

PORT WASHINGTON Union Free School District

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Dear Staff and Community,

As has been my open and forthright communications practice, I am providing “Just Plain Facts” to assist the Port Washington voters in determining for themselves how to vote in a school budget election. Voters are encouraged to independently research information regarding our school district. Among other sources of information about our District are the State Education Web site, *Newsday* Web site, *The New York Times*, *Wall Street Journal*, Patch.com and the *Port Washington News*. Please note that the factual information in this letter can be researched at those Web sites as well.

MYTH #1 – Voting “no” for the budget means that taxes will not increase.

REALITY – Under a New York State contingency mandate, taxes in Port Washington will increase whether voters support or reject the proposed budget.

RATIONALE AND SUPPORT – The present school budget that will be voted on, on May 17, 2011, outlines an increase of 2.96% and a tax levy increase of 3.95%. Due to a variety of factors, including increased pension costs, lost state aid, contract provisions and unfunded mandates, even if voters choose to defeat the budget, the minimum amount of budget increase will be based on the state issued contingency number of 1.92%. This means that the real percentage that people are voting on in Port Washington is the difference between 1.92% and 2.96%, which equates to 1.04%.

MYTH #2 – The Port Washington School District has not taken steps to alleviate the tax burden on its residents during these recessionary times.

REALITY – Port Washington, like school districts across the State, has been impacted by current economic conditions. This has resulted in the loss of jobs in our District.

RATIONALE AND SUPPORT – Even if the budget passes, our District will lose 29 positions through retirements and resulting attrition that will not be replaced. Additionally, we are laying off six teachers.

MYTH #3 – The school budget in Port Washington is higher than other North Shore School Districts.

REALITY – Port Washington ranks 10th of 12 North Shore School Districts in per pupil costs. We have been fortunate, even with lower per pupil spending, to have had three consecutive years of record National Merit Semi-finalists and Commended students, outstanding college acceptances, and a near perfect graduation rate. Additionally, between 2002 when we began our partnership and 2010, the average percentage of Regents diplomas for IDEA classified students has more than quadrupled from 17% to 72%. It should be noted that the 72% Regents diploma rate for IDEA classified students in Port Washington is significantly higher than the New York State graduation rate for non-classified students.

In the tradition of the great democracy in America, it is important that we continue to raise the bar on informative and issues-based voting. In that regard, voters should examine the facts analytically and determine for themselves how to vote.

Despite the recession, I believe that the best days in Port Washington are still in front of us, and I have the highest hopes that our wonderful students will continue to achieve at levels of nation-wide excellence.

Thank you for allowing me to be a small part of the wonderful success of this school district and community. As your Superintendent, I will continue to do my very best for you, and believe the best is yet to come for our students, schools and community.

Best regards,



Geoffrey N. Gordon, Ed.D.
Superintendent of Schools