

# Bourbonnais presents financial future predictions; considers full-day kindergarten and new school

by **Laura McElroy**  
Managing editor

Bourbonnais Elementary School District board members were presented with the "worst case scenario" of future financial predictions in order to plan for the future. With the declining consumer index, districts face reduced payments from property taxes.

Despite a bleak outlook, BESD is considering offering full-day kindergarten and began preliminary discussions of building a new elementary school, during their Tuesday, Jan. 27, 2009 board meeting.

A school district's major source of revenue is from property taxes through the tax levy. The yearly increase in the levy is based on the CPI or five percent, whichever is less.

Next year, there will be no change in the CPI, meaning no additional funding from property taxes.

"Five years from now, we would be \$500,000 in the hole if the CPI does not change," said district business manager Kevin Baker.

"The four-year budget projection shows deficits. We are looking at future deficits," said superintendent Myron Palomba. "We either increase revenue, decrease expenses and increase class size or in-

crease taxes."

The budget projections were based on the assumptions of no increase in the CPI and no increase in the per student state aid foundation level formula. The projections were also based upon teacher salary increases of four percent, an increase of 30 students requiring special services, a two percent increase in purchased services and no new teacher positions.

Despite the projected budget deficit, the district began discussions of offering full-day kindergarten. Palomba noted that the program would cost the district up-front costs, but would not affect the long-term financial situation of the district.

## Full day kindergarten

Currently the district operates six classrooms of half-day pre-kindergarten and 16 classes of half-day kindergarten.

"Students participating in full-day kindergarten consistently progress further academically," said Palomba. "Full-day kindergarten has long lasting benefits to the children."

Palomba noted that, if the district did approve offering full-day kindergarten, there would be an initial budgetary impact for hiring teachers and supplying classrooms. If ap-

proved, it would also require additional classroom space.

If approved, the elementary schools would be restructured and Shepard, Shabbona and LeVasseur would become kindergarten through fourth grade schools. Robert Frost School would still provide preschool programs and could offer a half-day 4-year-old kindergarten, stated Palomba.

Palomba added that, in Illinois, full-day kindergarten attendance is counted twice as much as half-day in the state aid formula.

"We would pick up an additional 140 students in the general state aid formula, resulting in additional state funding," said Palomba.

The board agreed more information was needed and a committee will be formed to determine if the community would support a full-day kindergarten program.

## New school?

"My recommendation is to build a new school," said Palomba. Regel added that a new school takes one year to plan and two years to build so preliminary discussions are needed.

To prepare for the future, the district has initiated a new study to obtain future enrollment projections.

There is no available classroom space at Frost, LeVasseur and Shabbona. Shepard has three free classrooms, Liberty has one and the Upper Grade Center has six.

To implement full-day kindergarten or build a new school, either a property tax increase or bond referendum would be needed.

A 20-cent tax increase in local property tax would give the district an additional \$66.67 per \$100,000 of equalized assessed valuation. But, Palomba pointed out, an increase in property taxes reduces state aid.

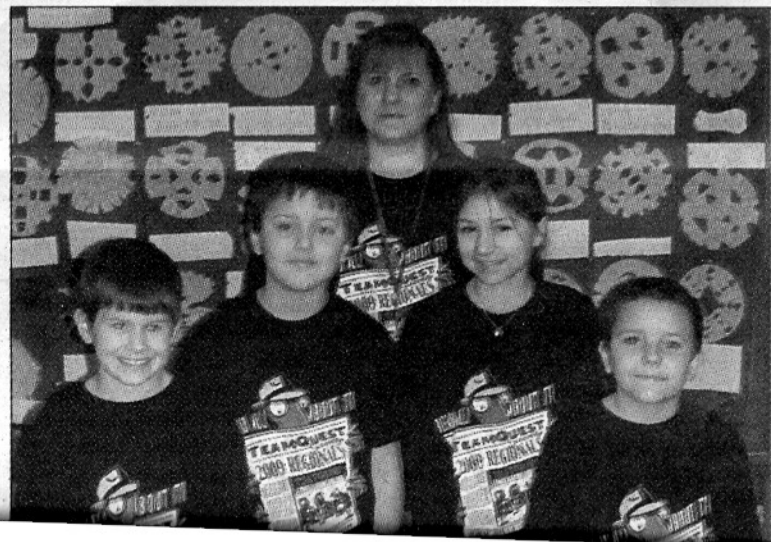
"So the actual budget increase would only be 25 cents

of every dollar we tax. If we increased taxes 20 cents, that would generate an additional \$867,000 per year. But we would lose \$690,000 in state aid," said Palomba.

Palomba recommended conducting an updated enrollment study, surveying parents and the community, further investigating and defining the need for a full-day kindergarten and begin the planning process for a fourth elementary school.

Either a property tax increase or new school building would be up to the voters of the district by referendum. The next available ballot is the spring of 2010.

## Regional winners



To address overcrowding at St. George School, the library/media center was closed, the computer lab and band practice room was moved and two teachers travel from room to room instructing from carts.

A walk-through and open house of the new school areas will take place Thursday, Feb. 5, 2009 from 6:30 to 7:30 p.m. at St. George School. The evening begins at 5 p.m. with the 8th grade regional basketball game.

At 6 p.m. a Title I parent

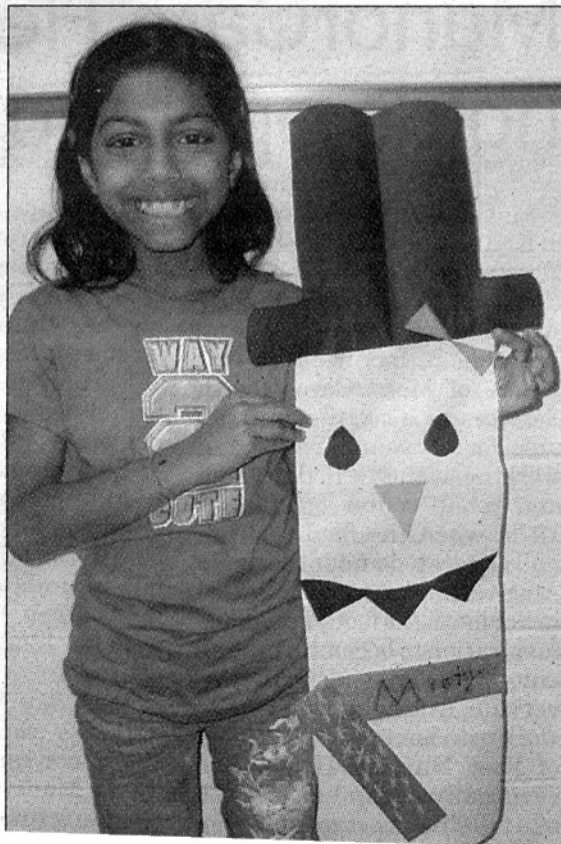
information meeting will be held. At 6:30 p.m. the open house begins and the 8th grade Explore test results will be available.

Preparations were made and financing was secured to complete three projects: a double-wide modular unit is used as classroom space and the district office; the old district office was remodeled into classroom space; and St. George Church parish hall is used for band practice. The new facilities opened Jan. 5.

## Frosty Friend

Photo courtesy  
of Noel LeVasseur  
School

The weather outside has been frightful so Mrs. LeSage's fourth grade class at Noel LeVasseur School in Bourbonnais made some frosty friends that were delightful. Ravina Vasanwala (above) shows off her new "Frosty Friend", Misty.



"Local districts are feeling the effects of our nation's economic crisis. Any increase in state funding is greatly appreciated, especially when it is directed towards fully funding mandates and general state aid," said Diane Rutledge, executive director of the Large Unit District Association. "The approach the board is taking will benefit the most students and give districts the greatest

nearly 800 just prior to No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 to less than 500 currently. This increase is needed to allow the agency to modernize technology, meet labor contracts and comply with state and federal regulations.

•\$4 million increase in new programs to improve student performance and better prepare students for success after

effective teachers and school leaders.

•Every school will offer a safe and healthy learning environment for all students.

The Illinois State Board of Education will provide its budget recommendation to the Governor and General Assembly for consideration as part of the overall State FY 2010 state budget.

# Administrative offices remodel

by **Laura McElroy**  
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Bourbonnais Elementary School District board members approved bids to reconfigure and remodel the district's administrative offices, 281 W. John Casey Rd.

Doug Bright from Johnston Hultsch Birkenbeil Bright Architects presented the board with the bids and information for the remodeling project during the board's Tuesday, Jan. 27, 2009 meeting.

The remodeling project will create a larger board meeting room. The existing storage room on the north side of the building will be used to create the new board room.

When complete, the room will have a capacity to seat 72 and will be three times larger than the current board room.

The board room will also be used for other district meetings and professional development.

In order to complete the renovations, a new entrance to serve both the board room and district offices will be created.

offices will be reorganized.

The low bid for the project, including technology wiring, was from Heritage Development and Construction Company in the amount of \$620,075.

"This bid is well below the estimates we have had. We've been considering this project for a long time and it is identified in the district's strategic plan," said board president Mark Regel. "We need a place for board meetings, which are well attended."

The project will soon begin and will be completed by the end of the school year.

In other news the board:

•Approved the purchase of 10 acres from American Lutheran Church. The land is located adjacent to Liberty Intermediate School. The land will be used in the future for a new bus facility and garage.

•Recognized Kirstyn Bahr, physical education teacher at Robert Frost. She was selected as a 2009 American Alliance for Health, Physical Education, Recreation and Dance (AAHPERD) Jump Rope for Heart (JRFH) Hoops for Heart (HFH)

Grant. Bahr was selected from a pool of applicants nationwide for her commitment to physical education and for the JRFH/HFH program. Bahr will receive a \$1,200 U.S. GAMES certificate for Frost at the AAHPERD National Convention and Exposition in Tampa, FL. In addition, Bahr received \$1,300 to cover a one-year national membership to AAHPERD and conference registration with the remaining money to cover her professional development costs and travel to Tampa.

•Maria Verkler, owner of the Bourbonnais Beef O'Brady's, for its support and dedication of educational reading initiatives and academic achievement in Bourbonnais schools.

Beef O' Brady's provides multiple incentives by rewarding students with reading bookmarks for a free kid's meal and certificates of merit which are redeemable for food and beverages by students. Beef O' Brady's also donated gift certificates to the transportation department for their holiday luncheon.