

SPRING 2012

It's Elementary



VALLEY STREAM UFSD THIRTEEN NEWSLETTER

A Message From Your **SUPERINTENDENT OF SCHOOLS**

A school district is often considered the heart of a community – a central hub, bustling with activity that offers students many opportunities to grow and learn. It is a place for families to connect and build memories of their child's learning and their child's achievements in art, music and physical education. Parents meet friends and share in the joys of raising children. Children meet children who will become their lifelong friends.

This is so true of Valley Stream UFSD Thirteen. Our elementary district has students from five different mailing addresses; students who use two different public libraries; students whose families have resided here from generation to generation; and students whose families have moved here specifically for the quality education we offer.

We are all working together as we develop the school budget for 2012-2013. The new legislation has an eleven step formula that includes a tax cap as part of the formula which determines the district's tax levy limit. The tax levy limit will differ from school district to school district dependent upon the items the legislation allows to be part of the formula. It is important for our residents to understand the tax levy limit and the new legislation. I urge you to learn more about this significant change to our budget process. Please try to attend the district budget meetings and the budget hearing. Please consider becoming a Budget Ambassador. You can also learn more about this by logging onto www.osc.ny.us for updates.

We need to continue to work together to keep the Valley Stream UFSD Thirteen the central hub for learning for our children and their families.

Sincerely,

Adrienne Robb-Fund, Ed.D.
Superintendent of Schools

COMMON CORE CORNER

The New York State Board of Regents has adopted the Common Core Learning Standards, which officially take effect in the 2012-2013 school year. The Valley Stream UFSD Thirteen administrators and teachers have been learning about the Common Core Learning Standards for English Language Arts and Mathematics through our ongoing Professional Development Program that takes place during our faculty meetings. In December, January and February, our teachers began creating units of study aligned with the Common Core Learning Standards for English Language Arts. Mrs. Stephanie Capozzoli, Principal of Willow Road School, and her staff shared information about the Common Core Learning Standards for Mathematics at the February meeting of the Board of Education. Audience members learned about the shifts in Mathematics education and participated in math problems that exemplify these shifts. The presentation is available to all community residents on the district website at

http://www.valleystream13.com/district/BOE_presentations.asp. Each issue of *It's Elementary* will provide information about the Common Core Learning Standards. Residents can learn about the Common Core Learning Standards by going to www.engageny.org or by going to the district website for the link to the New York State website.

Early Readers Build Skills with Foundations

Primary grade students are now learning basic phonics skills through a scientifically-based program called "Foundations." Foundations is a phonics and spelling program based on the Wilson Reading System and is designed to support student success in reading and spelling. District teachers were trained by a certified professional developer in the use of this program. The professional developer provided the initial training as well as the follow-up training, which was building-based and personalized for each teacher. The visit included lesson demonstrations, study groups and sharing of strategies. Our students' reading and spelling skills are showing signs of improvement since the implementation of Foundations.



CELEBRATING BLACK HISTORY MONTH

Students throughout the district celebrated Black History Month by reading non-fiction books about events and people who made a difference. Students read biographies, used the resources in *World Book Online* and *Grolier's Online*, created posters and some even came to school dressed as famous people. One hundred fifty students participated in an essay contest sponsored by Assemblyman Edward P. Ra, and six students were honored by the Assemblyman at the February meeting of the Board of Education. The students honored were: Sophia Marinez, Anthony Baires, Caryn Martin, Joline Viau, Nithin Seelan, and Alena Moreira.



IMPORTANT FACTS ABOUT THE 2012-2013 BUDGET PLANNING PROCESS

The Property Tax Cap

In June 2011 a law was enacted that puts new restrictions on the amount by which a school district may increase the tax levy associated with its proposed budget. The law dictates a multi-step formula to determine a district's tax levy limit.

The formula incorporates a number of variables including the rate of inflation, certain categories of expenses and increases in pension costs. The 2% tax cap refers to one element in an 11-step formula – the tax levy growth factor. This is the amount the base-year levy can be increased due to inflation. It is limited to either the rate of inflation (change in the consumer price index) or 2%, whichever is less. The other elements of the formula include an allowance for expenditures for capital projects and for mandated pension costs if they exceed 2%. These exemptions were included in the law to assure that districts will be able to levy sufficient taxes to cover their expenses.

Because of these factors, most districts will have a tax levy limit that is either higher, or in some cases lower, than 2%.

A budget that does not exceed the calculated limit is passed with the approval of a simple majority (50% +1). If a district chooses to propose a budget with a tax levy that exceeds the formula, a supermajority of voters (60%) would need to approve the budget in order for it to pass.

Contingency Budget Update

If the proposed 2012-2013 budget does not get the required 60% approval, the Board may hold a second vote on June 19th. The budget would need 50% to pass at that time. The cost of a second vote is approximately \$27,000. Should the budget fail a second time, the district would be required by law to operate under a contingency budget. The new legislation dictates that the maximum allowable tax levy increase under a contingency budget would be 0%. In addition to severe restrictions put on certain expenditures by the state, this would require a decrease of over \$1,000,000 from the proposed budget.

The Proposed 2012-2013 Budget

On May 15th the Board of Education will be proposing a budget with a 1.6% increase and an associated tax levy within the tax levy limit. Under the law, a majority of the voters (50%+1) would be needed for approval. However, this year a group of residents have brought forth a proposition to increase transportation to include all students who live one-half mile or more from school. Currently, the limit for fourth through sixth grade students is one mile. The cost of providing this additional transportation is estimated to be \$296,059.

Since the cost of this proposition, if it were to pass, when added to the budget would cause the tax levy to exceed the limit, both the budget (which is under the limit) and the transportation proposition must pass with a supermajority. In other words, in order for the proposed 1.6% budget to pass, it must have the approval of 60% of the voters.

Key Budget Terms

- **Budget** – The Superintendent and administrative staff determine the amount necessary to fund the educational program for the upcoming school year. The Board of Education reviews the proposed budget, makes adjustments, and adopts the budget, which is then put before the voters on the third Tuesday in May. This year the budget vote is on Tuesday, May 15th.

- **Revenues** – The monies the district receives in order to fund its operation. The district receives about 20% of its revenue from State and Federal Aid. Other sources of revenue include interest, non-governmental grants and carry-over funds from prior year operations.

- **Tax Levy** – The remaining funds needed to support the budget. The tax levy is equal to the budget minus all other revenues.

- **Tax Rate** – Three factors determine how much a particular piece of property is taxed: the tax levy, the adjusted base proportion for that class or type of property and the assessment for the property. The Tax Rate for a class or type of property is determined as follows:

$$\frac{\text{Tax Levy} \times \text{Adjusted Base Proportion}}{\text{Total Assessed Valuation}}$$

This rate is then multiplied by the assessed value for a particular property to determine the tax on that property.

- **Cost Per Average Homeowner** – The tax rate multiplied by the assessed valuation of the "average" home in the district. For the 2011-2012 budget year, the average home in Valley Stream Thirteen was assessed at \$890. This equates to a market value of \$356,000.

COST SAVING INITIATIVES

- **Transportation** – Valley Stream UFSD Thirteen is a founding member of the Southwest Quadrant Transportation Cooperative. When some member districts were contemplating withdrawing from this cooperative because of state restrictions, Valley Stream UFSD Thirteen took the lead in strongly urging members to continue this important cost-saving relationship. The state regulation was later eased.

- **Food Services** – Valley Stream UFSD Thirteen participates with District 30 and the Central High School District in a cooperative food service program. The cooperative is able to take advantage of reduced food costs and shared administrative expenses.

- **Insurance - Workers' Compensation** – Valley Stream UFSD Thirteen was one of the charter members of the Nassau County School Cooperative Workers' Compensation Self-Insurance Plan. The Assistant Superintendent for Business has served as President of the Cooperative for the past 12 years. The district has realized over \$600,000 in premium savings versus the least expensive alternative - insuring through New York Safety Group 491. **Other Insurance** – Valley Stream UFSD Thirteen is a founding member of the New York State Insurance Reciprocal, a consortium of school districts throughout the State. The reciprocal is run by school districts, for the benefit of school districts, providing coverages tailored to district needs at competitive rates.

- **Residency** – Valley Stream UFSD Thirteen cooperates with District 24 and the Central High School District in the provision of Residency Advisory Services including the employment of a full-time residency officer. This cooperative arrangement reduces clerical and investigative costs.

- **Equipment and Supplies** – Valley Stream UFSD Thirteen participates in cooperative bidding, BOCES and New York State contracts and inter-municipal agreements for the purchase of equipment and supplies.

Negotiations Update

Most of the district's bargaining units have newly settled contracts extending to June 2014. Recognizing the current fiscal constraints and the slow economic recovery, almost all of these contracts incorporate no salary increase in 2012-2013 and greatly reduced or delayed increases for 2013-2014.

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Kindergarten Registration

Do you have a child or know of a child residing in Valley Stream UFSD Thirteen who will turn five by December 1, 2012? The earlier parents register their children for school, the better the district can plan for their arrival in September. Parents can register students for kindergarten at any time when the Central Registration Office is open. The Central Registration Office is located at Memorial Junior High School, One Kent Road, Valley Stream. Registration information and the associated forms are located on the district website at: <http://www.valleystream13.com/district/enrollment.asp>. If you have any questions about registration, please contact the Central Registration Office at 516-872-5694.

Voter Registration Information

This year's school budget and trustee election will be held on Tuesday, May 15, 2012 at each of the district's elementary schools. If you are not yet registered to vote, the district encourages you to register.

To be eligible to vote, a person must be a United States citizen, at least 18 years old, a resident of the school district for at least 30 days, and registered. Unregistered individuals who meet the above criteria can register any day school is open between 8 a.m. and 4 p.m. in the District Office located at James A. Dever School. A special evening registration event will take place one week before the election from 5 p.m.-9 p.m.

Upcoming Events

Board of Education Meeting:

Tuesday, April 24th @ 8 p.m. in James A. Dever Boardroom

Lights on for Education:

Thursday, April 26th @ 7:15 p.m. at Memorial Jr/Sr High School

Budget Hearing:

Wednesday, May 2nd @ 7:30 p.m. in James A. Dever Auditorium

Budget Vote & Trustee Election:

Tuesday, May 15th 6:00 a.m. - 9:00 p.m.

Continental Math Club Builds Problem Solvers

A new club is available to upper grade students in each of our schools. The goal of the Continental Math League Club is to foster mathematical thinking and ingenuity by enhancing students' problem-solving skills.



The Continental Math Clubs meet for approximately one hour per week and will participate in the national Continental Math mathematics contests, which are held five times per year. Both students and teachers are excited about this new club and the chance to expand and test their math skills.

Online Resources at Your Fingertips

The district librarians have sponsored a series of parent-child workshops designed to educate both parents and students on how to use the online databases for research. Parents of intermediate grade students and their children were shown how to use *The World Book Online*, *Grolier's Online*, *The Science Book of Knowledge* and other resources available to district students. These online resources will foster the twenty-first century research skills students will need in high school, college and beyond. One parent was so excited, she commented, "I wish I had these resources! Imagine being able to do research from your home computer!"



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