

Superintendent McIntosh Provides Budget Update

Superintendent Lou McIntosh spoke with faculty and staff in February to provide an update on the 2010-11 budget process.

McIntosh stressed that currently there is a lot of uncertainty due to questions about how much state aid schools will receive next year.

Brunswick CSD faces a \$1,025,711 cut in state aid for 2010-11, as proposed in Governor Paterson's budget released in January. In past years the state legislature has restored such cuts to schools; but so far there has been little indication whether that will happen this year given the state's financial crisis.

Without a good sense yet of what state aid will be for 2010-11, McIntosh said school administrators will work cautiously on the budget. He stressed there would be no recommendations on staffing levels until at least the March 11 Board of Education meeting.

"I have two main goals," McIntosh said. "Try to retain all current positions and be mindful of the needs and concerns of our taxpayers."

Still, McIntosh noted the district at this point is facing a significant financial gap. A rollover budget – what it would cost to offer the same current programs and services next year – would total approximately \$22.1 million. But revenues total only \$20.7 million.

The district is considering savings in a variety of areas, including stretching out the school bus replacement plan, eliminating some capital improvements, and adjusting debt payments.

Additionally, 13 district employees have announced they will retire after this year. The district plans to look at all those positions and try to realign job responsibilities to cut spending by not filling the positions wherever possible.

"We're looking at everything that's not nailed down," McIntosh said.

McIntosh thanked employees for attending the budget meetings and empathized with how unsettling such news about the district's financial challenges must feel for them, particularly for new employees.

"All of your positions are important and this has nothing to do with individuals," McIntosh said. "The financial situation of the state has put us into this position."

Students Collect Supplies for U.S. Troops

U.S. soldiers serving in Afghanistan and Iraq will receive care packages thanks to the efforts of Tamarac students.



Eighth grade students collected personal supplies such as tissues, toothbrushes, shaving cream and hand sanitizers that troops often request. Students donated the items to Kathy Buckley from Military Mom in Action, a local organization dedicated to supporting troops overseas.

Students Learn How Drugs Harm Body

As part of their science unit, Tamarac middle school students recently learned how drugs and alcohol can harm the body's brain, nervous system and other organs.

Science teacher Rebecca Tennyson invited Abigail Smith, a substance abuse counselor with Rensselaer County, to talk with students in class. Because students are currently studying the human nervous system, Tennyson said it was a good opportunity to discuss how drugs and alcohol affect the body.



"She's going to tell you about the impact of drugs and alcohol, particularly at your age when your body is still growing and your brain is developing," Tennyson explained.

Smith talked about the misconceptions about drugs and alcohol, focusing much of her presentation on marijuana. She explained marijuana has 420 chemical compounds and has 50 to 70 percent more carcinogens than tobacco. The drug affects the brain cortex and creates short term memory loss even after someone stops using it. Other effects include preventing individuals from reaching deep REM sleep, delaying puberty and limiting growth.

"Some people claim it makes them better at things. It doesn't make you better at what you do, it makes you think you're better at what you do," Smith said. "People also say that it's not addictive. That's not true either."

Smith also talked about alcohol and the damage it can have on an individual's brain. Alcohol impairs judgment, decreases intellectual functioning, and creates motor control and sensory problems. Blackouts – when an individual drinks so much they can't recall events – actually cuts off oxygen in the brain and kills thousands of brain cells, Smith said.

Alcohol abuse also impacts individual's personalities and can be difficult to stop since it can cause both emotional and physical problems. Smith noted alcohol is a factor in 30 percent of all suicides. Smith encouraged students to avoid drugs and alcohol by being involved in healthy activities.

"If you ever have a question or concern, talk with others and use all the support that's available to you," Smith said.

Honor Rolls Now Available Online

Honor rolls for Tamarac Middle School and High School were recently announced.

To see a list of students who earned a place on the honor rolls, visit the school website, www.brittonkill.k12.ny.us, and click on the "Grade 6-8" or "Grade 9-12" link at the top of the webpage.

Students Create Models Based on Darwin's Notes

Tamarac High School students recently created models for science class depicting the various islands that Charles Darwin visited that led him to his theory of evolution.

Science teacher Mary McManus explained her class learned about Darwin through the diaries he wrote about his explorations. The observations in those diaries led Darwin to write his book "On the Origin of Species." Students then created models based on Darwin's notes.

Senior Lindsay King said she found it interesting that while the Galapagos Islands is the most famous place Darwin visited, he actually explored for five years on his ship, the HMS Beagle.

"He visited so many places, not just the Galapagos Islands," she said.

Tierra del Fuego, located near the tip of Argentina, was one of the locations Darwin visited and studied, noted senior Zysnia

Osepa. Zysnia showed the model she helped create based on Darwin's observations, which featured forested valleys with animals such as seals and whales. "I thought it was interesting how the trees all leaned to the east," Zysnia said of Darwin's notes.

Other class projects included Cape Verde, a collection of 10 islands known for its white cliffs, created by Emily Mehner and Morgan Stevens. The mountain islands included models of turtles, moray eels, parrot fish and a hawk-billed turtle.

A model of Salvador, Brazil featured a rugged coastline and animals such as penguins, seals and porpoises. "Darwin traveled there in 1832 on the HMS Beagle," explained Rachel Abate, who helped create the model. "He noted its rolling hills and snow capped mountains."

The Falkland Islands featured a rather unique climate, added Sharlette Kneer, with no trees and mostly sea grass that was home to birds such as albatrosses, ducks and geese as well as elephant seals.

"We also included a Falkland Island fox," Kneer said. "It was interesting because Darwin predicted it would go extinct and it did."

College Admissions Information Night

Tamarac High School's Counseling Center will host a College Admissions Information Night for interested parents and students on **Monday, March 8 from 5:30 to 6:30 p.m. in the High School cafeteria.**

High School Counselor Marie Taglione and Admissions counselors from area colleges will be on hand to discuss the college admissions process, financial aid and other relevant topics.

For questions, please contact the High School Counseling Center at 279-4600 ext. 2406.



Take a Yoga or Zumba Class at Tamarac

Interested in trying a yoga or zumba class in the comfort of your own school?

Brunswick (Brittonkill) CSD's Continuing Education program has new yoga and zumba classes starting in March.

Yoga classes are offered on either Tuesdays or Thursdays for an eight-week program starting on March 16. Zumba classes – a popular Latin-inspired dance fitness program – are offered on Mondays and Wednesdays for an eight-week program starting on March 8.

Visit the Continuing Education webpage for more information or to register by visiting www.brittonkill.k12.ny.us, and clicking on "Continuing Education" on the left side of the screen.

Carissa Seror Wins Tamarac Spelling Bee

Tamarac 8th grader Carissa Seror won this year's annual Tamarac Spelling Bee on January 28 after correctly spelling the winning word "unpredictable" in the 15th round of competition.

Carissa will represent Tamarac at the Regional Spelling Bee at Proctor's Theatre in Schenectady on March 15. First runner up was 8th grader Lee Vartigian. Second runner up was 7th grader Alex LeBarron.

Superintendent Lou McIntosh told students, parents and family members who packed the auditorium for the event that each of the 20 students competing were grade level champions. "They wouldn't be here if they weren't already winners," McIntosh said. Congratulations to all our students!

Fifth Grade Students Perform "The Miracle Worker"

Tamarac students in Janet Howard's fifth grade class recently performed "The Miracle Worker," a play that tells the story of Helen Keller and her teacher Anne Sullivan, who helped Keller learn to communicate. Students rehearsed

the play, which helps them learn public speaking skills, and performed it for elementary students and parents.

