



# Your Schools



Budget Edition

[www.niskayunaschools.org](http://www.niskayunaschools.org)

May 2013

► Vote: Tuesday, May 21, 7 a.m. to 9 p.m., Niskayuna High School

## Proposed \$76.3 million school budget heads to voters

Spending plan requires 60 percent voter support to pass

On Tuesday, May 21, voters will decide on a \$76.3 million budget proposed for the 2013-14 school year in Niskayuna that increases spending by 1.31 percent. Voters will also choose from among seven candidates for three seats on the Board of Education.

The spending plan will require the support of 60 percent of voters to pass because it calls for a tax levy that is greater than the district's calculated limit under the state's tax levy cap law. The proposed tax levy represents a 5.76 percent increase from the current year, and is about \$560,000 higher than the district's limit for a simple majority vote under the law.

The proposed budget maintains the overwhelming majority of current programs and services in a year when district leaders contended with rising costs and the loss of non-tax revenue. Reserve funds are limited, and state aid is set to decrease for a fourth consecutive year to a level that is about \$2 million less than in 2009-10.

Officials made about \$2.5 million in spending reductions across most areas of the district, which resulted in the year-to-year spending increase of 1.31 percent. Still, given the loss of other revenue, a tax levy increase of 5.76 percent was needed to balance the budget without further cuts.

"Our fiscal challenges continue to be rooted in diminished state aid year after year," Superintendent Susan Kay Salvaggio said. "Given this fact, developing a budget for next year required a mix of difficult decisions. We worked to contain costs and balance the tax levy increase with reductions — always keeping in mind the community's desire to maintain the quality of our schools."

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**LEARN** ► Budget Hearing (Presentation and Q&A)  
Tuesday, May 7, 7 p.m., Van Antwerp Middle School Auditorium

**MORE** ► Meet the Board of Education Candidates Night  
Thursday, May 9, 7 p.m., Van Antwerp Middle School Auditorium

### Budget at-a-glance

**Budget total**  
**\$76,329,401**

**Spending increase (%)**  
**\$988,004 (+1.31%)**

**Tax levy increase (%)**  
**\$2,935,542 (+5.76%)**

**Tax bill increase estimate**  
**\$250,000 home - Niskayuna**  
**\$276 (See page 5 for each town)**



Focus on the future

## High-tech initiative gains STEAM

This year, the innovations of Niskayuna students have included a smart football helmet that can sense head injuries, GPS-enabled headsets that can help the blind, and thermochromatic volleyball boundaries that can tell if a ball is in or out.

These projects earned middle and high school students recognition in state and national contests.

This work was part of a district initiative in the areas of Science, Technology, Engineering and Math — known as STEAM. Given the creative and visual nature of these fields, leaders are working to incorporate the Art program into the initiative and put the "A" in STEAM.

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## Exceeding the 'tax levy limit' preserves programs and opportunities for students

'Tax cap' law prescribes a formula, different budget vote rules

It would have taken an 11.8 percent tax levy increase to close a budget gap initially estimated at \$6 million without any spending reductions. School leaders never considered this approach.

Instead, they made about \$2.5 million in reductions to arrive at a balanced budget for next year that calls for a tax levy increase of 5.76 percent. The budget will require the support of a

< CONTINUED ON PAGE 3 >

### MAINTAINING THE NISKAYUNA STUDENT EXPERIENCE

As part of their budget decisions, district leaders decided to maintain:

- All eight schools
- Full-day kindergarten
- Sixth grade foreign language
- Dedicated science lab time
- Student clubs
- Modified sports

## A CLOSER LOOK AT THE \$6 MILLION BUDGET GAP

At the start of the budget process, the district faced a \$6 million gap between available revenue and the expenditures that would be needed to fund all current programs next year. This gap was not the result of a single, one-time spike in expenses or the sudden loss of revenue. It was the result of a variety of budget trends that have been mounting in recent years.

These trends include declining state aid, which is not allowing the district to keep pace with rising costs. Operating aid to Niskayuna has decreased nearly 23 percent since 2008-09. In that time, the district has relied heavily on reserves. This has helped maintain programs, but also results in budget gaps when reserves are not available for continued use at the same level. Meanwhile, the district's required state pension contributions have increased by double-digit percentages. The rise in pension costs alone would require a 2.5 percent tax levy increase in 2013-14.

## As state aid losses persist, district focuses on containing costs and community advocacy

**Gap Elimination Adjustment.** Those three words will show up on the district's state aid report for a fourth consecutive year in 2013-14. What do they mean? The GEA, as it is called, is an amount of each district's promised state aid that has been withheld to help the state address its own budget challenges since 2010-11.

The district faces a GEA of \$3,018,925 next year. The district's cumulative, four year total for aid that has been withheld through the GEA is \$13,026,692.

In that time, school leaders have identified efficiencies, reached staff concessions, used reserves, reconfigured programs, refinanced debt, and established partnerships to save programs.

Recognizing that these efforts alone will not be enough as long as the GEA continues, Niskayuna leaders and community members participated in an unprecedented regional advocacy campaign this year that called on elected officials to provide adequate school funding. Superintendent Salvaggio said she believes the community's efforts helped emphasize the need for adequate funding for education, while providing some state aid restoration for the district in the final state budget.

"I want to thank everyone who worked so hard on behalf of our children," Salvaggio said. "Advocacy will continue to be important. We'll keep working to contain costs and preserve student opportunities, and we hope our community keeps working to advocate for our schools. We will continue to face difficult budget decisions until funding for education becomes a state priority."



First Day of Kindergarten: Getting settled in at Hillside, September 2012.

## < FROM PAGE 1: BUDGET VOTE IS MAY 21 >

The Board of Education developed the budget proposal over the course of 12 public meetings, including three community forums. In addition to the tax levy increase, the Board balanced the budget in the following ways:

**Find the complete list of budget reductions online**

A complete archive of budget information is also available at [www.niskayunaschools.org](http://www.niskayunaschools.org).

### Operational Efficiencies and Cost Containment (\$623,876)

Examples: Bus garage purchase to save on lease costs, modified custodial and groundskeeping schedules.

### Aligning staffing to enrollment (\$316,745)

Staffing levels were adjusted based on enrollment at the elementary and middle school levels. At the elementary level, class sizes will continue to be monitored and, where necessary, controlled through the district's Class Size Management Plan. High school staffing levels were adjusted based on course requests. Average class sizes at all levels will remain similar to the current year.

### Program Reductions (\$630,350)

These account for about one-fourth of total reductions. See below for details.

### Administrative Reductions (\$955,450)

This includes an increase in the teaching assignments of academic directors to 40 percent of a full-time teaching assignment, as well as the difference in salary between retiring teachers and teachers who are newly-hired.

### State aid and appropriated fund balance

Although total state funding for the district is decreasing from this year to next, the final state budget included \$196,000 more for Niskayuna than the district's earlier projections, which helped balance the budget.

Additionally, an adjustment to the district's plans for appropriated fund balance helped close the gap. The district sets aside a certain amount each year to maintain cash flow and to help balance the following year's budget. The \$2.5 million officials initially planned to incorporate for these purposes into next year's budget was lowered by \$710,000. Although this potentially limits the amount available for 2014-15, district leaders continue to actively pursue revenue options that could result in the availability of the full \$2.5 million.

### How will the program reductions impact students?

- At the High School level, a small number of electives may not be offered, or may be offered on an alternating year basis.
- The sizes of some instrumental and vocal music lesson groups will increase.
- Freshman athletics, which typically has about 125 participants on eight teams, will be eliminated. The remaining levels of modified, junior varsity, and varsity will continue to provide about 1,600 spots on teams to students in grades 7-12.
- The Explorers Elementary Enrichment program will be eliminated.

### Staffing impact of budget decisions

The equivalent of 8 full-time support staff positions and 13.83 teaching positions will be eliminated. Actual layoffs will be lower than these figures due to attrition through retirements and resignations.

## &lt; FROM PAGE 1: THE 'TAX CAP' AND THE BUDGET VOTE &gt;

supermajority of voters on May 21 to pass because it contains a tax levy that is greater than the district's calculated limit under the state's tax levy cap law.

The tax levy cap law does not limit taxes to "2 percent" as it has often been promoted. Instead, it requires every district to calculate a figure that serves as a threshold for whether the support of a simple majority or a supermajority of voters is needed for budget passage. A budget with a tax levy at or below the threshold requires a simple majority, and a budget with a tax levy above the threshold requires a supermajority.

For Niskayuna next year, this threshold represented a 4.66 percent tax levy increase. The tax levy in the proposed budget is about \$560,000 higher than this limit for a simple majority vote.

As part of the budget process, the Board of Education reviewed potential reductions that would have resulted in a tax levy at or below the 4.66 percent threshold. These cuts included closing a school, returning to half-day kindergarten, reducing dedicated science lab time, and eliminating sixth grade foreign language and modified sports. School leaders ultimately decided to maintain these in the budget.

"We listened closely to the community and heard a strong desire to maintain the quality of our schools," Superintendent Susan Kay Salvaggio said. "This budget sustains many of the attributes that we have come know and value as part of a Niskayuna education."

### What's at stake? Impact of a defeated budget Tax cap law changed contingency budget rules

Under New York State law, if the proposed budget falls short of the required support of 60 percent of voters, the district can hold another budget vote in June on either the same budget or a revised budget.

If a second vote is necessary and officials want the proposal to require a simple majority for passage, at least \$560,000 in reductions from the current budget proposal would be required. In this scenario, district leaders said that budget items that were discussed for reduction but ultimately maintained would have to be considered again — including closing a school, half-day kindergarten, and eliminating sixth grade foreign language.

If a second budget vote is not successful, a district must adopt a contingency budget. The tax cap law has changed the impact of a contingency budget from a cap on spending (pegged to inflation) to a zero percent cap on the tax levy.

This would require about \$2.94 million in reductions beyond those that have already been put in place for next year.

### How does the tax levy cap work?

The state requires each district to use a complex formula to determine their "tax levy limit." Districts then add exclusions set forth in the law to this limit to determine their "maximum allowable tax levy for a simple majority vote." If a proposed tax levy is greater than this number, the support of a supermajority of voters is required.

### New ballot language

The law stipulates specific ballot language for districts exceeding their tax levy limit. See page 8.

## Niskayuna BY THE NUMBERS

**# 1** Niskayuna's ranking out of 84 districts in the Capital Region, according to the Fall 2012 "Upstate Schools Report" from Buffalo Business First.

## What does the budget fund? A Niskayuna education.

Every year, the Niskayuna school budget funds core programs, necessary and mandated services, and a wide array of programs designed to help students meet their potential and have a well-rounded educational experience. The proposed budget supports:

- Elementary class sizes that, on average, will stay the same as the current year and will be within the district's guidelines;
- A wide variety of high school electives, including Advanced Placement Courses (15) and honors courses (44);
- A foreign language program that begins in sixth grade and features multiple levels of four languages;
- Music ensembles (choral, band, and orchestra) at the elementary, middle and high school levels;
- Athletic opportunities for students in grades 7-12;
- A comprehensive visual arts program taught by certified art teachers beginning in kindergarten;
- A high school counseling center that assists students and families through the college process;
- Academic support services and extra help for students; and
- A comprehensive special education program that meets students' academic, social, and emotional needs.

## All schools remain open in proposed budget; Committee to study future facilities options

School officials looked at a broad range of options as they worked to balance the budget for next year. This included the possibility of closing either an elementary or a middle school.

The Board of Education ultimately decided against closing a school in this budget proposal. Instead, the board agreed to appoint an advisory committee, comprised of a cross-section of the community, to study enrollment, demographics, facilities, and other issues for future consideration. The district is also conducting a comprehensive census to aid in its future planning.

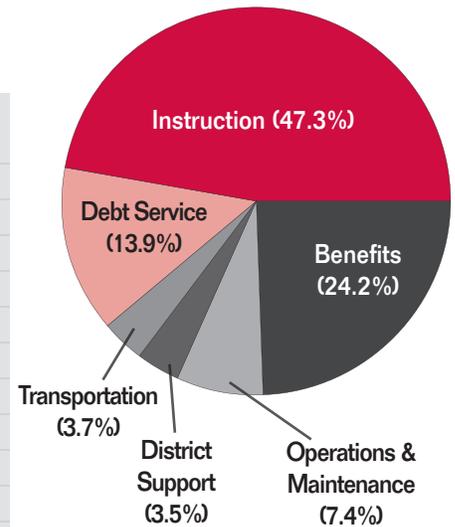
"The work of this committee is very important to the district," Board of Education President Deborah Oriola said. "We know that our financial challenges are here for the foreseeable future. The most judicious way to move forward at this moment is with a serious study of this issue from all angles, done in partnership with our community."

## Expenditure summary

	2012-13 budget	2013-14 proposed	Percent change
<b>Instruction and support</b>			
Teaching	\$21,257,853	\$21,223,524	
Teaching (spec. ed.)	\$6,974,095	\$7,169,048	
Teaching (occupational ed.)	\$405,000	\$405,000	
Teaching (summer, cont. ed.)	\$135,670	\$136,236	
Supervision	\$2,456,603	\$2,390,355	
Library Media Services	\$942,179	\$843,672	
Computer Services	\$1,424,675	\$1,363,569	
Guidance Services	\$1,025,919	\$969,151	
Health Services	\$536,197	\$510,760	
Psychology/Social Worker Services	\$669,157	\$530,808	
Athletics	\$564,269	\$548,716	
Census/Civic Activity	—	—	
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$36,391,617</b>	<b>\$36,090,839</b>	<b>-0.83%</b>
<b>Debt, fringe benefits and transfers</b>			
Employee Benefits	\$17,086,459	\$18,440,747	
Debt Service	\$10,325,397	\$10,504,159	
Transfers	\$110,000	\$100,000	
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$27,521,856</b>	<b>\$29,044,906</b>	<b>5.53%</b>
<b>Operations and Maintenance</b>			
Personnel	\$2,652,162	\$2,492,567	
Equipment	\$15,292	\$15,292	
Contractual Expenses/Assessments	\$2,638,185	\$2,718,185	
Materials and Supplies	\$422,240	\$422,240	
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$5,727,879</b>	<b>\$5,648,284</b>	<b>-1.39%</b>
<b>Transportation</b>			
Personnel	\$1,833,964	\$1,896,048	
Equipment	—	—	
Contractual Expenses	\$768,990	\$438,990	
Materials and Supplies (including fuel)	\$475,653	\$505,653	
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$3,078,607</b>	<b>\$2,840,691</b>	<b>-7.73%</b>
<b>District Support</b>			
Board of Education/District Meetings	\$28,300	\$28,300	
Central Administration	\$515,773	\$530,142	
Finance/Business Office	\$632,339	\$646,500	
Legal Services	\$90,000	\$125,000	
Public Info., Printing, Data Processing	\$647,391	\$613,104	
Insurance/Claims/Appraisal	\$297,635	\$341,635	
BOCES Admin. and Rent	\$410,000	\$420,000	
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$2,621,438</b>	<b>\$2,704,681</b>	<b>3.18%</b>
<b>Total expenditures</b>	<b>\$75,341,397</b>	<b>\$76,329,401</b>	<b>1.31%</b>

Copies of the complete budget are available at district and school offices and online at [www.niskayunaschools.org](http://www.niskayunaschools.org)

## Breakdown of expenditures



## Three-Part Budget Summary

New York State requires districts to present their proposed budgets in three categories: program, capital, and administrative.

Program	Amount	% of budget
2012-13:	\$50,496,106	67.0%
2013-14:	\$51,634,616	67.6%

Includes: salaries and benefits of teachers, guidance counselors, aides, nurses, etc.; teaching supplies, equipment and textbooks; library and instructional computer funds; athletics expenses and transportation costs (except bus purchases).

Capital	Amount	% of budget
2012-13:	\$17,610,861	23.4%
2013-14:	\$17,541,774	23.0%

Includes: debt service on buildings; bus purchases, tax certiorari and court-ordered costs; custodial costs including salaries and benefits of maintenance workers; and all facilities costs, including supplies, utilities, repairs and renovations.

Administrative	Amount	% of budget
2012-13:	\$7,234,430	9.6%
2013-14:	\$7,153,011	9.4%

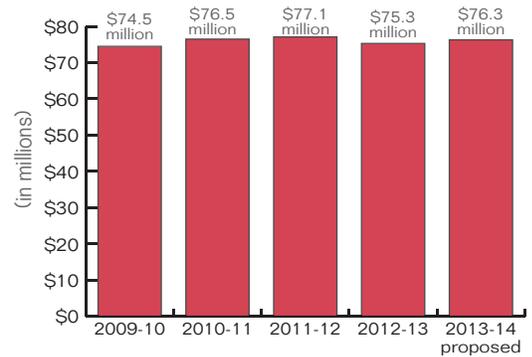
Includes: salaries and benefits of administrators who spend most of their time performing supervisory duties; insurance costs; legal expenses; public information; and Board of Education expenses.

# Revenue summary

Revenue	2012-13 budget	2013-14 proposed	Difference
Property Taxes	\$50,964,276	\$53,899,818	\$2,935,542
State Aid/BOCES Aid	\$17,622,303	\$17,480,988	-\$141,315
Payment in Lieu of Taxes	\$1,164,859	\$1,182,895	\$18,036
Use of Money, Property & Services	\$609,700	\$464,700	-\$145,000
Other Sources/Federal Jobs Fund	\$1,126,000	\$501,000	-\$625,000
Appropriated Fund Balance	\$3,854,259	\$2,800,000	-\$1,054,259
<b>Total revenues</b>	<b>\$75,341,397</b>	<b>\$76,329,401</b>	<b>\$988,004</b>

▶ Increase of 1.31%

## FIVE YEAR TREND - BUDGET TOTALS



Total spending in the proposed budget is less than in 2010-11 and 2011-12. The average annual spending increase over the past five years is 0.62 percent.

## Estimated tax bill increases by town based on the proposed budget

For a home in each town with a \$250,000 fair market value — prior to any STAR exemption

Town	Fair Market Value	Equalization Rate	Assessed Value	Projected Tax Rate (per \$1,000 Assessed Value)	Total Tax Bill	Tax Bill Increase	
						Per Year	Per Month
Niskayuna	\$250,000	1.0756	\$268,900	\$18.8450	\$5,067.42	\$276.00	\$23.00
Clifton Park	\$250,000	0.5800	\$145,000	\$34.9931	\$5,074.00	\$276.34	\$23.03
Colonie	\$250,000	0.6975	\$174,375	\$29.5693	\$5,156.15	\$280.82	\$23.40
Glenville	\$250,000	0.9200	\$230,000	\$21.9085	\$5,038.96	\$274.44	\$22.87

The estimates above are based on a tax levy increase of 5.76 percent and preliminary information about equalization rates from each of the town's assessors.

**Why use fair market values?** Using fair market values allows for the comparison of similar properties across the four towns. Since assessment levels vary by municipality, the state assigns each town an equalization rate in an effort to fairly apportion the total tax levy among them. The equalization rates indicate the percentage of fair market value represented by assessment levels in each town.

Please note: Equalization rates apply to an entire town; When applied to an individual property's assessed value, the resulting value may approximate a property's actual value on the market, but it is not necessarily an indicator of that.

## The difference between tax levy and tax rate

The tax levy is the total amount of money the school district raises in property taxes from among the four towns within its boundaries. Actual tax rates are dependent on several factors that can vary among the district's towns, including assessment practices and equalization rates.

Tax rates are not set until August — after the state certifies assessment rolls for each of the towns in the district. Tax bills are sent out in September after this process has concluded.

The school district has no control over assessment practices — and does not collect more in taxes than the amount it levies. While the tax levy is increasing by 5.76 percent, individual property owners may experience a change in their tax bill that is greater or less than that amount. When this happens, it is the result of differences in assessment practices between towns and/or the impact of exemptions on the total tax bill.

## A note about reserves

### District restoring fund balance

School districts generally maintain two types of reserves: those that are restricted for certain expenses (i.e., debt service) and those that are unrestricted, also known as fund balance.

Each year, the district budgets for a certain amount of "appropriated" fund balance to maintain cash flow and help balance the budget. Separately, it maintains an undesignated fund balance. When available, this can be used the same way a family might use a savings account — to meet unforeseen needs, fund one-time expenses, or to help navigate times of financial difficulty or a sudden loss of income (revenue).

For example, in 2010-11, the district experienced the need for two emergency capital projects and a sudden loss of revenue when the state held back federal Medicaid reimbursements to help deal with its own budget challenges. As a result, the district ended that year with a fund balance of -\$1.5 million. At that time, the district immediately began the process of restoring undesignated fund balance.

Through conservative planning and cost control measures, it expects to end this year with \$800,000. Rather than counting on this money for 2013-14, officials hope to build fund balance from there — strengthening the district's fiscal position for future years of budget challenges.

## Voters to consider seven candidates for three seats on the Board of Education

All candidates run at-large. The three candidates who receive the highest number of votes will each be elected to a three-year term beginning July 1, 2013, and expiring June 30, 2016. The **Meet the Candidates Night** will be held on Thursday, May 9, at 7 p.m. in the Van Antwerp Middle School Auditorium.

**Debbie Gordon**, of 509 Windsor Court, is seeking a third term on the board. She is currently the Board's vice president and serves on the Health Advisory Committee, the Safety Committee, the Drug, Alcohol and Social Media Committee, and is the Board of Education's liaison for Niskayuna High School.



She was previously PTO Council co-president for the Niskayuna Central School District and served on Craig School's PTO as co-president (2003-2005) and corresponding secretary (2005-2006). Gordon's community involvement includes acting as co-chair for the Schenectady Hospice Gala (2003-2005, 2012-present) and as a member of the Board of Directors of Temple Gates of Heaven (2004-2007). She was previously a co-president of the Schenectady Jewish Community Center PTO. Gordon was the treasurer of the Medical Alliance of Schenectady from 2002-2012 and has served as treasurer for several Niskayuna Youth Sports teams. She is currently on the American Cancer Society Golf Classic Committee.

Gordon graduated from the State University of New York at Binghamton with a bachelor's degree in psychology, and earned a master's degree in social work from Syracuse University. Gordon is a certified social worker who worked as a rape crisis counselor in Syracuse from 1993-1995.

Gordon and her husband, Brian, have lived in Niskayuna for the past 14 years. Their two children, Aaron, an eleventh grade student, and Stacy, a tenth grade student, attend Niskayuna High School.

**David Hudson**, of 2198 Story Avenue, is seeking a fifth term on the board. He is a member of the board's policy subcommittee, and has served on district committees for Safe Schools, Elementary Class Size, Capital Improvement Building Project, Full-Day Kindergarten, Drugs, Alcohol and Social Media, and the Educational Enrichment Fund.



Hudson is the board's voting delegate to the New York State School Boards Association and also serves as secretary for the Capital District School Boards Association. He received the Board Excellence Award in 2012 from the New York State School Boards Association. A past president of the Niskayuna Board of Education, Hudson currently serves as board liaison to Hillside Elementary School, Van Antwerp Middle School and the High School. He also serves as liaison to the special education support group, Nisky C.A.R.E.S.

Hudson is employed at Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute as a senior network system programmer, supporting several network protocol services. A SUNY graduate, Mr. Hudson studied music and industrial audiology. A lifelong resident and graduate of Niskayuna Schools, Hudson and his wife, Trudy, have two children, Amy and Peter, who also graduated from Niskayuna Schools.

**Patricia Lanotte**, of 842 Worcester Drive, is seeking a first term on the board. Lanotte is an assistant controller and finance simplification leader at GE Global Research. At GE, she is responsible for regulatory compliance and government property reporting. In addition, she focuses on eliminating redundancy and non-value added work across global sites. Patricia has 15 years of experience in budgeting, forecasting, and financial planning and analysis, in both the public and private sector.



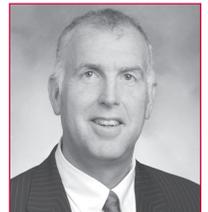
Prior to joining GE, Lanotte spent several years evaluating curriculum and scheduling courses for the University in the High School Program at the University at Albany.

She has a bachelor's degree in accounting from Siena College and is a graduate of the United States Army Defense Language Institute Russian Language Program.

Lanotte is currently the treasurer of the Rosendale Elementary School PTO and a member of the school's Shared Decision Making Committee, positions she has held since 2011. In 2012, she was leader of the Rosendale Fourth Grade Math Club.

Lanotte has been a district resident for 17 years. She and her husband, Mike, have two children: Anthony, a sophomore at Niskayuna High School; and Lauren, a fourth grade student at Rosendale.

**Kevin Laurilliard**, of 83 Ash Tree Lane, is seeking a first term on the board. Laurilliard is an attorney and shareholder with McNamee, Lochner, Titus & Williams P.C., whose law practice focuses primarily on commercial litigation and construction law.



He has bachelor's degrees in both English and psychology from the State University at Albany, and a juris doctor from Albany Law School at Union College.

He is a member of the Niskayuna Reformed Church and a board member of the Schenectady YMCA. Laurilliard is member of the Booster Club and Friends of Music. He is a coach with the Niskayuna Girls Basketball Association and was an assistant coach with the Niskayuna Boys Basketball Association. He is a former adjunct business law professor at Sage Colleges for undergraduate and graduate programs

Laurilliard has been a district resident for 16 years. He and his wife, Susan Quine Laurilliard, have three children: Emily, a Niskayuna High School graduate; Daniel, a 9th-grade student at Niskayuna High School; and Julia, a 6th-grade student at Iroquois.

**Matt Petrangelo**, of 2216 Story Avenue, is seeking a first term on the board. Petrangelo is a project manager with BCI Construction Inc., overseeing all phases



**Niskayuna** BY THE NUMBERS  
**26** Niskayuna's varsity teams that earned New York State Scholar Athlete Team recognition in 2011-12 for having a grade point average of 90 or above.

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## Does the budget include employee concessions and administration reductions? Yes and Yes.

The district will save \$158,000 next year as the result of a teacher furlough day based upon a concession agreement reached in 2012. Also, \$93,000 will be saved as the result of increasing the teaching assignments of the district's K-12 academic directors.

## Enrichment Fund moving forward

This year, the Board of Education worked in partnership with the Niskayuna Community Foundation to create an Education Enrichment Fund. The goal of the fund is to create, preserve, and enhance programs and opportunities for district students through tax-deductible contributions. Watch our website for information about the fund's development.

## < FROM PAGE 1: STEAM INITIATIVE >

Over the last couple of years, the district has been strengthening and introducing new pre-engineering courses, establishing new partnerships in the region, providing teacher training, and seeking opportunities for students to connect their classroom work to real-world applications. Partners in this effort include GE Global Research, RPI, and Schenectady County Community College.

"We want students at all levels to have access to hands-on experiences and exposure in the broad range of STEAM fields, and we are in the perfect region to make this happen," said Dr. Deborah Shea, assistant superintendent for instruction. "This will help them take advantage of future opportunities — and not just in math and science. No matter what fields students are interested in, learning how to be part of a team, seeing a project through from conception to completion, and communicating complex information are important skills."

The STEAM initiative includes: high school nanoscience and robotics courses; middle school visits to Global Foundries and the College of Nanoscale Science and Engineering; the summer Engineering Institute for Young Women; and the outdoor classroom at Niskayuna High School.

High School and Middle School Engineering Technology teacher Carl DeCesare said that the district's entries into the state and national innovation contests show that students thrive when they are making connections between the classroom and the world they live in.

"We want them to see that math, science, and technology ultimately make a difference in people's lives," he said. "We also want to encourage all students to take risks — I've found that when you do that, students always deliver."

Visit [www.niskayunaschools.org/STEAM](http://www.niskayunaschools.org/STEAM):

- A comprehensive list of initiatives
- Article & photos: Niskayuna HS Robotics Team engineering a bright future

## < FROM PREVIOUS PAGE: BOARD OF EDUCATION CANDIDATE PROFILES >

of construction, including coordination of workers, subcontractors, and equipment. In this role, he ensures that specifications are followed and that work proceeds on schedule and within budget.

A graduate of West Genesee High School in Camillus, N.Y., Petrangelo has a bachelor's degree in civil engineering technology from the Rochester Institute of Technology. He is a member of the Upstate New York Chapter of the U.S. Green Building Council.

Petrangelo has been a district resident for two years. He and his wife, Ellen, have two children: Alex, a kindergarten student at Hillside; and Ian, who is 4 years old.

**Jeanne Sosnow**, of 37 Dublin Drive is seeking a fourth term on the board.



Sosnow, who holds a B.S. degree in business administration from Bucknell University, is president of the Capital District School Boards Association, and is a delegate to the Federal Relations Conference in Washington, D.C. She has received the Board Mastery Award from the New York State School Boards Association (NYSSBA).

Prior to being elected to the Board, Sosnow served as both president and treasurer of the Niskayuna PTO Council. She was also president of Birchwood and Niskayuna High School PTOs and was a member of the Iroquois Middle School Shared Decision

Making Team. She has worked as a teaching assistant at Iroquois.

Sosnow served as president of the Board from 2009-2012. She works on numerous committees including the Policy Committee and the Audit Committee, of which she is chair. She participates annually in NYSSBA's advocacy conference in Albany. She remains active in N-CAP and community coalition activities.

Sosnow and her husband, Peter, have lived in Niskayuna for 23 years, and their three daughters graduated from Niskayuna High School.

### Joshua Vinciguerra,

of 889 Heather Lane, is seeking a first term on the board. He is an assistant attorney general in the Criminal Prosecutions Bureau of the New York State Attorney General's Office. In this role, he investigates and prosecutes a variety of crimes, including mortgage fraud, investment scams, and other white collar crimes, as well as human trafficking, in consultation with state and federal law enforcement agencies.



Vinciguerra has a bachelor's degree in government from Cornell University and a juris doctor from Albany Law School. He is a Shaker High School graduate.

Vinciguerra is a firefighter with the Stanford Heights Fire Department, a Niskayuna Lacrosse Club coach, and a member of the Albany Law School National Alumni Association Board of Directors. He was vice president of the St. Helen's School PTO in 2010-11.

Vinciguerra has been a district resident for 5 years. He and his wife, Maggie, have two children: Anna, a second grade student at Hillside; and Elizabeth, who is 4 years old.

## Niskayuna BY THE NUMBERS

**1,850+** Students in grades 4-12 who participate in at least one of the district's performing music ensembles.

## Niskayuna BY THE NUMBERS

**1,925+** Students in grades K-12 with art work displayed in exhibits at the District Office, Nisk-Art Gallery, or town hall for 2012-13



## Board of Education

Deborah Oriola, *President*  
 Debra Gordon, *Vice President*  
 John Buhrmaster  
 David Hudson  
 Barbara Mauro  
 Jeanne Sosnow  
 Robert Winchester

Susan Kay Salvaggio  
*Superintendent of Schools*

Dr. Deborah Shea,  
*Assistant Superintendent for  
 Educational Programs & Instruction*

Matt Bourgeois,  
*Assistant Superintendent for Business*

Matt Leon, *Your Schools Editor*  
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 BOCES Communications Service*

## YOUR OPINION MATTERS

The district invites voters to complete a voluntary and anonymous exit survey after casting ballots on May 21.

Your participation helps the district gather feedback and will help inform future budget decisions.

**Niskayuna** CENTRAL SCHOOL DISTRICT  
 1239 Van Antwerp Road, Niskayuna, NY 12309-5317  
[www.niskayunaschools.org](http://www.niskayunaschools.org)

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## VOTER & ABSENTEE BALLOT INFORMATION

### May 21 Polling Hours, Location & Parking

**Polling hours:** 7 a.m. to 9 p.m.

**Location:** Niskayuna High School Orchestra Room (use the entrance on the Balltown Road side of the school and follow signs).

**Parking:** Use the Balltown Road entrance to the High School. Parking will be reserved in the lot adjacent to the campus entrance.

### Who is eligible to vote?

You do not need to be registered to vote on May 21. You must be a U.S. citizen, 18 years or older, and a district resident for at least 30 days prior to the vote. Although no pre-registration is required, personal identification will be requested at the polls. Questions? Call the district clerk at 377-4666, ext. 50712.

### Absentee ballots

Absentee ballots are available at the District Office and will be issued upon request to residents who will be out of town or unable to vote at the polls due to illness or disability. Absentee ballots must be requested by May 14 if the ballot is to be mailed to the voter. Absentee ballots requested in person will be provided through 4 p.m. on May 20. All completed ballots must be received at the District Office by 4 p.m. on May 21. Call the district clerk at 377-4666, ext. 50712 for more information.

## Niskayuna BY THE NUMBERS

**95%** The percentage of the members of the Class of 2012 that planned to attend a 2- or 4-year college or university.

### New ballot language

Voters will notice some new, legally-required language on the ballot this year because the district is proposing to exceed its calculated limit under the state's tax levy cap law. An explanation of the law and its implications for the district's 2013-14 budget begins on page 1 of this newsletter. The ballot will state:

*Adoption of this budget will require a tax levy increase of 5.76 percent, which exceeds the statutory tax levy increase limit of 4.66 percent for this school fiscal year and therefore exceeds the state tax cap and must be approved by sixty percent of the qualified voters present and voting.*

### Budget brochure coming

The required budget notice will be included in a budget brochure mailed to all residents the week prior to the vote.

### More Budget Questions?

Contact Superintendent Susan Kay Salvaggio by e-mail or phone at [ssalvaggio@niskayschools.org](mailto:ssalvaggio@niskayschools.org) or 377-4666, ext. 50706. Detailed budget information is online at [www.niskayunaschools.org](http://www.niskayunaschools.org).