

February 18, 2010

Dear Families, Students and Staff:

The February break is almost over. We at Haldane celebrated two victories on Wednesday night by both the Boys' and Girls' Basketball teams. We rejoice in their happiness as they advance to the next round of competition.

Imagine a school year without any special after school activities such as the play, concerts or interscholastic athletics? Many districts in our area are contemplating all kinds of cuts to deal with the current economic downturn.

This unfortunate scenario is my segue to the budget. At Haldane we are more fortunate than most school districts. We tightened our belt last year, funded reserves and were careful during the year about spending. We also had the good fortune several years ago to benefit from some extra Parklands revenue. But because we have not had to discuss "devastating" the Arts program or cutting classroom teachers, it's been relatively quiet during budget deliberations. Our budget hearings have not been well attended.

Can our current situation lull us into complacency? I am not sure, but it does worry me. If by some chance the turnout at voting is low, a defeated budget could lead us towards a contingent budget which in turn, if adopted, would require over \$800,000 in cuts. Education at Haldane would not be the same.

As I talk with other school superintendents in the region, they worry about this year and worry even more about next year's budget and the loss of the temporary Federal Stimulus Funding. If economic trends continue and our state revenues fall, Haldane will be faced with some very difficult choices to make next year. This keeps me - and many of my colleagues - up at night.

So what is my intent in writing this letter? Simply to make sure that our school community is following the budget process. The Board is committed to slowing the growth of taxes. Currently, the Board is considering a 0% tax rate increase for next year and evaluating the impact that this decision would have on the following year's budget.

If attending board meetings is difficult, please follow our deliberations on the local cable Channel 22. Haldane Board meetings are televised on Tuesday & Thursday evenings at 7:00pm courtesy of the Town of Philipstown. In addition, the meetings are pod cast and information is regularly posted and updated on our web page. Should you have any questions or comments please email me at [mvillanti@haldane.lhric.org](mailto:mvillanti@haldane.lhric.org).

Sincerely,

Mark Villanti