



Michelle Bixby / Finger Lakes Times

Cornell University scientist Chris Smart teaches children about plant diseases during the GFSA's Science Night at North Street School Wednesday.

STATE AID

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languages, in the four-county region basic programs are being sliced, Sweeney says.

According to a recent budget presentation by Geneva City School District officials, a number of districts are looking at cutting expenses through the following actions: Increasing class size; reducing electives; cutting extracurricular activities; trimming or eliminating field trips; deferring equipment, textbook and library materials purchase; reducing or eliminating summer school; scaling back on extra help; and reducing transportation services.

There were more than 200 cuts to teacher, aide and assistant positions last year. Some of those positions were later reinstated, but districts likely will be forced to make several more cuts this year.

"They're all saying everything is on the table," said Sweeney.

School officials are looking for concessions from employees and considering cuts to anything not mandated, she says. Some districts, such as Phelps-Clifton Springs, have suggested closing their middle school building and eliminating kindergarten.

Cuts at those levels would be particularly detrimental, Sweeney said.

"The one thing that research has demonstrated over the years is that early childhood education really is important," she said.

If opportunities for school children are limited, the gap between rich and poor widens, she said.

Like other school officials, Sweeney acknowledges that economic times are difficult, but she says education should be the last thing to get cut.

"Stability and economic recovery are truly linked to the quality

Education by the numbers ...

■ Number of school districts in the state, 2010: 697

■ Number of school districts in the state, 1980: 737

■ Number of school districts in the state, 1920: Over 10,000

■ Median salary of public elementary and secondary school teachers, 2010-11: \$73,699 (estimated)

■ Median salary of public elementary and secondary teachers, 1980-81: \$21,316

■ Total spending on elementary and secondary education in New York, 2010-11: \$57.6 billion (estimated)

■ Total state spending on elementary and secondary education in New York, 2010-11: \$23.2 billion (estimated)

■ Total spending on elementary and secondary education in New York, 1991-92: \$21.4 billion.

■ Total state spending on elementary and secondary education in New York, 1991-92: \$8.7 billion

Source: New York State Education Department.

of education that we offer," she said. "There have to be other ways to balance the budget, but not on the backs of our children."

The Four County School Boards Association, which boasts members from most schools in the area, provides support services to member school boards — helping schools stay informed about state education issues is part of that. Through workshops and meetings, members are able to discuss and often reach consensus on school matters, something that could prove key.

"Obviously there's strength in numbers," said Sweeney. She stressed it is important that community members be engaged in the process as well.

"Community members are important pieces in carrying these messages to legislators," she said.

School budget gap figures

District	State Aid 2010-11	State Aid 2011-12	Decrease	% Decrease
Bloomfield	\$10,012,854	\$8,399,820	\$1,613,034	16.11%
Canandaigua	\$24,211,317	\$20,799,481	\$3,411,836	14.09%
Clyde-Savannah	\$11,969,274	\$11,131,770	\$837,504	7.00%
Dundee	\$8,761,476	\$8,576,831	\$184,645	2.11%
Gananda	\$10,114,685	\$8,943,831	\$1,170,854	11.58%
Geneva	\$24,615,566	\$23,935,326	\$680,240	2.76%
Gorham	\$15,539,581	\$13,515,015	\$2,024,566	13.03%
Honeoye	\$7,464,710	\$6,675,234	\$789,476	10.58%
Lyons	\$11,872,421	\$11,117,781	\$754,640	6.36%
Manchester-Shortsville	\$7,580,092	\$6,941,674	\$638,418	8.42%
Marion	\$11,123,669	\$9,825,455	\$1,298,214	11.67%
Naples	\$6,359,008	\$5,715,819	\$643,189	10.11%
Newark	\$26,949,811	\$23,772,887	\$3,176,924	11.79%
North Rose-Wolcott	\$16,590,469	\$14,578,013	\$2,012,456	12.13%
Palmyra-Macedon	\$16,171,599	\$14,038,772	\$2,132,827	13.19%
Penn Yan	\$14,624,671	\$12,721,121	\$1,903,550	13.02%
Phelps-Clifton Springs	\$20,661,137	\$18,189,331	\$2,471,806	11.96%
Red Creek	\$13,280,198	\$12,457,712	\$822,486	6.19%
Romulus	\$5,665,137	\$5,150,172	\$514,965	9.09%
Seneca Falls	\$12,386,243	\$10,902,979	\$1,483,264	11.98%
Sodus	\$15,549,107	\$13,807,920	\$1,741,187	11.20%
Victor	\$18,643,117	\$16,460,616	\$2,182,501	11.71%
Waterloo	\$22,550,752	\$21,204,168	\$1,346,584	5.97%
Wayne	\$14,938,036	\$12,347,789	\$2,590,247	17.34%
Williamson	\$10,540,400	\$8,919,621	\$1,620,779	15.38%
Total	\$358,175,330	\$320,129,138	\$38,046,192	10.62%

Note: 2011-12 figures are projected based on Gov. Cuomo's preliminary state budget

What the budget challenges are in ... Waterloo

Addressing the topic of the "School Budget Squeeze: What is at Stake" cannot be understood without first looking at the larger political issues and climate in our state.

Governor Cuomo, in his executive budget proposal, is recommending severely reducing state expenditures and drastically cutting aid to schools in an attempt to reel in the more than \$9.2 billion deficit that is currently projected.

He has my support to make these tough decisions and make appropriate cuts in aid to education.

The problem for the Waterloo Central School District is not that cuts in school aid will take place but rather how the Governor's proposal allocates these cuts.

I contend that the Governor's



**SUPERINTENDENT
TERRY MACNABB**

formula to distribute school aid cuts is not equitable and disproportionately hurts the Waterloo schools.

The Governor's proposal and allocation of aid cuts to schools is a recipe for disaster for Waterloo and similar schools. What is at stake is the survival of rural, low wealth school districts in New York state.

Waterloo is a low wealth school district that depends on state aid to provide the programs and services essential to our students, our families and our community.

Strong schools enhance communities and do so to a far greater extent in upstate rural communities where the school is often the heart and soul of the community.

The Governor continues to report through the media that his proposal is fair and that wealthy districts have percentage aid cuts that are greater than those for low wealth districts.

This is political rhetoric designed to distract the citizens of the state from the inequities in his plan.

He does not address the essential issue which is the dis-

proportionate financial impact on the taxpayer in low wealth, rural, upstate communities.

In Waterloo the Governor's proposal calls for a cut in state aid of nearly 6 percent for the 2011-12 school year.

In a wealthy downstate district of similar size and budget to Waterloo the Governor's proposal calls for a 14 percent cut in state aid.

That may appear to be fair on the surface but when we look at the impact the cuts have on the taxpayer in Waterloo vs. the taxpayer in the wealthier community we see the true inequity of the plan.

The tax levy increase on the Waterloo taxpayer is 13 times greater than that for the taxpayer in the wealthier district! Those who are least able to afford tax increases will have

the greatest tax rate increases as a result of the Governor's proposal.

The goals for the budget process in Waterloo are straightforward and critically important. We must find a way to continue to provide our solid but lean academic program in 2011-12 and in future years while being sensitive to the fiscal issues that confront our taxpayers.

We are charged with ensuring that our students meet state standards, are competitive as they apply to colleges and are successful.

Our Board of Education, faculty, staff and administration are committed to improving academic achievement for every student, providing a safe learning environment and ensuring fiscal responsibility.