



■ 2009-10 Budget Forecast

# Economic Downturn Likely to Impact Schools for Many Years

One of many ways that the U.S. government is trying to stimulate the economy is by investing in education. This could provide some immediate relief for schools in New York State, but the problems that led to a flagging economy may stretch on for several more years.

As the annual school budget planning process continues, the Schalmont Board of Education is considering strategies for maintaining academic successes while preventing dramatic changes from year to year in the school tax levy.

## Aid Cuts and Potential for Relief

In December, Gov. David Paterson released his 2009-10 executive budget proposal to the New York State Legislature. That proposal included a one-time “deficit reduction assessment” of \$1,185,149 for Schalmont Central School District.

President Barack Obama recently signed off on the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act, a \$787 billion stimulus bill that included approximately \$2.7 billion in funding for schools in New York

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# The Ever-evolving School Nurse

*Sunlight spilled in from a window, making the school nurse's office bright and cheery despite the chilly morning.*

*The nurse, too, remained bright and cheery, despite a steady stream of sad faces. One student had an upset stomach, another had an earache, and a third had fallen in class. As the nurse checked temperatures and called parents, two more children came in to use their asthma inhalers. A few minutes later, a mother dropped off some medication for a child and a teacher came in to check her temperature.*

*If the last 20 minutes were anything to go by, the nurse's day was sure to fly by.*

There is one registered nurse (RN) at each of the five schools in Schalmont Central School District. For all of them, no two days are ever the same, but every day brings a mix of opportunities to treat and prevent health issues. What might surprise some parents is how much a nurse's day has changed over the years.

“Our main role is to try to keep students healthy and informed and to help them make healthy choices,” said Linda Mortensen, a nurse at Schalmont Middle School for more than 20 years.

Keeping kids healthy takes on many forms. The most obvious is the

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**The Modern Nurse:** Cheryl Glindmyer, RN, cares for more than 600 students at Jefferson Elementary School. The role of a school nurse has expanded greatly over the years, in large part due to new state and federal mandates.

## Budget Forecast

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(sources: [www.recovery.gov](http://www.recovery.gov), [www.economicrecovery.ny.gov](http://www.economicrecovery.ny.gov)). This money may be used to eliminate the deficit reduction assessment and restore school aid at previously promised amounts, but the details of the distribution of funds were still being worked out at the time that this newsletter went to print.

While the stimulus bill offers the possibility of immediate federal relief, the economic problems that the state and the nation are experiencing are likely to remain for some time.

In his executive budget proposal, Paterson predicted a \$13.7 billion general fund deficit for the state next year and increasing deficits for the following two years. In the annual school budget, state aid accounts for almost 1/3 of the revenue and school taxes account for almost 2/3 of the revenue. If the economy continues

to worsen, fluctuations in state aid will have a direct effect on the total amount of money that the district collects from local taxpayers (i.e. school tax levy).

“Even if state aid is restored this year, we have to prepare for the possibility that it may drop significantly in the coming years. Many of the cuts we’re recommending this year reflect changes in enrollment, but we’re also looking across the board with an eye on what might be down the road,” said Superintendent Valerie Kelsey.

### Budget Basics, Today and Tomorrow

**Given the flagging economy, the school board’s first step in preparing a 2009-10 school budget is focusing on the mission of the district.** That mission is to

provide programs, resources and facilities to foster a positive learning environment and to assist individuals in growing emotionally, intellectually, physically, and socially to meet the challenges of the future.

“We can’t let a bad economy make us lose sight of our duty to prepare students for college and the workplace,” said Robert Sheehan, president of the school board.

According to Sheehan one way to fulfill that duty is to maintain curriculum advancements such as the Project Lead the Way pre-engineering program at Schalmont High School, Gateway to Technology program at Schalmont Middle School, and Everyday Mathematics program at all three elementary schools. These programs

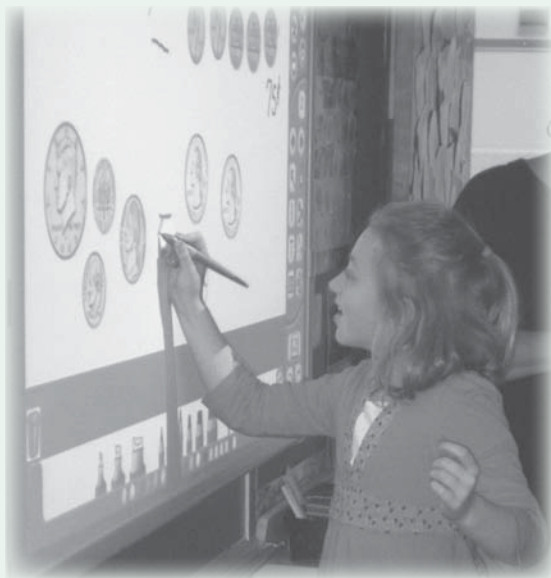
## Academic Successes

- ☆ 2006-07 NYS School Report Card (most recent available):
  - Schalmont High School had a 95 percent graduation rate.
  - All schools made Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) on state exams.
- ☆ Schalmont rose from a rank of 49 in 2005 to a rank of 21 in 2008 in an annual ranking of 85 Capital Region school districts by *The Business Review* (based on NYS Education Department data).
- ☆ Visit [www.schalmont.org/HS/HHome.htm](http://www.schalmont.org/HS/HHome.htm) and click on “Student Spotlight” for a broad spectrum of student accomplishments this year.

are helping students develop the foundations necessary to pursue college degrees in science and math. Such degrees may eventually help students land well-paying, high-tech jobs at one of the research/manufacturing facilities in upstate New York’s “tech valley” area.

**The next step in preparing a 2009-10 school budget involves taking a pulse on the community’s values.** The school board has done this by reviewing last year’s budget vote exit poll results, devoting a portion of every board meeting to residents’ comments, providing e-mail contact information on the district Web site, and interacting with residents at numerous school events. The school board has also conducted online surveys, such as the recent one related to the upcoming community forum.

The Community Budget Advisory Committee (CBAC) is another good source of information for the school



**An Investment that Adds Up:** Curriculum advances, such as the Everyday Mathematics program, will help Schalmont students develop the basic skills necessary to one day pursue jobs in upstate New York’s “tech valley” area.

board. Its 15 members have spent almost two months reviewing a draft school budget proposal, asking questions about expenses and programs, and offering suggestions for cost-savings.

**The final step in preparing a 2009-10 school budget is making cuts that are responsive to taxpayers' concerns in a way that has the least negative impact on students.**

If Paterson's proposed aid cuts are approved by the Legislature, Schalmont will see a 10.76 percent cut in anticipated revenue from the state. Federal stimulus money may reduce or eliminate those cuts, but given the likelihood of future economic problems, the need to adjust spending will remain.

As they await the passage of a state budget, the school board and superintendent will continue to look at a variety of ways to reduce expenses, both immediately and in the long term.

"Education is a good investment, whether it's for yourself or for the next generation of employees. We're focusing on making sensible cuts that will allow us to offer a quality program over the long term," said Kelsey.

**To learn more about the 2009-10 school budget proposal, attend the Community Budget Forum on Wednesday, March 25, at 7 p.m. in the HS Auditorium, 1 Sabre Dr.**

## An Elementary Odyssey of the Mind



Three Schalmont teams competed in the New York State Region 7 Odyssey of the Mind Tournament in February. Jefferson Elementary sent two primary teams (grades K-2), and Mariaville Elementary sent one division 1 team (grades 3-5).

"In Odyssey of the Mind, students develop problem-solving and creative-learning skills while working in small groups to solve higher-level thinking questions. By working in small groups, they also learn about team work and making friends," said Melissa West, a Jefferson first-grade teacher and the coordinator of the OM program in Schalmont.

Only two elementary schools from Schalmont participated this year, but West hopes to expand the program to all grade levels next year.

"I enjoy seeing students at all levels of learning work together to solve very complex problems. Each year when the students get on stage and present their hard work, it is so amazing to see what these young minds are able to accomplish," she said.

Congratulations to all of the teams on their creativity and hard work preparing for the competition.

Visit [www.schalmont.org/Jefferson/jeffnews/odysseyofthemind.htm](http://www.schalmont.org/Jefferson/jeffnews/odysseyofthemind.htm) for more pictures.

## School Budget Development Calendar: Spring 2009

DATE & TIME	MEETING	LOCATION
Wednesday, March 25 @ 7 p.m.	Community Budget Forum #1	Schalmont High School Auditorium, 1 Sabre Dr.
Monday, April 6 @ 7 p.m.	School Board Meeting, Community Budget Forum #2	Schalmont Middle School LGI Room, 2 Sabre Dr.
Monday, May 11 @ 7 p.m.	School Board Meeting, Official Budget Hearing	Schalmont Middle School LGI Room, 2 Sabre Dr.
Tuesday, May 19 @ 6 a.m. - 9 p.m.	Annual School Budget Vote, School Board Election	Schalmont High School New Gym Foyer, 1 Sabre Dr.

# Bond 2007 Capital Project Update

Spring is a time for renewal, and in Rotterdam, that renewal will include reconstruction of aging facilities in Schalmont Central School District. The capital project that was approved by voters in October 2007 has since been approved by the New York State Education Department. Some reconstruction projects are already underway, and several will begin in the coming months.

## Completed

Those who attend spring sporting events will have a chance to park on the now-paved lot near the Schalmont High School athletic fields. This formerly gravel lot (picture 1) was covered as part of a lighting and paving project designed to improve the safety and usability of the area. Changes have also been made to the student parking lot to increase the safety of drivers and pedestrians.

## Coming Soon

At Schalmont Middle School, reconstruction of the gym floor should take place during spring break. The current wooden floor (picture 2) collects moisture, which has resulted in cracks, buckling and unpleasant odors. The new floor should rectify those problems and be more energy efficient than the current floor, which requires a special ventilation system.

In May, work should begin on the bulk of the capital project: reconstruction in the original 1957 wing of the high school. While other areas of the school saw renovations over the years, this wing remains much the same as it did when the school first opened more than 50 years ago. Projects in this wing include roofing reconstruction to address frequently occurring leaks (picture 3); replacing single-pane windows (picture 4) with more energy-efficient windows; replacing the huge, old steam boilers (picture 5) with smaller, more efficient hot water boilers; and reconstructing the classroom heating and ventilation system, which is beyond its useful life.

*Visit [www.schalmont.org](http://www.schalmont.org) and click on "Capital Project" for more information.*



## ■ School Nurse

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treatment of illnesses and injuries as they occur during the school day. This generally involves evaluating conditions and providing first aid as needed or contacting the school physicians (Five Corners Family Practice) for more serious issues.

“We’re also a really good resource for parents,” said Mortensen, who regularly receives calls from parents who are looking for health information or advice as to whether or not to take their children to a physician.

Prevention is also an important part of keeping kids healthy. When students come in with a health concern, many school nurses use the visit to educate them about ways to keep from getting sick again.

“In a small school, I’m able to do a little more preventative medicine,” said Joanne Jones, the nurse at Woestina Elementary and a 25-year Schalmont employee. She often speaks to students about topics such as playground rules and safety issues, nutrition and the food pyramid, and ways to prevent the spread of germs during the flu season.

School nurses perform many other activities, most of which are mandated by state law. The mandated activities

include reviewing and documenting health appraisals; conducting vision, hearing and scoliosis screenings; reviewing and documenting immunizations; preparing and administering prescription and non-prescription medications; identifying and reporting communicable diseases to the New York State Health Department; and more recently, tracking students’ Body Mass Index (BMI) and weight status category.

Certain nurses also oversee sports physicals, serve on the Wellness Committee and/or Safety Committee, and provide staff training on health issues.

“I process hundreds of students prior to each sports season,” said Sandy VanEtten, the Schalmont High School nurse and an alumna. “I do not have a dull day.”

School nurses’ roles are often complementary to those of school counselors and psychologists.

“A lot of it is emotional support,” said Donna Wolbert, the Mariaville Elementary nurse for 18 years. Students sometimes come to her because they are having a bad day or need to talk. “I think a misconception is that we just do band-aids.”

Whether emotional or physical, good health has a direct effect on academics and classroom performance.

“Just the littlest things will keep the younger children from learning,” said Cheryl Glindmyer, the Jefferson

Elementary nurse for about eight years.

School nurses have always helped students feel better so they could focus in class or sent them home to prevent the spread of an illness.

Today, they also administer medications and treatments that allow many children with chronic conditions – such as asthma, diabetes, seizure disorders, attention deficit hyperactivity disorder, cerebral palsy, muscular dystrophy,



**An Ounce of Prevention:** While treating middle school students, Linda Mortensen, RN, often works in a discussion about ways they can prevent future illnesses and stay healthy.

autism, and food allergies to remain in school. That treatment sometimes involves serious procedures such as catheterizations, tube feedings and insulin shots.

“With more inclusion in schools, there’s definitely more hands-on nursing,” said Wolbert.

School nurses’ responsibilities may have increased over the years, but their role as caregivers has remained just as important as ever.

“The health and safety of our students is foremost in everyone’s mind, and nurses help us preserve that,” said Superintendent Valerie Kelsey.

### Need a Nurse?

Each school nurse has a “Nurse’s Notes” Web page online. To find one, visit [www.schalmont.org](http://www.schalmont.org) and click on your child’s school name.

The Web pages provide details on health requirements, medication guidelines and sick student policies.

# Mystery in the Library

*Schalmont Sixth-graders Hit the Shelves to Solve a Crime*

Something was afoot in the Schalmont Middle School library. At least it was according to a top secret message rushed into several reading classes by Associate Principal Matt Morgan.

To whom could he turn to solve the mystery? *Sixth-graders!*

This February, reading teachers Joann Perillo-Lasky and Maria Conover turned their class curriculum on mystery stories into a stimulating way for students to learn about library resources such as reference books and the online catalog.

They teamed up with librarian Linda Fasano to create a three-day event that had almost 140 students pondering clues and solving riddles as they moved from books to computers and back again.

Mystery in the Library began with the special delivery by Morgan and continued with a mysterious videotape that informed students of their new roles as detectives.

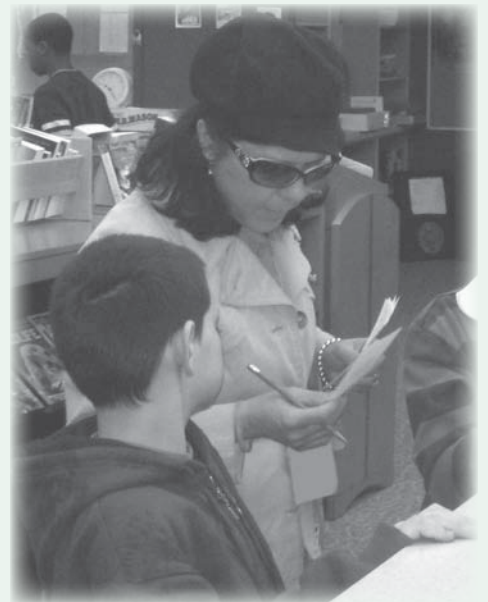
"We're trying to solve a crime, but we don't know what the crime is," said sixth-grader Rachel Stagnitti.

Sitting on the floor beside a bookshelf, she and a classmate pondered clue number four: a mini mystery story. By the last day of the event, they needed just three clues to solve the crime.

"It's really fun, but it's kind of confusing," said classmate Brandi Orminski as she and Stagnitti analyzed the story to figure out why the characters in it were lying.

At the nearby check-out desk, Fasano wore a black fedora and a badge with the words "Get a Clue Detective Agency." Students eagerly crowded around her and the two teachers for a sign off on correctly solved clues.

"The lead up to the mystery was fun, and it got the kids really excited," said Lasky. As the event came to a close, her students were looking forward to seeing which class solved the mystery first.



**Hot on the Trail:** Reading teacher Maria Conover, dressed as a detective, helps a sixth-grader uncover clues during the recent Mystery in the Library.

"It was a great, hands-on way for them to learn to use the different features in the library while building their reading and comprehension skills," she said.

## Exploring the Comedy, Drama of Struggles

*HS performance to include one-act play written by senior*

The Schalmont High School Drama Club will perform three one-act plays, **April 7 – 8**, at 6:30 p.m. in the HS Auditorium, 1 Sabre Dr. Each play centers on the theme of people struggling to communicate with each other, but one is a serious drama, one is a slapstick comedy, and one blends the two genres.

In David Ives' *The Sure Thing*, a man struggles to find the right words to use when he meets an attractive woman in a coffee shop.

In *The Rest of Their Lives*, a play written and directed by Schalmont High School senior David Banker, students struggle to define their relationships with each other, the school and the outside world that they will soon enter.

In Peter Schaffer's *Black Comedy*, the lights go out in a London apartment, and the characters' struggle to literally see each other leads to hilarious confusion.

Tickets, which are \$7 for adults



**Student Playwright:** High school senior David Banker (right) directs a rehearsal of *The Rest of Their Lives*.

and \$5 for students, will be sold at the door and the week prior to the play in the auditorium during lunch.

# SCHALMONT HS WINTER SPORTS STANDOUTS

## Girls Varsity Bowling

Congratulations to the Schalmont High School Girls Varsity Bowling Team on going undefeated 12-0 in the league and 15-0 overall. They won the Colonial Council regular season championship and end-of-season tournament for the second year in a row. The team also won the Section II Class B championship for the first time in school history.

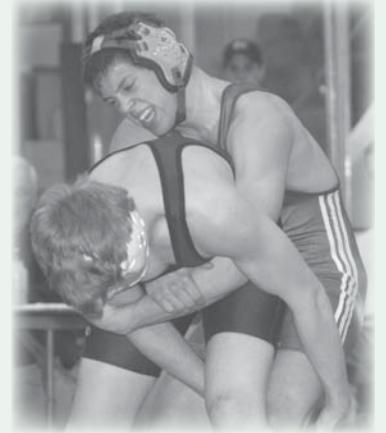
The team includes seniors Renee Tomasck, Ashleigh Sellick and Marissa Leone; junior Kristen Cusano; sophomores Liz Kuhlkin, Meredith Juers and Juliann Heigel; and freshmen Natasha Bidwell, Nicole Leone and Nicole Gentile. They are pictured below with coach Michael Gaudette. Kuhlkin and



Bidwell were selected for the Section II All-star Team, which placed fifth overall at the New York State Bowling Championships.

## Wrestling

Congratulations to junior Vincent Gallo on placing second in the 171 pounds weight class at the NYS high school wrestling championships. He was the second Schalmont wrestler to ever reach the state finals.



## Scholar-Athlete Teams

Congratulations to the Boys Basketball, Girls Basketball, Boys Bowling, Girls Bowling, and Girls Indoor Track teams on receiving a Scholar/Athlete Team Award from the New York State Public High School Athletic Association.

## Winter Sports Stats

For more winter sports teams' and athletes' stories, visit [www.schalmont.org/District/athletics/winterrundown.htm](http://www.schalmont.org/District/athletics/winterrundown.htm).

Ring,  
ring...



## IT'S DOLLARS FOR SCHOLARS!

The Schalmont Chapter of Dollars for Scholars will conduct its annual fundraising campaign on **April 1 – 2** from 5 – 8 p.m. each night.

Schalmont High School students will call local residents and businesses to ask for tax-deductible contributions to student scholarships. Each year, Dollars for Scholars gives out several \$500 scholarships to deserving seniors bound for higher education. There will also be six named scholarships available this year.

Those who don't receive a call and would like to make a donation can use the form at right to send one in by mail.

Thank you for your support!

## Donation Form

I would like to support the young people of Schalmont Central School District with a monetary contribution. Please accept the enclosed contribution of \$ \_\_\_\_\_.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City: \_\_\_\_\_

Zip Code: \_\_\_\_\_

Please make checks payable to "Schalmont Dollars for Scholars."  
Detach this form and mail it with your check to:

**Schalmont Dollars for Scholars**  
P.O. Box 6119  
Schenectady, NY 12306

This donation is tax deductible for income tax purposes.  
Your check is your receipt.



### School Board Calendar

Schalmont Board of Education public meetings are held at 7 p.m. unless otherwise noted.

**Monday, March 23**  
Middle School LGI Room  
2 Sabre Dr.

**Monday, April 6**  
Jefferson Elementary School  
100 Princetown Rd.

**Monday, April 27**  
Middle School LGI Room  
2 Sabre Dr.

### Reunion Calendar

**Sixth-grade students of Mr. Stagnitti in 1964-65**  
**April 18, 2009**  
For more information, e-mail pat293@aol.com.

**Class of 1989 Summer 2009 (tentative)**  
For more information, e-mail schalmont89@yahoo.com.

**Class of 1999 Thanksgiving Weekend 2009 (tentative)**  
For more information, e-mail valkie33@hotmail.com.

## Budget Vote Exit Poll Recap Part III

The annual budget vote exit poll gives voters another opportunity to share their concerns with the Schalmont Board of Education. Almost 60 percent of those who voted in May 2008 chose to complete an exit poll. While reviewing the results, the school board discovered some common concerns and misunderstandings. Following is some clarification on issues addressed in voters' comments on last year's exit polls.

**Q. I do not see sufficient investigation into cost savings or cost-reducing efforts.**

**A. The district is constantly looking for ways to reduce costs.** For several years, the district has participated in a Schenectady County schools buying consortium for savings on bus parts, cafeteria food and supplies, computer supplies, paper, trash removal, etc. It has also participated in a BOCES energy consortium for savings on natural gas and electricity, and has implemented an energy savings plan at all five school buildings. Last year, 1 full-time equivalent (FTE) position at the MS and 1.2 FTE at the HS were cut due to declining enrollment. Staff positions are also reviewed to determine if they can be effectively filled with fewer personnel. For information about efforts to cut costs in the 2009-10 school budget, visit [www.schalmont.org](http://www.schalmont.org) and click on "2009-10 Budget."

**Q. School taxes unreasonably tax the senior citizens.**

**A. Property values, which are established by local town assessors, are the primary factor in determining an individual's portion of the overall school tax levy.** The school tax levy is the amount of money necessary to balance the annual school budget after state aid and other revenue sources are taken into account. An individual's school tax bill is calculated using the assessed value of his or her property, any applicable exemptions (e.g., Basic or Enhanced STAR), and the school tax rate for the town in which the property owner resides. For more information on exemptions, visit [www.orps.state.ny.us/home/tpe\\_index.cfm](http://www.orps.state.ny.us/home/tpe_index.cfm) or your town assessor's office.

Visit [www.schalmont.org/District/boardofed/budget\\_ep.htm](http://www.schalmont.org/District/boardofed/budget_ep.htm) for more exit poll Q&A.



Visit [www.schalmont.org](http://www.schalmont.org) to register for Schalmont School News Notifier and receive e-mail updates on school news, emergency closings and delays.



Produced in cooperation with the Capital Region BOCES Communications Service.

# Schalmont

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