WEST NEW YORK SCHOOL BUDGET FREEZES SCHOOL TAXES

School property taxes in West New York will not increase in a proposed 2009-2010 School Budget that was approved by the Board of Education on Tuesday evening, March 17.

Dr. Robert Van Zanten, Superintendent of Schools, presented a $119.7 million budget for the 2009-2010 school year, which calls for a local school tax levy of $13.6 million – the same amount as the current school budget.

The new school budget anticipates a $3.8 million increase in state aid, about 5% more than this year, in large part because school officials were able to identify an additional 1,700 "at risk" students who meet state and federal family income requirements for Free and Reduced Lunch. State funding is largely based on a district's "at risk" student population. "School personnel did an excellent job finding these students and helping their parents complete the necessary paperwork," said Dr. Van Zanten.

Class sizes will not be increasing and will remain in compliance with State Department of Education guidelines.

Dr. Van Zanten said that the new budget also achieves about $2.5 million in costs savings through better management practices, financial controls, and Interlocal Agreements with the Town of West New York.

The significant savings will be achieved by educating special needs students in the district, rather than sending them to other school systems outside West New York. A new autism class will be created for six pre-school students and significant savings in tuition and transportation costs will be realized.

The new school budget will also fund $1.4 million in improvements to the district's older elementary schools that will include new science labs and safety systems, exterior repairs and new sidewalks.

"In light of the financial difficulties facing taxpayers in West New York and throughout New Jersey, we are very pleased to keep school property taxes frozen at current levels for the next school year," said Dr. Van Zanten. "The School Business Administrator and our administrative staff did an excellent job in controlling costs and finding new ways to save tax dollars without compromising our high quality of education."

The proposed school budget will now go before the Board of School Estimate for final approval and adoption on March 30th in the West New York Court Chambers.