

Warrant Article	Discussion
ARTICLE ONE: Budget Proposed: \$33,828,000 Default: \$34,941,251	The proposed budget is over \$1 million BELOW the default budget. The Board and Budget Committee crafted a budget that addresses long-standing cost issues, seeking to align the budget with decreases in enrollment. The Proposed budget was amended up \$918,000 at the Deliberative Session. This budget INCLUDES the costs of the new SAU 93, \$1,202,852, no longer specified in a separate warrant by law, and which is \$58,450 less than last year, and achieve predicted savings. THE SCHOOL BOARD AND BUDGET COMMITTEE SUPPORT THIS ARTICLE.
ARTICLE TWO: All-Day Kindergarten \$191,500	This warrant is aimed purely at student achievement, and is one of the best investments we can make. Too many of our newest students arrive ill-prepared for school. All-Day Kindergarten gives us the chance to catch them up, and save effort (and cost) later. The Board chose to offer this as a warrant to give voters a choice. It includes the costs of new teachers and about \$22,000 of one-time startup costs. THE SCHOOL BOARD AND BUDGET COMMITTEE SUPPORT THIS ARTICLE.
ARTICLE THREE: High School Renovation \$1,343,641	This is the third of five one-year warrants to continue renovations at Monadnock Regional High School. We plan to take \$267,204 from the 1975 Capital Reserve Fund, and \$130,000 from the 2009 School Building Capital Reserve Fund to offset costs, so that the net amount we need to raise is \$946,437. HOWEVER, we qualify for 56% state aid, and expect to receive an additional \$630,700 in the coming year to offset the cost to taxpayers as long as the State fully-funds building aid. This year's warrant addresses major plumbing and electrical work, and handicapped-accessible bathrooms. THE SCHOOL BOARD AND BUDGET COMMITTEE SUPPORT THIS ARTICLE.
ARTICLE FOUR: Health and Safety \$148,300	This year's Health and Safety project will complete the installation of a fire sprinkler system in Mt. Caesar. We replaced their fire alarm system last year. Swanzey's Fire Chief has told us we need sprinklers. We have to do this. This amount is substantially less than the \$250,000 or so that we typically request. THE SCHOOL BOARD AND BUDGET COMMITTEE SUPPORT THIS ARTICLE.
ARTICLE FIVE: Maintenance Trust Fund \$0	We keep an emergency fund for unexpected major repairs. It does not need additional funding this year. NO TAX EFFECT. THE SCHOOL BOARD AND BUDGET COMMITTEE SUPPORT THIS ARTICLE.
ARTICLE SIX: Special Education Trust Fund \$50,000	We keep an emergency fund for unforeseen special education expenses. It was depleted last year by unexpected special education costs. This warrant asks to replenish that rainy-day fund with \$50,000, which will bring the fund balance to about \$112,000. THE SCHOOL BOARD AND BUDGET COMMITTEE SUPPORT THIS ARTICLE.
ARTICLE SEVEN: Fund the deficit \$34,845	Our operating budget of over \$30.7 million ran a deficit last year of \$34,845. This warrant asks you to pay it off. THE SCHOOL BOARD AND BUDGET COMMITTEE SUPPORT THIS ARTICLE.
ARTICLE EIGHT: Mt. Caesar Multi-Purpose Room \$1	This is a petitioned warrant article to build a Multi-Purpose Room (a gymnasium with a stage) at Mt. Caesar School in Swanzey. This is a good idea, but not this year. This warrant was amended to appropriate \$1 at the Deliberative Session. THE SCHOOL BOARD AND BUDGET COMMITTEE DO NOT SUPPORT THIS ARTICLE.
ARTICLE NINE Troy School Land	As a result of a re-survey, we now own 12 acres of swamp land adjacent to Troy School, correcting a mistake made in 1952. There is no impact to your taxes. This warrant is for housekeeping purposes. THE SCHOOL BOARD SUPPORTS THIS ARTICLE.
ARTICLE TEN: Receive reports	This is for housekeeping, asking your permission to receive reports from auditors, consultants, agents, and others. THE SCHOOL BOARD SUPPORTS THIS ARTICLE.
ARTICLE ELEVEN: Listen to you	We try our best to listen to you, and will keep doing so. THE SCHOOL BOARD SUPPORTS THIS ARTICLE.

Aspects of the Cost Problem:

- About 50% of our students qualify for Free or Reduced Lunch for economic hardship, up from 17% in 2008.
- Property taxes fund education, and foreclosures are at an all-time high
- Towns are behind making payments to the district from their tax collections
- Our towns have some of the highest education tax rates in the state
- We are significantly over the per-pupil state average cost
- Our student-teacher-ratio is 10:1, the state average is 12:1
- Our enrollment has dropped from 2,700 to 1,934 (-39%) over the past seven years, similar to many other districts in NH.
- We knew this drop was coming, yet did little to mitigate the negative effects.
- We have roughly the same number of teachers as we had six years ago
- We have almost as many para-professionals as Keene
- We will spend more on Special Education in the elementary schools than we do on Regular Education
- Health insurance costs rose 22.5% last year, and rise 14.3% in this proposed budget
- Retirement contributions have increased.
- We have pared supplies, staff development, and other non-personnel costs to the bone
- Nobody enjoys cutting staff. This has been an unpleasant, but necessary effort.

Warrant Articles

We continue on our frugal path with warrant articles. Our budget is flat over last year, even including increases to teacher and staff pay, health insurance and retirement contributions. Our budget for the new SAU 93 is \$58,000 less than we had for our share of SAU 38 last year.

All-Day Kindergarten is a good academic deal. It will significantly improve student achievement in later years, and may help offset future special education costs. If we save one child from being classed as a one-on-one special ed student, we pay for the first year over the 13 years of that child's attendance.

The High School Renovation warrant continues the work to bring our high school up-to-date, including compliance with the Americans With Disabilities Act, and improvements to science labs. We hope to repave part of the parking lot, which currently causes some SUVs to bottom out, and takes a toll on our plows in winter.

The Health and Safety warrant finishes the sprinkler system at Mt. Caesar, required to meet the Swanzey Fire Chief inspection results. We have to comply with fire code, and keep children safe.

We hope to have over \$630,000 of state building aid coming soon. It goes in the general fund to be returned to the taxpayers.

We need to pay off our last-year deficit, and fund the Special Ed rainy-day account.

Goal-Setting and Planning

The District's Goal-Setting and Strategic Planning effort continues to progress. Having adopted a goal to be the best school district in the state (why settle for less?), participants identified the need to integrate our schools with our communities, make sure all families and students feel welcome, conform curriculum across the elementary schools, make sure we develop teachers, especially the newest ones, while maintaining our facilities.

We recognize that we are developing students for a future we cannot imagine. What, then, do we do? **We seek to have students who learn to act on the things that matter on a scale that makes a difference in a future we cannot imagine.** Several subtle points: students learn; we don't teach them. They learn to act, not just study and regurgitate. The things that matter are the issues our communities face: a strong local economy, sustainable sources of food, energy and climate, an aging population, and, yes, educating our young people. The scale is our communities, where students' actions can make a significant difference. For our teenagers, we intend to deeply immerse them in their communities defining and helping solve real problems, learning important skills along the way.

For our high schoolers to be effective, however, they must learn the basic skills in the elementary schools. **We must pursue rigorous development of literacy and numeracy that make sure every child is at grade level by third grade, especially in reading and writing.**

The overall theme of our strategic direction, therefore, is "Rigor and Action."

Literacy

The District has initiated a Literacy Task Force, whose job it is to improve reading and writing results for students in the district.

Now in the planning stages, the group envisions steps in identifying and helping students who underperform their age group.

Roughly half of our students enter kindergarten already below their age group for language skills. Half of our 9th graders read below grade level. After 3rd grade, 85% of what a student will learn requires them to read. If they read poorly, they are at risk of being poor learners.

There is a silver bullet for our youngest pre-schoolers. Parents and grandparents, read to your children for only 20 minutes a day. Studies show that children whose parents read to them entered school at-or-above grade level for language skills. It's easy, and it's fun. Your child doesn't care how good you are at reading, and with surprisingly little practice, you'll get much better at reading yourself.

Read good stuff. Your local librarian knows many good, age-appropriate books, and libraries are free. Books-On-Tape work, too, and many libraries have good selections. But 20 minutes a day is "Goodnight Moon" and "Where the Wild Things Are" before bed.

