

The Dresden Finance Committee (DFC) is charged with monitoring the budget process and reviewing, opining on, and informing the residents of Hanover and Norwich about the budgets presented by the Dresden School Board.

During the past several years, the DFC has expressed its concerns about the magnitude and rate of growth of the Dresden School Budget, while the community seeks clear definitions of education quality and metrics for measuring it that justify the budget's growth.

This year, the DFC examined cost trends over the past decade. Based on the best data available, the growth of the budget during that period was two times the Consumer Price Index for the core budget. Including debt service and special education costs, growth was three-and-a-half times the CPI. Enrollment during the period was relatively constant. Therefore, looking out to the next decade and beyond, a change in budgetary direction is necessary. The DFC is concerned that these increases, which significantly exceed the growth of other living expenses of town residents, are not sustainable.

The Dresden School Board set 2.75% as the target rate of growth for the F/Y 2009 budget, and the school administration has been working diligently to meet that goal. The DFC commends this effort and appreciates continued attention to the goal.

Efforts to define and measure quality have also been ongoing. In October 2006, the SAU Board established a Quality of Education Committee to address this need. The DFC looks forward to substantial and meaningful outcomes from this effort. Interim progress reports can be found at www.sau70.org.

In addition, the 2007/08 teachers contract established two committees. The Compensation Study Committee is looking at alternatives to the current track-and-step salary system. The Evaluation Study Committee is considering alternative performance evaluation systems. Again, the DFC looks forward to substantial and meaningful outcomes from these two committees.

The DFC encourages all citizens to play an active role in both the budget and quality discussions. Please attend the Tuesday meetings scheduled at the Hanover High School library at 7:00 pm

- January 8, 2008: Initial budget presentation.
- January 15, 2008: Budget deliberations.
- January 22, 2008: Budget public hearing and adoption.

Cheryl A. Lindberg, Chair
Dresden Finance Committee