



QUESTAR III
PUTTING STUDENTS FIRST

Tentative Budget

2012 - 2013



March 23, 2012

Dear Colleagues:

The state's fiscal crisis, coupled with the constraints of the property tax levy cap, has put unprecedented pressures on school boards to cut and contain costs. As you prepare a budget for 2012-2013, Questar III BOCES stands poised and ready to serve your needs, and provide cost savings through shared services.

The structure and mission of the BOCES demonstrate the power of intermunicipal cooperation to achieve economies and efficiencies, expand educational opportunity, close gaps in student achievement, improve educational equity and serve children.

On behalf of the Questar III Board of Education, it is our pleasure to invite component school board members to our Annual Meeting on April 4 at our Conference Center in Castleton. Questar III conducts an Annual Meeting to review its tentative operating plan, in accordance with state law.

I also invite you to learn more about next year's proposed budget by reading this document. With BOCES as a catalyst, we will continue to work together to offer services that serve children and districts regardless of enrollment, income or size of tax base. The times may be urgent but the BOCES solution is time-tested.

Thank you for your interest and support for our continuing efforts to serve your school district.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Robert H. Gibson".

Robert H. Gibson
President
Questar III BOCES

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "James N. Baldwin".

James N. Baldwin
District Superintendent
Questar III BOCES

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Executive Summary

Questar III BOCES serves 22 component districts and one non-component in Rensselaer, Columbia and Greene counties and provides more than 250 shared services statewide.

The organization has been proactive in controlling costs for districts in spite of being faced with the same economic challenges facing our region's schools.

Questar III's proposed administrative budget for 2012-2013 is \$4,202,000, which is \$83,947 more than the current year's budget (\$76,649 of the increased budget will be absorbed by our component school districts).

This budget supports the management, coordination and leadership provided by the BOCES board and central administration.

By law, the 22 Boards of Education within Questar III will vote on the BOCES administrative budget on the same day, April 24. This is the only portion of the BOCES budget that component school districts vote on each year.

The budget for a BOCES differs in several significant ways from that of a school district. The most noticeable difference is that its total budget is actually a collection of several independent budgets. Another difference is that BOCES budgets are strictly revenue-based. That is, they are governed by the revenue generated rather than predetermined expenditures.

As a result, final program budgets for the 2012-2013 school year will depend upon service requests from districts. Each tentative program budget is adjusted as enrollments or district participation varies.

Ultimately, all BOCES services and programs (except for administration and rent) must be requested in writing. Therefore, districts only pay for requested services.

Budgets for services, programs and grants make up approximately 90 percent of Questar III's total budget. A large percentage of services are instructional programs. This includes career and technical education programs for high school students and special education.

Total Budget – Executive Summary

EXPENDITURE CATEGORY	ACTUAL	ADJUSTED	PROPOSED
	EXPENDITURES	BUDGET	BUDGET
	2010/11	2011/12	2012/13
INSTRUCTIONAL SALARIES	\$ 16,580,009	\$ 15,922,490	\$ 16,800,055
NON-INSTRUCTIONAL SALARIES	\$ 5,745,603	\$ 5,402,125	\$ 6,064,079
EQUIPMENT	\$ 1,904,222	\$ 1,974,233	\$ 2,056,355
SUPPLIES & MATERIALS	\$ 1,285,766	\$ 1,772,183	\$ 1,359,320
CONTRACTUAL SERVICES	\$ 2,235,509	\$ 3,989,738	\$ 3,157,113
PROFESSIONAL SERVICE CONTRACTS	\$ 894,990	\$ 1,529,357	\$ 896,453
RENTAL OF FACILITIES	\$ 1,207,085	\$ 1,416,572	\$ 1,170,389
PAYMENTS TO SCHOOLS DISTRICTS & OTHER BOCES	\$ 8,401,438	\$ 10,554,062	\$ 10,741,163
EMPLOYEE FRINGE BENEFITS	\$ 10,812,738	\$ 11,190,107	\$ 12,806,357
POST RETIREMENT BENEFITS	\$ 1,318,750	\$ 1,412,520	\$ 1,464,100
TRANSFER TO CAPITAL	\$ 579,789	\$ 579,789	\$ 803,465
TRANSFER CHARGES FROM OPERATIONS & MAINT	\$ 1,961,070	\$ 2,927,657	\$ 2,189,893
TRANSFER CHARGES FROM OTHER SERVICES	\$ 13,376,324	\$ 12,415,965	\$ 12,238,204
TRANSFER CREDITS	\$ (12,296,907)	\$ (10,952,728)	\$ (10,970,377)
TOTAL	\$ 54,006,386	\$ 60,134,070	\$ 60,776,569

EXPENDITURE CATEGORY	ACTUAL	ADJUSTED	PROPOSED
	EXPENDITURES	BUDGET	BUDGET
	2010/11	2011/12	2012/13
CENTRAL ADMINISTRATION	\$ 3,640,434	\$ 4,400,583	\$ 4,202,000
CAPITAL (RENTS AND LEASES)	\$ 1,700,485	\$ 1,859,689	\$ 1,859,700
CAREER & TECHNICAL EDUCATION	\$ 7,191,783	\$ 8,421,598	\$ 8,536,841
SPECIAL EDUCATION	\$ 18,065,109	\$ 18,143,239	\$ 19,292,564
ITINERANT SERVICES	\$ 1,409,796	\$ 1,637,721	\$ 1,867,900
GENERAL EDUCATION	\$ 4,703,783	\$ 4,462,206	\$ 3,915,328
INSTRUCTIONAL SUPPORT	\$ 4,264,275	\$ 5,021,816	\$ 5,085,674
DISTRICT SUPPORT	\$ 7,060,678	\$ 10,398,151	\$ 10,855,925
SPECIAL AID FUND	\$ 5,970,042	\$ 5,789,066	\$ 5,160,637
TOTAL	\$ 54,006,385	\$ 60,134,069	\$ 60,776,569

BOCES Overview

Boards of Cooperative Educational Services (BOCES) are public education cooperatives that serve as extensions of local school districts. A BOCES provides programs and services that districts may be unable to offer on their own or that would be more economical to share with other districts.

The New York State Board of Regents and the Commissioner of Education charge the state's 37 District Superintendents and BOCES with providing leadership and support in developing the capacity of local schools to enable students to meet both the state learning standards and graduation requirements.

Questar III BOCES serves 22 component districts and one non-component in Rensselaer, Columbia and Greene counties and provides more than 250 shared services statewide.

How Questar III Operates

Questar III BOCES helps school districts operate more efficiently and cost-effectively by pooling their resources and sharing costs. BOCES services are created when two or more school districts have similar needs that can be met by sharing staff members, classroom/office space, equipment, time or expertise.

BOCES has been – and continue to be – an agent for change and a vehicle for choice in our public education system. Through BOCES, districts can provide a rich variety of learning experiences for students of all interests, ages and abilities.

Like public school systems, Questar III is governed by a policy-making board of education. The 11 members of the Questar III board serve three-year terms and are elected by component boards through a special vote held each April.

Questar III board members either serve or have served on local district boards and collectively have rendered more than 325 years of service to the children of our region. Many of them also have experience as board presidents or vice presidents in their districts.

How Districts Purchase Services

All services and programs (except for administration and rent) must be requested, in writing, each year. Therefore, districts only pay for requested services. Prior to providing any service, the BOCES must receive the approval of the Commissioner of Education through the submission of a proposed programmatic and financial operating plan for each service, known formally as a Cooperative Service Request or COSER.

Every year, each local board has the option to increase, renew or cancel any service. Through this process, local boards control approximately 90 percent of the BOCES general fund budget.

Questar III and the component districts enter into formal contracts through its online final service request (FSR) system. Specified in each contract are the number and types of services to be furnished by the BOCES, the number of people to be served, and the amount to be paid to the BOCES.

Paying for BOCES Services

Questar III has no taxing authority. It is funded by the school districts forming the cooperative. Except for the administrative and capital budgets, which are based on each district's enrollment, Questar III districts pay only for the specific services they use.

As an incentive to cooperate and share resources, New York provides BOCES aid to partially reimburse districts for BOCES services. Aid is distributed to districts based on a state approved formula. BOCES aid for Questar III districts range from 36 to 77 percent.

Education Law does not permit a BOCES to carry fund balances into future years. Consequently, Questar III must return any funds that it has collected and not expended in the delivery of services during the following year to each district that participated in the service.

Budget History

Questar III has been proactive in controlling costs for component districts in spite of being faced with the same economic challenges facing our region's schools.

When James N. Baldwin was named Questar III District Superintendent in 2002 he led efforts to reduce millions in administrative expenses from the agency's administration and program budgets. These cost containment efforts continue today.

Our budget and program development efforts continue to strive for fiscal responsibility, accountability and transparency. We have encouraged greater participation by our component school superintendents, and these conversations have allowed Questar III to gain a better understanding of the level of shared services districts value and need.

Superintendent committees continue their active involvement in program development and rate setting. Here, new services are developed or existing services are refined to better meet district needs.

Questar III Budget Philosophy

Questar III's work embodies three core values—*Service, Learning* and *Excellence*—and a commitment to *Putting Students First*.

Through its budget development process, Questar III seeks to:

- Improve its capacity to deliver an educational program that supports student achievement and high academic standards.
- Be faithful stewards and make effective use of the financial resources entrusted to us by our component school districts.
- Move resources, both human and financial, closer to our students and points of service.
- Provide the best possible service to our customers as quickly as possible.
- Increase productivity and provide districts with value for their money.

Proposed Administrative Budget

The administrative budget supports the management, coordination and leadership provided by the BOCES board and central administration, which includes the District Superintendent, business office, regional planning, and board clerk.

It also contains funding to support activities associated with the state learning standards, certification office and regional initiatives in health and safety, communications, grant writing, fingerprinting and superintendent professional development. This budget also supports an ongoing multi-BOCES initiative to develop and maintain a regional human resource database to assist school districts in negotiating labor contracts.

CENTRAL ADMINISTRATION	ACTUAL EXPENSES 2010/11	ADJUSTED BUDGET 2011/12	PROPOSED BUDGET 2012/13
INSTRUCTIONAL SALARIES	\$ 310,154	\$ 309,139	\$ 255,746
NON-INSTRUCTIONAL SALARIES	\$ 659,842	\$ 674,925	\$ 809,528
EQUIPMENT	\$ 989	\$ 10,402	\$ 9,750
SUPPLIES & MATERIALS	\$ 107,993	\$ 113,722	\$ 57,275
CONTRACTUAL SERVICES	\$ 105,673	\$ 165,279	\$ 151,019
PROFESSIONAL SERVICE CONTRACTS	\$ 207,305	\$ 510,383	\$ 239,400
PAYMENTS TO SCHOOLS DISTRICTS & OTHER BOCES	\$ -	\$ 90,000	\$ 90,000
EMPLOYEE FRINGE BENEFITS	\$ 418,279	\$ 447,312	\$ 524,539
POST RETIREMENT BENEFITS	\$ 1,318,750	\$ 1,412,520	\$ 1,464,100
TRANSFER CHARGES FROM OPERATIONS & MAINT	\$ 45,411	\$ 101,629	\$ 50,497
TRANSFER CHARGES FROM OTHER SERVICES	\$ 466,038	\$ 565,272	\$ 550,146
TOTAL	\$ 3,640,434	\$ 4,400,583	\$ 4,202,000

Questar III's proposed administrative budget for 2012-2013 of \$4,202,000, which is \$77,451 below a contingency budget of \$4,279,451.

The state requires that health insurance costs for all BOCES retirees be included as part of the BOCES administrative budget. While the Rensselaer-Columbia-Greene Health Insurance Trust has been aggressive in keeping these rates low for the BOCES and member districts, legacy costs remain a significant burden for Questar III and its component districts (34.8 percent of the administrative budget pays for retiree benefits).

Questar III has also experienced a decrease in grant revenues and interest income, which supplement the administrative budget. The loss of grant revenues increases the administrative burden school districts must pay. When funded, these grant-funded or contract-funded groups pay a prorated portion of operational expenses for the central office building, but as grant funding decreases (or ends), other program areas must absorb these expenses.

The BOCES Reform Legislation of 1993 requires the presentation of the administrative budget as separate from the capital budget (rents and leases). The legislation limits the salary of the District Superintendent and mandates the separate reporting of the District Superintendent salary and benefits as follows:

State of New York portion of salary and fringe:

<i>District Superintendent Salary</i>	\$ 43,499
<i>Federal Insurance Contributions Act and Medicare</i>	\$ 9,920

BOCES portion of salary and fringe:

<i>District Superintendent Salary</i>	\$123,679
<i>New York State Teacher Retirement</i>	\$ 16,858
<i>Health & Disability Insurance</i>	\$ 21,788
<i>Workers' Compensation Insurance</i>	\$ 1,945
<i>Unemployment Insurance</i>	\$ 1,945
<i>Auto Allowance</i>	\$ 6,000

Impact of the Administrative Budget

Sections 1950 and 1951 of the NYS Education Law established BOCES and the requirement of member or component districts to pay a proportionate share of the administrative costs.

The impact of the BOCES administrative charge (compared to last year) on local districts' budget will range from a decrease of 7.33 percent to an increase of 16.46 percent.

School districts pay an annual assessment toward the support of the administrative budget based upon their Resident Weighted Average Daily Attendance (RWADA). This means the charge is distributed among the 22 component districts based on a three-year average of student attendance. Thus, districts that have experienced relative increases in enrollment in recent years will see a larger increase.

Annual Meeting and Budget Vote

By law, the 22 Boards of Education within Questar III will vote on the BOCES administrative budget on the same day, April 24. This is the only portion of the BOCES budget that component districts vote on each year. Additional information will be shared with board members at Questar III’s annual meeting on April 4, 2012 at its Conference Center in Castleton, NY.

Rent and Capital Budget

There is no increase in the rent/capital budget for next year.

2011 – 2012 Budget	\$1,859,689
2012 – 2013 Budget	\$1,859,700
Dollar increase	\$11
Percent increase	0%

	<u>2010-2011</u>	<u>2011-2012</u>	<u>2011-2012</u>
Rents to Schools	\$624,097	\$752,900	\$538,750
Rent to Others	\$568,000	\$527,000	\$517,485
Transfer to Capital	\$579,789	\$579,789	\$803,465

Providing school facilities with safe and modern learning environments for students is critical. Questar III continues to engage school and community leaders to consider future developments in our region and what facilities it will need to meet the future needs of its programs and districts.

There are several factors affecting next year’s rent and capital budget. We have budgeted for capital projects at Sackett Educational Center (parking lot and drainage).

As our two educational centers age, Questar III needs to replace or substantially renovate the Rensselaer Educational Center in Troy and the Columbia-Greene Educational Center in Hudson. This year, we are renovating the greenhouse area at Columbia-Greene to increase our learning space. However, we are still weighing options for the Rensselaer Educational Center because of provisions within the new property tax levy that would have affected our school districts.

Questar III is also making a commitment to providing equal opportunities for high school students to attend our career and technical education (CTE) programs by

balancing our array of offerings. For example, the agency is exploring the possibility of expanding the Green Technologies and Renewable Energy program (currently based only at Columbia-Greene Educational Center in Hudson) to Rensselaer County.

Several years ago, Questar III and Capital Region BOCES established a lease with the University at Albany Foundation to provide space for Tech Valley High School at East Campus location. Each BOCES pays half of the rent.

A number of years ago, as part of its long-term facility planning, Questar III ended several private leases. Two years ago, Questar III signed a lease agreement with Averill Park for the George Washington School, an academy serving special education students. This year, Questar III signed a lease with Catskill for a similar academy based at Catskill High School. This move from Claverack to Catskill resulted in cost savings for the BOCES and school districts.

Additionally, the 10-year lease for our central office building in Castleton expired and we were able to save money by renegotiating our lease agreement with British American. Ultimately, this benefits the various programs and services based at this location, which pay a prorated share of our lease and operational costs, based on square footage.

Program Budgets

The budget for a BOCES differs in several significant ways from that of a school district. The most noticeable difference is that a BOCES budget is actually a collection of several independent budgets.

Another difference is that most BOCES budgets are strictly revenue-based. That is, they are governed by the revenue generated rather than predetermined expenditures. As a result, final program budgets depend upon service requests from districts in May 2012. Each tentative program budget is adjusted as enrollments or district participation varies. These adjustments occur throughout the year as demand for BOCES services fluctuates.

Budgets for services, programs and grants make up approximately 90 percent of Questar III's total budget. A large percentage of services are instructional programs. This includes career and technical education programs for high school students and special education.

Below are highlights for each program area:

Career and Technical Education

Questar III's Career and Technical Education (CTE) programs offer high school students the opportunity to learn career skills while earning a Regents diploma.

These half-day programs integrate classroom learning with professional training in a wide range of exciting fields such as aviation, construction, culinary arts, information technology and mechanical technology.

CAREER & TECHNICAL EDUCATION	ACTUAL	ADJUSTED	PROPOSED
	EXPENSES	BUDGET	BUDGET
	2010/11	2011/12	2012/13
INSTRUCTIONAL SALARIES	\$ 3,163,476	\$ 3,061,376	\$ 3,230,469
NON-INSTRUCTIONAL SALARIES	\$ 474,969	\$ 569,464	\$ 550,388
EQUIPMENT	\$ 139,935	\$ 117,251	\$ 91,705
SUPPLIES & MATERIALS	\$ 329,020	\$ 376,449	\$ 358,840
CONTRACTUAL SERVICES	\$ 537,633	\$ 779,129	\$ 767,300
PROFESSIONAL SERVICE CONTRACTS	\$ 32,590	\$ 84,823	\$ 110,100
PAYMENTS TO SCHOOLS DISTRICTS & OTHER BOCES	\$ 128,641	\$ 150,500	\$ 154,263
EMPLOYEE FRINGE BENEFITS	\$ 1,819,379	\$ 2,041,976	\$ 1,983,320
TRANSFER CHARGES FROM OPERATIONS & MAINT	\$ 796,658	\$ 1,217,337	\$ 1,010,266
TRANSFER CHARGES FROM OTHER SERVICES	\$ 364,322	\$ 320,601	\$ 356,190
TRANSFER CREDITS	\$ (594,840)	\$ (297,308)	\$ (76,000)
TOTAL	\$ 7,191,783	\$ 8,421,598	\$ 8,536,841

This year's budget continues to combine CTE and Tech Valley High School rates in a five-year average. This was done at the request of component school superintendents.

As our programs continue to evolve from a limited number of programs into a broad system of hands-on programs that encompass the skills and job areas that are likely to be in greatest demand in the future (health sciences, information technology, etc.), we are re-aligning resources to better support our programs.

In recent years, we have focused on matching students to the "right" programs. Historically, some students were encouraged to enter a CTE program without the necessary interest or previous academic accomplishments to be successful. Additionally, some students moved from program to program to "explore" different careers - this often resulted in students with a deep and demonstrated interest in a particular program being unable to attend due to limitations in capacity.

Additionally, our total enrollment has decreased since 2008-2009. During this time period, Questar III closed three well-attended CTE programs (early childhood education, auto collision repair and business information systems), and added three new programs that do not have high enrollments at this time. In addition, limits were placed upon CTE enrollment in programs where there were supervision concerns (i.e., culinary arts had 52 students).

Two different task forces were formed to look at these issues over the past several years.

The first task force identified key data and supported the elimination of three CTE programs and the creation of three new programs. These data are shared both with superintendents and students/parents interested in the program. They included employment outlook and training requirements.

An intake process was established and has been reviewed each year with input from superintendents, school counselors, and principals.

In September 2011, Questar III launched three new CTE programs – Aviation Maintenance Technology, Green Technologies and Renewable Energy and Health and Emergency Medical Careers. The green technology and health programs are both one-year survey courses for high school seniors – this continues an effort to provide districts and students with flexibility and choices for CTE.

The second task force – a CTE Futures Committee – looked at options for instructional delivery. The group, which included superintendents, assistant superintendents, principals, CTE administrators and coordinators, met four times. Various CTE models were presented and the group explored the pros and cons of different programming options.

While there was not clear consensus in the group, a number of themes emerged. They included: concerns with geography and transportation costs, the need to balance offerings across the region, the need to continue to use data to drive decision-making, use of online and distance learning opportunities whenever possible and the possibility to link Tech Valley High School, New Visions and CTE offerings.

In addition to working with local school districts, Questar III also partners with various employers, colleges, labor unions, government and human service providers to prepare a 21st century workforce.

Our Work-Based Learning program provides job shadowing, internships and service learning projects onsite at local companies. Whether it's networking computers onsite in Berlin Central School District or visiting Ducommun in Cocksackie, our students learn by working alongside professionals in the field.

Questar III also works with more than 180 local business leaders through its consultant advisory committees. These volunteers advise Questar III on curriculum, trends and technologies in their fields. This process allows the organization to be responsive to school, economic and workforce needs. More importantly, it helps to ensure that CTE students have the knowledge and credentials needed for success in their chosen fields.

The percentage of students in our CTE programs receiving Regents diplomas from their local high schools exceeds the average of all districts in the supervisory district, even though approximately 30 percent of these students with disabilities.

Students from our New Visions programs continue to thrive. These programs provide high school seniors with unparalleled access to local universities, college professors, high-tech companies, scientists and other working professionals that is difficult to provide in the home district.

Special Education

A decades-long leader in providing special education programs and related services to students with disabilities, Questar III provides a comprehensive array of services for students, based on their individual academic capabilities and social/behavioral needs.

SPECIAL EDUCATION	ACTUAL EXPENSES 2010/11	ADJUSTED BUDGET 2011/12	PROPOSED BUDGET 2011/12
INSTRUCTIONAL SALARIES	\$ 7,209,575	\$ 6,891,470	\$ 7,643,053
NON-INSTRUCTIONAL SALARIES	\$ 1,782,796	\$ 1,401,460	\$ 1,433,794
EQUIPMENT	\$ 78,252	\$ 95,726	\$ 54,000
SUPPLIES & MATERIALS	\$ 145,387	\$ 266,341	\$ 169,961
CONTRACTUAL SERVICES	\$ 165,197	\$ 479,248	\$ 231,075
PROFESSIONAL SERVICE CONTRACTS	\$ 43,955	\$ 99,759	\$ 37,250
PAYMENTS TO SCHOOLS DISTRICTS & OTHER BOCES	\$ 2,376,267	\$ 2,400,000	\$ 2,460,000
EMPLOYEE FRINGE BENEFITS	\$ 4,885,404	\$ 4,899,554	\$ 6,048,093
TRANSFER CHARGES FROM OPERATIONS & MAINT	\$ 583,775	\$ 893,458	\$ 603,421
TRANSFER CHARGES FROM OTHER SERVICES	\$ 11,787,362	\$ 10,778,275	\$ 10,759,354
TOTAL	\$ 18,065,109	\$ 18,143,239	\$ 19,292,564

In recent years, the cost of delivering high-quality programs and services has increased and districts have asked us to seek newer, cheaper ways of doing business. In response, we convened a Special Education Task Force to research different delivery models and design/reinvent a model that better meets the academic and behavioral needs of our students in light of uncertain finances, more intensive student needs and greater accountability for all.

Improvements are critical as districts and the BOCES are held accountable for the academic performance of these students.

The task force includes Questar III staff and representatives from component school districts. The task force is expected to deliver a report to superintendents later this spring.

Starting this fall, Questar III will be using State Education ratios rather than class names to place students. With the exception of one program (the 6:1:1 TYP program will be identified since it's a specialized program), the ratios will be the following:

- 12:1:4 for students who are medically fragile
- 8:1:2 for students in district based classes
- 6:1:1 for students in academy based classes
- 6:1:1 TYP program
- 4:1:2 for students in academy based classes who are academically close to grade level or cognitively low functioning with significant behavioral needs

Ultimately, we are looking to construct more homogeneous classes for students. The intake process will review a student's cognitive ability, academic level, age and behavioral needs when assembling classroom rosters. This effort provides districts with greater flexibility when placing a student from the CSE, but it also focuses on better supporting student needs.

Questar III is also exploring the potential of offering an additional program for local school districts, depending on district requests – a deaf/hard of hearing program

In recent years, Questar III received requests to serve students who require smaller, academy based settings to meet their needs. Greene County superintendents and CSE Chairs had also asked Questar III to assist them with programming for their students.

In September 2011, we opened the Catskill Academy at Catskill High School. In addition to Catskill, the BOCES has also signed leases with Averill Park and Rensselaer to support academies onsite in their districts. These schools give us a chance to serve students who would otherwise be placed into private settings or one not connected to the public school system.

This year, we also started a new Spectrum Program at Rensselaer City that provides students on the autism spectrum with opportunities to work towards achieving a Regents High School diploma while strengthening their social and emotional skills. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention estimates that 1 in 110 children in the United States are now diagnosed with an autism spectrum disorder (ASD).

Questar III also continues to focus on literacy and numeracy in the delivery of special education. Next year's budget funds a literacy specialist to work with classroom teachers.

Itinerant Services

Through its itinerant services, Questar III staff members are shared between school districts. This includes both certified and specialty support personnel.

ITINERANT SERVICES	ACTUAL	ADJUSTED	PROPOSED
	EXPENSES	BUDGET	BUDGET
	2010/11	2011/12	2012/13
INSTRUCTIONAL SALARIES	\$ 715,312	\$ 685,132	\$ 846,044
NON-INSTRUCTIONAL SALARIES	\$ 183,808	\$ 192,570	\$ 317,770
EQUIPMENT			\$ -
SUPPLIES & MATERIALS	\$ 1,155	\$ 72,994	\$ 250
CONTRACTUAL SERVICES	\$ 21,542	\$ 50,941	\$ 14,528
PAYMENTS TO SCHOOLS DISTRICTS & OTHER BOCES	\$ 141,355	\$ 225,471	\$ 208,327
EMPLOYEE FRINGE BENEFITS	\$ 332,336	\$ 380,158	\$ 448,489
TRANSFER CHARGES FROM OTHER SERVICES	\$ 14,288	\$ 30,455	\$ 32,492
TOTAL	\$ 1,409,796	\$ 1,637,721	\$ 1,867,900

Services may be provided at the local district, a BOCES site, or at another location, depending on the nature of the request or service provided. Services may also be provided during certain hours each day, certain days each week, or certain periods during the school year, depending on the service. Services may not exceed 60 percent of a full-time service.

Itinerant services include bilingual education, consultant teacher, occupational therapy, orientation and mobility, physical therapy, public information coordinator, school psychologist, school social worker, speech and language therapist, supervisor speech, teacher of the blind/visually impaired, teacher of the deaf/hearing impaired, and transition coordinator.

In recent years there has been an increase in non-instructional salaries of the itinerant services budget due to requests for our onsite communications service. This year, 10 districts purchased this service.

Communications specialists work closely with the administration and staff to accurately represent information that supports the district's mission and goals. This includes an array of onsite communications that range from the development of press releases to newsletters as well as focus group facilitation, communications planning and crisis communications. Several school districts have also launched Facebook pages as a way to reach new audiences and to engage residents.

General Education

Questar III offers a wide array of general and alternative education offerings in distance learning, performing arts, pre-kindergarten, science and technology and regional competitions.

GENERAL EDUCATION	ACTUAL EXPENSES 2010/11	ADJUSTED BUDGET 2011/12	PROPOSED BUDGET 2012/13
INSTRUCTIONAL SALARIES	\$ 1,413,406	\$ 1,104,091	\$ 1,013,744
NON-INSTRUCTIONAL SALARIES	\$ 124,594	\$ 39,252	\$ 63,819
EQUIPMENT	\$ 8,332	\$ 23,639	
SUPPLIES & MATERIALS	\$ 27,807	\$ 137,042	\$ 74,073
CONTRACTUAL SERVICES	\$ 95,391	\$ 66,955	\$ 15,982
PROFESSIONAL SERVICE CONTRACTS	\$ 210,116	\$ 226,113	\$ 170,500
RENTAL OF FACILITIES			
PAYMENTS TO SCHOOLS DISTRICTS & OTHER BOCES	\$ 1,556,087	\$ 1,812,719	\$ 1,852,431
EMPLOYEE FRINGE BENEFITS	\$ 726,343	\$ 572,814	\$ 535,098
TRANSFER CHARGES FROM OPERATIONS & MAINT	\$ 127,244	\$ 191,188	\$ 115,036
TRANSFER CHARGES FROM OTHER SERVICES	\$ 452,953	\$ 288,393	\$ 74,645
TRANSFER CREDITS	\$ (38,490)	\$ -	\$ -
TOTAL	\$ 4,703,783	\$ 4,462,206	\$ 3,915,328

Part of advancing the state standards is providing forceful leadership as an advocate for alternative learning. Questar III has made a significant and longstanding commitment to alternative education programs for at-risk students. These full day programs are expensive, but they are an investment in students that may not graduate without them.

During the last several years, school districts have worked to develop their own “in-house” programs, and thus the enrollment in these programs has declined. While it is still part of our instructional mission to maintain a program for at-risk high school students, the program is undergoing review once again to see if enrollment warrants the continuation of the program. If enrollment further declines Questar III will work with those school districts sending students to structure a program that can best meet the specialized needs of the students attending.

Distance Learning

Working closely with the Northeast Regional Information Center (NERIC), Questar III offers access to a distance learning network that truly exemplifies the nature of the cooperative. Sharing courses that cannot be offered in most districts gives students the opportunity for advance placement offerings and college courses that would not be possible, such as Mandarin Chinese. Participating schools both host and receive courses that provide for extensive offerings for students.

Instructional Support

This budget funds high quality teacher professional development and other instructional support services that benefit thousands of students, teachers and administrators across the region. All school improvement initiatives are coordinated by the Office of School Improvement, which responds directly to needs identified by school districts and/or schools.

INSTRUCTIONAL SUPPORT	ACTUAL	ADJUSTED	PROPOSED
	EXPENSES	BUDGET	BUDGET
	2010/11	2011/12	2012/13
INSTRUCTIONAL SALARIES	\$ 1,013,817	\$ 1,039,067	\$ 931,266
NON-INSTRUCTIONAL SALARIES	\$ 472,814	\$ 448,645	\$ 459,807
EQUIPMENT	\$ 1,475,750	\$ 1,651,063	\$ 1,854,800
SUPPLIES & MATERIALS	\$ 163,320	\$ 206,114	\$ 148,665
CONTRACTUAL SERVICES	\$ 335,841	\$ 449,084	\$ 484,415
PROFESSIONAL SERVICE CONTRACTS	\$ 82,503	\$ 114,024	\$ 102,800
PAYMENTS TO SCHOOLS DISTRICTS & OTHER BOCES	\$ 355,304	\$ 566,344	\$ 578,283
EMPLOYEE FRINGE BENEFITS	\$ 592,289	\$ 620,633	\$ 640,353
TRANSFER CHARGES FROM OPERATIONS & MAINT	\$ 64,571	\$ 135,908	\$ 95,355
TRANSFER CHARGES FROM OTHER SERVICES	\$ 68,036	\$ 77,184	\$ 73,424
TRANSFER CREDITS	\$ (359,970)	\$ (286,250)	\$ (283,494)
TOTAL	\$ 4,264,275	\$ 5,021,816	\$ 5,085,674

Questar III is the only BOCES in the region that offers ongoing embedded professional development in mathematics, ELA, and integration of technology for educators who serve all students. Our goal is to provide support where teachers need it the most – in the classroom.

This year, we have supported the region's schools with a number of initiatives related to Race to the Top and the Regents Reform Agenda. The agency has provided numerous trainings and guidance on implementing the Common Core Standards, APPR and Data-Driven Instruction – School-based inquiry.

Data Coordination and Analysis

This service provides districts with an onsite Data Coordinator/Analyst to help insure that accurate reporting of data is accomplished. The data analysts are experts at providing this level of support, as well as providing analysis of the data and how it can be used for instructional decision making. This team works closely together to make sure that changes in data reporting requirements are met by the districts they serve and that the analysis of test result data can be used effectively.

Online Professional Development

Through a variety of online software products, several of our services are offering training opportunities that allow staff to stay where they are (thus avoiding mileage

costs) and participate via live, interactive sessions that incorporate all of the benefits of a face-to-face meeting without actually being there.

Other school improvement efforts

The Office of School Improvement also coordinates the regional scoring of the 3-8 state assessments in ELA, Mathematics, Science, Social Studies, and the New York State English as a Second Language (NYSESLAT). Additionally, the office supports new principals through the Principal’s Coaching Program. It also works collaboratively with districts to provide Supplemental Educational Services and required bus driver and bus monitor trainings.

Grant Writing

Questar III offers a grant writing support and coordination service. This year, the service was revamped based on input from school superintendents to include three tiers of support. This ranges from collaborative grant development to coaching and “help desk” support to writing/editing grant proposals.

District Services

Districts face many challenges that require innovative solutions or a high level of technical expertise today. Whether it is providing health and safety programs, evaluation services or communicating with the public, Questar III’s district services extend, enhance and enrich the educational capacity of participating districts. Through teamwork and collaboration, these services can solve problems, simplify tasks or support district’s operations. Next year, there will be minimal rate increases driven by employee costs.

	ACTUAL EXPENSES 2010/11	ADJUSTED BUDGET 2011/12	PROPOSED BUDGET 2012/13
DISTRICT SERVICES			
INSTRUCTIONAL SALARIES	\$ 509,589	\$ 701,133	\$ 726,721
NON-INSTRUCTIONAL SALARIES	\$ 1,141,005	\$ 1,209,686	\$ 1,743,984
EQUIPMENT	\$ 58,947	\$ 75,152	\$ 42,100
SUPPLIES & MATERIALS	\$ 290,963	\$ 458,522	\$ 386,497
CONTRACTUAL SERVICES	\$ 488,038	\$ 1,325,320	\$ 1,122,690
PROFESSIONAL SERVICE CONTRACTS	\$ 232,689	\$ 318,251	\$ 180,160
PAYMENTS TO SCHOOLS DISTRICTS & OTHER BOCES	\$ 3,677,640	\$ 5,278,028	\$ 5,397,859
EMPLOYEE FRINGE BENEFITS	\$ 676,551	\$ 846,754	\$ 1,247,373
TRANSFER CHARGES FROM OPERATIONS & MAINT	\$ 72,677	\$ 136,638	\$ 80,034
TRANSFER CHARGES FROM OTHER SERVICES	\$ 223,325	\$ 355,785	\$ 391,953
TRANSFER CREDITS	\$ (310,746)	\$ (307,118)	\$ (463,446)
TOTAL	\$ 7,060,678	\$ 10,398,151	\$ 10,855,925

Business Office Support

Questar III has developed a variety of services to support the increasingly complex school district business operations. In response to district feedback, we have developed a central business office (CBO) service and human resource service. We are also investigating ways for school districts to share transportation staff and operations.

Thanks to the Rensselaer-Columbia-Greene Health Insurance Trust, local school districts have successfully negotiated contract renewals with Blue Shield of Northeastern New York (BSNENY) below the national trend for the past five years. The Trust provides health benefits to more than 10,000 employees, retirees and dependents in 23 districts in a three-county region.

By pooling together resources, the Trust leverages great purchasing power to obtain lower premiums and to spread potential losses over a larger number of policyholders. Over the past several years, the Trust has worked proactively to contain health care costs by negotiating better pricing terms and implementing performance guarantees for vendors that put their fees at risk if they do not meet established performance standards.

The Questar III Purchasing Department routinely generates regional Requests for Proposals (RFP's) or bids for various goods and services. It has been our experience that regional RFP's and bids generate better vendor pricing and save business officials time.

School district compliance and accounting requirements are increasingly complex. Questar III shares our staff's expertise to ensure that all of our components comply with the new Governmental Accounting Standards. An aidable GASB 45/Other Post Employment Benefits (OPEB) valuation service helps districts across the state calculate and manage their OPEB liability.

The State Aid & Financial Planning service continues to be purchased by nearly every school district in New York State. The service is being expanded to offer more onsite support for school districts in business management or operations.

Health and Safety

Questar III's team of health and safety experts serves the vast majority of our school districts. Services range from on-site support to an array of services that can be purchased separately.

Many districts have found that by having a health and safety specialist onsite it has given them the capacity to identify health and safety issues in advance of an incident and that the expense of the on-site person quickly pays for itself in savings.

The service has added offerings in recent years, including a backflow inspection and Class C water operator service (to assist districts with state health compliance for water well systems). Rates for our health and safety services were modified in response to competitors, market value or cross-contracts with other BOCES.

Special Aid

The Special Aid Fund represents anticipated funding for 18 programs. This includes state contracts and grants from the state and federal government. The proposed budget for next year of \$5,160,637 represents funding for Special Education Summer School, LPN program, Adult Education, Library programs and Regional Bilingual Education Resource Network (formerly known as BETAC).

SPECIAL AID FUND	ACTUAL EXPENSES 2010/11	ADJUSTED BUDGET 2011/12	PROPOSED BUDGET 2012/13
INSTRUCTIONAL SALARIES	\$ 2,244,680	\$ 2,131,082	\$ 2,153,012
NON-INSTRUCTIONAL SALARIES	\$ 905,775	\$ 866,123	\$ 684,989
EQUIPMENT	\$ 142,017	\$ 1,000	\$ 4,000
SUPPLIES & MATERIALS	\$ 220,121	\$ 140,999	\$ 163,759
CONTRACTUAL SERVICES	\$ 486,194	\$ 673,782	\$ 370,104
PROFESSIONAL SERVICE CONTRACTS	\$ 85,832	\$ 176,004	\$ 56,243
RENTAL OF FACILITIES	\$ 86,389	\$ 136,672	\$ 114,154
PAYMENTS TO SCHOOLS DISTRICTS & OTHER BOCES	\$ 166,144	\$ 31,000	\$-
FRINGE BENEFITS	\$ 1,362,157	\$ 1,380,906	\$ 1,379,092
TRANSFER CHARGES FROM O&M	\$ 270,734	\$ 251,499	\$ 235,284
TOTAL	\$ 5,970,042	\$ 5,789,066	\$ 5,160,637

The BETAC contract ended June 30, 2011, but was renewed this spring by SED under a new name, RBE-RN. The contract for the Puerto Rican and Hispanic Youth Leadership Institute (PR/HYLI) ends June 30, 2012, but the organization plans to reapply for funding. Funding for the Teacher Center was restored for 2011-2012 after several years of uncertain funding. However, this funding ends June 30, 2012.

Explanation of Budget Line Items

The following is a description of the budget categories presented in this document. These budget classifications are those that are prescribed by the New York State Department of Audit and Control for use by all BOCES.

- **Instructional Salaries** — this category includes salaries of BOCES personnel who are employed in positions requiring certification by the State Education Department. These individuals are generally members of the New

York State Teachers' Retirement System. Salaries of teachers, teacher assistants and administrators would be reported in this category.

- **Non-Instructional Salaries** — this category includes the salaries of BOCES personnel who are employed in positions that do not require certification by the State Education Department. These positions generally are classified under the state and county Civil Service commissions, and these individuals are generally members of the New York State Employees' Retirement System. Salaries of secretaries, aides and custodians would be reported in this category. Also included in this category are certain positions which require licensing by SED, but which do not require certification (i.e., physical therapists).
- **Equipment** — this category includes costs for the purchase of equipment, furniture and fixtures.
- **Supplies and Materials** — this category includes items such as textbooks, periodicals, paper, tests, records, tapes, cleaning supplies, small tools, lumber, metal, paint, hardware, uniforms, gasoline, lubricants, tires, automotive parts, etc.
- **Contractual Services** — contractual and purchased services such as utilities, equipment repair, insurance, legal fees, independent auditors and accountants, other professional and technical services, rental of equipment, advertising, postage and travel expenses are reported in this category.
- **Payments to School Districts and Other BOCES** — this category reports expenses for services purchased from districts and other BOCES, except for facility rentals.
- **Employee Benefits** — the amounts reported in each of the various categories presented represent the Board of Cooperative Educational Services' share of employee benefits. Included in this line are amounts budgeted for state retirement systems, social security, workers' compensation insurance, unemployment insurance and health insurance.
- **Transfer Charges from Operation and Maintenance of Plant** — the amount shown in this budget category for each service program represents the share of the total costs for the operation and maintenance of Board of Cooperative Educational Services facilities that has been prorated to the particular program.
- **Transfer Charges from Other Service Programs** — costs reported in this category represent charges to a BOCES service program for the use of other services provided by Questar III.
- **Transfer Credits from Other Service Programs** — the amounts reported in this category represent credits to a particular program, due to services provided by that program to other service programs in this BOCES.

Questions and Answers

What happens if the tentative administrative budget is not approved?

Questar III must prepare and adopt a contingency administrative budget if a majority of the component school districts do not approve the tentative administrative budget, or if there is a tie vote (half approve, half disapprove).

Are there any limitations on a BOCES contingency administrative budget?

Yes. In a contingency budget for BOCES the amount of the administrative budget may not exceed the amount in the prior year's budget, except for expenditures incurred in the supplemental retirement allowances, including health insurance benefits for retirees. The proposed administrative budget of \$4,202,000 is \$77,451 below a contingency budget of \$4,279,451.

How does Questar III plan for the future?

Questar III has a 20-year history of developing strategic plans. Our strategic planning efforts ensure that we are providing leadership for our districts through the development and refinement of high quality programs, achievement of cost efficiencies, transparency of decisions and – the essence of any cooperative – collaborative decision-making.

This spring, Questar III is embarking on a journey to plan, shape and position the BOCES for the future. Our planning process builds upon previous efforts and our core values of service, learning and excellence. It also asks various stakeholders, from staff to superintendents, to reflect on past practices and consider future needs.

The ARCS Framework for sustainable school improvement is serving as the foundation of our planning efforts. Grounded in many years of research and practice, the framework is focused on four principles: Alignment, Representation, Culture and Sustainability.

We expect a draft plan to be ready for our Board's review in summer 2012.

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