



## Huntington Union Free School District

*"A Tradition of Excellence Since 1657"*

James W. Polansky

Superintendent of Schools

February 3, 2012

Dear Huntington Students, Staff, Parents, and Community Members:

I hope your new year is off to a great start. I'd like to take this opportunity to update you on several important district matters:

### 2012-2013 Budget Planning and Preparation

Governor Cuomo's recent Executive Budget proposal is, for the most part, as expected given the state's economic condition. There are several items that draw our attention because of the potential impact on our schools. The governor included a statewide school aid increase of \$805 million (including \$250 million in competitive grants), which is the maximum level allowed under the new state cap limiting future aid increases to the level of personal income growth in the state. The governor has also suggested linking the aid increase to the successful completion of negotiations on a new teacher and principal evaluation system (APPR) and that he will place his own APPR plan into his 30-day budget amendments if the union lawsuit challenging the state's approach is not dropped. In addition, he has proposed a plan for pension reform, which would include an option for a new and less generous "tier."

The challenge we face in Huntington is the same faced by districts throughout New York State – specifically, to improve student performance while working with increasingly fewer resources. My commitment and that of the Board of Education is to construct an educationally sound and fiscally responsible 2012-2013 budget. Unfortunately the much-called-for "mandate relief" has not risen to level that will make a discernible budgetary difference. Additionally, we are faced with an array of non-discretionary cost increases that must be addressed, such as salary and contractual obligations, pension contributions, debt service, insurance premiums, BOCES administrative and capital charges, utilities and transportation. We will continue working to manage these costs where possible and taking actions to reduce discretionary expenditures significantly and in a manner that least impacts our students.

Please note that the budgetary process has begun. At the January 30<sup>th</sup> meeting of the Board of Education, the tax cap calculation and an introduction to this year's budgetary challenge was introduced. It is important for all to recognize that new legislation poses a limit or "cap" on the 2012-2013 tax levy, but that the required limit is not necessarily "2%." Designated exclusions will lead to an allowable limit that will vary by district and will likely



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exceed 2% by a small margin. Huntington UFSD's allowable limit for 2012-2013 is estimated at 2.21%, as highlighted within the presentation and worksheet posted on the district website ([http://www.hufsd.edu/leadership/budget/budget\\_index.html](http://www.hufsd.edu/leadership/budget/budget_index.html)).

As you may have read from the postcard recently mailed to district homes, upcoming budget meetings are scheduled as follows:

- Monday, March 5: Budget overview and review of sections covering the Board of Education, central administration, and transportation.
- Monday, March 19: Review of sections covering employee benefits, debt service, inter-fund transfers and capital.
- Monday, March 26: Budget workshop session on instruction and staffing.
- Monday, April 2: Review of estimated revenues and an overall budget review.
- Monday, April 16: Board adoption of the 2012-13 budget.
- Monday, May 7: Public budget hearing.
- Tuesday, May 15: Budget vote and Board of Education election.

### Instructional Update

We continue to move forward with several initiatives, including Framework for Teaching implementation, data-driven instructional planning, Response to Intervention (RtI) tiering, and instructional differentiation. The collective goal of such programs is to provide teachers and other staff members with the appropriate guidance and tools to frame their planning and instructional efforts around the needs and interests of the individual child. Our progress as a district must and will continue in this regard.

The other major initiative is the planned transition to a new set of standards centered on the Common Core Curriculum, which will be fully implemented by the 2014-2015 school year. The new K-12 standards and curriculum are part of a national effort to provide a uniform and appropriately rigorous program for students across the country. The transition process has already commenced and will continue for the foreseeable future with professional development, curriculum writing, and instructional exemplars. Visit our Common Core Learning Standards Information Center at [http://www.hufsd.edu/leadership/central/central\\_office\\_curriculum.html](http://www.hufsd.edu/leadership/central/central_office_curriculum.html) for additional information.



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### Closing Thoughts

Each month, I find myself wishing to thank our parents for sending us the extraordinary students with whom we have the privilege to work. Following the outstanding concerts in December, I have had the opportunity to attend a multitude of events and activities throughout the district and those events keep coming. It is easy to distinguish the intelligent, motivated, and cheerful students who contribute to our school community daily. Again, the importance of the home-school connection should not be underestimated. Thank you, parents, for all that you do to make Huntington a special place.

Best wishes for a happy and healthy 2012, and for an enjoyable and productive second semester.

Regards,

*Jim Polansky*

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