

Dear Norwalk Public School Families,

Thank you for your support of the school budget. Throughout January and February, many parents and students provided great insights about the 2011-12 Operating Budget to the Board of Education and all the elected officials. To bring everyone up-to-date, the Common Council set a budget amount of \$153,361,267 or a 2.4% increase for the school year 2011-12. The Superintendent's Budget of 3.32% equated \$155,338,729 and was developed with over \$4 million dollars of reductions. Therefore, we still have a gap of \$1,977,462 to figure out. As I stated when I presented my 3.32% budget, this was not a recommended budget. Now, with this added gap, we will have to go deeper in making reductions. As we look at further reductions, I am cognizant that each and every reduction will impact our ability to provide a strong instructional program to your children. In order to support our Operating Budget, we are asking for help from our union partners. We must be able to avoid this second level of deeper reductions. However, I do not believe that we will be able to go into the 2011-12 school year without reductions unless the cap from the City is reconsidered. This reconsideration could happen. The next set of meetings and actions will occur as follows:

- 3/23/11 Public hearing on the 2011-2012 BOE Operating Budget request
- 4/4/11 Board of Estimate and Taxation completes review and forwards BOE Operating Budget request to the Common Council
- 3<sup>rd</sup> week in April Common Council may amend cap on appropriations
- 4<sup>th</sup> week in April Board of Estimate and Taxation meets to adjust budget on new cap
- 5/2/11 Board of Estimate and Taxation adopts budget and tax rates
- 5/24/11 Board of Education adopts the 2011-12 Operating Budget

I know that investing in education is good business. Investing in our schools will make a difference to our students and their futures.

Thank you for your support of making up three school days on February 22, 23, and 24<sup>th</sup>. I know that for some families, this meant making changes to plans. I believe the benefit to the students was significant. I was out in schools during that week and I observed good instruction. The students I spoke to were happy to be in school.

The Connecticut state-mandated Assessments began this week. During the month of March, students in 3<sup>rd</sup> through 8<sup>th</sup> grade are assessed in the areas of mathematics, literacy and science. Students in grade 10 are assessed in mathematics and literacy. Our students have worked incredibly hard to be prepared for these assessments. Our teachers, administrators and our support staff have been working together to ready our students, and so we are ready. Please make sure that your children are well rested, and please send them to school.

Finally, I encourage you to nominate excellent Norwalk teachers for the Connecticut Teacher of the Year Program. This program has been in existence since 1952. Until now, the Norwalk Public Schools has not participated in the program. We have so many outstanding teachers that we should be honoring them. The Teacher of the Year Program recognizes and honors teacher excellence. It does not attempt to select the "best" teacher; rather, it seeks to identify, from among many outstanding teachers of the year, one teacher to serve as a visible and vocal representative of what is best in the profession. The program celebrates excellence in teaching by recognizing teachers who have inspired a love for learning in their students and who have distinguished themselves in the profession.

School districts participating in the Teacher of the Year Program have found that the program to have a positive impact on the entire community. There are many benefits that result from recognizing excellence in teaching. By honoring the teaching profession, our community will be able to achieve the following positive outcomes:

- Establish a culture that rewards excellence in teaching
- Validate the work of teachers
- Provide teachers with a platform to speak about educational issues
- Give students a sense of pride in their teachers
- Showcase teachers as positive role models
- Encourage students to think about teaching as a career
- Give the community a sense of pride in its teachers
- Help to get the public involved and invested in the schools.

Our strength is in our people, and these programs bring honor to us all. Now more than ever, public education needs champions.

If you are interested in nominating a teacher from your child's school, please go to the NPS website and search for Teacher of the Year.

Sincerely,

Susan Marks