

BERLIN CENTRAL SCHOOL DISTRICT

2010-2011 BUDGET

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS (FAQ)

Q: If the budget is voted down, does that mean Grafton will stay open?

A: No, the Board of Education approved 2010-2011 Budget for vote on June 15, 2010 which **does not** include money to operate the Grafton Elementary Building. Any effort to keep the building open would result in a much higher tax payer impact.

Q: What is the cost of educating a student in the Berlin Central School District for both Special Education and General Education?

A: The cost of educating a regular education student in the Berlin Central School District as listed under the Fiscal Accountability Report Card on file with the State of NY is \$10,222, which is **\$35 lower** than the State average.

The cost of educating a special education student in the Berlin Central School District as listed under the Fiscal Accountability Report Card on file with the State of NY is \$19,005 which is **\$5,474 lower** than the State average.

Q: If we go to a contingency budget, what do we lose?

A: A contingency budget for the Berlin Central School District would require **an additional \$93,043 in reductions**. The proposed budget is lower than the legal contingent level, but under current law this would require that all equipment be removed from the budget unless the purchase was deemed health and safety related. A contingent budget still does not include funding for the Grafton Elementary School.

Q: What is the budget increase under this new budget proposal and how will it impact my taxes?

A: The proposed budget has not increased over last year resulting in an anticipated **tax levy increase of 0%**. The actual tax impact on an individual home depends on current assessment and equalization rates that are not known as this time.

Q: What are the program/staffing reductions that have already been made to get us to our current tax increase?

A: Through the reorganization of the district's elementary program into one location the district creates savings in other areas. Personnel reductions include; Administrative, 3 Teaching, 2 Teaching Assistants, Health Office, custodial, 1 clerical position, and a bus route reduction for a total of 10 positions. Many of the reductions are a result of staff retirements. Vacated positions allow the retention of current staff members that would have been laid off.

Q: *What percentage of the budget is comprised of administrative salaries?*

A: Administrative and Supervisory salaries only include the following positions: Superintendent, Business Manager, 3 Principals, Director of Special Education, and the Superintendent of Buildings & Grounds for a total of \$604,720 for the 2010-2011 school year or 3.22% of the total budget.

Q: *How much of the budget is allocated to program and kids?*

A: The State requires that every school district uses a set format to divide the budget into three parts: Administrative, Program and Capital – using the mandated format the Berlin Central School District 2010-2011 proposed budget allocates 79.81% to the budget educational program portion of the budget.

Q: *What options have been previously explored in terms of configurations for this district?*

A: In 2006-07 the district worked in conjunction with Questar III to set up groups of individuals comprised of representatives of the community, staff and outside businesses to assist the district in planning for the future. In 2007-08 the Board of Education spent many hours studying at least 18 different options resolved by a majority vote in March 2008, to consolidate all elementary children to one site. During a two year period 2008-10 the Superintendent also established a group of community members who worked many hours to present options to the Board of Education on Capital Projects as part of the future planning of the district. Conclusions of all committee work over the past years have yielded similar results.

Q: *How are Berlin Central School District's summer programs funded?*

A: The Berlin Central School District's elementary summer program is funded through Title 1 money from the Federal Government. The Middle School and High School programs

are budgeted as a general fund expense. The transportation to meet the needs of the elementary program is funded through Title I, again with Middle and High School programs being funding through the regular budget.

Q: *Can we share services with neighboring districts – Superintendent, Director of Transportation?*

A: This continues to be explored for the Director of Transportation. Educational programs shared among area schools is still under review.

Q: *When Grafton Elementary closes will students have longer bus rides?*

A: The routes will be reconfigured to start at the farthest point and work towards the Berlin Elementary location. The students should anticipate similar bus rides as they experience now, but of course there will be exceptions with some shorter and some a bit longer depending on the location of the students' home. Transportation routes will be streamlined for the most efficient use of resources.

Q: *When Grafton Elementary closes will elementary students have greater exposure to MS/HS students during bus rides?*

A: Actually the opposite will be true, the children will have a very limited exposure to older students as the routes will be separate and not be mixed. Afternoon routes can actually be reconfigured to mimic the morning routes that do not mix students. A slight adjustment to bell times may be necessary to accomplish the end result, but the exposure will be less than at the current time.

Q: *When Grafton closes, will class sizes increase?*

A: This district has acceptable class size guidelines that are as follows: Kindergarten: 18 – 20 students; Grades 1 & 2: 21 – 22 students; Grade 3 and above: 23 – 25 students. The district has no plan to change these guidelines for class sizes in the district, unless there is a contingency budget.

Q: *Is it true that local taxes will increase by 20% or more in the next five years?*

A: The District's 5 year financial projections do not call for such an increase. The financial projections have been reviewed by State Aid planning as well as the Audit Committee as

a snap shot in time using the best information during the development of the documents. No one can predict the future, but Berlin Central School District is in sound financial condition from planning over the past several years and an effort to contain costs. Planning for the future has established several fund reserves with surplus money that will allow the district to weather the financial shortfall expected with decreased State Aid funding projections. Through reorganizing efforts, the district can deliver services to all students in a more efficient manner with clear and concise plans for the future. Closure of the two elementary schools will impact the tax levy, saving millions over the next 5 year period.

Q: Are there advantages to shifting services to Questar III rather than providing them in district?

A: The Berlin Central School District strives to maximize aid where possible by using shared services through Questar III. This gives the district the necessary services at the appropriate level necessary to meet the student and staff needs. Using Questar III for these services also allows for revenue in the following year in the form of BOCES Aid. Since the State has frozen Foundation Aid the only way to impact the aid or revenue stream in a positive manner is for the district to shift the expense to an area that allows for increase in aid return. Questar and other categorical aid (transportation, textbooks, software, library materials, and special education services) areas are the only way to increase the future revenue to the district until there is a future restoration of Foundation Aid.