

## Budget Committee

### Recommendations

#### 1. **Creation of a Citizen's Review and Advisory Committee**

The suggested area of responsibilities of a Citizen's Review and Advisory Committee as recommended by the Budget Committee are those that fall squarely within the scope of a duly elected Board of Education. The Board of Education is the citizen's Review and Advisory Committee responsible to the residents and voters of Tolland. It is well established that a board of education is granted broad powers in order to implement and maintain the right of public education in its community. This authority, by necessity, extends to fiscal matters.

While a board of education may appoint committees, even committees of non-board members, to assist it with the performance of its statutory duties, a board of education cannot transfer its fiscal authority to another. The assignment of this responsibility to a group of non-elected individuals by the Board of Education, however, does not relieve the Board from its statutory authority and responsibility and, in fact, moves this responsibility further away from the scrutiny and approval of voters.

If the Board of Education appoints a group of individuals as an advisory committee, moreover, that committee will be considered a "public agency" for the purposes of the Freedom of Information Act ("FOIA") and the committee would then be subject to the entire range of FOIA requirements and restrictions for the posting of meetings, meetings being open to the public and the posting of minutes, to list just a few. Accordingly, the broad definition of committees subject to the requirements of FOIA makes it imperative that any individuals appointed by the Board of Education to serve on any committee understand their obligations under FOIA, as committee violations of FOIA will be imputed to the Board of Education.

#### 2. **Early Graduation – Offer a savings bond or cash scholarship for those able to graduate by grade 11. If \$2,500 or a \$5,000 bond were offered, it is far less than the cost of grade 12.**

Connecticut boards of education are entrusted with implementing the educational interests of the state, specifically by maintaining "good public elementary and secondary schools" as stated in Section 10-220 of the Connecticut General Statutes (CGS). Each Connecticut resident who is between five and twenty-one years of age is entitled to attend public school *unless the individual has been graduated from a high school*.

The "educational interests of the state" as identified by statute, are to provide an equal opportunity to a suitable educational experience for those in the statutorily

defined age group (see above), finance public schools at the minimum expenditure requirement, provide educational opportunities to reduce racial, ethnic and economic isolation, and to enact the mandates of the State Board of Education. Conn. Gen. Stat. § 10-4a.

The providing of funds by the Board of Education to or on behalf of an individual to receive a post-secondary education is beyond the Board of Education's statutorily-designated responsibility and grant of authority. Connecticut law, as currently written, does not authorize or empower boards of education to expend tax-payer funds in the manner suggested by this proposal.

3. **Partner with colleges/universities – To offer college credit courses on a tuition basis in grade 12 to those who have graduated in grade 11. Tolland's education obligation having been satisfied, tuition could be charged for on-line, teacher monitored and/or taught courses. This fee schedule would be set to yield positive cash flow and at the same time cost parents less than at a university.**

With the current graduation requirements a student could not graduate after grade 11. They could complete credits in the middle of grade 12. However, the legality of charging students for a publicly funded K-12 school would be in question. Community colleges are able to receive students who have graduated early and their fees are reasonable. Please note that four year colleges would be hesitant to accept students without a senior year transcript.

We have a fee for students who want to attend Tolland Public Schools from another district. The current tuition charge for attending Tolland High School is \$15,828.

- 4, **Procurement Review – Review all procurement procedures and business processes to determine if the highest value is being received when the BOE or Administration solicits contracts for goods and/or services. Consider using an outside consultant to review and revise major procurement documents (e.g., bus transportation, food services, other special services, etc.). Just renewing or reusing previous contract documents or prices are not acceptable.**

Board of Education Policy 3020 stipulates the process for awarding contracts. A competitive bidding process is required for services and/or goods that exceed \$7,500.

5. **Volunteer Programs – Solicit assistance and establish volunteer assistance programs to provide additional student support and intervention for core programs (reading, math, science). Possible support group candidates could include any town resident or persons from other volunteer groups such as PTO, Tolland Junior Women, Friends of Tolland Schools, Tolland**

**Education Foundation, Tolland Taxpayers Organization, Lions Club, Knights of Columbus, or private employers (e.g., NERAC, CNC, etc.).**

At Birch Grove School we have dozens of parent volunteers who work in the classrooms, in the library, in the art room, and with the running club at recess. Parents also support the book fair, Children's Day, and field day, and other PTO events.

In a small town like Tolland, we are always concerned about confidentiality when allowing parents to be involved with instruction. Our Reading Department used parents to run several programs over the years and now think that they do not have the time to do the coordination and training that volunteers require. Coordination of a huge volunteer effort would require a staff person with the time to organize this effort. Volunteers are not always suited to instructional tasks.

- 6. Job Descriptions – Prepare detailed job descriptions for every staff position within the school system that lists all duties and responsibilities. BOE can then evaluate all staff positions based on educational system value provided. BOE should identify redundant positions and combine similar job functions.**

Job descriptions have been developed for all positions with the District. The fifty-eight (58) descriptions list qualifications, performance, responsibilities evaluation and reporting supervisor. Positions are evaluated annually. There are no redundant positions.

There is a binder in every school office that lists the duties and responsibilities of all Board of Education employees.

- 7. Medical Benefits – Establish a negotiated cost sharing percentage for all health care premiums and expenses. For example, many private sector employees pay 30% and the company pays the other 70% of all health care premiums and expenses. Establish a suitable public sector cost sharing percentage (15%, 20%, 25%) for health care expenses. Offer only one managed care medical plan to all employees instead of two plans currently offered.**

Medical benefits are subject to negotiations with each of the six District bargaining units. Currently, teachers and nurses pay 17% (Individual) and 18% (Two person and Family) for the preferred provider (PPO) plan and 14% (Individual) and 15% (Two person and Family) for the point of service (POS) plan. All other bargaining units currently pay 16%, 18%, 18% for the PPO plan and 13%, 15%, 15% for the POS plan.

Changes to the medical benefits plans have been and will continue to be negotiated at contract renewal time for each bargaining unit.

**8. Standardize Curriculum – Standardize the school curriculum at periodic intervals (every 5 years?). Reassign the full-time curriculum coordinators to teaching or other classroom-related positions.**

There are approximately 1200 units of instruction in the district with about 150-200 units each in language arts, science, social studies and math. It takes approximately one day to upgrade a unit and two days to develop a new unit. These units cannot be physically updated in one year. The Connecticut State Department of Education continually updates and refines content and process standards.

Coordinators are also responsible for teacher support, procurement and distribution of materials, curriculum nights, data team workshops (at least 30 in the last year), content workshops (at least 15 in the last year), and technology workshops (at least 8 in the last year). They are also responsible for working with teachers to develop benchmarks (for every unit of instruction), monitoring the use of benchmark assessment results (for every unit of instruction), maintaining the assessment database for their curriculum, modeling lessons, developing and helping teachers with learning activities and strategies, infusing of technology into the curriculum, preparing and updating the curriculum website, running competitions, participating in program evaluation, supporting the functioning of data teams, providing administrative workshops, providing curriculum reports to the Board of Education, conducting individual student testing, reporting at special education PPT's, and developing and conducting placement testing.

Coordinators also perform other jobs voluntarily – technology implementation and support (we will have three new systems – a budget system, a student management system and a library system) and the jobs normally done by a middle school reading consultant (there is no reading consultant in the middle school).

**9. Facilities Management – Merge all staff and budgets for school buildings and grounds maintenance into the Town Facilities Department. Make the BOE and Town Council /Manager the joint managers of this combined department and transfer funding responsibility to the Town budget.**

Section 10-220 of the Connecticut General Statutes gives the Board of Education authority, among others, for the “care, maintenance, and operation of buildings, land, apparatus, and other property used for school purposes”.

**10. Maintenance Management – Procure and implement a new Computerized Maintenance Management System for all facility management processes. The new system will help track work orders, staff resources, and prioritize maintenance, repairs and equipment replacement needs.**

We have had a maintenance management application system for the past few years that we utilize. School personnel process work order requests on-line, administrative personnel approve the request and the maintenance personnel prioritize and process the work order. The work is performed by the maintenance department or assigned to a school custodian.

- 11. Expense Reimbursement – Establish a detailed employee expense management system to help control expenditures. Consider having the BOE review all major expenses and provide pre-approval for all major purchases, conferences, or travel related items.**

Employees submit a “Request to Attend a Professional Meeting/Conference” prior to attending any professional development. The request is reviewed and approved by the Director of Curriculum and Instruction and the Superintendent. Employees must submit an expense reimbursement form with receipts to Accounting Services for review and reimbursement. Mileage reimbursement forms require documenting the date, destination and mileage prior to reimbursing employees for their expenses.

Board of Education Policy 3020 addresses “major purchases” in excess of \$7,500.

- 12. Minimize Staff Turnover and Increase Staff Satisfaction – Create and implement a staff communication, incentive and reward program to better engage staff and improve employee morale. Elements of the program could include the use of employee surveys, employee suggestion program, staff incentive programs, and/or employee recognition program. Consider providing incentives and recognition to encourage employee attendance and minimize absences.**

Three year ago we instituted an exit interview for staff members who have retired or resigned from the District. Please see results of this survey in response to Item 18. It should be noted that incentive and reward programs would best be part of contract negotiations in so far as it may relate to merit pay.

Please note that principals solicit staff input at meetings on a regular basis throughout the school year. Moreover, principals periodically celebrate excellence with public recognition of teacher achievements.

- 13. Line Item Budget Development & Tracking – Eliminate all intra-budget line item transfers and incur actual project costs in each budget line item. All BOE members and senior administration staff should have on-line real-time access to current budget and status reports. Prepare monthly budget variance reports separate from the tracking of all actual expenditures for each line item.**

Transfers occur as a result of unanticipated expenses and are done according to Board Policy 3010. The budget is a spending plan which starts to be developed in November of the year prior to the fiscal year and is based on specific known expenditures (i.e. contracts) or projected expenses. Expenses will often not be exactly the amount budgeted.

Line item budgeting is currently done when department budgets are developed each fiscal year. Expenses are charged to the appropriate line item account when invoices are paid.

The implementation of the new financial application software will give access to all budget managers and school administrators for review of their accounts and for report generation. Board of Education Policy 3010 outlines procedures for transfers and budget reporting which is done monthly to the Board of Education.

- 14. Review & Justify All Non-Instructional Staff Positions – Review all 43 support services staff position – principal’s office (23), superintendent’s office (3), business services (5), and systemwide positions (13). Consider consolidating similar job functions to reduce the total number of non-instructional staff. Consider also reviewing the need for 67 non-certified staff positions (mostly paraprofessionals) as this represents approximately 22% of the total instructional staff.**

Each of the non-instructional staff positions is continuously analyzed. Each of the positions carries specific job duties.

**Superintendent’s Office:**

Superintendent  
Superintendent’s Secretary  
Business Office/Maintenance Department Secretary

**Tolland High School:**

Principal  
Assistant Principal  
Assistant Principal (.5)  
Principal’s Secretary  
Assistant Principal’s Secretary  
Guidance Department Secretary  
Student Activity/Guidance Secretary  
Front Office Secretary (2)

**Tolland Middle School**

Principal  
Assistant Principal  
Principal’s Secretary  
Student Activity/Guidance/Special Education Secretary  
Front Office Secretary

### **Tolland Intermediate School**

Principal  
Assistant Principal (.5)  
Principal's Secretary  
Guidance/Special Education Secretary  
Front Office Secretary

### **Birch Grove Primary School**

Principal  
Assistant Principal  
Principal's Secretary  
Guidance/Special Education Secretary  
Front Office Secretary

### **Business Services**

Business Manager  
Accountant  
Payroll Clerk  
Accounts Payable Clerk  
Human Resource Generalist

### **Systemwide**

Director of Curriculum  
Secretary  
Director of Pupil Services  
Secretary  
Science Coordinator  
Social Studies Coordinator  
Language Arts Coordinator  
Math Coordinator  
Physical Therapist  
Occupational Therapist  
District Director of Information Technology  
District Network and Telecommunications Administrator  
District Technology Specialist

The Board of Education has reviewed the need for 67 paraprofessionals on two separate occasions this past year. The listing of paraprofessionals with each specific job responsibility was listed. Many of the paraprofessionals are in the area of special education, and designated through the planning and placement team (PPT) process.

15. **Emergency Budget Controls – due to the current financial crisis, implement an immediate hiring freeze and suspension of non-critical employee expenses. Reduce all employee expenses and temporarily eliminate staff registration and attendance for all conferences, seminars, and staff travel**

**services. Eliminate all overtime, contract services, and outside employee contracts.**

The School District has been on a budget freeze since October 20, 2008. Limitations were placed on attendance at professional development training sessions. While certainly economical, it is not practical to eliminate all contract services or outside employee contracts. Emergency situations arise that require contractors for mechanical systems, safety equipment inspections or telephone repairs.

- 16. Athletic Programs – In my view athletics are an integral part of a well rounded education. However, the varsity aspect of athletics only benefits maybe 5-10% of the total school population. Each year the costs for these programs continue to increase out of proportion to the money available in the budget. The residents need to know what the total cost of all athletic programs are to include the cost of equipment (individual & program); transportation to events (bus & driver), maintenance of fields, tracks, gymnasiums. Also, how much do parents pay so their kids can play?**

This past year, 422 individual students participated in the high school interscholastic athletic program or approximately 47% of the total school population. We present a spreadsheet each year that separates the cost for the athletic program into two categories: PROGRAM and SALARIES. The program costs detail the cost of equipment, uniforms, supplies, officials, trainer and transportation. The salary costs detail the costs for all coaches in the program.

Parents currently pay \$125 per athletic team with a family cap of \$500 annually.

- 17. Outsourcing Cafeteria & Janitorial Employees – A study should be undertaken to consider this option. The most expensive cost is salaries & benefits for these employees just as it is for teachers.**

The cafeteria program operated by the school district is managed effectively and efficiently. The program maintains a reasonable balance in its operating budget. Please see response to Item 32.

The janitorial employees work under a bargaining union contract and one represented by the United Public Service Employees Union. Nonetheless, the option of outsourcing janitorial services was reviewed by the Board of Education several years ago, but no action was taken at that time.

- 18. Voluntary Teacher Terminations – Much discussion has ensued around the fact that an inordinate number of teachers are leaving the Tolland school system. We presume exit interviews are being conducted. We would like to know the reasons being given for leaving by these professionals.**

Exit interview results from the past two years indicate the following:

11 Teacher resigned at the end of 2007/2008	6 forms returned
7 Teachers retired at the end of 2007/2008	5 forms returned
1 Teacher resigned during 2008/2009	No form returned
1 Teacher retired during 2008/2009	1 form returned

**What was your reason for leaving?**

Marriage		Salary	5	Opportunity for advancement	2
Parenting		Hours	1	Change in residence	
Workload	2	Retirement	6	Take job in other educational institution	3
Health		Furlough		Better benefits	2
Take job outside education		More Challenge		Pursue education	
Less Stress					

Multiple reasons can be listed.

- 19. Duplication of Maintenance Staff – Both the municipal side and the school side has their own maintenance staff. It would seem to me that if these staffs were merged economy of scope would be achieved possibly thereby leading to fewer staff at lower costs.**

See response to Item 32.

The school maintenance department consists of three workers (one supervisor and two maintainers). With four school, central office and one off-line facility (Parker), the school maintenance department is understaffed. There is no duplication between the District and the Town.

- 20. Review of the Substitute Program – the review should include how much is budgeted for this contractual obligation and how much is actually used. If 100% of the money is not used where does the money go in the budget? What is the total amount of Maternity/Sick Pay time off provided to an employee? Presume the total number of days off is based on the type of delivery. There are significant \$ amounts as many of our teachers are young married females.**

The substitute budget is not budgeted based on the employee contracts. The substitute account not only provides funds for teacher substitutes, the funds cover the cost of custodial, paraprofessional, and secretarial substitutes.

The budget is developed based on the prior two years average expenditures. Any projected balance in the account is transferred to other line item accounts that may require additional funding.

Pregnancy is considered a short term disability and employees may be away from work based on the recommendation of their physician. They are paid for their time away from work provided they have sick time accrued.

The correlation between the money spent or disability time due to pregnancy and hiring of females is irrelevant as we hire staff based on qualifications.

- 21. Block Scheduling – Since block scheduling has been initiated have any studies been conducted to determine if more staffing is required for the elective courses offered. Has this led to the request by Administration to increase the # of hours required to graduate? Are class offerings reviewed annually and those that are only attracting a few students dropped from the curriculum?**

We have conducted studies to determine if more staffing is required by Block Scheduling. We have determined that the staffing would be about even with a Tradition Schedule because staffing would be required for study halls and other duties. The number of credits required to graduate were established seven years ago, and were based on the number of courses that students can take over a four-year period. The class offerings are reviewed annually for student enrollment and courses that are under-enrolled are dropped.

- 22. Computerized Maintenance Management System – Many private companies keep track of their assets through a computerized software program. Many are available. Costs to implement such a program should be investigated. This should also include an annual inventory of all assets to reduce loss.**

Our new financial software includes an asset management module. We will look into the implementation of this module for a future date after the current software implementation is completed.

- 23. Review \$ Amount Requiring Approval – We were informed that the current amount of \$10,000 is in place before any budget expenditure requires approval. There was general agreement in this tough financial climate that this amount should be reduced to \$5,000 or maybe \$2,500.**

Please refer to Item 4 regarding purchases greater than \$7,500. All purchases are approved through the purchase order process. With the new software

requisitions will be required to be submitted and approved by the appropriate manager prior to business manager approval and printing.

- 24. Senior Citizen Discount – Provide a discount incentive to Senior Citizens who are residents of the town to attend school activities. Possibly issue them some type of ID card which would generate information from which a senior citizen volunteer force could be created, a volunteer force within the school district.**

Senior Citizen Discounts are already offered to all of our paid admission athletic events and to most of our drama/music events. We will explore the possibility of establishing a senior citizen volunteer group in the future.

- 25. Voluntary Incentive Programs – Try to involve teachers in some sort of voluntary give back to the school system. The incentive could be wrapped around the appraisal of each teacher. If the teacher’s use of sick time is below an established average (to be determined) than their step increase would be enhanced. However, if it was below then they would be penalized. Somehow the thought has to be conveyed that sick days are not an entitlement but they are to be used when they are needed.**

First, Connecticut General Statutes specify the number of sick days to be allotted to teachers on an annual basis. Section 10-156, CGS, provides for 15 paid sick days.

The teachers’ bargaining union contract is specific relative to salary step increase. There is no provision for merit or demerit pay.

The Administration monitors the number of sick days taken by employees in order to curtail misuse of sick days.

- 26. Preventive Maintenance Program – With the cost of constructing buildings in this day and age, much, much more attention has to be given both internally and externally to the facilities. Even if the budget is tight those \$ committed to maintenance should be shifted to another area.**

District expenditures are tight in all areas. Below is a chart of the most recent District’s latest Strategic School Profiles showing District Expenditures and Revenues for 2006/07. As noted, their expenditures are on a per pupil basis. Please note the expenditure comparisons for Plant Operations and Maintenance.

#### DISTRICT EXPENDITURES AND REVENUES, 2006-07

Expenditures may be supported by local tax revenues, state grants, federal grants, municipal in-kind services, tuition and other sources. DRG and state figures will not be comparable to the district if the school district does not teach both elementary and secondary students.

Expenditures	District Total (in 1000s)	<u>Expenditures Per Pupil</u>			
		District Total	PK-12 Districts	DRG	State
Instructional Staff and Services	\$18,481	\$5,884	\$7,153	\$6,737	\$7,159
Instructional Supplies and Equipment	\$499	\$159	\$262	\$287	\$266
Improvement of Instruction and Educational Media Services	\$1,024	\$326	\$443	\$395	\$429
Student Support Services	\$2,360	\$751	\$764	\$713	\$761
Administrative and Support Services	\$2,848	\$907	\$1,256	\$1,267	\$1,271
Plant Operation and Maintenance	\$3,240	\$1,023	\$1,329	\$1,295	\$1,322
Transportation	\$1,865	\$576	\$605	\$605	\$601
Costs for Students Tuitioned Out	\$327	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Other	\$327	\$104	\$147	\$130	\$145
<u>Total</u>	<u>\$32,337</u>	<u>\$10,169</u>	<u>\$12,203</u>	<u>\$11,824</u>	<u>\$12,151</u>
Additional Expenditures					
Land, Buildings and Debt Service	\$4,751	\$1,513	\$1,875	\$1,979	\$1,882

Please note that Tolland spends less than other comparable K-12 districts, District Reference Group (DRG), or the State in every category listed.

To concentrate on one particular area of the budget as suggested, leaves another area with even less funds.

- 27. Payroll – Again if this is not already being done both the municipal & school employees should be paid through one computer system. Duplicate systems are cost prohibitive. Again, if it is not already done an outside source should be considered to handle this function.**

The Board of Education could take over the payroll functions of the town employees. Currently our payroll clerk is responsible for employee payroll in excess of 600 employees. Adding the modest employee count from the Town could be possible.

- 28. Education System Checking Account – Any funds should always be in an interest bearing account. Also the number of checking accounts should be reduced to the most minimal number for easier auditing and tracking. Also, any Activity Fund accounts should require two signatures to withdraw funds. This ensures that hanky panky will not take place.**

We will investigate the implementation of interest bearing accounts for all student activity accounts. Each school has a student activity account.

Per the Board of Education school activity account procedures, all checks written require two signatures. Additionally, the person responsible for writing checks is not a signatory on the account. Checks require appropriate documentation. The student activity accounts are reviewed as part of the annual Town audit.

- 29. Use of High School Students - All of our high school students are computer literate for the most part. Some of these students have terrific talents that could be put to good use for problems with in house computer systems or developing software for specific class programs. The list could go on and on. Any student providing such assistance would be given a credit or two towards graduating. Let's use our internal resources before we go outside and bring in a computer tech that will charge \$80 to \$100 per hour plus the cost of a service call. I'm sure the liability issues could be worked out.**

We actively recruit among the most qualified students for I.T. department helpers. We use these student helpers for desktop hardware and software tech support, web site maintenance, and for many of the clerical and administrative tasks required to manage more than 1200 pc's. We routinely employ two or three such student helpers.

We only very rarely employ "outside" consulting or technical services. Our own staff has always been quite adequate to handle not only pc's and pc peripherals' problems, but also all of our building-area and wide-area networks, mail service, web service, content filtering, spam abatement, email archiving, backup and recovery service, as well as 100% of application training and tech support. On the rare occasions when we need help from an outside source, the scope of such service is invariably far beyond what could be expected of student help.

Some students currently assist teachers in the district to set up web pages and other communication programs. Due to privacy issues and HIPPA laws, we have to be extremely careful in allowing students to access the in-house computer system.

- 30. Transportation – Ensure that only those students who truly require special accommodations are transported on a special education bus. A child in speech therapy certainly does not need this consideration.**

The Planning and Placement Team (PPT) is required to consider the individual needs of every child identified under special education. This includes transportation. With rare exceptions, children ride the regular school bus. Those children who have physical impairments or behavioral issues that warrant a specially designated vehicle are assigned special transportation. Unless there

are extenuating circumstances that require the PPT to make alternative arrangements, it is true that children who only have speech therapy ride the regular bus.

- 31. Cost of Parking Permit – I believe that the current cost being charged Tolland HS students is \$25 per year. Why not charge \$100 per year? Most students come with 3 or 4 other students meaning a cost of \$20 per student. Either way, \$25 a year is much too cheap. Let’s get realistic here. What do we have school buses for? They drive around town with three high school students sitting in a 40 passenger bus. Outrageous!**

The current cost of student parking permits is \$35.00 per school year. Any changes to the fees and their uses would have to be approved through Board of Education policy.

- 32. Explore the Economics of Outsourcing Catering - Corporations are “experts” (usually, at least the better corporations) in the business they’re in. Whether their business is insurance, manufacturing, travel, etc. They focus on delivering their product or service as efficiently as they can. They are not experts at catering and do not dilute their efforts by providing food service themselves. They outsource catering. The task of the group would be to determine the true cost of running the cafeterias including dietitians, ordering menu planning chefs, cooks, etc. and compare cost to bids for outsourcing this service.**

**Similarly, evaluate the cost effectiveness of building maintenance. Corporations also outsource maintenance for the same reasons stated above.**

The Tolland Public School, Department of Food Service is a successful operation with a qualified and dedicated staff. We provide the students of our district healthy and great tasting meals to help them achieve academic success. We accomplish this by offering a variety of meal choices that follow all of the requirements of the National School Lunch Program (NSLP) while maintaining a fiscally responsible position. As you will see outlined below, we are proficient in our “business of child nutrition”. Management companies are in “business for profit”.

- The Food Service Department is essentially self-supporting and is financially sound. We cover the expense of our labor and all of our benefits, repairs, and equipment. We have recently replaced major equipment in our aging kitchens without BOE expense.
- The Director of Food Service holds a degree in Food Service Management and maintains certification at the highest level with the School Nutrition Association. She has over 30 years of experience in food service operations. The last eight years have been in school nutrition.

- The staff is highly trained in the business of child nutrition. There are currently twenty-seven employees in the department. Eighteen hold sanitation certification and fourteen also hold additional certification with the School Nutrition Association. Participation in child nutrition seminars and conferences is encouraged and realized. There are fifteen employees attending the School Nutrition Association State Conference next week.
- Every five years the State Department of Education is required to conduct a Coordinated Review Effort, or CRE Review, of each school district participating in the National School Lunch Program. It is a comprehensive review focusing on the administrative aspects of the food service program. Tolland had a CRE review in March of 2008 and was commended for such a fine job overall.
- Throughout the district, we serve over 1,400 lunches daily. We work closely with the school nurses and families to ensure the safety of our student population with allergies.
- As a self/operating program, we are able to carry out all of the necessary documentation for the State and Federal requirements of the National School Lunch Program. When contracting with a food service management company, the school district must have a staff (not a part of the management company) to coordinate, monitor, review and control the food service operation. For instance, food service management companies may not process the Free and Reduced Meal Policy, an integral part of the program. It is an extremely detail oriented and time consuming responsibility which is on going throughout the school year.
- We belong to the Eastconn buying cooperative resulting in tremendous buying power and providing flexibility in menu options. We also purchase from local farms in the farm- to-school program.
- We have excellent program guidance and resources available with the Connecticut State Department of Education, the School Nutrition Association, and the National Food Service Management Institute.

We currently employ three individuals to maintain the four open schools, Parker Memorial and the central office building a total of 647,054 sq.ft. The maintenance manager and the two maintainers are responsible for the repairs and maintenance which include heating, ventilating, and plumbing. Our maintainers have many years of experience in their field. The maintenance manager has over 30 years experience in the Tolland School system alone. We do outsource a portion of the specialized work, for example the operation of the security system and the computerized heating/cooling system. We can investigate outsourcing the maintenance of the school district to determine if moving in this direction would be cost effective.

- 33. Policies, procedures, handbooks, menus, and calendars – Should all be on the school website (vs. distributed in hardcopy). Notify parents of this change in advance and if anyone does not have access to a computer, they can let their child’s teacher know and they will receive a hard copy. Additional hardcopies can be available at the office (I think the schools may be trying to go in this direction).**

The school district, for several years, has tried to reduce the costs associated with hard copies of routine information. Accordingly, all of the listed items are already on the web; policies and administrative regulations are on the district pages, and all of the remaining items are on the schools’ websites. The Districtwide Communications Committee to be established in the fall will be looking at ways to enhance communications and reduce paper flow.

- 34. Length of School Year – Do we need to go 183 days? How much does it cost/day to keep the schools open and running? Explore consolidating ½ days to full days.**

The length of the school year has been established through contract negotiations with the teachers’ union (Tolland Education Association) at 183 days. Any change to the length of the school year would have to be negotiated.

The cost savings of eliminating a school day has been estimated to be approximately \$105,000. The amount reflects savings in salaries for all employees working the school year (teachers, paraprofessionals, nurses, secretaries who work the school year) and bus transportation.

The current school calendar has three (3) half days – the day before Thanksgiving, Parent Teacher Conference day in March and the last day of school in June. Consolidation of these days is impossible.

- 35. Consolidate Events – If there is more than one event going on in different schools/ facilities, could they possibly be consolidated into one school instead of having multiple schools open.**

The matter of building/room capacity has to be taken into consideration. The two elementary schools each have approximately 740 students – a consolidated event will need space to accommodate at least 1480 students (and their parents).

Furthermore, the programs at individual schools address the needs of the students in these schools. The programs must be age appropriate to the student body.

**36. External partnerships – Business partnerships, utilize UCONN and what it has to offer. Look in Newington School for substitutes for our substitute teachers to see if there would be a significant cost savings.**

We do utilize the services of UCONN in a variety of ways. We belong to TNE (Teachers for a New Era) sponsored by UCONN. This group analyzes data from our students – comparing the success of students of their graduates with the success of student with teachers who graduate from another institution. In addition, UCONN conducted a physical education program with Tolland and is analyzing our physical education data. Administrators have attended the UCONN assessment series this year. Professors from both language arts and math have consulted with our coordinators. We hope to develop liaisons with the language art professor. A UCONN professor will be providing the keynote for the opening of school in August 2009. We do have some student teachers from UCONN. We do have some observers and student teachers from EASTERN, as well. They require extra work for our staff.

We contacted the Newington School District to ask of their substitute teacher program and found that each school selects its' own substitutes while Tolland has a centralized service. We are not sure of any cost savings using the Newington method.

**37. Cooperative Buying – cost of goods: paper and janitorial, food, office supplies, school supplies. Partner with other schools, our town, and business.**

We currently belong to EASTCONN and CREC, both regional education resource centers which partner with other schools in the regional area. We participate in their bid process for paper, food and custodial supplies.

Although we purchase office and school supplies through specific vendors that are part of other bid lists, we will investigate the purchasing of all supplies from one state authorized vendor.

**38. Seek out More Grants – And research Obama's plan for education.**

We currently apply for as many grants as we can handle. Grants require internal facilitation and many other changes. Grants are almost always targeted – often to things we would have to agree to continue and there is no money to continue. Grant targets are most often tangential to the regular education program. They are, for example, for developing a robotics program. Furthermore, grants have to supplement or be in addition to what we have, not supplant or pay for what we already have.

We are currently carrying out a \$62,140 writing grant, a \$73,149 engineering grant, a \$22,549 Primary Mental Health grant, and a career and technical education grant of \$16,102. We have consortium grants for English Language

Learners and US History and potentially a science and forensics grant. Our family resource center is also funded through a grant.

The District is fully utilizing the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) funding of \$602,760 for the Individual with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA).

**39. Consolidate Volunteers and Staff – Encourage senior volunteers and vice versa students volunteer for seniors.**

We have a volunteer program. Adult seniors are welcome to volunteer. There are many parent volunteers in the younger grades. They are volunteers and, as such generally cannot be depended on to run ongoing programs. They do help alleviate the work load. There are fees associated with screening volunteers through the criminal database program.

Certified teachers or college graduates can join the substitute pool and volunteer to substitute teach. Those who are qualified usually are looking for paying positions. State law requires that substitutes hold a bachelors degree.

A student “Senior Options” program exists at the high school where high school students volunteer in the elementary schools. Community service is a graduation requirement option.

**40. Donations – Teachers can no longer ask for items for the classroom. I think if families were willing to donate such items than they can be asked to – no one has ever been forced to donate items.**

At younger grades every classroom has a room parent. Through the room parent, parents are sent a classroom wish list of possible items to donate to the classroom. These are items such as Kleenex, glue sticks, etc. Families are welcome to donate or not. We have received some negative feedback about this in these difficult economic times. Families buy classroom supplies at the beginning of every year at a cost of \$35 - \$75 depending upon the grade. This does not include the cost of replacement made during the year or the cost of a calculator at the high school level.

**41. Environment – Increase staff and teacher morale (suggestion from staff & teachers on how this can be done). Ask staff, teachers and even students for ideas on how to cut costs. Ask staff, teachers and even students how they feel about the schools and their education. Increase teacher’s salaries to market levels, and then look at benefits, hours teaching, attendance etc.**

Schools have dedicated staff meetings to soliciting suggestions on how to increase staff and teacher morale. As much as possible, suggestions are implemented. Teachers work very hard and the demands on them continue to increase. As demands increase and budgets decrease there is a direct impact

on staff morale. As always, not having enough time to do all they are expected to do is the biggest issue with teachers.

Again, many staff meetings are dedicated to discussions about the changes in education. Many teachers are frustrated by the increasing curricular demands placed on the schools by state and national standards.

Teacher salaries, benefits and teaching hours are all subjects of contract negotiations as prescribed by law.

**42. Multiple Budgets – BOE/Superintendent’s office should have multiple budgets showing different scenarios commensurate with current economic conditions.**

The budget process is very complex requiring the input from the various cost center managers. The budget developed each year is based upon the needs of the schools, keeping in mind contractual obligations, statutory mandates and parental expectations. The budget request reflects the educational needs of the District while keeping in mind the budgetary restraints of current economic conditions. District budgets in the past have included little, if any, new initiatives, and have focused mainly on addressing fixed costs of the District.

**43. Staffing – Non-teaching personnel – an in-depth study of all professionals that are not in an actual teaching position, but are in a supervisory position under the superintendent should be done.**

The State certified supervisory positions in the District include the Superintendent, the four principals, four assistant principals, the Director of Curriculum and Instruction and the Director of Pupil Services. A review of school administrators to pupil ratios has been performed on several occasions. Below is a tabulation of the most recent data:

<u>SCHOOL</u>	<u>STUDENTS PER ADMINISTRATOR</u>	
	<u>TOLLAND</u>	<u>STATEWIDE</u>
Birch Grove	567	275
Intermediate	507	275
Middle	386	254
High	359	200

The Director of Curriculum and Instruction is responsible for using National Standards/Concepts in curriculum development, specifically developing curricula for language arts, social studies, math, world language, health, developmental guidance, music, art, physical education, family and consumer sciences, and technology education. The position is also responsible for developing a performance based curricula, developing comprehensive language arts plans, and developing a computerized database for curricula and benchmark data.

The Director of Pupil Services is responsible for ensuring that special education, psychological, physical and occupational therapy services for students are provided in accordance with federal and state law. This position is also responsible for ensuring that Section 504 of the 1973 Rehabilitation Act are properly implemented.

- 44. Mandates – A closer look at mandates and what ramifications they have on program costs. A breakdown of what mandates can be combined with current subjects. A look at the cost of current mandates that have been put into the school system and can these not be eliminated?**

Please visit the Office of Policy and Management website at [www.ct.gov/OPM/cwp/VIEW.asp?a=2985&q=383072&opmNav\\_GID=1807](http://www.ct.gov/OPM/cwp/VIEW.asp?a=2985&q=383072&opmNav_GID=1807) to view a compendium of all mandates on Connecticut towns. Within this report one can review the specific educational mandates. Costing out the state and federal mandates is a very labor intensive exercise. However, assuming the state share of education funding is a 50/50 split with towns, and given that educational funding totals approximately \$11 million annually to support the District's \$33 million budget, one can assume that at 50% (\$17 million), the unfunded portion is \$6 million.

- 45. School Facilities – Examine the current use of classrooms and scheduling in the school system. Can the current high cost of the middle school be eliminated by moving it back to the previous building? Reopen Parker school and make the high school a junior-senior high school. Thus keep the old high school in our back pocket for future growth.**

During the summer of 2008, the District moved grades 6, 7 and 8 into the former high school as the Middle School and grades 3, 4, and 5 into the former middle school as the Intermediate School. The two schools are fully utilizing the classrooms in those facilities. Parker School has been dormant during the 2008/09 school year and present plans are to keep it closed for the 2009/10 school year while a review of future use is made. The High School cannot accommodate grades 7 through 12 as a combined junior-senior high school with an estimated enrollment of 1400 students.

- 46. Expenditures on School Fields – Examine the number of times the school fields are fertilized, cut and lined for games. Determine the cost per game of field maintenance.**

The Town road crew is responsible for the care and maintenance of the District fields. Based on data provided by the Town, the following are the per game costs for field maintenance:

Soccer	-	\$80 per week per field
Football	-	\$135 per game

Baseball	-	\$55 per game
Softball	-	\$55 per game

- 47. Budget Control 20% Take Back - Look at the reasons for the 20% take back by the Superintendent after the budget is set. Determine why each department can't live within the budget that was submitted. What is the reason for a 20% take back? What are the pressing items that come up during the school year that would require a 20% reserve?**

We no longer hold back 20% of the departmental budgets.

- 48. School bus routes – Take a close look at specific neighborhoods that would lend it to having all children assemble at a specific junction point for bus pick-up. This could eliminate the constant stopping and starting in many neighborhoods.**

We will engage the current transportation provider to investigate the current pickup/drop-off routes of students when they develop bus pickup and drop-off locations this year. Board Policy 5040 outlines the procedures to be followed regarding transportation of students.

- 49. Staffing-Teachers – Take a comprehensive look at the actual number of hours each teacher spends in front of a class per day.**

The student day is six hours and thirty minutes long. By contract, teachers are provided a half hour lunch and a preparation period that extends approximately 42 minutes at the elementary level and 84 minutes per day at the middle/high school level. At all other times, teachers are instructing students. In addition, teachers are required to work 45 minutes beyond the student day.

- 50. Communication – Increase open dialogue, communication, and opportunities between BOE and town residents.**

The Communications Committee of the Community Conversation made this same recommendation. As a result, a Districtwide Communication Committee will be established for the beginning of the 2009/10 school year to review opportunities to expand communication opportunities to parents and residents of Tolland.

- 51. Volunteerism – Develop and accept volunteers to tutor and/or facilitate/advise/assist with school clubs and co-curricular activities.**

The Co-Curricula Committee of the Community Conversation made an identical recommendation. The District cannot replace a co-curricular (club) 'advisor' position with a volunteer from the community because teachers are offered the opportunity to be an advisor as per their contract. The District has operated some co-curricular activities with a parent advisor in the past, but this has been

with a special arrangement with the union. Running co-curricular activities that are outside the authority and scope of the administration of the school presents many challenges such as questions of authority, oversight, safety, insurance, reliability, and viability.

- 52. Internships – Further develop internships and intern partnerships with local universities for substitute teaching, in-school tutoring, both remediation and enrichment, reading group facilitation, math assistance, recess monitoring, etc.**

We will explore this recommendation to ascertain the possibility of establishing an internship program in Tolland.

- 53. Co-operative Buying with Other Towns/Districts – Including, but not limited to: books, educational programs, computer hardware, software, and programs, professional development training, sports equipment, paper products, office and classroom supplies, copy/copier services.**

We share professional development training with other districts. We go to other districts, e.g. BEST portfolio analysis, Physical Education fitness changes, and they come here, e.g. Writing grant program use, SEPTA workshops. We often go to EASTCONN and share professional development with many other districts in Eastern Connecticut. The English Language Learner program and the Perkins Center and Technical Education program are cooperative programs. The District purchases through the Capitol Region Education Council (CREC) and EASTCONN. We also utilize vendors through the State bid such as copiers.

The Business Manager belongs to the Regional Interdistrict Consortium. One of the functions of this initiative is to investigate the feasibility of cooperative purchasing with other towns.

- 54. Fuel Budget – First, how much money was included in the budget for heating and bus fuel? Given the rapid and precipitous drop in oil prices, was the budget adjusted for the lower rates?**

The diesel fuel budget for FY 2009-10 totaled \$327,343. The original budget for fuel oil was \$269,812. The diesel budget has been reduced by \$130,086 to reflect the locked-in rate that was effective as a result of our cooperative purchasing bid in February of 2009. The fuel oil budget was reduced by \$142,654 as a result of the cooperative purchasing bid.

- 55. School Year – Second, and probably more significant, is the option to close the schools for the two extra days (beyond state and federal minimums) that the Tolland school systems are open. Beyond that, there are several half day sessions that could be combined to a single day to further shorten the number of days children need to be bussed and the buildings need to be heated and lighted.**

While the State requires a minimum of 180 days, Tolland has 183 school days. Any change to the school year must be negotiated with the teachers' bargaining union.

The school calendar contains three half-day sessions. These are the day before Thanksgiving, the spring Parent/Teacher conference day and the last day of the school year. There is no way to combine these days since they are (1) interspersed throughout the school year, and (2) they each serve a distinct purpose.

- 56. Teacher Time Utilization – If push comes to shove regarding spending, with personnel being the big ticket item, we feel a full accounting of teacher time utilization should be part of the process. The BOE should have available a master schedule by day and week, for each school showing each teacher's scheduled assignments. This should include ALL personnel, paras, and special ed, reg. full time, part time and subs, if any. If there is going to be any discussion of personnel changes, especially cuts, an accurate accounting should be reviewed so that an order of importance can be established.**

There is a teacher schedule by building of all staff assignments (teacher, paraprofessionals) that includes regular education assignments, full and part-time.

- 57. Define "EDUCATE" – the Board should ask what exactly defines "EDUCATE" in terms of what the town MUST do by state and federal law. We need to define exactly what the town "must" do minimally to satisfy it's obligation to educate our children, and we need to then identify resources and related costs, (personnel, plant, etc.) to do that. Everything else then can be said to be optional. The Board can then clearly break this out to the residents along with its recommendations and let them decide as a community what they feel they can or wish to support financially. At the least, an exercise should be undertaken to define what TOLLAND (BOE & Admin.) would show as a prioritized list of services it feels are necessary to comply with lawful obligations versus what it feels TOLLAND should offer.**

"Educate" is defined under Title 10 of the Connecticut General Statutes – Education and Culture. Title 10 includes all the mandates associated with educating a child. Title 10 includes, among others, the program of study, the certification requirements of teachers and administrators, the responsibilities of boards of education, reporting requirements – both fiscal and programmatic, the definition of the education interests of the State, the amount of sick days afforded teachers, the teacher negotiation requirements, special education procedures, transportation requirements, etc.

The federal government also provides a series of mandates under No Child Left Behind, Individual with Disabilities Act (IDEA), the requirements of the various federal grants under the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA), Title IX (gender equity), etc.

- 58. Communications – As much information as possible should be posted on the BOE web site to allow a Citizen’s committee to utilize without staff assistance and allow parents and interested residents open access to their education systems make up. Full line item budget, as passed and as revised during the school year; school by school master schedule with classes and teacher assignments, check register, purchase records etc. The more open and transparent we can make the system, the greater potential there is for in depth communications.**

The district already places an extraordinary amount of information on the web. Detailed budget documents are on the web as well as specific responses from cost center managers and the superintendent to questions about budget development, priorities, and administration. With the superintendent’s permission, cost center managers are always happy to receive input and respond to questions about their programs. The district’s purchase records, payroll management, and all other financial transactions are governed by very stringent local and state statutes and a comprehensive professional audit is performed every year.

- 59. Memberships – Audit real value of memberships, including CABA, NASB and all other organizations. Investigate alternate funding sources or elimination of memberships and paid subscriptions.**

The District does not belong to CABA or NASB. The District does belong other major organizations such as the Connecticut Association of Schools, the Connecticut Association of Public School Superintendents, the New England School Development Education Council, and EASTCONN (Tolland’s regional education service center). The services provided by these organizations are invaluable to the staff and provide information pertinent to the operations of the District. Nonetheless, we will perform a review to ascertain services provided and cost benefit.

- 60. Personnel Management – Use cooperative recruiting, job posting or other personnel-related activities offered by Regional Educational Service Centers.**

**Implement a controlled retirement incentive plan that regulates the flow of retiring staff and allows the district to plan for the systematic replacement of an aging work force. There can be savings, but what is more important is making sure that it is carefully planned to control the exit of employees rather than having the retirements control the district.**

**Have staff development providers come to the district to provide training. It's cheaper than paying employees to travel to the provider.**

**Keep non-critical vacancies open for 30 days before filling the positions and sweep lapse funds, as well as any leave without pay for existing positions, from departmental budgets.**

The District does utilize EASTCONN as well as CREC (both Regional Education Service Centers) for recruitment and other student related services such as group purchasing initiatives, special education transportation services and professional development.

A controlled retirement plan has been reviewed and found not to be cost effective since teachers upon retirement are due payouts for unused sick time. In addition, a plan usually requires an incentive offered to induce an early retirement. This incentive typically reduces any realized savings, if not eliminate it all together.

All schools sponsor staff development at their schools. However, individual teachers seeking specific information on a subject do attend conferences out of the district. The District will review future offerings to minimize cost in this area.

Typically the hiring process takes about 30 days. The posting of a vacancy, the interviewing/selection process with the accompanying offer and notice to former employer usually takes about 30 days before a new staff member begins work.

- 61. Educational Service Delivery - Allocate extracurricular travel money directly to schools based on the number and age group of children served. Let schools "buy" the services they require within the established budget, either from the transportation department or from private vendors. This makes the expense predictable and controllable for budget purposes.**

**Enter into articulation agreements with higher education institutions to allow students to take college courses through distance learning. In some cases, this is cheaper than employing specialized teachers.**

Each school prepares and controls its own budget as it pertains to extra curricular travel. Trips are planned and financed through the District's budget process which begins in November of the year prior to the fiscal year.

The District has reviewed distance learning programs in the past. The reason we have not pursued this opportunity was because there was a requirement to have a certified staff person assigned to coordinate the virtual courses. This was not cost effective. Nonetheless, we will continue to review this option as an alternative for some students.

62. **“Sub-R-Us” – Schedule training at times when substitute teachers are not required. Use parent volunteers to reduce expenditures for substitutes during teacher’s monthly planning meetings.**

The District has five full day training (professional development) sessions during the year. There is no school during these five days and therefore no requirements for substitute teachers. However, individual teachers may enroll in training sessions that are off-site and do require a substitute teacher. This past year, limitations were set that curtailed the number of training sessions for teachers.

There is no need for substitutes during monthly planning meetings. We did however contact the State Department of Education to review whether parent volunteers could be used as substitute teachers. As in all cases, parent volunteers would have to be fingerprinted and have a bachelors degree in order to substitute teach.

63. **Courses – Eliminate low enrollment courses offered at the secondary level. For example, instead of offering six sections of Business Math with an average of 10 students each, offer four sections with an average of 15 students.**

This process occurs annually at the High School. The principal monitors enrollment in all courses and eliminates course offerings when enrollment is low. There are some courses that might have fewer students enrolled, but most of these courses have to be offered because of student ability levels. The chart below indicates average class sizes in Tolland compared to the District Reference Group (DRG) and the State as reported on the Strategic School Profiles (2007/08).

Tolland Public Schools  
Average Class Size

<u>Class</u>	<u>District</u>	<u>DRG</u>	<u>State</u>
Grade K	18.4	17.1	18.1
Grade 2	21.5	18.6	19.3
Grade 5	21.5	20.4	20.9
Grade 7	21.4	19.9	20.5
High School	19.8	17.8	18.6

**ADDENDUM**

1. **Board of Finance – this could help in oversight of the overall budget for both the Town and the BOE side. This could also provide TRANSPARENCY between BOE and Town Council. Potential perceived drawback: This would require a Charter Revision.**

This recommendation requires comment beyond the scope of the District administration.

- 2. Textbooks – Look into ways to consolidate purchasing of textbooks with other districts/school systems OR purchase USED textbooks for our district.**

We will investigate the cooperative purchasing suggestion. However, please note that this would require a similar curriculum and approach to the instructional programs among school systems. We have been updating our textbooks. Buying used textbooks with old copyright dates would go counter to our objective.

- 3. Books/Readers, in general: co-ordinate with PTO, teacher's and Scholastic Company books that can be purchased by students in a coordinated fashion. i.e. a "wish list" could be sent to parents or anyone else interested in supporting the cause of increasing access to readers for the school(s) most in need of readers. Are there youth groups in the area that could also work with the above groups for helping to sort the books as they come in?**

We believe that the PTO's in the District already provide the service in a coordinated manner.

- 4. Roof maintenance – what is done where, when, and any warranty information, and costs involved.**

The District Maintenance Director monitors the conditions of all roofs and has the cost and warranty information. Several partial roof replacement projects have been undertaken and completed within the past five years.

- 5. Capital Improvement Items. How are these determined and by whom? What is the paper trail? Does it need improvement? Could someone volunteer or be subcontracted to help out?**

The capital improvement program begins with a recommended list of projects developed by the District Maintenance Director and the Superintendent. This list is presented to the Board of Education for review and consideration in the fall. The approved list is forwarded to the Town Manager who further refines the list. A public hearing is held to review the Town Manager's recommended list of projects. This list is presented to the Town Council for review and inclusion in the Town Budget. We believe we have the data and working knowledge to identify appropriate needs to develop a list of capital improvement projects. As in all other matters, the issue becomes one of securing the funding for these projects.

