



SCARSDALE  
PUBLIC SCHOOLS

## 'Dale Dispatch: District e-Newsletter

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From Dr. Thomas Hagerman

Superintendent of Schools



### On School Budgeting, 2019

At Scarsdale, the budgeting process is a community endeavor. Certainly, the Superintendent and School Board set parameters that frame the school budget development process. However, each year that I have been here, the community has helped to shape and realign the timeline, contents, and process.

While there are many approaches to developing a school district's budget, Scarsdale uses a school site-based budgeting process. This involves actively soliciting feedback on building needs and invites a grassroots approach, which in turn facilitates "buy-in" of both the process and the eventual outcomes. It also advances the interests of students and educational program needs and assures a high level of accountability, not only in the development stages but also with monitoring as the budget plan becomes operational.

At its core, the school budget serves as the financial expression of the educational philosophy of the Scarsdale School District and the Board of Education. It is viewed as the most important and fundamental responsibility of financial management. The school budget seeks to obtain the greatest results with the resources that the community makes available for the educational program it aspires to support. Budget development in Scarsdale is an integral part of program planning. The annual

operating budget must effectively express and allow for the implementation of programs and activities that are aligned with District priorities and School Board goals and objectives.

There are five major constituency groups that school administrators and school boards must always connect with, but particularly during the budget process: students, parents, taxpayers, faculty, and staff. Each of these groups must necessarily inform the process, if the budget is to be successful, both in its formation and implementation. Our budget presentations have been designed with these key constituents in mind. It is important that each of these groups understand that the budget is influenced by foundational core values and practices, external drivers, and internal initiatives.

In our fiduciary roles as executive administration, we recognize that a strong rationale is a critical component before advancing these items into our budget for further Board and community consideration. Moreover, we have also spent the last few years looking at operational efficiencies, staffing optimization, shared services, cooperative agreements, and technological efficiencies that would allow us to do more with less.

We have also been engaged in long term planning in many areas to ensure a thoughtful and fiscally-responsible approach to this work. However, each year also brings new initiatives that have a budget impact. In some cases, these are known and planned for accordingly. For example, we knew that the security vestibules as part of the last bond referendum would require additional annual budget support for personnel, visitor management systems and the like. Other times, issues that may not have been a priority in the past are catapulted to the forefront. Safety, security, and emergency management, cooling solutions for learning spaces, and District-wide sustainability are a few recent examples. While these issues have risen to a high level of public discourse, the Board of Education and administration have yet to fully explore and analyze the specific cost-to-value relationship. Developing this alignment is another important function of our budgeting work.

We have and continue to encourage the public to be involved in this work. Questions and concerns can be directed to the Board of Education via email ([boardofed@scarsdaleschools.org](mailto:boardofed@scarsdaleschools.org)).

We look forward to hearing from you and partnering with you in this important work.

Warm regards,  
Dr. Thomas Hagerman



## A Reading Life

*By Edgar McIntosh, Assistant Superintendent for Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment, and Co-Director, Center for Innovation*

Before February break, I had the pleasure of visiting a kindergarten classroom during reading time. The students were spread throughout the classroom -- at tables, on the floor, and sprawled across beanbag chairs. Each student was reading their way through their book bags-- clear plastic baggies filled to overflowing with a combination of carefully teacher-matched books and books that students chose themselves based on interest, curiosity, or a friend's recommendation. One was conferring with the teacher, some were quietly rapt, and some were reading softly to themselves, while others were chatting in partnerships about the pictures or story. As you can imagine, it was a happy scene.

It made me think of my own reading life. In my curriculum role, I spend a lot of time reading about the art and science of learning. I find these texts interesting, but don't really think of them as part of

my personal reading life. That life is on my coffee table, in my Kindle, and stacked on my bedside table. Currently, I'm rereading a travel guide from a recent trip to Jaipur and Udaipur; *Sapiens: A Brief History Humankind*; and (on Kindle) a fantasy novel my nephew Simon recommended. I've got a great book of short stories on deck too: *What You Call Winter* by Nalini Jones. Like those kindergarteners, that's the reading I get lost in.

It has been shown that reading for pleasure builds vocabulary and increases comprehension. It doesn't have to be *War and Peace* either. Research tells us that we develop our fluency and comprehension best when the reading level is well within our grasp, and that reading quantity plays a role in that development. Of course, it's also important to do close and careful reading of complex texts, but reading for enjoyment should not be viewed as a guilty pleasure. After all, continued reading for pleasure beyond school has been shown to cultivate civic participation, increase empathy, enhance relationships, deepen our understanding of ourselves, reduce stress, lower the incidence of dementia, and has been tied to higher incomes. (National Reading Campaign, 2014)

And as Dr. Seuss said much more simply: "The more you read, the more things you know. The more that you learn, the more places you'll go."

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## Recruitment Season

*By Drew Patrick, Assistant Superintendent  
for Human Resources and Leadership Development*



Even as we move closer to the selection of a new principal for Fox Meadow, our attention now turns toward the [teaching and leadership vacancies](#) anticipated for the 2019-20 school year. The result of a combination of retirements and proposed additions, recruiting for these positions requires coordination, collaboration, and stamina. As I have noted before, our District has no problem attracting an immense quantity of applicants. Rather, our challenge is to continue to hone and refine our screening, interviewing, and selection processes to ensure that we identify the very best from among those numbers.

So how do we identify quality talent? A framework I have found helpful in organizing the information we uncover during the hiring process was developed in the early 1970's by the [Gallup Organization](#). After engaging in an in-depth examination of the qualities and characteristics of exceptional teachers, Gallup generated what has become one of the most frequently used interview questionnaires, the *Teacher Perceiver Instrument*. While this assessment tool is not something we use in Scarsdale, concepts identified in the underlying research endure, and are useful for understanding what characteristics predict quality teachers and leaders.

The Gallup work organizes twelve themes across three categories--intrapersonal, interpersonal, and extrapersonal. Themes such as *mission*, *investment*, and *focus* characterize the intrapersonal category. A candidate exhibiting strengths in this area demonstrates a belief that all students can learn and grow, sees their professional goal as making meaningful contributions to this growth, and derives satisfaction from this kind of achievement. However, with the increasing emphasis on the importance of collaboration as a vehicle to problem-solving, strengths in the interpersonal domain are also critical. Gallup characterizes the themes of *empathy*, *rapport drive*, and *listening* as critical interpersonal attributes. Thus, we look for evidence of a candidate's ability to accept and incorporate the state of mind of others in their work, and connect with each student on an individual level. Finally, extrapersonal themes such as *innovation*, *input drive*, and *individualized perception* describe the

importance of creativity and risk-taking in generating a learning environment that challenges all students, and a commitment to constantly searching for new ideas to make learning an individual experience for each student.

Highly talented educators with potential for growth are our most valuable resource when it comes to student learning. As a result, we take the responsibility of recruiting seriously, and approach it with as much thought and consideration as we can. In addition to excellent training and appropriate certifications, teachers who are "Scarsdale material" will demonstrate strength in the important intrapersonal, interpersonal, and extrapersonal themes. We look forward to introducing the recruitment class of 2019 to the community later this spring.



## To Redshirt or Not to Redshirt

*By Eric Rauschenbach, Director of Special Education and Student Services*

The term "redshirt" comes from college athletics: it is the practice of having a freshman athlete practice with the team but not compete in the actual games. The thought process behind this tactic is that another year of practice and maturity will serve to give the athlete a leg up in the following years of eligibility. "Academic redshirting" is the practice of withholding an age-appropriate preschooler back from kindergarten for an extra year, thus making them one of the oldest students in the cohort. The belief, championed by Malcolm Gladwell in his 2008 book *Outliers*, concludes that an older student will be more mature in their social interactions and better prepared for the academics, thus giving them more opportunities as they move through their school career. Since the book's publication, the idea of academic redshirting has been brought into the mainstream, and on average [6.2 percent](#)\*\* of Kindergarten-eligible students are held an extra year in preschool.

Redshirting is nothing new nationally and, certainly, not new locally; each year there are a number of students held back from kindergarten. Scarsdale's kindergarten cutoff date is December 31 and the students who are held back are usually born close to the cutoff. However, there have been a number of students held recently whose birthdays have been earlier in the fall. Increasing numbers of redshirted students, and indications that students who are redshirted are starting to have birthdays further from the cutoff dates, have led to a number of questions regarding the practice. My hope is to present some of the research on the topic, and delineate the District's practices, so parents can make informed choices.

The decision to hold a student in preschool for an additional year is never easy and each child is unique. Neither the District nor any educator I know would tell you definitively that redshirting is either good or bad. There are instances where it makes sense and can have a real impact on a student's school experience. However, there is also a false belief that it is a "can't hurt" type of decision. In some cases, the decision to hold a student back can have detrimental effects on a student. In the end, it is a student by student choice.

### **So what does the research say?... Many things!**

There is a study that posits redshirted students are [more likely to get into college](#) and a study that posits those same students are more likely [to drop out and have a criminal record](#). There is even a study that posits students who are relatively younger [get lower grades while in school but higher educational attainment overall!](#) While it may seem counterintuitive that the research can be all over the map, there are a few factors that lead to this outcome; first, it is almost impossible to isolate one

factor, like redshirting, and its impact on a student's overall success. Secondly, there tends to be two major reasons for holding a student back: allowing a student who falls outside the norm to have additional time to mature, or families looking to give their child an advantage. Each of these groups of students may on average have very different outcomes than each other even if they weren't redshirted. As an educator, it makes sense to me that there are varying outcomes given the wide diversity in the sample populations of these studies - each community's overarching reasons for redshirting may be vastly different. One thing is clear in the research: the long term benefits of redshirting as a general practice are not clear.

### **How does Scarsdale handle the question of redshirting?**

According to New York State regulations, the District determines which grade a student will be placed in upon entrance to school. While we do retain that right, in practice, we generally follow a parent's wish to hold a student back and enter them into kindergarten a year late. However, the District maintains a practice of assessing each student entering kindergarten, and it is those assessments that would determine the appropriate grade a student should be placed in. In the instance of a student who far exceeds kindergarten expectations, the District may place that student into first grade. Parents of students with special needs have an additional variable to consider. Children under the age of five are provided services through the Committee on Preschool Education (CPSE) and those services are funded by the County of Westchester, not the District. Once a child becomes kindergarten-eligible, they cease to qualify for preschool services and would only be eligible to receive services through the District's Committee on Special Education (CSE) at a school in the District. So, if you are thinking about holding your child back from kindergarten, I would strongly encourage you to discuss the decision with your elementary school administration or my office, so we can explain the choices and the kindergarten program. The only way to make an informed decision is to have all the facts about our program, and hear the recommendations of the people who will actually teach your children.

### **Some thoughts if you are trying to determine whether to hold your student back from kindergarten:**

- 1) **Avoid being pressured:**
  - Other people do not know your child or what is best for them. Redshirting is not a "can't hurt" decision.
  - 5's programs in preschools are for-profit businesses and have an interest in your continued attendance.
- 2) **Talk to knowledgeable professionals:**
  - Your physician, elementary school administrator, or CPSE Chairperson can offer insight into your child and what decision would be best.
- 3) **Consider your child's reaction to not entering kindergarten with their preschool classmates:**
  - Your child will need an explanation as to why they are not going into kindergarten especially since it will be a topic of conversation both within preschool and in the family.
- 4) **Examine the reasons why you feel this is a good decision and take your time:**
  - The reason for holding a child back should be compelling and based on your individual child's profile.
- 5) **Look at the research yourself** (links embedded in this article and below)

Selected Resources:

[Academic Redshirting and Young Children](#)

[Is Your Child Ready for Kindergarten?](#)

[\\*\\*https://www.educationnext.org/is-your-child-ready-kindergarten-redshirting-may-do-more-harm-than-good/](https://www.educationnext.org/is-your-child-ready-kindergarten-redshirting-may-do-more-harm-than-good/)

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## 2019-20 Budget Development and Facilities Update

*By Stuart Matthey,  
Assistant Superintendent for Business and Facilities*



### **Budget Development**

Although budget development is practically a year-round process, the budget season formally commenced this past November with two public forums designed for the community to provide their thoughts on budget priorities. Also in November an updated multi-year budget model was presented followed by a presentation of FYE 2019 year-end projections and 2019-20 budget planning factors. Here is the remaining timeline of other budget presentations scheduled and actions taken:

- **March 11th** - Budget Plan Update and Full Budget Review including Revenues and Tax Projections.
- **March 25th** - Special Meeting - Budget Forum
- **April 8th** - Board of Education scheduled to adopt the 2019-20 Budget
- **May 21st** - Budget Vote

The 2019-20 proposed budget has been developed based on continued support of existing educational programs and the funding of new initiatives which arise organically in any given year. These new initiatives are thoroughly deliberated through the budget development process to assure that they are consistent with SET 2.0 and the District's transition plan. More specifically, the 2019-20 budget accomplishes the following:

- 1) Advancement of high-quality teaching and learning consistent with SET 2.0, including STEAM implementation, and staffing levels consistent with current and historical philosophies and community expectations
- 2) Implementation of a comprehensive approach to safety, security, and emergency management including additional staff to support the mental health and emotional support of our students, and contracted personnel to serve as safety monitors and provide visitor management services in all of our buildings during the school day and at all school sponsored activities
- 3) Providing cool learning spaces on high heat days for all students
- 4) Improving and upgrading facilities consistent with the Facilities Master Plan

The current budget draft under consideration by the Board of Education represents a 1.86 percent increase over the current year, with an associated tax levy increase of 2.27 percent and a projected tax rate of 1.63 percent for Town of Scarsdale residents and 5.56 percent for Town of Mamaroneck residents.

Please don't forget to vote on May 21st in the Middle School Gymnasium from 7 a.m. to 9 p.m.

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# Online Tools for Parents

*By Rachel Moseley, Director of Information Technology*

## **Transportation to Private and Parochial Schools**

Requests for transportation to private and parochial schools for the 2019-20 school year must be received by the District no later than April 1, 2019. All requests have to be submitted via the Infinite Campus Parent Portal online registration system.

The District uses the Infinite Campus database system for managing student information. The Infinite Campus Parent Portal ("Campus Portal") is a confidential and secure website which allows authorized parents and guardians to access information about their children in real-time. It also allows parents and guardians to update contact information in order to receive notifications about school closings and delays.

Please visit [www.scarsdaleschools.org/TransportationRegistration](http://www.scarsdaleschools.org/TransportationRegistration) for instructions on how to request transportation. If you have questions about transportation, please visit the District's transportation website at [www.scarsdaleschools.org/Transportation](http://www.scarsdaleschools.org/Transportation).

## **Kindergarten Registration**

While the official kindergarten registration window closed on January 31, the registration system will remain open for new families, as well as for those who missed the deadline. Please visit [www.scarsdaleschools.org/PublicSchoolRegistration](http://www.scarsdaleschools.org/PublicSchoolRegistration) for instructions on how to register online.

Children whose fifth birthday falls on or before December 31, 2019, may be registered for the 2019-2020 school year. Parents who have not yet registered their child are encouraged to complete this process as soon as possible to ensure a smooth screening and placement process.

For questions, please call the District Registrar, Nunzia Mauro, at (914) 721-2444, or send an email to [registrar@scarsdaleschools.org](mailto:registrar@scarsdaleschools.org).

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## Technology Standards and Student Expectations



*Jerry Crisci, Director of Instructional Technology and Innovation, and Co-Director of the Center for Innovation*

Student technology expectations are a key component of our new District Technology Plan. These expectations are correlated to the latest version of the National Educational Technology Standards. A partial list of these standards include:

- **Empowered Learning**, where students use technology to take an active role in choosing and demonstrating competency in their learning goals.
- **Digital Citizenship**, allowing students to demonstrate how to use technology responsibly.
- **Knowledge Construction**, providing students with opportunities to use technology to create documents and other digital artifacts that showcase their understanding.

- **Innovative Design**, helping students to use critical thinking to solve problems, and creativity to express their ideas.
- **Computational Thinking**, providing students with opportunities to learn coding, and work with physical programmable objects.

The K-12 Technology Committee is looking forward to presenting the new Technology Plan to the Board and the community at the March 25th Board meeting.



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