

DISTRICT DISPATCH

A Publication of the North Syracuse Central School District

Volume 28 No. 4

April 2012

School budget vote set for May 15th Programs maintained as District faces challenges

The District and Board's guiding principle in developing a budget for the 2012-13 school year has been to become more cost-effective while preserving programs that enable student achievement.

On May 15th, residents will vote on the District's proposed \$138,771,201 budget that would increase spending 1.7 percent, or \$2.3 million, and carries a tax levy increase of 4.23 percent, which is within the tax levy limit (see page 2).

The District initially projected a \$9.2 million budget deficit for the 2012-13 school year based on an anticipated loss of federal funds and rising costs. However, that projected deficit has since been reduced to \$6.7 million after:

- ★ The District was notified it would be receiving more state aid than originally projected,
- ★ The District received updated revenue projections from payment-in-lieu-of-taxes agreements, and
- ★ A new agreement was reached with the teachers' union.

★ *continued on page 7*



Northstars continue to shine

Since 2008-09 the District has reduced its expenditures by more than \$15 million and despite the District's challenges, its students continue to excel in the classroom and beyond.

Some of the many student accomplishments for the 2011-12 school year are shown on page 6.

2012 - 13

Budget at-a-glance

Proposed budget
\$138,771,201

Budget increase
\$2,286,730

Proposed school tax levy increase = 4.23%

Vote: Tuesday, May 15th from 9 AM to 9 PM

For residents living
SOUTH of 481

For residents living
NORTH of 481

Administrative Office Building
5355 West Taft Road
North Syracuse, NY

Cicero Elementary School
Route 31
Cicero, NY

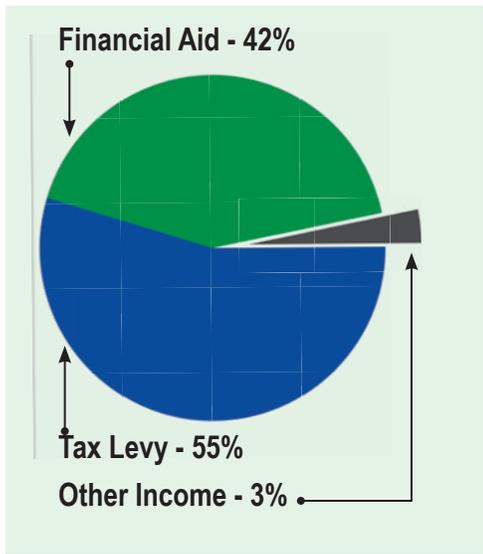
TAX IMPACT ON \$100,000 HOME \$89.00 INCREASE BEFORE STAR

| | Cicero | Clay | Salina |
|---|---|---|---|
| |  |  |  |
| Full Value | \$100,000 | \$100,000 | \$100,000 |
| Assessed Value (AV) | \$100,000 | \$4,320 | \$100,000 |
| Estimated Tax Rate Per \$1,000 of AV | \$21.91 | \$507.17 | \$21.91 |
| Estimated Annual School Tax | \$2,191 | \$2,191 | \$2,191 |
| Tax Increase | \$89 | \$89 | \$89 |

These calculations exclude the benefits of STAR

**For more budget news go to
www.nscsd.org/budget**

District Revenues



| | 2011-12 Budget | 2012-13 Proposed | Dollar Change |
|-------------------|----------------------|----------------------|--------------------|
| General Aid | \$49,473,852 | \$49,145,524 | (\$328,328) |
| Building Aid* | \$7,329,510 | \$9,220,955 | \$1,891,445 |
| Other Revenue | | | |
| PILOTS | \$329,800 | \$441,000 | \$111,200 |
| County sales tax | \$806,000 | \$430,000 | (\$376,000) |
| Interest | \$135,000 | \$135,000 | — |
| Fund balance | \$1,600,000 | \$750,000 | (\$850,000) |
| Rent | \$451,000 | \$381,000 | (\$70,000) |
| Other | \$3,561,992 | \$2,390,761 | (\$1,171,231) |
| Subtotal | \$56,357,644 | \$53,673,285 | \$(2,684,359) |
| Property taxes | | | |
| Property tax levy | \$72,797,317 | \$75,876,961 | \$3,079,644 |
| TOTAL | \$136,484,471 | \$138,771,201 | \$2,286,730 |

*Represents funds that will be used to pay debt service on buildings rather than support programs



Q. What is a tax levy?

A. The tax levy is the total amount of taxes a school district must raise to help fund its budget, after accounting for all other revenue sources. The tax levy is the basis for determining the tax rates for each municipality within a district. Tax rates are also impacted by changes in town assessments and state equalization rates.

District's proposed budget is within its tax-levy limit

New York's property tax levy "cap," signed into law in June 2011, has often been referred to as a "2 percent cap" on taxes by some politicians and the media.

However, the new law does not restrict any school district's proposed tax levy increase to 2 percent — or any other amount. Instead, the legislation requires each district in the state to calculate its own tax levy limit to determine what level of voter support is necessary for budget approval.

The figure "2 percent" (or the rate of inflation, if less) is just one of eight variables that factor into each district's calculation of what is called a "tax levy limit." Districts then add to that amount portions of the tax levy that are not subject to the "cap." The State allows for certain items to be excluded from the cap including taxes levied to cover capital expenditures and a small portion of pension costs.

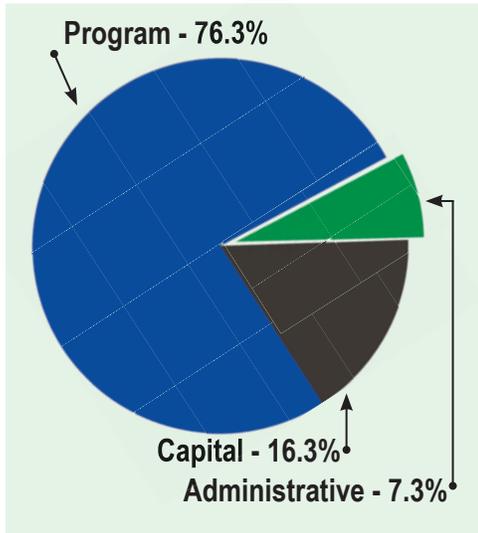
For the North Syracuse Central School District, the tax levy for 2012-13 is \$75,876,961, a 4.23 percent increase over the current year tax levy. Based on the law, this is the maximum allowable tax levy the District can propose while requiring the support of a simple majority of voters (50 percent +1) for budget approval. After much consideration, the Board of Education adopted a proposed budget with a tax levy increase of 4.23 percent.

If the District proposed exceeding the maximum allowable levy limit in its spending plan, a supermajority (60 percent or more) of voters would be needed for budget passage, a percentage that historically has been difficult to attain.

For more information about the property tax levy cap law, including a question and answer section, go to the budget page of the North Syracuse Central School District website: www.nscsd.org/budget.

District Expenditures

All public schools in New York State are required by law to report spending in three categories: program, administrative and capital. The District's program component represents the largest portion and focal point of its budget, accounting for more than 76% of the entire budget.



| | 2011-12 Budget | 2012-13 Proposed | Dollar Change |
|------------------------------------|----------------------|----------------------|--------------------|
| Program Expenditures | \$104,370,438 | \$105,947,560 | \$1,577,122 |
| Regular Instruction | \$39,104,696 | \$38,644,516 | (\$460,180) |
| Special School Program | \$14,772,624 | \$14,975,017 | \$202,393 |
| Student Services | \$9,333,831 | \$9,202,426 | (\$131,405) |
| In-Service Training | \$354,912 | \$290,912 | (\$64,000) |
| Legal | \$79,800 | \$79,800 | — |
| Transportation | \$8,042,632 | \$8,082,283 | \$39,651 |
| Employee Benefits | \$32,681,943 | \$34,672,606 | \$1,990,663 |
| Administrative Expenditures | \$10,342,384 | \$10,171,848 | (\$170,536) |
| Board of Education | \$95,933 | \$105,782 | \$9,849 |
| Central Administration | \$1,618,200 | \$1,605,770 | (\$12,430) |
| Central Support | \$1,204,367 | \$1,205,022 | \$655 |
| Supervision/Staff Development | \$4,825,416 | \$4,620,967 | (\$204,449) |
| Census | \$1,056 | \$1,550 | \$494 |
| Employee Benefits | \$2,597,412 | \$2,632,757 | \$35,345 |
| Capital Expenditures | \$21,771,649 | \$22,651,793 | \$880,144 |
| Operation/Maintenance of Plan | \$9,713,138 | \$9,323,325 | (\$389,813) |
| Central Support | \$120,000 | \$120,000 | — |
| Employee Benefits | \$1,553,624 | \$1,848,486 | \$294,862 |
| Debt service | \$10,384,887 | \$11,359,982 | \$975,095 |
| TOTAL | \$136,484,471 | \$138,771,201 | \$2,286,730 |



Tax levy, tax rates, tax bills:

What does it all mean?

A **tax levy** represents the amount of money the school district will collect from local property owners to fund its budget. It is figured after taking into account all other revenues, including state aid.

Next year's tax levy for residents of the North Syracuse Central School

District would increase by \$3,079,644, or 4.23 percent, under the budget proposal.

State and federal aid to the North Syracuse Central School District have decreased from nearly 47% for the 2008-09 school year to just over 42% for the 2012-13 school year. These decreases have caused a shift in the responsibility of funding schools onto local taxpayers.

The tax rate – or the amount to be charged per \$1,000 of assessed property value – is figured by dividing the tax levy into the total assessed value of properties within the

school district. Assessed values are determined by town assessment practice.

Since the District does not have information on current year assessments, they are projecting that the tax rates will increase at 4.23 percent, the same rate as the proposed tax levy.

Tax bills – the final amount that each homeowner pays varies depending on individual property assessments and the town's final tax rate. This is set in August after towns finalize their assessments and the state sets equalization rates, which equalize the tax burden between towns.

In other words, some taxpayers may see their bills go up by more than 4.23 percent while others may see their tax bills go up by less. In that situation, the school district is not collecting any more taxes. Rather, the tax burden is being redistributed to take into account shifting property values.

If you aren't registered to vote, the deadline to do so is May 10th.

New rules for contingency budgets

In addition to establishing a tax levy limit, the new property tax cap legislation has ramifications for school districts where proposed budgets are rejected by voters.

In the past, school districts that were unable to gain voter approval for a budget (after two votes) were able to adopt a contingency budget which capped spending based on inflation.

Now, the tax levy cap legislation has introduced a new contingency restriction. The tax levy under a contingency budget must be the same or less than the prior year's levy.

If the North Syracuse Central School District has to adopt a contingency budget for next year, the Board of Education would be required to make an additional \$3 million in reductions to make up for the revenue that would have been generated by the proposed 4.23% levy increase.

Potential cuts would include sports teams and music programs and would lead to increased class sizes at all grade levels.

Those cuts would be in addition to the nearly \$3.4 million that have already been made in order to balance expenses with available revenues.

"The District and the Board of Education have worked very hard to present the community with a budget that balances the educational needs of students with the economic concerns of the community," said Dr. Kim J. Dyce Faucette, superintendent of schools.

"Under the proposed budget, programs and services were consolidated whenever possible, rather than eliminated. If the District has to make additional cuts, programs will be eliminated."

If voters reject the initial budget proposal on May 15th, the Board's options remain the same as in the past. It can resubmit the same budget - or a revised budget - for a revote on June 19th, or it could decide to adopt a contingency budget. If residents vote down the budget a second time, the Board must adopt a contingency budget, resulting in a \$0 increase in the tax levy.



District maximizes resources and maintains programs

The North Syracuse Central School District is like hundreds of other school districts across New York State that are faced with the economic challenge of shrinking state aid and other revenues while battling increasing costs.

Expenditures for the 2012-13 school year are projected to be \$138.8 million. This reflects a \$2.3 million increase from the current year's budget, which is less than it was three years ago.

"In a time when districts are continually being asked to do more with less, the North Syracuse Central School District has met that challenge," said Dr. Kim J. Dyce Faucette, superintendent of schools.

The North Syracuse Central School District is ranked 666th in New York State out of 676 districts in terms of estimated per pupil spending. Additionally, according to New York State 2010-11 School Report Card data, out of the 25 districts of the Onondaga-Cortland-Madison (OCM) BOCES, there is only one district that spends less per student than the North Syracuse Central School District.

"We will continue to think outside of the box and actively identify new cost-saving opportunities. We are in the process of developing a multi-year strategic plan to establish a shared vision, direction and priorities for our District," Superintendent Dyce added.

The District's next steps include collaborating with employees in new and different ways to meet the ongoing challenges of a changing education environment.

**For more budget news go to
www.nscsd.org/budget**

SCHOOL BOARD CANDIDATES

The Board of Education is the official policy-making body of the North Syracuse Central School District. The Board is composed of nine members who are elected by District voters to three-year terms. Members receive no salary for serving on the Board. The terms of three Board members expire each June 30th. Board members may seek re-election at the annual budget vote. This year there are four candidates running for three vacant seats due to the expiration of terms. The three candidates receiving the highest number of votes will be elected to three (3) year terms (from July 1, 2012 to June 30, 2015).



Robert Allen Crabtree is completing his first term as a member of the Board of Education, and is seeking his second term to serve the District. During his first term, Mr. Crabtree made contributions to the accomplishments of the Legislative and Policy committees. He is an active member of the Onondaga County School Boards Association, Central New York School Boards Association, and the New York

State School Boards Association.

He is a member volunteer for the C-NS Optimist, since 1990, serving two years as President and two terms as the Lieutenant Governor of the New York State District, Governor of the New York/New England District, is a member of the Board of Directors of the North Syracuse Dollars for Scholars, since 1990, also serving as its president, a member of the North Syracuse Education Foundation, North Syracuse Chamber of Commerce, and volunteers at the North Area Meals on Wheels.

★ *continued on page 7*

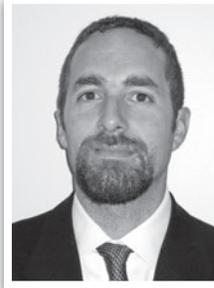


George Harrington resides in North Syracuse with his wife Denise. Harrington's three children, Sara, George and Laura attended and graduated from the North Syracuse Central School District.

Harrington is employed by Ryerson Metals as an Inside Sales Representative.

He has been active in the various schools as a member of the parent-teacher organizations and booster clubs. Harrington is also currently a director on the North Syracuse Cemetery Association. Harrington also previously served a three-year term on the North Syracuse Central School District Board of Education.

Harrington feels that with children being our future, that by participating on the School Board, he can help achieve the visions of the district's students, teachers and community.



Michael Donofrio is a lifetime resident and graduate of the North Syracuse Central School District. He earned a Bachelor of Science degree in business management from Le Moyne College.

As a founding member of GiGi's Playhouse-Syracuse, a Down Syndrome awareness center, and an active member of Syracuse D.A.D.S. (Dads

Appreciating Down Syndrome,) Michael is an advocate for the Down Syndrome and special education community. He has served as the regional executive for the Central New York region of the Sports Car Club of America (SCCA) since 2006.

Michael and his wife Allyson have two children, five-year-old Eric, a student in the District, and two-year-old Addison.

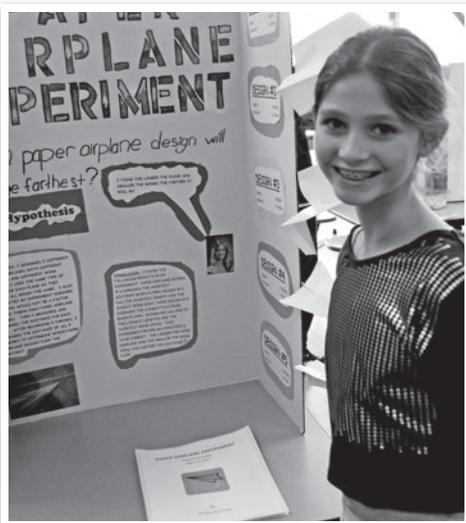


Simon Stearns is a native of Trumansburg, NY and now lives in North Syracuse with his wife, Jessica, and their two children. Jessica is an alumna of the North Syracuse Central School District and their daughter is a fourth grade student at Allen Road Elementary. Simon graduated from SUNY Cobleskill with an Associate of Science degree in biology and continued

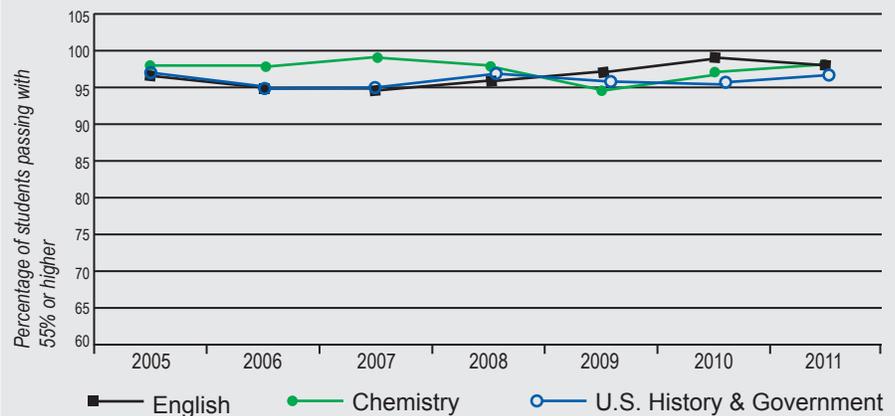
his education at SUNY Oneonta, graduating with a Bachelor of Art degree in Fine Art. He became interested in the field of education while living in Los Angeles and earned his California Substitute Teaching License.

When moving back to Central New York, Simon and his wife decided that the North Syracuse School District had the most to offer. Concerns over the recent increases in taxes, coupled with year over year cuts to crucial programs and positions, however, have motivated Simon to seek an active roll on the board of education. He believes that with new board members come new ideas and that we can work together to improve the quality, and value, of the education our community pays for and depends on.

***Each Board of Education candidate is responsible for writing his or her own biography.
The District does not endorse one candidate over another.***



Percentage of Students Passing Regents Exams 2005-2011



Student accomplishments ★ *continued from page 1*

- ★ The **C-NS Engineering Team** (seniors Michael Ann Baker, Andrew Fuller, Joseph Grzyvinsky, Maggie Donohoe, and Jessica Jelfo, and juniors Vincent Brigandi, Nicholas Cifaratta, Jacob Finsel, and Joseph Stokes) took first place for the third consecutive year in the Hydrogen Fuel Cell Prototype Class of the Shell Eco-Marathon Americas. Additionally, the team's electric prototype vehicle placed 7th out of the more than 30 teams entered.
- ★ Hundreds of student athletes achieved **scholar athlete** status during the 2011-12 school year. To qualify as a scholar athlete, students must have an overall GPA of 85% or higher and teams must have an average GPA over 90%.
- ★ **Scholastic Art Award Winners:** C-NS students Troy Furco, Bailey Eggleston, Lauren Hess, James Coon, Samantha Leaf, Nicole Dudden, Hannah Alvaro, Cara Baird, Emily Fiel, Allyson Komrowski, Stephanie Saucier and Lavanda Ladd earned gold medals in the competition. Silver awards were earned by Holly Hurst, Sara Jordan, Alex Obey, Gannon Andrews, Miranda Madden, Michaela Marano, Elizabeth Simmons, Amanda Ziobro, Nichole Burgen, Lindsay Miller, Austin Brown, Anthony Spinelli, Brock Lockette, Melissa Sabine, Maggie Donohoe, Christopher Gaiser, Rachel Pentasuglio and Stephanie Saucier. Many students also received honorable mentions in the competition.
- ★ C-NS junior Jacquelynn Akins was recognized for her volunteer service with a **President's Volunteer Service Award**.
- ★ C-NS and North Syracuse Junior High School students earned more than 20 top-ten medals at the **New York State DECA competition**.
- ★ The Northstars **Varsity Girls Basketball Team** won the District's first-ever Federation Championship and player Breanna Stewart was named **Gatorade National Player of the Year**.
- ★ C-NS senior Christian Oliver received an honorable mention from the **New York State School of Music Call for Compositions**.
- ★ Four elementary students, Sydni S. Barnett (Lakeshore Road Elementary School), Joshua R. Pickard (Cicero Elementary School), Benjamin W. Stevenson (Lakeshore Road Elementary School) and Hannah E. Warren (Allen Road Elementary School) scored 100% on their **NY State Science tests**.
- ★ 7th grade student Caitlyn Ackerman from Roxboro Road Middle School and 6th grade student Hannah Scalisi from Gillette Road Middle School qualified to compete in the **WCNY Scripps Written Spelling Bee**.
- ★ C-NS senior Edwina Kisanga was named a semifinalist in the 48th annual **National Achievement Scholarship Program**.
- ★ **North Syracuse Family, Career and Community Leaders of America** participated in the New York State Competition, earning three gold medals and four silver medals.
- ★ **C-NS Varsity Cheerleaders** won the 19th annual Section III Winter Cheerleading Championship.
- ★ **C-NS Dance Team** received the "Super Sweepstakes" award in the Marching Auxillaries Southeast Regional Competition in Florida.
- ★ The North Syracuse Junior High School **Builder's Club** was nominated for a "Spirt of Caring" award for their volunteer services.

School Board Candidates - Robert Allen Crabtree (*continued*) ★ *continued from page 5*

Mr. Crabtree is also an active member of the Immanuel Lutheran Church in Clay. He currently mentors students at C-NS High School and tutors kindergarten students at the Roxboro Road Elementary School.

Crabtree taught elementary grade levels for 36 years in the District, retiring in 2007. He also was an elementary math specialist, elementary math/science curriculum writer and test program supervisor. He received the 1988 North Syracuse Teacher of the Year, 1991 Technology Club of Syracuse Outstanding Teacher, STANYS Excellence in Science Teaching Award and the Post Standard Golden Apple Awards. Former Assemblymen Michael Bragman

and Al Stirpe honored Mr. Crabtree with three New York State Assembly resolutions.

Crabtree believes that every child should receive a quality education in the North Syracuse Central School District with every program stressing fundamental skills needed for every student to be successful in our ever changing world. He also believes we need to be innovative in presenting programs where students can achieve their highest present and future career goals. It is his belief that academic courses and extracurricular and athletic programs can be offered to accomplish these student-centered goals while developing a fiscally responsible budget for the taxpayers.

Programs maintained ★ *continued from page 1*

To help close the gap, school officials are proposing a number of spending cuts and increasing next year's school tax levy by 4.23 percent – which is the most the District can increase it under the state's new property tax levy cap and still need a simple majority of voters (50 percent plus 1) to pass the budget. (See page 2 for more tax levy cap law information.)

The 4.23 percent tax levy increase still leaves the district with a \$3.4 million gap that would be closed through a series of reductions, including the consolidation of course sections and the elimination of 39.7 staff positions, several elective courses, some equipment and supply purchases,

and some planned maintenance projects.

Positions to be cut include teachers, teaching assistants, assistant coaches and several administrative positions.

All district programs would be maintained under the budget proposal, and class sizes would be minimally effected.

"Making cuts is never easy, especially when it results in the elimination of positions," said Superintendent Kim J. Dyce Faucette. "We believe the proposed budget provides funding to meet the educational needs of our students and is fiscally responsible to our taxpayers."

In April, the teachers' union stepped forward to help the District close its budget gap by offering a new agreement that includes a pay freeze for 2012-13, saving the District about \$1 million.

For 2012-13, the District is challenged with the loss of \$3.2 million in Federal Jobs Funds used to support programs and services in 2011-12.

"With less financial support from the government, the responsibility of funding public school districts is shifting to local taxpayers," said Donald Keegan, the district's assistant superintendent for management.

In crafting the budget, school officials took into consideration the feedback they received from more than 2,000 respondents who completed the district's online survey earlier this spring.

Approximately 60 percent of the survey respondents indicated they would support a tax levy increase at or above 4 percent, consistent with the district's budget proposal.

"We took into account the community feedback we received through the survey and at Board meetings and put together a budget proposal that we feel balances the community's wishes with our financial resources and responsibilities," said Board of Education President Pat Carbone.

NORTH SYRACUSE CENTRAL SCHOOL DISTRICT

Board of Education

Pat Carbone, *President*

Toni 'Lyn Brauchle, *Vice President*

Catherine Cifaratta-Brayton

Robert Crabtree

Sandra M. DiBianco

Scot McClintock

Michael Mirizio

Patrick J. Svoboda

Connie Gibson, *District Clerk*

Superintendent

Kim J. Dyce Faucette, Ed.D.

Administration

Stanley Finkle, *Assistant Superintendent for Instruction*

Donald Keegan, *Assistant Superintendent for Management*

www.nscsd.org



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SYRACUSE, NY
PERMIT NO. 4

DATED MATERIAL – PLEASE RUSH

Please Vote!
Tuesday, May 15, 2012
9 AM to 9 PM

Polling Places:

For residents living
SOUTH of 481

Administrative Office Building
5355 West Taft Road
North Syracuse, NY

For residents living
NORTH of 481

Cicero Elementary School
Route 31
Cicero, NY

Voter qualifications:

- ★ U.S. citizen
- ★ 18 years of age or older
- ★ Resident of the school district for at least 30 days prior to the vote
- ★ Not under sentence for a felony conviction and not adjudged mentally incompetent

Registration Information: If you are not registered to vote with the County or District, you must pre-register by May 10th. The District is holding a special evening registration from 4:00 to 8:00 PM on May 8th at Cicero Elementary School & the Administrative Office Building. Additionally, you may register at the District Office Building through May 10th, Monday through Friday from 8:00 AM to 4:00 PM.

Absentee Ballots: Qualified voters of the District may obtain applications for an absentee ballot from the Office of the District Clerk. Completed applications must be received by the District Clerk no later than 5:00 PM on May 14, 2012 OR no later than 5:00 p.m. on May 8, 2012 if the absentee ballot is to be mailed to the voter. Completed applications received after 5:00 PM on May 8, 2012 will require the voter to personally appear at the Office of the District Clerk to receive an absentee ballot.

For questions regarding voter registration, absentee ballots or polling places, please contact Connie A. Gibson, District Clerk, at 218-2131.

On the ballot:

- ★ 2012-13 school budget proposition: \$138,771,201
- ★ School bus purchase proposition: \$1,250,652
- ★ Salina Free Library budget proposition: \$400,860
- ★ Three seats on the Board of Education

Budget public hearing

May 8, 2012, 7 PM

Jerome F. Melvin Administrative Office Building
(5355 West Taft Road in North Syracuse)

More budget information:

Copies of the budget can be reviewed 8 AM to 4 PM weekdays at the District Office, 5355 West Taft Road in North Syracuse. More information is available at www.nscsd.org/budget.

BUS PURCHASE REFERENDUM

On May 15, voters will decide on the following bus referendum, which is part of the District's long-term fleet replacement program. The annual bus replacement program, which was established in May, 2002 has led to a reduction in fleet size, reduction in mechanics and improved bus inspection rates. The cost of the referendum per \$100,000 home is shown below.

Proposition: Shall the Board of Education of the North Syracuse Central School District (the "School District") be authorized to purchase ten (10) 65-passenger diesel school buses at an estimated maximum cost of \$103,023 each; one (1) 39-passenger diesel school bus with one to three wheelchair positions and air conditioning at an estimated maximum cost of \$115,129; and one (1) 48-passenger bus with air conditioning at an estimated maximum cost of \$105,293 for a total estimated maximum cost of all such vehicles not to exceed \$1,250,652, and to obtain the necessary funds by the levy of a tax upon the taxable property of the School District to be collected in annual installments in the years and in the amounts as the Board of Education shall determine in accordance with Section 416 of the Education Law, and, in anticipation of said tax, to issue up to \$1,250,652 in obligations of the School District?

| | Cicero | Clay | Salina |
|---|---|---|---|
| Bus Proposition |  |  |  |
| Tax Increase for a \$100,000 home before STAR | \$1.50 | \$1.50 | \$1.50 |