

Dear Friend of the Needham Schools,

In March and April 2011, Citizens for Needham Schools invited the community to a series of conversations with the School Committee about the financial future of our schools. A School Committee member opened each conversation with an explanation of one finding of the School Department's [five-year financial forecast](#)-- a \$1 million School budget shortfall each year for the next five years -- and possible solutions to this problem. The attendees responded to presentation with questions, comments, and ideas.

Citizens for Needham Schools thanks those who attended the conversations. We were inspired by your questions, ideas, and energy, and we appreciate your taking the time to reflect on our schools' future. We would like to conclude the conversations with a summary of the discussions and our suggestions for future action.

We have compiled the [notes](#) from those conversations and posted them on our website. CNS did its best to take handwritten notes on the comments made at each conversation. These notes are approximations of those comments. They are not intended to reflect the opinion of Citizens for Needham Schools.

While each of the conversations had its own personality, common themes emerged. We especially sensed an interest in further exploring:

- Increasing the funds available to the schools through
 - operating overrides
 - non-public funding
 - adjusting the School Department's share of Town revenues
 - increased state funding
- Reducing School costs by
 - examining special education spending
 - employing alternative models of teaching and learning
- Clarifying our expectations for the schools by establishing benchmarks for adequate school services

We were struck by how many valuable ideas were expressed in just one hour of facilitated dialog among concerned citizens. We hope that the conversation will continue and that you will all remain a part of the School funding process. This summer, Citizens for Needham Schools will talk to the School Committee about future actions. Please stay tuned. If you have ideas or if you would like to be involved, please email us at info@CitizensforNeedhamSchools.org.