

WELCOME TO THE

February 2012

Home of the Thunderbolts

L.A.S.D. NEWSLETTER

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BOARD AND ADMINISTRATION PREPARES FOR DIFFICULT 2012-2013 BUDGET

With all economic indicators showing signs of little positive movement and the fact the district has listened to the State legislators saying it is likely the State, at best, will fund education at the same level as 2011-2012 we are set for a very challenging year.

The 2011-2012 budget included 1.3 million dollars less to the district than in 2010-2011. The district is currently experiencing revenue collection for the 2011-2012 budget that is approximately \$200,000 less than projected. State revenue collection is also lagging so as the budgetary process begins the district can probably hope for level funding similar to last year at best.

The district has been downsizing staff the past two years and it will be likely the same will continue this year. The district will begin the process looking at a deficit of \$1,069,012. Should the state budget be reduced over last year, the deficit could be larger. What we know is by June 30, 2012 we must have a balanced budget so the board and administration is working to decrease the budget.

The district will continue to approach reductions by protecting classroom elementary teaching positions and should teaching positions need to be decreased, which it is likely they will; it will come by making program changes at the secondary level. The district will continue to protect the core areas of math, English, reading, writing, science and social studies at both the middle and high school level. For this year, the district begins the process with no plan to eliminate elementary programs. With level funding this year and level funding projected for next year and the year following facing significant increases in pension costs the district will be forced to continue to downsize staff hoping to avoid significant program reductions, if possible.

At the same time the district has experienced dwindling revenue sources, the district has been showing improved academic results. The focus is continually on improving learning and the real challenge that now faces district leadership is the strategic positioning of expenditures where it will have the greatest impact upon learning with the priority being in the areas of math, reading, writing, science and social studies.

The Board of Education, in December passed a resolution saying the district will not go to referendum requesting voters to approve an additional tax increase above the maximum allowed under Act I. For 2011-2012, the maximum tax increase permitted; if the board chooses is, .2161 mills. Last year under Act I the local property tax increase netted the district in projected revenue, \$430,000. For 2012-2013 the maximum the district can generate in local property tax is \$258,062.

With greater academic accountability placed upon the district, the real challenge will be to maintain the upward improvement of student academic performance, and accomplish continual improvement, with fewer dollars.

REMINDER OF FREE AND REDUCED LUNCH FORMS

We know that the economy has made it more difficult for some families to make ends meet. Whenever your income level changes, you may be eligible for increased support. You can even reapply at anytime. Please feel free to contact the guidance office or the main office of your child's school and we will send out a form to you in the mail. If you need assistance completing the forms, we will be happy to work with you. Please let us know your needs so we can be of assistance.

HOW DO WE IMPROVE LEARNING IN TIMES OF DECLINING REVENUE?

Today, at least once a week or even more frequently we pick up the newspaper to read about the economy, the struggles of the Federal Government with the deficit, and declining revenue that means budget projections are running behind what was anticipated. All is true, correct and the reality of today.

The Littlestown Area School District faces the same challenges. Our revenue sources, state, and, local tax ability which is limited by the legislative, Act I, declining local revenue collection all adds up to less money. We also understand that the above has impacted and continues to impact every citizen when dealing with our own budgets at home, or experiencing changes in how various services provided by all levels of government has changed

Although, the funding climate of today is bleak, we in the Littlestown Area School District remain optimistic that we will be able, with reductions, and good fiscal planning along with some already operational changes that have garnered savings be able to meet our challenged purpose which is to improve learning for every student, every day, finding and using every way.

We will make minor adjustments in our current programming in the future and the board, administration, and staff will rise to the challenge daily to strive to meet the needs of every student. Our challenge is to take the revenue we receive and position the funds where they will have the greatest impact on learning and that is at the classroom level.

We will make cost reductions in areas that have less impact on learning. To do that, decisions will be made that certainly would be perceived as not beneficial to those impacted, however, the board, administration and staff will provide ever improving learning opportunities for the students of Littlestown. We have nothing but a level of optimism that we will be able to do just that, for that is our purpose every day to improve learning for every student, finding and using every way.

Understanding Budget and Issues Facing the District

Included are some facts that hopefully will help everyone understand why it is so important for the Littlestown Area School District to maximize the use of resources we have available to improve learning for every student, every day, finding and using every way.

Less Revenue Higher Expectations

- In 2011-2012 funds from state were reduced by 1.3 million dollars.
- Projecting level funding or same as in 2011-2012.
- Local property tax increase netted \$430,000 in 2011-2012.
- District increased to the maximum allowed by law under Act I.
- District did not ask for exceptions to go above the Act I level.
- In 2012-2013 a maximum tax increase of .2161 mills under Act I will net \$258,062 or a decrease of \$171,938 over 2011-2012.
- Occupation tax revenue is down. As people change jobs, or become unemployed, change the assessment level downward. Net impact less in occupation tax being collected.
- Normally budget 97% collection for real estate. This year budget 95%. More defaulting on taxes.
- Conclusion: All revenue sources have been reduced and it could get worse.

Same time revenue is decreasing – pension costs are increasing By law

2011-2012	8.65%	Employer contribution rate
2012-2013	12.36%	Employer contribution rate 42.89% over 2011-2012 or \$438,536
2013-2014	16.75%	Employer contribution rate 35.52% over 2011-2012 or \$568,910
		% over 2011-2012 or \$616,077
2015-2016	25.56%	Employer contribution rate 20.28% over 2011-2012 or \$628,641
2016-2017	26.26%	Employer contribution rate 2.74% over 2011-2012 or \$189,371

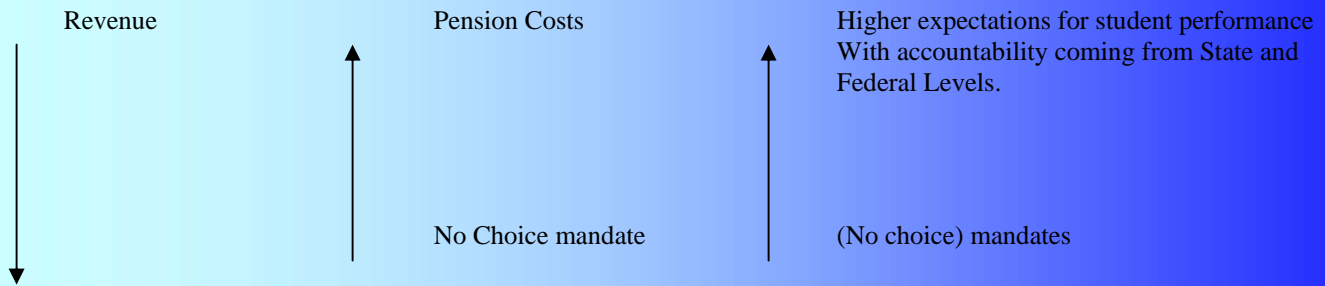
- These numbers do not reflect salary increases. They are built on the assumption that everything stays constant.
- Again as revenue sources decline, pension costs escalate. Must contribute by law.

OTHER KNOWNNS

68.42% of total budget in salaries and benefits.

31.58% Special Education costs which are mandated, contracted services such as water, sewer, electricity, maintenance, transportation, insurance, charter school, cyber charter school payments, supplies and textbooks, equipment, bond interest, athletics.

- PSSA score expectations increase. Major tool for measuring results by Feds/State currently.
- Common score standards raise the bar of expectation for student performance.
- 2013-2014 – 2014-2015 new teacher evaluation with % of overall evaluation tied to performance.

Conclusion**What Are We Left To Do?**

- Protect and enhance learning for every student, every day, finding and using every way.
- Research shows the teacher has the greatest impact on learning followed by principal and district office.
- Protect elementary class size. Largest class 25 at Grade 5, K-3 – 23.
- Protect the core areas
 - Math, Science, English, Social Studies
 - Music, Arts
- Maintain a Capital Reserve to fund Capital Projects on a yearly basis.
- Maintain Fund Balance (savings account) to be used when needed to offset unknowns such as spikes in health care costs, payroll should state not have a balanced budget by June 30.
- Maintain athletic and extracurricular programs but supported partially by other revenue sources.
- Reductions in professional staff currently must be made based upon declining enrolment, or program change. The procedure is established by the school code.

ANNOUNCEMENT FROM THE TECHNOLOGY DEPARTMENT

The Littlestown Area School District Technology Department is excited to announce the deployment of document cameras at Alloway Creek Intermediate School! These cameras are attached to teachers' computers and used in a variety of ways. Teachers may project notes and/or study guides which they have developed for use during classroom instruction. They can also project worksheets completed by students and have these students come to the front of the class to share their efforts with their classmates. The cameras offer a unique way for teachers to project homework and class projects for students to check and compare their own answers. When students are absent, teachers can quickly take a picture of the forms and study guides being projected and then print them for inclusion in the absent student's homework packet. If teachers are projecting what they are writing, they can save that work and pull it up again for future reference. Since the document camera is attached to the computer, it is very simple to use it to quickly e-mail additional work to parents who request it for a self-motivated student. Document cameras are a promising item in a teacher's arsenal of integrated technology designed to spark and maintain student interest in the learning process. The Technology Department anticipates additional applications as teachers become more familiar with this technology.

ROLLING ACRES

On January 26th Rolling Acres Elementary School had their first ever Parent Night that focused on learning about Love and Logic; our school wide initiative that helps children gain greater responsibility for their actions.

We were excited to have almost a 100 parents sign up for this special event. Parents and children came at 5:00 for dinner and afterwards parents participated in 3 twenty minute sessions that focused on a different Love and Logic strategy. The strategies that were introduced could help parents with their children at home. Teachers and administrator hosted the sessions. For this special night we had many members of our school community help to support us by either donating food, serving food, signing parents up, or leading the presentations. At this time we would like to thank all of the teachers and secretaries that helped to make this event a reality and we would also like to thank the parents for coming out. This event helped to build our school wide community. **Our next Parent Love and Logic Night will be on April 26th.** We would love for you to join us!!

RTII AT ALLOWAY CREEK INTERMEDIATE SCHOOL

The Alloway Creek Intermediate School staff worked relentlessly as a team during the 2010-2011 school year to implement the Response to Instruction and Intervention (RtII) framework. Throughout the year, the staff built a framework to provide interventions and enrichment opportunities based on data collected. At the conclusion of the year, the RtII Core team applied to the Pennsylvania Department of Education (PDE) for certification to use RtII to identify students for special services in reading. ACIS joined the ranks of only a few elementary schools in Pennsylvania to become certified.

Due to the success of Alloway Creek's implementation of RtII, the team was invited to participate in the PATTAN's RtII Implementers Forum on December 19th, which was attended by participants from throughout Pennsylvania. Teresa Ader-Doumont, Melanie White, Sarah Ringley, and Karen Haas presented the RtII framework for ACIS and methods to implement the framework when research-based interventions are not bringing about desired outcomes. This was a wonderful opportunity to showcase the progress the staff has made in meeting the needs of all students.

MAPLE AVENUE MIDDLE SCHOOL NEWS

Maple Ave. Middle School students recently competed in the annual National Geographic Society Geographic Bee. The entire middle school population participated and the events culminated with the TOP 10 competing Dec. 22nd. for the title. The student body was in attendance as Zach Mace and Jacob Reed traded geography skills to determine the school champion. Jacob Reed was able to hold off Zach and become the 2011/2012 MAMS Champ.

The Social Studies Department wishes to thank everyone that played a role in this event.



News from the High School



SCHEDULE CHANGE COMING TO THE HIGH SCHOOL FOR 2012-13 SCHOOL YEAR.

Next school year the high school will change the schedule for 9th grade students. All 9th grade students will receive math, social studies, English, and biology in the first four periods of the day. These periods will be extended to 56 minutes from the normal 42 minute period. This will allow the equivalent of 60 {sixty} extra instructional periods in the core areas for each and every freshman.

In the afternoon, freshmen will eat lunch, attend physical education class, and take elective classes. These classes will be on the regular 42 minute schedule like the other grades.

NEW 'ACADEMIC' FOCUS RAISES EXPECTATIONS FOR ALL STUDENTS

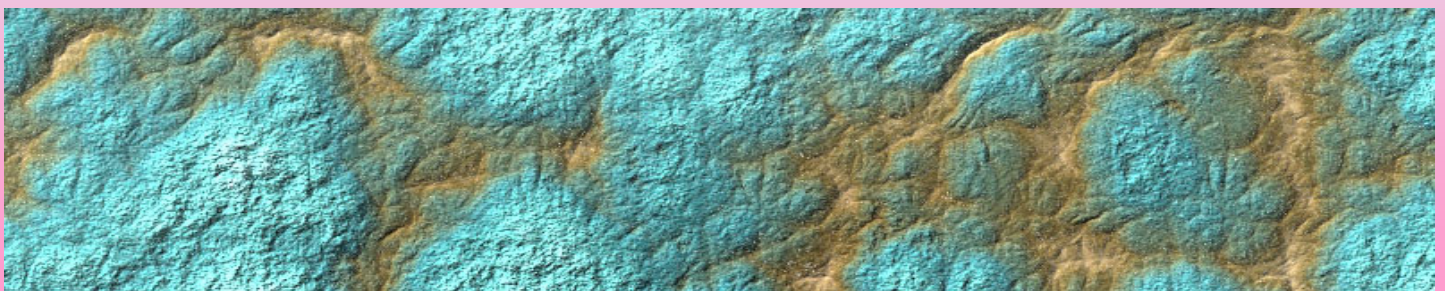
Beginning in 2012-13, basic and remedial classes in biology, social studies, & English will no longer be offered to 9th grade students. All students will take Academic Level classes.

This 'leveling up' process is happening for a couple of reasons. Firstly, exposure to and success in Academic Level classes will encourage more students to complete an academic level curriculum during their high school careers. This will help a greater percentage of our students have the opportunity to reach college. Secondly, all students are required to take and pass the state mandated Keystone Exams. In order for our students to have a greater chance, they all need the opportunity to take our highest level 9th grade courses.

Longer class periods for 9th grade core subjects and smaller class sizes will help our instructors reach the needs of all students in these classes whether the student requires extra help or enrichment opportunities above and beyond the course standards.

TRANSITIONING TO 9th GRADE SPECIAL MEETINGS SCHEDULED

The high school administration will hold three informational sessions for 8th grade parents to explain and discuss transition to 9th grade and changes to scheduling and course offerings. These meetings will be held on, February 6th & 7th at 7:00 pm in the **MAMS Auditorium** and on February 7th at **9:30AM** in the high school auditorium.



2011-12 HIGH SCHOOL 11th GRADE PSSA INFORMATION

The time is rapidly approaching when students in the 11th grade will be required to take the Pennsylvania System of School Assessment (PSSA) exams. The intent of this article is to provide you, the parents/guardians, with the specific dates in ample time to avoid conflicts such as appointments and/or trips. It is vitally important that our students are in attendance, participate, and do their very best on these assessments. The exams will be given on the following dates:

Assessment	Date(s)
PSSA Math	3/13/12, 3/15/12 & 3/21/12
PSSA Reading	3/14/12, 3/20/12 & 3/22/12
PSSA Writing	4/17/12-4/19/12
PSSA Science	4/24/12-4/26/12

11th GRADE PSSA AS A GRADUATION REQUIREMENT

In accordance with School Board Policy 215 Promotion and Retention, students must demonstrate a score of proficient or advanced in reading, writing, and mathematics on the state assessments administered in grade eleven in order to graduate.

Students who do not receive a score of proficient or advance on the Math and Reading PSSA exams, are required to complete a computer based remediation program for a time period of 100 hours per exam that they are not proficient or advanced. Remediation is required for PSSA's in the areas of reading and math by the Pennsylvania Department of Education (School Board Policy 217). In addition, students must retake the Math and Reading PSSA exams, if they did not receive a proficient or advanced score in October of their senior. We encourage all parents/guardians to talk with their student(s) about the seriousness of the PSSA exams and possible additional requirements that they may face if they do not give these exams their best effort in an attempt to achieve proficiency. In brief, scoring proficient or advanced saves you 100-200 hours of work your senior year!

NEWS FROM THE FOOD SERVICE DEPARTMENT

On September 19, 2011, a "Grab and Go" breakfast program was launched at the Littlestown High School. This program is designed to bring breakfast to the students. It is served out of the concession stand in the lobby and is available from 7:15 AM until the first bell each morning. The items served meet the breakfast guidelines established by the National School Lunch Program and included whole grain breakfast bars, cereal bars, and muffins, along with fruit or 100% fruit juice, yogurt or string cheese, and milk. Students eligible for free or reduced priced lunches also get the breakfast at the free or reduced price. Our goal is to see that no student starts their day hungry. Providing a student with the "fuel" needed to jump start their day has the potential to lead to improved academic performance.



ZUMBA AND YOGA CLASSES BEING OFFERED

If you're looking for an exercise class to get you moving, come out and try ZUMBA, a Latin inspired fitness program. Maybe you need to do something to help you relax, give YOGA a try.

Classes are being held in the cafeteria at Maple Avenue Middle School for only \$5 per class.

ZUMBA – Monday, 4:00 – 4:45 Maple Avenue Middle School cafeteria

YOGA – Tuesday, 4:00 – 4:45 Maple Avenue Middle School cafeteria



Common Core Standards: What are they?

The Common Core Standards are a set of standards that were created by the Council of Chief State School Officers, National Governors Association and the majority of the states. The Common Core Standards are based on the same levels as the highest performing countries around the world. These standards are research and evidence-based, aligned with college and work expectations and include rigorous content and skills.

When the PA State Board of Education adopted the Common Core Standards in Math and English Language Arts, it charged Pennsylvania Department of Education with the responsibility to complete a full alignment study of PA Academic Standards to Common Core Standards – in terms of both content and rigor. A transition plan was developed that provides clear direction for districts to implement Common Core Standards.

Year	Pennsylvania Department of Education (PDE)
January 2012	Revise PA Academic Standards in Reading and Math to create a set of PA Common Core Standards
February 2012	Post Common Core Standards on Standards Alignment System (SAS) www.pdesas.org
February – May 2012	Provide Common Core Training
Spring 2014	Implement Common Core aligned PSSA tests, grades 3-5
Spring 2015	Implement Common Core aligned PSSA tests, grades 6-8

How will the PA Standards Change?

In Mathematics, there will be an increase in rigor and depth which will put a greater emphasis on building a solid understanding of basic mathematical principles and applying those principles in real-world contexts. .

Language Arts will shift to reading more informational text that is relevant and complex. The focus will be on the types of reading and writing students use in science, social studies and career and technical courses.

As LASD works through the transition towards the Common Core Standards, additional information will be sent out to parents to provide a consistent, clear understanding of what students are expected to learn, so parents know what they need to do to help them.

For further information about the Common Core Standards visit

<http://www.corestandards.org/about-the-standards> or

<http://www.corestandards.org/>

WEATHER RELATED INFORMATION

We have been lucky this winter season so far, however, it is winter and anything can happen. Remember snow in October? In the event of adverse weather, the district will more than likely need to make decisions on late starts, early dismissals, or school cancellations. If we do, please stay tuned to the following stations as announcements will be made on:

TELEVISION

WGAL-NBS 8

WHP-CBS 21

WHTM-ABC 27WPMT-FOX 43

RADIO

WYCR 98.5 FM

WHP 580 AM

WPOC 93.1 FM

WGET 1320 AM

BOB 94.9 FM

WHVR 1280 AM

WGTY 107.7 FM

WARM 103 AM

WITF 93.3 FM

WSBA 910 AM

99.3 KISS FM

WBAL 1090 AM

We ask that you please listen/watch for weather related announcements or you can check the Littlestown Area School District website at

www.lasd.k12.pa.us.



