is the ongoing professional development associated with such initiatives as the Common Core Learning Standards, the Framework for Teaching, and data-driven instruction. There is the buzz, excitement, and unmatched pride associated with the recent curricular, extracurricular, and service-related accomplishments of our students. There is also the genuine sense of "community" that I have routinely perceived during my building visits, as well as during my attendance at district events and PTA meetings.

I am confident that you found or will soon find your scheduled parent-teacher conferences to be invaluable. These conferences offer an important opportunity to further establish multi-directional communication, as teachers and parents discuss student achievement, progress and learning needs. The home-school connection is critical to a child's academic and social success, regardless of the specific building or grade level involved.

This is a dynamic time in the world of education; a time when education in New York and throughout the country is under intense scrutiny. There is no doubt that we, as a district, must continue to assist our students in making further academic progress. As educational professionals, we must make every effort and think creatively to ensure that each student is appropriately challenged and supported both within and beyond the classroom.

As a result of New York State's application to the federal Race to the Top program and recently adopted statute, we are rapidly planning and implementing a new annual performance review process for teachers and principals. We live in an era where workforce demands change as rapidly as the technology that supports them. We face the prospect of a cap on the property tax levy, annual reductions in state aid, and an array of unfunded federal- and State-mandated expenses. Despite these challenges, however, it is our responsibility as a district and as a community to ensure that our students are well rounded and prepared to meet the demands of post-secondary academia, as well as that associated with a 21<sup>st</sup> century society and global economy.



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The 2012-2013 budget development process will be among the most challenging the district has faced in recent times. Again, our goal will be to maintain program integrity in a fiscally responsible and transparent manner. Nonetheless difficult decisions will surely need to be made. As presented during a recent Board meeting, initial projections suggest the need to reduce a "roll-over" budget (which includes no cost increases except those mandated) by more than two million dollars to reach the budget total resulting from a 2% cap on the tax levy. This is a challenge that will be faced by districts throughout New York State. I encourage you to stay informed through your attendance at future Board of Education meetings and your attention to daily news postings on the district website, as we work carefully to navigate the process.

While it may seem prosaic, this is the time of year when our thoughts turn to that for which we are grateful. The Huntington school community should be quite thankful for the support that members continue to provide for each other, whether related to celebrating the endeavors and accomplishments of our motivated and talented students or mourning the loss of a beloved student or teacher. I am personally thankful to those who I have had the pleasure of coming to know over the past several months and for those throughout the community who routinely put forth their best daily efforts in behalf of our students. In sum, we are fortunate to be part of a community that makes education a high priority.

Have a wonderful Thanksgiving with your families. I look forward to working with you as we tackle the challenges that come our way in the months to come.

Sincerely,

James Polansky  
Superintendent of Schools