

Education Report

The past year has been very busy and extremely challenging for the Edgecomb School Committee. We have been working simultaneously on a renewed school consolidation plan, evaluating keeping grades seven and eight in the Edgecomb Eddy School, and dealing with significant cuts in State Education Funding that were made in Augusta.

School Consolidation

In January of 2009, the voters of School Union 49 – which includes Edgecomb, Boothbay, Boothbay Harbor and Southport – rejected a plan to consolidate with School Union 74 and Jefferson. Shortly after, we began working on a new consolidation plan to create an Alternative Organizational Structure (“AOS”) that would include our four municipalities as well as Georgetown. From the beginning, we felt that Georgetown was a perfect fit with our existing structure, and at the same time, the State lowered the required number of students for forming an AOS to 1,000.

Given this cultural fit and a count of 1,012 students, in early 2010 we filed letters of intent with the Commissioner of Education to form an AOS with Georgetown. In early March, however, we were notified that our application had been denied because the State’s tabulation said we had only 998 students – two students short of the requirement. Needless to say, we were extremely frustrated with the State’s position, but at the same time, new legislation was introduced to give the Commissioner the authority to waive the 1,000 student requirement.

In early April, our Superintendent was approached by the Commissioner’s office and told that if we could fast-track the process, we might be able to form an AOS and have it functioning by July 1 of 2010. For Edgecomb, this was great news because it would add \$50,000 in State Subsidy for the 2010-2011 school year and reduce by a comparable amount the property taxes to be raised by the Town for education.

Union 49 and Georgetown came back to the table immediately and submitted a plan to the Department of Education for formation of the AOS. In this plan, the existing towns in School Union 49 intend to have the AOS operating on July 1, 2010, and Georgetown would join this new AOS on July 1, 2011. If we are successful in this process, School Union 49 will become Rocky Channels School System (“RCSS”), with pretty much “business as usual.” Eileen King will continue as our Superintendent, and she and her staff will remain in the central office in Boothbay Harbor. The Sheepscot River is the unifying element for the five towns that will make up the AOS, and we chose the name Rocky Channels since the Abenaki name for Sheepscot, “Pahseapskok,” means a place where the river is split up into many rocky channels. This precisely describes the tortuous byways of the Sheepscot River and Bay.

Given the process of forming RCSS, our normal education budget process will be pushed into June instead of the usual time in May in conjunction with Town Meeting. At the time of this writing in late April, we expect the following timeline for the process:

- May 11** Public hearing on formation of RCSS at the Edgecomb Eddy School at 7:00 p.m.
May 27 Polls open from 1 p.m. to 7 p.m. to approve formation of RCSS
June 8 RCSS Board Meeting to select a Superintendent approve the RCSS Budget
June 14 Public hearing on RCSS Budget at Boothbay Region Elementary School at 5:00 p.m.
June 21 Public hearing on Edgecomb School Budget at Edgecomb Eddy School at 5:00 p.m.
June 25 Polls open from 1 p.m. to 7 p.m. to approve Edgecomb School Budget

Edgecomb Eddy School and Grades K-6

The school year started with a record number of students for Edgecomb Eddy's K-6 school – 109 – an increase of 23 students in less than two years. The staff continues to work hard to creatively meet the needs of our increasing population, while bearing in mind the town's challenging economic times. Our staff and students were excited to begin the school year with notification that Edgecomb Eddy School had been chosen as Maine's Title I Distinguished Performing School of 2009! With this award came the honor of having two staff members attend the National Title I conference held in Washington, D.C., on a trip paid for by the Department of Education. Kindergarten teacher Jennifer Gosselin, and Dean of Students Lisa Clarke, along with representatives of other high performing schools from around the country, were honored to participate in a parade of distinguished schools where the keynote speaker was Ron Clark, a renowned educator and author. They were also treated to a special luncheon in honor of these chosen schools. A number of workshops were attended, where educators from around the nation shared their expertise in the profession.

Changes in education have required us to move from assessing students by numerical values and letter grades, to what is called standards-based assessments. A standards-based report card lists the most important skills students should learn in each subject at a particular grade level; instead of letter grades, students receive marks that show how well they have mastered the skills. Students also continue to be assessed on their personal development and work habits. This type of reporting gives students specific information about their areas of strength, as well as weaknesses. This has been a big undertaking as Edgecomb's teachers have worked collaboratively with other educators of their grade level or subject areas, to rewrite assessments and report cards, aligning them with the Maine Learning Results.

This is the first year we have been able to offer a Spanish instruction program for all students, (at no additional cost), and look forward to its continued success for many years to come. We were also able to provide physical education instruction at the school, as opposed to transporting the students to the Boothbay Region YMCA, as has been done in previous years. For the second consecutive year, our staff and students participated in a school-wide literacy festival, which is a culminating celebration of our favorite books, authors and personal pieces of writing. Also, for the second consecutive year, Marilee Harris has volunteered her time and expertise to organize two Odyssey of the Mind groups. This is an international educational program that provides creative problem-solving opportunities for students from kindergarten through college. Team members apply their creativity to solve problems that range from building mechanical devices to presenting their own interpretation of literary classics. This year our sixth grade team came in third overall in their category, and brought home Edgecomb Eddy School's first trophy!

Thanks to the ongoing support of many volunteers, we continue to offer programs that not only enrich the lives of our students, but complement their education, as well. Due to the hard work of many, lead by the very competent Mrs. Monica Elder, our Parent-Teacher Club continues to be a driving force behind the many things that make Edgecomb Eddy School so special. In June, Monica will be stepping down as the PTC president, and we wish to offer our heartfelt thanks for the countless hours she has spent over the years working tirelessly for our school community. She will be missed.

Middle School in the Future

During the winter, we also began to evaluate the best way to educate our middle school students. When the new Edgecomb Eddy School was built in 2002, it was done with an eye to the future and has the infrastructure to accommodate up to 150 students. Although we saw a decline in the number of students in the school during the first few years after opening, in the past year and a half, the number of students has increased from 85 to 109. As a result, average class sizes are increasing, and the School Committee felt that now is an appropriate time to explore whether we have the critical mass for the school to educate grades K-8 as opposed to K-6 at present.

At the same time, we are at a crossroads for the funding of education in the State of Maine. According to the Maine School Management Association, “the proposed state budget language makes it clear just how much of the burden of paying for K-12 education is going to shift onto local property taxpayers as state assistance declines. Under state law, each community must cover its local share of the cost of education, as defined by the Essential Programs and Service funding formula, and raise up to the required equalized local mill rate to cover those costs.” On a statewide basis, “the local share for K-12 education this year will be \$918 million versus a state share of \$921 million, plus \$43 million in federal stimulus money. Next year, the local share will be \$997 versus a state share of \$852 million, plus \$59 million in federal money.”

Obviously this will have an impact on how we pay for education in the Town of Edgecomb and one of the most difficult issues that we, as a School Committee, face is how little of our budget is controllable. With only a K-6 school at present, you are well aware that we send our 7-12 students to nearby middle and high schools – this however, comes with a fixed cost per student, and the greater the number of 7-12 students we have, the more it costs our Town.

We are at a point where the projected number of middle school students in the foreseeable future may warrant expanding the Edgecomb Eddy School to K-8. Some very preliminary estimates show that we may be able to save \$100,000 to \$150,000 per year in the next decade based upon the number of middle school students we are projected to have in our Town. These potential savings are very important because we have no control over a very large part of the Education Budget in Edgecomb – upper grades tuition, facilities costs, and special education expense.

The School Committee recognizes that there are many factors involved if a change were to be made, and you have our commitment that maintaining a high quality of education for the students of Edgecomb remains our priority. In difficult economic times, however, we must be creative and look at how best to utilize all of our resources to ensure that all students in our Town receive the best possible education.

To facilitate a dialogue between the School Committee and the community, we held a public meeting on February 9 to go over the pluses and minuses we have identified if a change would be made, how a transition could take place, the financial impact of the change, and most importantly, to hear from all Stakeholders in the process. As we expected, there were very strong opinions on the subject, both for and against the concept. The one point that was clearly made, however, is that our current sixth grade students were already vested in moving to a different school in September. For that reason, at the March School Committee meeting we voted to continue exploring the idea but with earliest implementation being for the 2011-2012 school year.

Thomas Steele-Maley will chair a broad-based committee that will explore, in greater detail, the pros and cons of keeping grades seven and eight at the Edgecomb Eddy School. If we were to expand the Edgecomb Eddy School to include grades 7-8, we expect there would be a need to add to our teaching staff, and the committee will also explore what additional programs would be required. Also, if a change were to be made, we expect it would be phased in over a two-year period so that grade 7 students who have already left the Edgecomb Eddy School would continue their grade 8 studies at the middle school they currently attend. As we explore this option over the next several months, we will be soliciting input from both parents and taxpayers.

2010-2011 Budget

We are pleased to present a budget with expenses, net of debt subsidy, decreasing \$8,506 or 0.4%. The School Committee worked very hard with our Superintendent and Dean of Students to cut costs wherever possible in this year of financial difficulty for the State which has reduced our State Subsidy by \$123,575. If we are successful in forming the Rocky Channels AOS by July 1, 2010, the reduction in State Subsidy will only be \$73,575. If this happens, the increase in the Town Assessment for education for the 2010-2011 school year will be \$96,070 or 5.2%.

Historical Class Sizes	2010-11	2009-10	2008-09	2007-08
Grades K-6	113	109	96	86
Grades 7-8	23	16	24	33
Grades 9-12	59	63	67	69
Total Tuition	82	79	91	102
Total Enrollment	195	188	187	188
Increase in K-6 over 2007-08	27	31.4%		

It is important to note that all of the cuts we have made in the budget are for grades K-6 at the Edgecomb Eddy School since we have no control over tuition costs for grades 7-12. We are doing this at a time when the enrollment at Edgecomb Eddy is projected to be at an all-time high of 113 students. It is important to note that for the same cost we will be educating 27 more K-6 students in the school next year compared to the enrollment just two years ago. This budget has been thoroughly reviewed by the School Committee, the Budget Committee and the Selectmen, and all have voted to recommend that the budget be passed at the Budget Validation Meeting tentatively scheduled for June 21 and to be approved by the voters on June 25.

Respectfully submitted,

Edgecomb School Committee

Stephen Ward – Chair

Dirk Poole

Thomas Steele-Maley

Superintendent of Schools

Eileen King

Edgecomb Eddy School Dean of Students

Lisa Clarke

Edgecomb School Budget

FY 2010-2011

	2010-2011	2009-2010	Change	Variance	Grades K-6		Grades 7-8		Grades 9-12	
	Budget	Budget	YOY	YOY	Total	Per	Total	Per	Total	Per
Number of Students	195					113		23		59
Administration/School Comm	\$ 64,834	\$ 70,381	\$ (5,547)	-7.9%	40,785	361	8,301	361	21,295	361
Instruction	704,600	728,260	(23,660)	-3.2%	704,600	6,235	-	-	-	-
Tuition (Inc tuition for Special Ed)	777,386	761,945	15,441	2.0%	-	-	229,820	9,992	547,566	9,281
Computer Technology	5,853	16,648	(10,795)	-64.8%	5,853	52	-	-	-	-
Student Body Activities	2,532	3,900	(1,368)	-35.1%	2,532	22	-	-	-	-
Health	10,413	6,564	3,849	58.6%	10,413	92	-	-	-	-
Debt Service	359,534	375,234	(15,700)	-4.2%	-	-	-	-	-	-
State Subsidy-Debt Service	(359,534)	(375,234)	15,700	-4.2%	-	-	-	-	-	-
Plant Operation	163,212	163,025	187	0.1%	163,212	1,444	-	-	-	-
Food Service	6,208	6,208	-	0.0%	6,208	55	-	-	-	-
Total Base Expense	1,735,038	1,756,931	(21,893)	-1.2%	933,603	8,262	238,121	10,353	568,861	9,642
Transportation	75,717	83,504	(7,787)	-9.3%	62,912	557	12,805	557	-	-
Special Education Services	331,851	310,676	21,175	6.8%	315,520	2,792	-	-	10,716	182
Total Expense Net of Debt Subsidy	2,142,606	2,151,111	(8,506)	-0.4%	1,312,035	11,611	250,926	10,910	579,577	9,823
State Subsidy/Arra Funds	107,791	231,366	(123,575)	-53.4%						
Additional Susidy if AOS Forms	50,000	-	50,000	0.0%						
Excess Carryover	44,000	40,000	4,000	10.0%						
Carryover-Projected	-	35,000	(35,000)	-100.0%						
Other Revenues	201,791	306,366	(104,575)	-34.1%						
Town Assessment	1,940,815	1,844,745	96,070	5.2%						

Controllable vs Non-Controllable Expense

Controllable	867,812	40.5%
Non-Controllable	1,274,794	59.5%
Total Expense Net of Debt Subsidy	2,142,606	100.0%

