

**BERNARDS TOWNSHIP BOARD OF EDUCATION**  
**Office of the Superintendent**

**MEMO**

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**DATE:** March 22, 2010  
**TO:** Members of our School Community  
**FROM:** Valerie A. Goger *Va. Goger*  
**RE:** Budget Update

Governor Christie presented his budget message last week, and we now have a somewhat clearer understanding of the budgeting process for the next school year. As you have undoubtedly read in the press and viewed on the news, he has reduced state aid in all school districts and municipalities. The reduction in state aid is dramatic; we will lose almost \$4 million next year. This comes on the heels of his announcement earlier in the month that he is suspending the balance of our current year state aid payments, amounting to an additional loss of \$1.6 million in aid this spring. This is a tremendous burden of \$5.6 million that has been shifted onto local taxpayers.

Nonetheless, we need to face the reality that the budget, with a per pupil cost far below the state average, must be reduced even further. In the past few years, we examined options that included reducing full-day kindergarten to a half-day program, offering an eight rather than nine period day at both the high school and middle school, and modifying the world language, enrichment, and guidance programs at the elementary schools. In the current year's 2009-10 budget, we eliminated elementary Spanish and enrichment, increased class size at all levels, reduced administration, and lessened the number of elective offerings at the high school. We were able to postpone the more dramatic kindergarten and high school modifications for this year.

We are still waiting for guidance from the state on retirement incentives and employee contributions to healthcare which could have a dramatic impact on the budget. The final budget that will be presented to the voters must be completed by March 31. The Board will discuss all of its options to close the funding gap at two upcoming meetings: March 24 and March 31. Both meetings will be held at Oak Street School, beginning at 7:00 PM. We invite you to attend and become a part of the process.

(Budget presentations and information can be found at [www.bernardsboe.com](http://www.bernardsboe.com))