

Q & A:



Monroe County Public Schools



Why should I care about public schools?

Monroe County's school districts are a major economic force. Losses to districts result in community-wide loss.

Collectively our school districts are the county's largest employer with over 21,000 employees and a total budget of \$1.92 billion a year.

Collectively our schools generate one billion dollars in state and federal aid annually.

Cuts in school district spending will negatively affect the entire community.

School tax dollars stay in the local economy.

Most of a district's budget supports personnel who live and spend locally.

Reductions in revenue lead to cuts in personnel and local purchasing.

Educational professionals are consumers of cultural offerings and college graduate programs.

Most school employees grew up here, and are returning our investment in their educations.

Our economy is built upon a highly skilled workforce. The national reputations of our public schools provide a major draw to potential employees and employers.

MONROE COUNTY School Boards Association

220 Idlewood Road, Rochester, NY 14618
(585) 328-1972 www.mcsba.org

June 2009



Why aren't schools accountable?

Public schools accountability is unmatched by any other level of government.

Suburban school districts are governed by elected non-partisan volunteers who are the only governmental leaders required to be trained in their fiscal oversight responsibilities.

Suburban school budgets are the only governmental budgets voted on annually. Construction projects and use of reserve funds must also have public approval.

Most school districts involve community members in budget development.

Most local school budgets pass with high pluralities, validating our processes and programs.

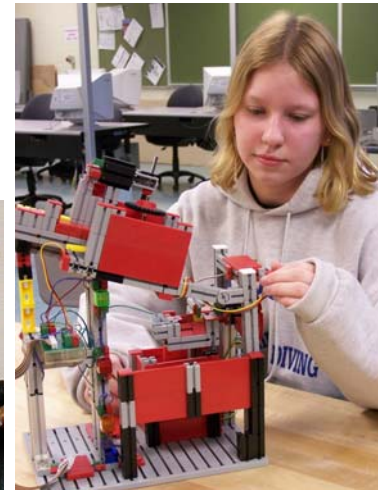
No other level of government works with such stringent oversight or expensive obligations based on 16 volumes of NYS Education laws, State Education Department regulations, and demanding and expensive Federal requirements.

Public schools in our area are ranked 6th in the nation by *Expansion Management* magazine, a resource for executives.

SOURCE: Gary McLendon. "Magazine ranks local schools No. 6 in U.S." *Democrat & Chronicle*. January 15, 2008

Why don't schools save more \$?

Monroe County school districts have a long history of collaboration to provide the best programs possible for the least cost.



Much of district spending is mandated by state and federal law. Districts continually seek ways to be more cost effective.

Cost-containing collaborations include a health care consortium, energy conservation projects, transportation routing, academic programs, collective bidding and purchasing, and more.

"The Best for Less: Cost-Saving Strategies and Shared Services in Monroe County School Districts" can be accessed at www.MCSBA.org.

Our county's public school districts are required by law to provide transportation, special education services, health services, textbooks, library books, student computers and software to more than 10,000 students attending private, parochial, and charter schools.

Because our districts are responsibly governed, they all have A bond ratings from Moody's that save \$100,000s in interest costs when districts borrow money for needed capital projects.

FACT: Budget increases are caused by state and federal mandates and by community needs. Every line in a school budget is supported by a law or constituency.

FACT: Communities differ in what they expect of their schools. They elect school board candidates who share their priorities.

FACT: Communities vote for or against the spending plans proposed by their districts. Residents can limit spending increases.

FACT: School districts maintain lower ratios of administrators to staff than do private businesses.

Why don't schools run like business?

Businesses can respond to the market by changing their purpose and activities. Public schools have one unchanging purpose – they must educate every child who comes to them, regardless of the child's neediness.

School districts are public employers; their unionized employees are protected by state law.

- * Any changes in working conditions or benefits must be negotiated
- * Contract provisions continue until the approval of the next contract.



Didn't districts get more aid?

If the federal stimulus money had not been provided, districts would have experienced a substantial cut in state aid. The federal infusion protected districts from cuts.

The additional federal aid in large part is available only for specific programs to increase help for students with special needs and to create jobs.

In spite of not receiving additional aid to cover increasing expenses, local districts have made a concerted effort to control costs by collaboration with other districts and by initiating cost cutting measures which, as much as possible, do not weaken programs and services to students.



Why are superintendents paid so much?

Market forces affect superintendent salaries.

There is a small pool of people both willing and qualified to take these jobs. Superintendents are highly educated and certified leaders who function as a CEO and who must deal with ever-changing laws. In addition, they must be available 24/7 to deal with district issues.

Their salaries are lower than CEO salaries in any company with comparable budgets, or in major non-profit organizations. While most local non-profits have budgets much lower than the average school district and employ far fewer people, in many cases their leader's salaries are much higher than those of superintendents. *

* *Rochester Business Journal* review of local non-profits: December 21, 2007, page 7; and December 28, 2007, page 7.



Why not cut #s of administrators?

In recent years a flood of new laws has mandated new public school programs. Each new requirement brings complex regulations and time-consuming reports which increase the workload of administrators.

2007-08 – Limitations on use of new state aid with complex planning and reporting (Contracts for Excellence)

2007-08 – Identifying and delivering needed services for all special education children attending private schools within a district's boundaries (IDEA)

2006-07 - Health and Wellness Committees (School Lunch Program); annual tests for all students grades 3- 8 (NCLB)

2005-06 - Highly Qualified Teachers required in core subject areas (NCLB)

2004-05 - Mandatory fiscal oversight training for school board members, creation of audit committees, new auditing procedures, and periodic Comptroller audits (NYS)

2002-03 – New accountability measures and hiring rules; sanctions for not making adequate yearly progress (NCLB)

2002-03 – Purchase of defibrillators and staff training in their use (NYS)

2001-02 - Redesign of school safety and security plans; mandated response activities in districts; mandated increase in pension fund contribution from 0% to 12% (NYS)

2000-01 - Development, annual review, and dissemination of Codes of Conduct; collaboration with emergency responders on crisis response plans including lock-downs and evacuations; and employee fingerprinting (NYS)

