

Superintendent's Budget Message April 28, 2009

This budget, approved by the Newburyport School Committee on April 27, 2009, is unprecedented in nature. It is a budget that brings all of our programs into the next fiscal year and that includes some small strategic investments that will help us to stay on course with our strategic goals. It is unprecedented because of the total budget increase- an increase of just 0.67%.

Arriving at this budget was no easy task. This was achieved through a lot of hard work across the District with the dual intent of minimizing layoffs for FY10 and ensuring that critical elements of our *Strategic Plan* are funded. The administration succeeded in this task by finding additional efficiencies, by making further across-the board-reductions in expenses, and by not carrying forward into FY10, positions that remain vacant due to the budget freeze imposed in October 2008.

The School Committee approved this budget as an *unbalanced* budget based upon current revenue projections. This was my recommendation to the Committee and that recommendation was based upon current financial conditions, including pending state and federal actions that may increase anticipated revenues. That recommendation was also based upon my belief that not funding the recommendation would directly result in harm to students and programs. I believe that as you review this budget, you will be impressed with its transparency, the effort to reduce expenses, and the manner in which the budget will continue to support our strategic goals and initiatives.

The Newburyport Public Schools embarked on a new *Strategic Plan* during the 2008-2009 school year. This plan specifies broad strategies and specific actions that address fifteen important goals. The *Strategic Plan* is a vision document and also a practical plan to improve teaching and learning in our schools. The Plan also addresses building stronger community ties between the schools, parents, and community. Finally, the *Strategic Plan* includes goals to ensure healthier and more engaged students who will be better learners. I think that you will find the document addresses the need for well-rounded, highly-prepared students, for high caliber and caring teachers and staff, and for the entire community to be involved in the education of the City's children. It is a bold and aggressive plan that goes far beyond raising test scores. It challenges the Newburyport Public Schools and the community to go from good to great.

Massachusetts takes great pride in being number one in student achievement in the United States- witness how our students outscored all others on the National Assessment of Educational Progress and how Massachusetts students rank fourth in the world among countries on the international tests of science and mathematics. Our students continue to lead nationally in SAT scores and other measures.

Newburyport takes great pride in how our high school students compare to other Massachusetts high schools. However, we are not satisfied with the status quo. We know that our students can do even better, and that we can, as a school district, do better to ensure that no students are left behind and that all of our students achieve to their highest potential. We also know that we must prepare our students for one of the most challenging futures of any generation past, we must prepare them with 21st century skills and higher levels of literacy, numeracy, and critical

thinking to work and live in a new world of global business and instant communication. We have begun this work in earnest.

This is a time in which the Newburyport Public School system needs to keep its foot on the accelerator. In FY09 our school budget funded critical strategic additions and the District made significant strides in our most basic job- teaching and learning. The District now has an aggressive and comprehensive *Strategic Plan* in place, a plan that will better our students as achievers, improve the communities in which our students learn and in which our staff works, and in which our parents and citizens live. And, it is a plan that will build a healthier and safer future for Newburyport's youth. We cannot afford to take our focus off of these important endeavors.

We continue to provide the best educational opportunities for all of the children in our school system. To continue to do so will require being able to do more with less. This budget is based on that necessity.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Kevin M. Lyons". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial 'K' and a long, sweeping tail on the 's'.

Superintendent of Schools

