

Message from Board President Lori Jiava

At last February is upon us and according to Punxsutawney Phil, he has predicted that we will have a mild winter until Spring officially sets in on March 20! The school calendar is moving fast and furiously and our board is focusing on budget discussions. We are hopeful that our anxiety over the tax cap was not necessary. Although, the board still has several meetings to deliberate over the numbers that make up this rather large budget, our district seems to be fairing the tax cap quite well. One might ask, how can that be possible when every district around us is bracing themselves? In the past 2 1/2 years this board in conjunction with the Superintendent, worked tirelessly to watch expenditures and eliminate unnecessary spending. We started rebuilding our finance, and our current fund balance is proof of it. To highlight some of the measures we have taken; we have been putting proper procedures in place so that we collect the funding we are entitled to. We have administrators writing more effective grants and overseeing the process from start to finish. Some cost reductions measures we have taken have proven to be effective as well. We have improved our inventory control, changed over our phone system district wide along with keeping a close eye on 'over-time'. As a result of this we have managed to control the operations of the plant while spending less. We have refinanced bonds at lower interest rates to save money, and have been emphasizing the use of REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS (RFP), which have dramatically decreased our insurance costs.

At the end of 2008-09, our fund balance was approximately \$ 2.4 million, now it is currently \$ 8.1 million. This in itself allows us to weather the tax cap much better. All of the measures we have taken are having a positive effect on this upcoming budget. We are hopeful to preserve positions and programs for the students. Our students deserve a well rounded education.

Some new exciting happenings are taking place within the next month. On February 13th, the Kindergarten Study Team will be presenting the research on the possibilities of a full day kindergarten program. The data will show if we have enough room and if it is feasible. As I am sure most of you are aware already, a

full day program is key critical to students just starting their educational careers. With the state mandates, assessments and the rigor of the Common Core Standards, full day kindergarten is a good foundation for successful learning.

Also on the 13th, there will be a presentation on a proposal to expand our alternative high school, Orchard View. During this presentation, there will be research and data on the possibilities of the schools expansion.

I would like to touch on the 'Grade Configuration Committee' for a moment. Although we will not be having an update from the committee until March sometime, I would like to take the time to reach out to the community members who have voiced their concerns and who have sent emails to us. I would like to reiterate the same things I have said in the past few meetings; The committee is still in its infant stage of the process. If the board decided to move forward, the process would be quite extensive. The presentation on January 9th from the committee was the research that the board had charged the committee (in March 2011) to seek and compile. Based on the discussion items from board members and concerns from the community, there is much more work that has to be done and many questions that need to be addressed. Please understand you are the voice for your children and the board applauds you for advocating. The board wants to hear your concerns and we need to look to our professionals to obtain the answers so that your questions are satisfied. Our board will be having a brief discussion on the 13th regarding the direction of the 'Grade Configuration Committee' and we hope to alleviate some of your concerns.

As our students get ready for a long weekend starting on February 17, our faculty will be attending a Superintendent's Conference day. The common core will be highlighted along with professional development. Students will be due back to school on Tuesday the 21st.

On a more personal note, I would like to thank all of the administrators, teachers, teacher's aides and support staff for their dedication to the students. The atmosphere around the schools and the efforts with RTI are all appreciated. The identification process is so critical for the students. The educators are to be

commended for their keen eye and their desire to respond and intervene in order for each child to be successful and be their best! Thank you!

Few Reminders:

Our next board meeting is February 13th at 7:30pm (or soon after) at Wapp Jr. High auditorium.,

The following meeting; February 27th at 7:30pm at District Offices -167 Myers Corners Road - 2nd Floor

If you cannot attend a meeting, please make use of our video library. We stream our meetings live and then post the following day in our library. A helpful link:

<http://www.wappingersschools.org/domain/95>

Snow Delays, Cancellations & Early Dismissals Tips:

- ❖ Please make use of your child's schools Google groups. They are a great way to find out about delays, cancellations and early dismissal.
- ❖ Please make sure your emergency contact numbers are up to date and your instruction for your child is accurate in case of an emergency or an early dismissal. Your children's safety is our priority.
 - ❖ Listen to local radio stations for closing or delays.
 - ❖ Access www.cancellations.com
- ❖ Call your child's school and push the prompt for school updates.

An informed parent, is crucial when it involves the safety of students