

On track for tomorrow...



EAGLE EXPRESS

BUDGET ISSUE – MAY 2005

Duanesburg Central School District

Residents to consider \$12.1 million proposed school budget

On May 17, residents of the Duanesburg Central School District will vote on a proposed \$12,115,600 budget for the 2005-06 school year.

Although the proposed plan represents a year-to-year increase in spending of \$969,490 or 8.7 percent, it is important to note that this figure includes approximately \$200,000 from the Capital Reserve Fund to pay for renovations to the middle/high school and would not influence the tax rate.

If approved by voters, the estimated tax rate increase would be 5.8 percent, or \$2.60 per \$1,000 of assessed property value. For example, a homeowner in the Town of Duanesburg with a residence assessed at \$50,000 could expect to pay \$130 more next year. *(For more tax information, see page 4.)*

Voters will also be asked to decide on a bus and tractor purchase proposition, and elect three candidates to the Board of Education.

Why is spending going up?

Three-quarters of the budget increase results from operating costs that the school district must provide either by law or contract.

With an estimated initial increase of up to 18 percent, or \$178,400 next year, health insurance costs outpace most other district expenses.

New York State law requires that all public agencies, including school districts, to participate in a pension plan for employees. Next year, DCS expects contributions to the Teachers Retirement System (TRS) to increase an additional \$146,000 while it will contribute 4.5 percent or \$40,000 more to the Employee Retirement System (ERS).

Pension costs have risen dramatically in the past few years primarily because of a slower economy and downturn in the stock market.

Utility costs and salary increases account for approximately \$250,000 of the proposed budget increase.

Schools are also feeling the pinch of expenses that are unique to education, yet can vary from one year to the next. Special education costs, for example, are expected to rise approximately \$126,000 next year as enrollment of students requiring special services increases. Out-of-district placements for special education can run up to as much as \$30,000 per student.

BUDGET OVERVIEW

- ▶ 2005-06 Budget \$12,115,600
- ▶ Dollar Increase \$969,490
- ▶ Percent Increase 8.7%
- ▶ Estimated tax rate increases 5.8%



School Budget Vote and Board Election
1-9 p.m.
Tuesday, May 17, 2005
Elementary School Gym

▶ ▶ **MORE BUDGET NEWS**
pages 2-5

What's new in the budget?

Additional science lab could help students fulfill requirement

Aside from the mandatory financial obligations the school district must fulfill, the proposed 2005-06 school budget would provide for a few key improvements with money from the district's Capital Reserve Fund for Facilities.

By using money from the Capital Reserve Fund, the district could receive reimbursement of approximately 70% of the cost from state aid. If not approved in the budget, any repairs would have to be made out-of-pocket

and, therefore, would not be eligible for aid.

These improvements are listed on the budget as two separate projects.

First, the conversion of an existing classroom to an additional science lab, which is projected to cost \$100,000. The lab space is now necessary because students must complete three years of science instead of two to graduate from high school.

"That requirement combined with more of our students choosing to enroll

in science courses has precipitated the need for another science lab," said Superintendent Mark Villanti.

The second, totalling approximately \$100,000, is aimed at improving handicapped accessibility and safety. It would include replacing a hazardous backstage electrical panel and adding ramps and lifts to improve accessibility.

An evaluation of school facilities, which is part of a five-year facilities plan that the New York State Depart-

ment of Education requires of all school districts, found nearly \$3 million worth of repairs and renovations. Some will be addressed by the elementary school building project approved by voters in December 2003.

Making structural repairs and renovations and updating core systems, such as electrical and plumbing, on a regular basis would enable the district to accommodate new technology, improve energy efficiency, and maintain safety and security.

"Careful, long-term planning for the maintenance of our facilities is important to providing a good education and protecting the community's investment in its schools," Villanti said.

What has the district done to cut costs?

Making every dollar count

In the past few years, district officials have managed to present school budgets that yielded tax rate increases between 3-5 percent.

In some cases, after assessments and equalization rates were finalized, which are set by the town and the state respectively, the final tax rate increase was lower than the district's original estimates.

Next year's tax rate increase is projected to be 5.81 percent, and while

that is somewhat higher than years past, it is on par with or less than the increases faced by other area schools districts.

"With this budget proposal, we are able to preserve the strength of our educational program," said Superintendent Mark Villanti. "We have taken care to make reductions in areas that will least impact our students and remain conscientious of taxpayer concerns."

District officials cut \$100,000 of spending in a

number of ways from the first budget draft.

Some cost-savings have resulted from exploring ways to improve efficiency, such as participating in an eight-school consortium to move to a self-insured workers' compensation plan.

Other measures include cutting operating and maintenance costs and reducing BOCES services, scaling back staff development, trimming supplies and materials, and limiting the number of field trips. ◀

Projects Outlined

Capital 1: Convert high school room 112 to a science classroom/lab.

Cost: \$100,000

Capital 2: Renovations/replacement including handicapped access ramps, electrical panel, gym sound system, minor roof repairs, create parking area near soccer field, soundproofing and the annex.

Cost: \$100,000





DCS measures of success

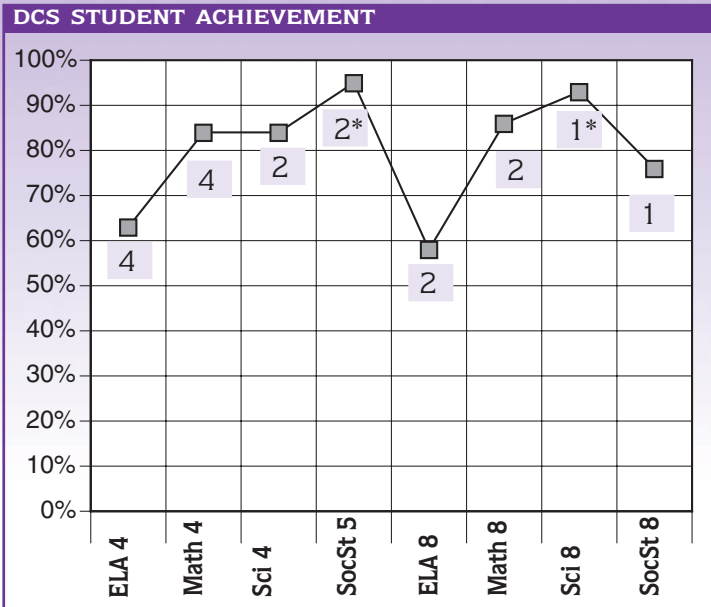
With the cost of education rising, a fair question to ask is: Is the community's investment in its schools paying off?

The graphs, right, illustrate DCS student performance on New York State tests and Regents exams taken in 2003-04. The numbers represent the district's standing compared among the six Schenectady County school districts. Statistics are from the New York State Department of Education's annual School District Report Card.

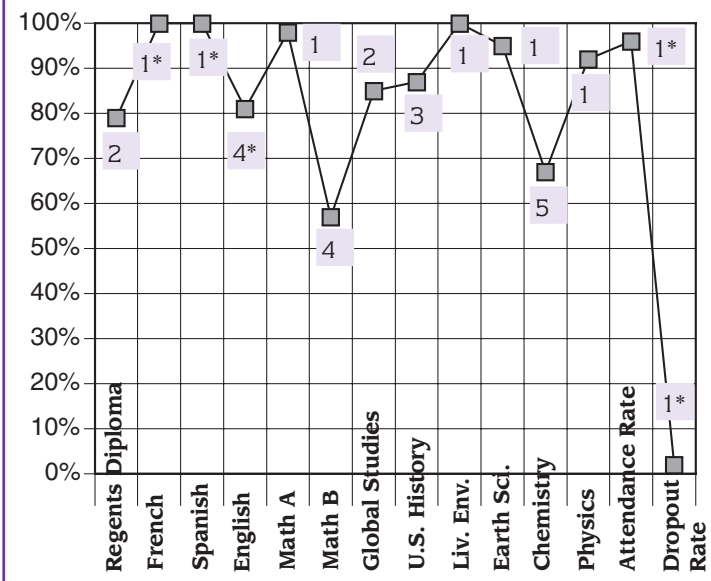
Duaneburg Central has one of the lowest per pupil expenditures of Schenectady County schools, and the lowest compared to districts in nearby Schoharie County, (see "Did You Know?"). Even so, the majority of students continue to meet or exceed the state's learning standards.

With few exceptions, Duaneburg's students consistently rank near or at the top of the academic standings compared with their counterparts from around the county.

On the SAT college entrance exams, the mean verbal and math scores for DCS students were 548 and 557, respectively. The New York State average was 508 verbal and 518 math.



Note about ranking: 1 = high 6 = low
Asterisk (*) next to the number indicates a tie with another district.



Did you know?

On average, the Duaneburg Central School District spends less per pupil (general education) than many of surrounding school districts.

SCHENECTADY CO. AVERAGE	\$6,197
SCHOHARIE CO. AVERAGE	\$6,879
NEW YORK STATE AVERAGE	\$7,595
DUANESBURG CENTRAL	\$5,559

From Statistical Profiles of Public School Districts, a report compiled by the University of the State of New York and the New York State Education Department.

To read about more reasons for the district to be proud, see stories on pages 6-7.

What would happen if the proposed budget is defeated?

Under state law, the proposed school budget can be submitted to the public for a vote a maximum of two times. If a majority of residents vote no and the budget is initially defeated, the Board of Education can choose to adopt a contingency budget, or they may present the same budget or a revised plan to the public for another vote. If it is defeated a second time, the district **must** adopt a contingency budget — which would place a cap on new spending.

Based on this year's formula, the state-imposed spending cap is 3.24 percent. (Some exclusions are allowed.)

For DCS, that would require \$446,586 in cuts from the proposed 2005-06 budget. The results of a contingency budget could include:

- Reductions in instructional and non-instructional staff,
- Curtailing extracurricular clubs and interscholastic sports,
- Supplies and equipment purchases may be eliminated.

Proposed 2005-06 tax rates

The chart below shows projected tax rates based on estimated state aid and growth in assessments. Please note, however, that the tax rate increases are different among the seven towns comprising the

Duanesburg Central School District. This is because rates are based on property assessments established by each town and equalization rates that are set by the state. Final tax rates will not be available until

August. It is important to note that the school district has control only over the tax levy, which is the total amount of property taxes that must be raised to balance its budget.

TOWN	2004-05 TAX RATE	2005-06 EST. TAX	EST. \$ DIFFERENCE
DUANESBURG	\$44.72	\$47.32	\$2.60
CHARLESTON	42.44	44.91	2.46
KNOX	24.70	26.14	1.44
WRIGHT	21.10	22.33	1.23
PRINCETOWN	43.70	46.24	2.54
FLORIDA	23.49	24.85	1.36
SCHOHARIE	21.10	22.33	1.23

Proposition 2: Bus Purchase

Proposition 2 on the May 17 ballot will ask voters to approve the purchase of two school buses to replace older buses and a vintage 1959 tractor, at a cost not to exceed \$146,485.

The purchase includes:

- A 71-passenger bus for a maximum cost of \$76,735,
- A 30-passenger buses at a maximum cost of \$44,750, and
- A maintenance tractor at a maximum cost of \$25,000.

Typically, larger buses must be replaced every 8-10 years, while the smaller buses (which travel further distances each school day) are replaced every six to seven years. By maintaining a regular replacement schedule, the district can keep its bus fleet current without overburdening taxpayers.

The district will borrow the money and pay it back over four years, with the first payment due during the 2006-07 school year.

The district will receive approximately 70 percent state transportation aid reimbursement for bus purchases, including principal and interest costs.

This means that state transportation aid will pay approximately \$85,039 toward the purchase of these buses, while the remaining sum will be picked up by local taxpayers. The district will not receive aid toward the tractor expense.

Balancing affordable tax rate and sound basic education becomes even trickier

The first on-time state budget in two decades is good news for school districts. It means that instead of estimating revenue from the state – as district officials were forced to do in previous years – school budgets can be developed using definite figures. While this is certainly helpful to the budget process, it hasn't improved the state aid picture.

"Finance isn't like a piece of artwork," said Business Administrator Lew DeFilippo. "Numbers

can't be redrawn to be made more attractive."

Don't believe everything you read...

Newspaper reports often tout the record amount of aid New York State provides for education. In a broad sense this assertion is true, but only when all categories of aid – including operating, transportation, special services, and building – are tallied collectively.

Consider this: During the 2002-03 school year, DCS received \$2,297,099 in operating aid compared to \$2,190,029 for the current school year — a decrease of

\$107,070 or 4.66 percent.

Why is that significant? Because operating aid is the funding school districts need to support the day-to-day business of education. And the expenditures to which operating aid is applied are rising well above the rate of inflation.

That has meant property owners in smaller communities, such as Duanesburg, have become increasingly responsible for helping shoulder the cost of education because of shrinking state revenues and not much commercial development.





How is your tax dollar spent?

Instructional costs represent the largest area of expense. Approximately 54.3 percent of the budget is spent on these costs, which include teacher salaries, supervision, special education services and other pupil services. Employee benefits account for the second largest area of expenditure, at nearly 18.7 percent of the budget.

<u>Expenditure Summary</u>	<u>2004-05 Budget</u>	<u>Proposed 2005-06 Budget</u>	<u>\$ Difference</u>
Instruction	\$6,344,260	\$6,582,961	\$238,701
Employee benefits	1,881,621	2,264,173	382,552
Transportation	\$773,550	835,986	62,436
General support/O&M	1,338,458	1,430,598	92,140
Community service	2,000	0	(2,000)
Debt service	768,221	754,882	(13,339)
Interfund Transfer	\$38,000	247,000	209,000
Total Expenditures	\$11,146,110	\$12,115,600	\$969,490

Where does the money come from?

There are two main sources of income for the Duanesburg Central School District: state aid and local property taxes. State aid provides about 44.1 percent of the revenue while property taxes account for 47.9 percent. The remainder of the revenue, 8 percent, comes from other sources, as shown below.

<u>Revenue Summary</u>	<u>2004-05 Budget</u>	<u>Proposed 2005-06 Budget</u>	<u>\$ Difference</u>
<u>State Aid</u>			
Operating aid	\$3,179,032	\$3,320,094	\$141,062
BOCES aid	430,884	429,185	(1,699)
Transportation aid	800,639	889,868	89,229
Textbook/software/library	73,600	73,733	133
Building aid	523,231	634,101	110,870
Total State Aid	\$5,007,386	\$5,346,981	\$339,595
<u>Local Revenues</u>			
Medicaid	\$40,000	\$40,000	-0-
Investment earnings	30,000	30,000	-0-
Fund balance	411,700	411,700	-0-
Interfund transfers	80,000	300,000	220,000
Penalties: taxes	6,000	6,000	-0-
Services	7,000	8,000	1,000
BOCES classroom rental	26,500	26,500	-0-
Miscellaneous	144,000	145,000	1,000
Property taxes	\$5,393,524	\$5,801,419	\$407,895
Total revenues	\$11,146,110	\$12,115,600	\$969,490

SCHOOL BOARD ELECTIONS

There are three open seats on the Board of Education. The following two candidates have submitted petitions.

▶ **John C. Iseman, Esq.** of Duanesburg Road, Quaker Street is seeking a third term on the school board. He and his wife, Elizabeth, have two sons attending Duanesburg Middle/High School and one daughter in junior college. Mr. Iseman has earned degrees from the University at Albany, College at New Paltz and Albany Law School. He is an attorney in private practice.

▶ **Paul B. Munson III** of Garnsey Road is seeking a first term on the Board of Education. He and his wife, Theresa, have one daughter attending Duanesburg Elementary School and a son in preschool. Mr. Munson is a graduate of Duanesburg High School and earned a degree from Plattsburgh State University. He has been a news videographer for WNYT-TV in Albany for 20 years.

▶ Because there is no third candidate, the remaining open school board seat will be decided by write-in voting. Directions will be provided on the day of the vote.

Who can vote?

All voters must be U.S. citizens, age 18 or older on election day, and residents of the Duanesburg Central School District for 30 days immediately prior to May 17.

Absentee ballots

Upon request, absentee ballots will be issued to residents who are unable to vote in person for specific reasons such as illness, disability, or out of town. For an application, call the district clerk at 895-2279. Completed applications must be received by Tuesday, May 11, if the ballot is mailed to the voter. Applications will be accepted through May 17 for in-person pick up and delivery of ballots. **All completed ballots must be received no later than 5 p.m. on May 17.**



Hands-on project brings students, teachers and community together

The Family/Consumer Science classroom is in the midst of receiving an extreme makeover courtesy of the students in Sherrie Bartholomew's Interior Design/Decorating class.

For the past several weeks, 28 students have been busily renovating the kitchen lab. When it is complete in June, there will be five working stations, one designed specifically to accommodate disabled students.

Why remodel?

"It was horrible. It hadn't been updated in years. The colors were really bad... the curtains were yellow with a fruit pattern," explained Steve Mix, who volunteered to wood grain all the existing and new cabinets.

Bartholomew spearheaded the project, first by seeking financial assistance from state representatives. Within a few days of mailing a request, Sen. Hugh Farley's office responded with a check for \$10,000 of state education grant money.

That's when the real work began.

"It shows how our community is willing to

roll up our sleeves and work toward accomplishing something we believe in," said Superintendent Mark Villant. "To have an outside contractor do this type of work would have cost 15 times as much."

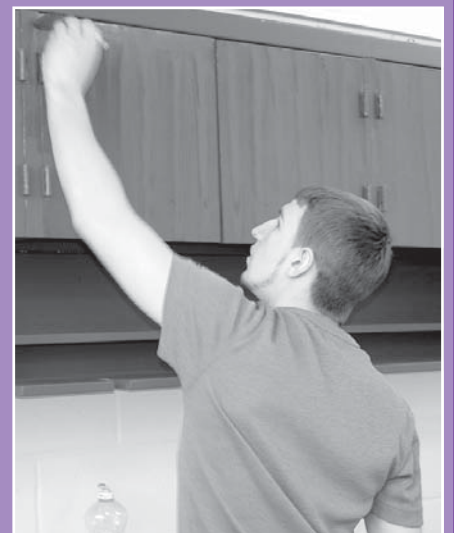
Decorating gurus

Forget Martha Stewart, through this hands-on project, students have become experts on plastering, painting, staining and cabinet-making.

A field trip to Stock Builders was a highlight of the project for ninth-grader Laura White and eleventh-grader Ali Mackie. "It was fun researching paint chips for color schemes," said White.

With their research, six student groups created designs that were then submitted for a vote.

"It was majority rule, no arguing," Mackie explained. "A little of each group's ideas are represented in the final design."



Interior Design and Decorating students work together to renovate the 40-year-old kitchen classroom. Thanks to the generosity of Sen. Hugh Farley and the efforts of students, teachers, local businesses and community members, the space will be completely remodeled.

"This project is student driven. They come in here each day and get right to work," Bartholomew said. "There have been some challenges along the way, but it's been one of the most worthwhile things I've participated in during my teaching career."

Mrs. Bartholomew is grateful for the overwhelming support she and her students have received from not only the school community, but also from Duaneburg community members.

"It's been a real team effort to get this off the ground," she said.

Sean O'Flaherty agreed. "I think we've all gotten to know each other better and we work well together."

Bartholomew and her students thank Sen. Farley for his generosity and all those who volunteered their time, offered their expertise and donated materials to the project including:

- Passonno Paints
- Donald Lucarelli, Stock Builders
- Rita Sickles, Capital Region Builders and Remodelers
- Joe, Ryan and Wesley Coppola (electrical work)
- Technology teacher Mark Kepner and his student Michael Dorch (cabinet design/construction)
- Maintenance staff Jim Nesbitt (plumbing)





DCS wrestlers know the value of hard work

Duaneburg High School wrestlers take their sport very seriously — so seriously, in fact, that state champion Jim Almy and sectional champs Carl Breitenstein and Brian Borst have competed in tournaments long after the high school season officially ends. Even the team's only female wrestler, Amy

Whitbeck, has several tournaments lined up in the next several weeks and into the summer.

And these are prestigious tournaments — some by invitation only — where the Duaneburg wrestlers will go head-to-head with the best student athletes from across the country and the Northern Hemisphere.

All four wrestlers, for example, qualified to compete in the National Juniors Championships in Fargo, ND this summer. Almy and Breitenstein will also compete in the National Duals in Oklahoma.

An eleventh-grader, Almy captured the school's first state championship at the Pepsi. He has been wrestling for the past seven years. Breitenstein, also a high school junior, began competing on the varsity wrestling team while in seventh grade. Ninth-grader Borst began his wrestling career in the PeeWee program as a first-grader. Whitbeck, also in ninth grade, followed her brother into the sport and has wrestled for the past three years.

Joe Bena, a wrestling coach for 30 years, came out of retirement last year

to lead Duaneburg's wrestling program.

"It's my hobby," joked Bena, who was inducted into the New York State Wrestling Hall of Fame earlier this year, "and you really can't retire from a hobby."

Determination and focus appear to have been as important to the success of these wrestlers as practice and skill.

"I set a goal for myself and worked toward it," said Borst.

Breitenstein came close last year and missed by a point. "That was my motivation to work even harder this year."

"The accomplishments and excellence of these athletes is no accident," Bena said. "These wrestlers have earned the right to win."



Coach Joe Bena with wrestlers Carl Breitenstein, Amy Whitbeck, Jim Almy and Brian Borst.

More measures of success

Here are some more indicators of success of which we should be proud.

The district had six scholar athlete teams in 2004-05 — meaning, as a team, students maintained a 90% or better average.

During the spring, fall and winter 2004, DCS had six interscholastic teams earn league championships including boys' track, girls' track, baseball, softball, volleyball and wrestling.

Our DCS wrestling team earned the Section II Sportsmanship Team Award.

Wrestler Jim Almy captured the New York State Heavyweight Wrestling Championship (see story above).

The girls' cross country team took second place in the Class D state championship.

Duaneburg Central has consistently been listed in

the Top 25 in The Capital District Business Review's annual ranking of 85 area school districts.

The district received a "School District of Distinction" award by Standard & Poor's School Evaluation Services, which rated area schools for academic achievement and cost effectiveness.

Third-grade project with Baleigh Payne published in the next edition of the

children's book "D is for Democracy."

Staff recognition includes:

- Maureen Chico, WTEN Educator of the Week;
- Joe Bena, Section II Coach of the Year, and named to the New York State Wrestling Hall of Fame; and
- Frank DeMasi, Section II, Class D Cross Country Coach of the Year.



Duanesburg Central School District Budget Notice

School districts are required by state law to mail this information to all households within the district.

If you would like additional information about the budget, please call the Superintendent's Office at 895-5350, ext. 237.

Definitions

Administrative costs include salaries and benefits of administrators and administrative support staff, school board costs, curriculum development, staff development, tax collection, legal and auditing costs, central printing, central data processing, BOCES administrative costs, research, planning and evaluation.

Program costs include salaries and benefits of all teachers and staff delivering pupil services (health, guidance, library, etc.), textbooks, instructional materials, equipment, extracurricular and athletic activities, BOCES program costs, and all costs of the transportation program except bus purchases.

Capital costs includes salaries and benefits of maintenance and custodial staff, debt service on buildings, bus purchases, utilities, general insurance, tax certiorari and other court-ordered costs.

OVERALL BUDGET PROPOSAL

	Budget Adopted for the current School Year	Budget Proposed for the 2005-06 School Year	Contingency Budget for the 2005-06 School Year*
Total budgeted amount	\$11,146,110	\$12,115,600	\$11,669,014
Increase/decrease for the 2005-06 school year		\$969,490	\$522,904
Percentage increase in each proposed budget		8.7%	3.24%
Change in the consumer price index		2.7%	
Resulting est. property tax levy for the 2005-06 school year		\$5,801,419	\$5,354,833
Component Breakdown:			
1. Administrative Component	\$2,838,939	\$3,285,937	\$3,164,816
2. Program Component	\$6,789,837	\$7,097,455	\$6,835,840
3. Capital Component	\$1,517,334	\$1,732,208	\$1,668,358

* What happens if the 2005-06 budget is not approved by a majority of voters?

Under state law, school boards can submit a budget to voters a maximum of two times. If the budget is defeated twice, the board must adopt a contingency budget which would cap new spending at 3.24 percent. (Some exclusions are allowed.) If the district adopts a contingency budget, cuts in the amount of \$446,586 would be required. The board of education would then reduce the budget as they deem appropriate.

BASIC STAR EXEMPTION IMPACT

Estimated Basic STAR¹ Exemption Savings based on a hypothetical home within the Town of Duanesburg with an assessed value of \$50,000.

	Budget Adopted for the for the 2004-05 School Year	Budget Proposed for the for the 2005-06 School Year
Basic STAR tax savings	\$614	\$617
School tax increase/decrease	\$78	\$130
Net Basic STAR tax savings	\$535	\$487

The annual budget vote for the fiscal year 2005-06 by the qualified voters of the Duanesburg Central School District, Schenectady County, New York, will be held at the Duanesburg Elementary School in said district on Tuesday, May 17, 2005 between the hours of 1:00 and 9:00 p.m., prevailing time in the Duanesburg Elementary School, at which time the polls will be opened to vote by ballot or machine.

¹The basic school tax relief (STAR) exemption is authorized by section 425 of the Real Property Tax Law.

Superintendent

Dr. Mark Villanti
895-2279 • FAX 895-2626

Business Administrator

Lewis DeFilippo
895-2279 • FAX 895-2626

Elementary Principal

Dr. Katie O'Brien
895-8310, ext. 222 • FAX 895-2957

Jr.-Sr. High School Principal

Wilford LeForestier
895-5350, ext. 222 • FAX 895-9971

House Principal

Steve Drescher
895-5350, ext. 223

Transportation Dept.

Harry Folckemer, Carolyn Meyer
895-2511

On track for tomorrow...



Duanesburg Central School District

Delanson, New York 12053

Board of Education

Raymond Hawes,
President

Dr. James Breitenstein,
Vice President

Bridget Holmes
John Iseman
Alan Krieger
David Remling
Debra Schardt

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