

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS FROM THE APRIL 3, 2008
RAHWAY BOARD OF EDUCATION
COMMUNITY RELATIONS COMMITTEE
TOWN MEETING

Q1. How many illegal immigrants do you have in the school system?

A1. We do not gather information on the immigration status of our students. We do, however, keep information on where students reside in our community. If we become aware that a student may have moved out of our school district but is still attending one of our schools, an investigation is conducted by our school attendance officer. If it is determined that a student no longer resides in Rahway the process of transferring the student out begins.

Q2. Does this Budget continue to support the Arts?

A2. Yes, the budget continues to support our Arts program which does an outstanding job. This budget contains funding for a part time strings teacher for the Middle School, new band uniforms, new instruments, assistant band directors, assistant orchestra leaders, assistant play directors, and a new sound and light board for the High School auditorium. These are some of the highlights of what is contained in the proposed school budget for the Arts.

Q3. What new courses/programs are being offered at the high school in September?

A3. Next year the high school will offer four new Advanced Placement Courses: Physics, Statistics, Comparative Government & Politics, and Government & Politics. Additional Business Education courses are planned as well as a course in African American History. Additional staff for the social studies and science departments is also included in the budget.

Q4. What are the class sizes for the elementary, middle, and high school?

A4. Class size varies by grade level. Some classes are higher than average and others are lower. Average class size in the elementary school is in the low 20's. In Middle School it averages 22-23. In the High School it is 23-24 students per class.

Q5. If a student begins to receive special education services, does that mean they will receive special education services until they graduate?

A5. State law mandates that special education students be re-evaluated every three years. These re-evaluations assure that a student's needs are reassessed and protect a student from remaining in special education for their entire school career if these services are no longer needed.

Q6. Will this Budget allow us to stay current with our technology?

A6. Yes it will. The District entered a lease agreement eight years ago. We use the equity in the lease every year to continue to replace old equipment. The lease payment is a line item in the budget each year. This method has allowed us to look at the goals in the district technology plan and prioritize the needs. It's a constant balancing act to decide what projects are implemented each summer. Not only computers, but software licenses, switches, routers, etc., must be kept current. This new budget will also allow us to hire a Technology Facilitator for the elementary schools. The state is now requiring students to meet certain technology progress indicators in grades 4, 8, and 12. We have to now account for the percentage of 8th grade students in the district that are proficient in technology as dictated by the NJ Core Curriculum Content Standards (CCCS). A facilitator in the elementary schools will work with individual classes in the computer labs to start teaching these skills in the primary grades. This budget also includes a data specialist who will work with all of the student data preparing state and federal reports and assisting administrators with analyzing student assessment data to improve student achievement and disciplinary data to better improve the school climate.

Q7. PBSIS is being implemented at the Middle School. Are there any plans to implement this in any of the elementary schools?

A7. The PBSIS (Positive Behavior Supports in School) project was started last year in the Middle School. That was a data gathering, training and planning year. The goals of this program are to minimize school suspensions, improve student behavior, and recognize the positive behavior of students. The rewards phase of the program kicked off last fall. Students are rewarded both weekly and monthly. Currently there are mixed results as to the program's effectiveness, but the psychologists we are working with

from Robert Wood Johnson state that it takes a much longer period of time to see truly positive results. We are not even through year one yet. At the conclusion of this school year, student behavioral data will be analyzed to see if there has been a decline in disciplinary issues from the previous school year. We expect as a result of our participation in this initiative, that our staff will develop the capacity of our school to create an environment that encourages and supports pro-social student behavior at the school-wide, classroom, and individual student levels using current, research-validated practices in positive behavior support. Roosevelt School is in year one of PBSIS, the data gathering, training, planning phase. The school administration and the staff at Roosevelt School are looking forward to recognizing and rewarding students who demonstrate positive school behavior when they begin the implementation phase next September.

Q8. How are you continuing to involve parents in our schools?

A8. We continue to offer many evening “Family Night” events for parents to attend with their children to learn more about our math and science programs and to actually work on some of the same activities that their children work on during the school day. These events have been well attended. We have also offered Family Reading nights in cooperation with our town library for each of our elementary schools. The high school has hosted parent information nights for parents in grades 6-8 in order to highlight the academic, athletic, and club programs that will be available to their children when they enter the high school. Our PTA/O’s also offer many opportunities for our parents to become involved in the life of their child’s school. We also work with outside agencies such as Prevention Links who offer programs that focus on strengthening families. Our arts and athletic programs also offer many parental involvement opportunities throughout the grades.

Q9. I hear that Roosevelt School is no longer a school in need of improvement. Is this true and how did it come about?

A9. According to the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) rules and regulations, each school must meet 41 performance indicators dealing with state standardized tests in literacy and mathematics. When Cycle 1 reports were issued with the results of the spring ‘07 NJ-ASK tests it showed that Roosevelt did not meet 1 out of the 41 indicators in regard to Special Education students in Language Arts Literacy. The Cycle 2 report also

showed deficiency in this one indicator. Some of our special education students take alternate proficiency assessments because of their special needs. The state recalculated a third time, taking all of these assessments into consideration and found that Roosevelt school did make safe harbor in special education language arts literacy, and therefore, is no longer a school in need of improvement. Mr. Collucci reported that his staff was delighted with the news. Letters were sent home notifying parents of the change in status. It is very unfair to be labeled a school in need of improvement because of a single deficiency. Special education students need to take the same tests as regular education students. Sometimes this is too difficult depending on the disability, and an alternative assessment needs to be given. Our staff at Roosevelt school works very hard with all of our students to help them achieve to their fullest potential.

Q10. Are our safety and security needs met in this budget? In past meetings there were concerns about security raised. You mentioned one additional security person would be added to the Middle School in this budget. Are you comfortable with that?

A10. Presently in the Middle School, we have one safety officer that circulates around the building, and another person sitting at the reception desk to greet visitors into the building and direct them to various locations. An additional safety officer circulating throughout the building would provide greater security to ensure the safety of our students. In the High School we have three safety officers that patrol the halls, and a person also seated at the reception desk. In the elementary schools all the entrance doors are locked. Visitors must buzz to gain access. Security cameras are in place that allow office staff to see who is at the door and they are also able to converse with visitors. In addition, all schools conduct evacuation drills and lock down drills during the school year and emergency management plans are in place that are evaluated and updated annually.