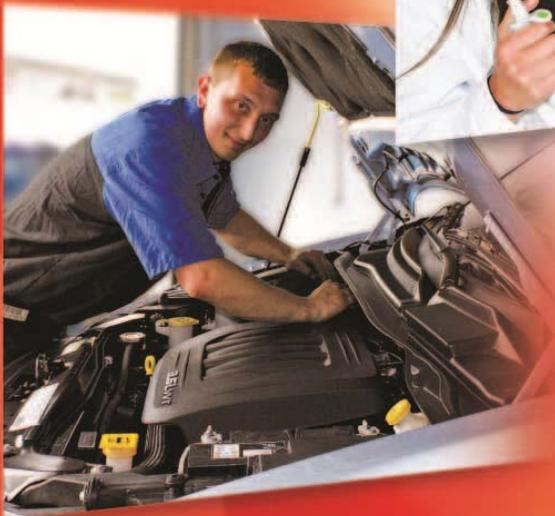


QUESTAR III



TENTATIVE BUDGET

2013-2014



March 28, 2013

Dear Colleagues:

The state's continuing fiscal crisis, coupled with the constraints of the property tax levy cap and state aid tied to income growth, has put unprecedented pressures on school boards to cut and contain costs. As you prepare a budget for 2013-2014, 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 10 at our Conference Center in Castleton. Questar III conducts an Annual Meeting to review its tentative operating plan, in accordance with state law.

We 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 and continues to achieve positive results for school districts and their students.

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 2013-2014 is \$4,238,898, which is \$36,898 more than the current year's budget but \$18,066 below a contingent budget. This budget supports the management, coordination, regional planning 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 23. This is the only portion of the BOCES budget that component 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 2013-2014 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 by the superintendent of schools.

Budgets for services, programs and grants make up approximately 91 percent of Questar III's total budget. A large percentage of services are instructional programs that include career and technical education for high school students and special education.

Total Budget – Executive Summary

EXPENDITURE CATEGORY	ACTUAL	ADJUSTED	PROPOSED
	EXPENDITURES	BUDGET	BUDGET
	2011/12	2012/13	2013/14
INSTRUCTIONAL SALARIES	\$ 15,026,651	\$ 14,960,590	\$ 16,426,627
NON-INSTRUCTIONAL SALARIES	\$ 4,808,281	\$ 4,894,387	\$ 5,583,254
EQUIPMENT	\$ 1,713,775	\$ 2,305,752	\$ 1,872,871
SUPPLIES & MATERIALS	\$ 1,254,559	\$ 1,808,147	\$ 1,491,188
CONTRACTUAL SERVICES	\$ 2,450,896	\$ 4,060,334	\$ 3,292,032
PROFESSIONAL SERVICE CONTRACTS	\$ 926,590	\$ 1,383,094	\$ 955,525
RENTAL OF FACILITIES	\$ 1,022,484	\$ 1,098,273	\$ 1,048,750
PAYMENTS TO SCHOOLS DISTRICTS & OTHER BOCES	\$ 9,309,917	\$ 11,764,980	\$ 10,984,253
EMPLOYEE FRINGE BENEFITS	\$ 10,335,957	\$ 10,883,922	\$ 12,425,218
POST RETIREMENT BENEFITS	\$ 1,412,640	\$ 1,464,100	\$ 1,519,064
TRANSFER TO CAPITAL	\$ 579,789	\$ 775,771	\$ 598,000
TRANSFER CHARGES FROM OPERATIONS & MAINT	\$ 1,875,272	\$ 2,934,117	\$ 2,077,728
TRANSFER CHARGES FROM OTHER SERVICES	\$ 4,947,767	\$ 5,901,565	\$ 6,013,929
TRANSFER CREDITS	\$ (588,684)	\$ (746,940)	\$ (1,038,905)
TOTAL	\$ 55,075,894	\$ 63,488,092	\$ 63,249,534

EXPENDITURE CATEGORY	ACTUAL	ADJUSTED	PROPOSED
	EXPENDITURES	BUDGET	BUDGET
	2011/12	2012/13	2013/14
CENTRAL ADMINISTRATION	\$ 3,778,092	\$ 4,503,393	\$ 4,238,898
CAPITAL (RENTS AND LEASES)	\$ 1,602,273	\$ 1,874,044	\$ 1,646,750
CAREER & TECHNICAL EDUCATION	\$ 7,974,934	\$ 8,749,913	\$ 8,495,787
SPECIAL EDUCATION	\$ 17,731,399	\$ 20,174,276	\$ 21,286,209
ITINERANT SERVICES	\$ 1,504,691	\$ 1,657,214	\$ 1,737,765
GENERAL EDUCATION	\$ 4,074,016	\$ 4,008,290	\$ 3,883,347
INSTRUCTIONAL SUPPORT	\$ 4,580,380	\$ 5,744,445	\$ 5,411,329
DISTRICT SERVICES	\$ 8,270,710	\$ 10,847,106	\$ 10,332,785
SPECIAL AID FUND	\$ 5,559,399	\$ 5,929,411	\$ 6,216,664
TOTAL	\$ 55,075,894	\$ 63,488,092	\$ 63,249,534

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 are 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 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 have been – and continue to be – an agent for change and a vehicle for family and student 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 districts, 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. Due to the death of Board Member Nancy Knabbe, there will be an additional seat up for election this year (to fill the remainder of her term, two years).

Questar III board members either serve or have served on local district boards and collectively have rendered more than 300 years of service to the children of our region. Most of them also have experience as board 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 their share of requested programs and 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. Questar III and the component districts enter into formal contracts through final service requests (FSR). Specified in each contract are the number and types of services to be furnished by the BOCES, the number of students 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 districts forming the cooperative.

As an incentive to cooperate and share resources, New York provides BOCES aid to partially reimburse school districts for participating in BOCES programs and services. Aid is distributed to districts based on a state approved formula. BOCES aid for Questar III districts range from 36 to 76 percent.

Budget History

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

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 in our decision-making process. These deliberations 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. Through this collaborative process, 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.

CENTRAL ADMINISTRATION	ACTUAL	ADJUSTED	PROPOSED
	EXPENSES	BUDGET	BUDGET
	2011/12	2012/13	2013/14
INSTRUCTIONAL SALARIES	\$ 320,384	\$ 265,707	\$ 326,685
NON-INSTRUCTIONAL SALARIES	\$ 655,524	\$ 809,528	\$ 675,771
EQUIPMENT	\$ 6,784	\$ 12,076	\$ 18,150
SUPPLIES & MATERIALS	\$ 87,817	\$ 60,573	\$ 106,656
CONTRACTUAL SERVICES	\$ 130,677	\$ 249,270	\$ 194,240
PROFESSIONAL SERVICE CONTRACTS	\$ 151,357	\$ 451,731	\$ 261,000
EMPLOYEE FRINGE BENEFITS	\$ 482,263	\$ 524,579	\$ 514,963
POST RETIREMENT BENEFITS	\$ 1,412,640	\$ 1,464,100	\$ 1,519,064
TRANSFER CHARGES FROM OPERATIONS & MAINT	\$ 64,391	\$ 95,548	\$ 55,793
TRANSFER CHARGES FROM OTHER SERVICES	\$ 466,255	\$ 570,281	\$ 566,576
TOTAL	\$ 3,778,092	\$ 4,503,393	\$ 4,238,898

It also contains funding to support activities associated with the state learning standards, certification office and regional initiatives in health and safety, communications, fingerprinting and superintendent professional development.

Additionally, this budget supports superintendent searches, district strategic planning initiatives, budget facilitation, and board workshops/trainings. Based upon superintendent requests for additional support, the agency is also dedicating resources in this budget to assist school districts with research to identify grant opportunities for which they may qualify. Ultimately districts will decide whether to contract with Questar III to assist with the writing of such grants. This budget also supports an ongoing multi-BOCES initiative to maintain a regional database to assist districts in negotiating labor contracts.

Questar III's proposed administrative budget for 2013-2014 is \$4,238,898, which is \$18,066 below a contingency budget of \$4,256,964. The actual administrative charge to districts for this proposed budget would be \$3,414,215 as this budget also includes \$404,683 in revenue earned through administrative fees charged to non-components that buy services. Additionally, it also includes \$420,000 in interest and indirect cost revenues.

The proposed budget reflects an increase in charges related to the fingerprinting program provided to all component school districts and employee benefits. Central warehouse and duplication charges decreased, as has the cost of salaries and

purchased services. Questar III has reduced a number of positions and implemented a vacancy control program whereby the need for positions is analyzed as vacancies occur within the agency.

The majority of health insurance costs for all BOCES retirees are 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 districts, legacy costs remain a significant burden for Questar III and its component districts.

Approximately 36 percent of the administrative budget accounts for other post-retirement benefits (OPEB). The balance of OPEB payments are distributed to programs, services, grants and contracts. If OPEB obligations were fully funded by the administrative budget, the year-to-year budget increase would be 25 percent and OPEB would account for 46 percent of the administrative budget.

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>	\$ 9,410

BOCES portion of salary and fringe:

<i>District Superintendent Salary</i>	\$123,000
<i>New York State Teacher Retirement</i>	\$ 20,295
<i>Health & Disability Insurance</i>	\$ 22,148
<i>Workers' Compensation Insurance</i>	\$ 1,845
<i>Unemployment Insurance</i>	\$ 1,845
<i>Auto Allowance</i>	\$ 6,000

Rent and Capital Budget

There is an 11.5 percent decrease in the rent/capital budget for next year.

2012 – 2013 Budget	\$1,859,700
2013 – 2014 Budget	<u>\$1,646,750</u>
Dollar decrease	\$212,950
Percent decrease	11.5%

	<u>2011-2012</u>	<u>2012-2013</u>	<u>2013-2014</u>
Rents to Schools	\$752,900	\$538,750	\$552,750
Rent to Others	\$527,000	\$517,485	\$496,000
Transfer to Capital	\$579,789	\$803,465	\$598,000

Providing safe and modern learning environments for students is critical. Questar III continues to engage school and community leaders to consider the future facility needs of our programs and services.

In recent years Questar III’s special education program has moved to an academy approach. Questar III leases special education academy space from Averill Park, Catskill and Rensselaer to provide regionally centralized locations for clusters of classrooms. Additionally, the agency leases special education classrooms from East Greenbush, Ichabod Crane and Schodack.

While Questar III has dramatically improved its special education facilities thanks to partnerships with component districts, one of its longstanding challenges has been finding appropriate space for Career and Technical Education (CTE) students. While we have been working year-to-year to maintain and update our Hudson-based Columbia-Greene Educational Center with good results, our Troy-based Rensselaer Educational Center (REC) is past its useful life.

While the agency has budgeted for capital projects at REC, it is currently exploring options with Rensselaer City to relocate REC programs to the district’s K-12 campus. Rensselaer has proposed building a special wing to house CTE programs for Questar III and its districts. One of the benefits of working with districts with high building aid ratios is the cost savings for the BOCES and in-turn, its component school districts.

Options to expand or renovate the REC with its aged infrastructure and deteriorating conditions are limited. Right now Questar III would have to propose a region-wide vote to alter the footprint of REC – a non-starter in this fiscal climate. Moreover, these costs would also affect component districts’ tax levies – something we must avoid if possible. Additionally, there is limited centrally-located space available for lease from component schools (and none of this space is designed for hands-on career training programs).

The proposed site at Rensselaer City would provide a centralized location off I-90 limiting transportation costs for some districts. This would expand opportunities for students across our region by providing a central location for desired high-tech CTE programs. This proposal is in the planning stages. Questar III will keep school districts updated as this process unfolds.

Lastly, Questar III and Capital Region BOCES established a lease with the University at Albany Foundation to provide space for Tech Valley High School at their East Campus location. Once this lease expires Tech Valley will relocate to a

new facility at UAlbany's College of Nanoscale Science & Engineering in Albany starting in the 2014-2015 school year.

Impact of the Administrative, Rent and Capital Budgets

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. Twenty-one of our 22 component districts will experience a decrease in their share of administrative costs. The impact of the BOCES administrative, rent and capital charges (compared to 2012-2013) on local districts' budget will range from a decrease of 10.43 percent to an increase of 1.83 percent.

School districts pay an annual assessment toward the support of the administrative budget based upon their Resident Weighted Average Daily Attendance (RWADA). District charges vary based on increases or decreases in student enrollment.

Budget Vote

By law, the 22 Boards of Education within Questar III are required to vote on the BOCES administrative budget on the same day, April 23. This is the only portion of the BOCES budget that component districts vote on each year.

Program Budgets

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

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

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
	2011/12	2012/13	2013/14
INSTRUCTIONAL SALARIES	\$ 3,379,719	\$ 3,143,459	\$ 3,342,942
NON-INSTRUCTIONAL SALARIES	\$ 527,903	\$ 513,480	\$ 545,341
EQUIPMENT	\$ 114,341	\$ 155,802	\$ 98,160
SUPPLIES & MATERIALS	\$ 223,695	\$ 364,881	\$ 347,595
CONTRACTUAL SERVICES	\$ 459,444	\$ 802,527	\$ 702,993
PROFESSIONAL SERVICE CONTRACTS	\$ 31,520	\$ 226,858	\$ 180,600
PAYMENTS TO SCHOOLS DISTRICTS & OTHER BOCES	\$ 131,236	\$ 154,263	\$ 149,875
EMPLOYEE FRINGE BENEFITS	\$ 2,073,480	\$ 1,865,223	\$ 1,966,229
TRANSFER CHARGES FROM OPERATIONS & MAINT	\$ 771,290	\$ 1,374,616	\$ 872,950
TRANSFER CHARGES FROM OTHER SERVICES	\$ 262,306	\$ 148,804	\$ 289,102
TOTAL	\$ 7,974,934	\$ 8,749,913	\$ 8,495,787

Questar III CTE programs continue to thrive with high demand by students and districts thanks to the success and reputation of our programs. The percentage of CTE students receiving Regents diplomas from their local high schools exceeds the average of all districts in our BOCES. It is important to note that approximately 30 percent of these students are special education students.

This year's budget continues to combine CTE and Tech Valley High School rates into a five-year average. This was done at the request of our component school superintendents several years ago and it enables us to make full use of existing capacity by allowing school districts to send students to CTE or Tech Valley High without incurring additional costs in the current year.

As our programs continue to evolve into a system of career pathways that develop content specific knowledge and 21st century skills demanded by employers, we continue to re-align resources to better support our programs.

Over the past decade, Questar III has expanded to offer a number of high-tech, CTE programs that can lead to in-demand and high-wage technical careers. These include: green/alternative energy, information technology, health care, aviation, mechanical technology, engineering, scientific research, construction and HVAC/R. Questar III offers six industry certifications and five licensing exams. Additionally, Questar III expanded its Green Technologies and Renewable Energy program to Rensselaer High School.

As we look to the future we will develop explicit career pathways so that students and their families can make better informed decisions about high school experiences that will result in college and career readiness in Tech Valley and beyond.

Career Studies programs provide students (ages 16-21) with entry-level training in a technical area or trade at an alternative learning pace. These programs are designed to provide more customized career instruction and experience in a supportive learning environment. These programs have a small student-teacher ratio and are taught by certified teachers with substantial real-world experience in their given trade. Please visit <http://goo.gl/ihilr> to view a Career Studies video. These programs are not part of the overall CTE budget and this year we convened a group of superintendents, school counselors and Committee on Special Education (CSE) chairs to consider future directions for the programs.

Like our school districts, Questar III is implementing the Regents Reform Agenda. The CTE budget provides support for implementation of the Common Core Learning Standards and Annual Professional Performance Review (APPR) in our CTE programs. While Questar III does not directly receive Race to the Top money for programs, it does connect to the Network Team and our professional development resources to learn about and share best practices and resources.

Questar III's CTE programs are actively involved in regional economic development initiatives and conversations. More than 200 representatives from business, labor, government and higher education serve on our consultant committees – advising the BOCES on course content, equipment and current trends. This equals more than 10,000 hours of volunteer service to Questar III, its students and programs annually. The collaborations resulting from these collaborations allow our CTE programs to be responsive to school, economic and workforce needs.

Thanks to the support of business and higher education, we have expanded our work-based learning initiative for students. This includes job shadowing, internships and service learning projects onsite at local companies. In fact, last year's students completed more than 6,200 hours of internships, including time at the University at Albany and organizations such as Habitat for Humanity.

This year, Questar III and Capital Region BOCES established an agreement to offer wider CTE options for students. While the two BOCES have made their New Visions programs available to all high school seniors in either BOCES for several years, the new effort takes advantage of existing capacity and expands the number of courses offered jointly to provide students in all seven counties with more pathways to college and career readiness.

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 2011/12	ADJUSTED BUDGET 2012/13	PROPOSED BUDGET 2013/14
INSTRUCTIONAL SALARIES	\$ 6,014,971	\$ 5,991,218	\$ 6,884,282
NON-INSTRUCTIONAL SALARIES	\$ 885,236	\$ 640,003	\$ 1,081,681
EQUIPMENT	\$ 85,367	\$ 71,791	\$ 27,000
SUPPLIES & MATERIALS	\$ 176,199	\$ 207,064	\$ 167,350
CONTRACTUAL SERVICES	\$ 185,885	\$ 439,130	\$ 208,825
PROFESSIONAL SERVICE CONTRACTS	\$ 38,906	\$ 36,100	\$ 35,500
PAYMENTS TO SCHOOLS DISTRICTS & OTHER BOCES	\$ 1,834,920	\$ 2,794,000	\$ 2,080,080
EMPLOYEE FRINGE BENEFITS	\$ 4,112,511	\$ 4,648,096	\$ 5,572,235
TRANSFER CHARGES FROM OPERATIONS & MAINT	\$ 566,084	\$ 871,958	\$ 674,227
TRANSFER CHARGES FROM OTHER SERVICES	<u>\$ 3,831,320</u>	<u>\$ 4,474,916</u>	<u>\$ 4,555,029</u>
TOTAL	<u>\$ 17,731,399</u>	<u>\$ 20,174,276</u>	<u>\$ 21,286,209</u>

In recent years, the cost of delivering high-quality programs and services has increased and districts have asked us to seek newer, less costly ways of doing business. Last year, we convened a Special Education Task Force to research different delivery models that better meet the academic and behavioral needs of our students in light of uncertain finances and greater accountability for all.

As a result of that work we have implemented a number of changes. Last fall, Questar III started using SED ratios rather than class names to place students. With the exception of 6:1:1 Therapeutic Youth Program (TYP) program will be identified since it's a specialized program), the ratios are:

- 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, this process allows us to construct more homogeneous classes for students. It also provides districts with greater flexibility when placing a student from the Committee on Special Education.

The 12:1:4 program for students who are medically fragile will be discontinued due to low enrollment. School districts have indicated that they can accommodate these students through other means. The agency is also finalizing a new college partnership (Sarah's Sisters) at Russell Sage for students with intellectual disabilities ages 18-21. This will provide these students with a learning experience in a college setting before they move to post-secondary life.

Next year's budget also supports expansion of the Sackett Educational Center's success with a grant-funded partnership with Brown University. Brown University's Collaboratory for Adolescent Literacy Leaders (CALL) grant has allowed a team of four teachers and one literacy specialist to join six other teams across the country in a professional development program to improve classroom instruction and student achievement.

Teachers on the CALL grant team are required to meet for three hours each week prior to the start of the day to share strategies and discuss how they are interacting as a team with their students. They observe each other's lessons and work together to strengthen their teaching practice.

As with all Questar III instructional programs, the special education budget also supports implementation of the Common Core Learning Standards and APPR.

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
	2011/12	2012/13	2013/14
INSTRUCTIONAL SALARIES	\$ 674,082	\$ 538,061	\$ 565,089
NON-INSTRUCTIONAL SALARIES	\$ 198,014	\$ 172,718	\$ 241,052
EQUIPMENT	\$ 3,102	\$ 799	\$ -
SUPPLIES & MATERIALS	\$ 906	\$ 1,510	\$ 1,050
CONTRACTUAL SERVICES	\$ 19,825	\$ 45,174	\$ 17,921
PAYMENTS TO SCHOOLS DISTRICTS & OTHER BOCES	\$ 188,232	\$ 583,327	\$ 477,216
EMPLOYEE FRINGE BENEFITS	\$ 394,988	\$ 287,654	\$ 397,150
TRANSFER CHARGES FROM OPERATIONS & MAINT	-	\$ 1,004	\$ 7,806
TRANSFER CHARGES FROM OTHER SERVICES	\$ 25,542	\$ 26,967	\$ 30,481
TOTAL	\$ 1,504,691	\$ 1,657,214	\$ 1,737,765

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 specified times to address district needs.

Itinerant services include: consultant teacher, music therapy, occupational therapy, orientation and mobility, physical therapy, adaptive physical education, school psychologist, psychological worker, speech and language therapist, speech improvement, teacher of the blind/visually impaired, teacher of the deaf/hearing

impaired, and transition coordination; as well as district services such as claims auditing and public information /communicator coordination.

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, seven districts purchased this service. Communications specialists work closely with the administration and staff of the district 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, and regional competitions.

GENERAL EDUCATION	ACTUAL EXPENSES 2011/12	ADJUSTED BUDGET 2012/13	PROPOSED BUDGET 2013/14
INSTRUCTIONAL SALARIES	\$ 975,593	\$ 848,935	\$ 888,427
NON-INSTRUCTIONAL SALARIES	\$ 55,602	\$ 47,030	\$ 65,130
EQUIPMENT	\$ 24,920	\$ 39,519	-
SUPPLIES & MATERIALS	\$ 97,636	\$ 145,482	\$ 97,550
CONTRACTUAL SERVICES	\$ 26,031	\$ 51,202	\$ 18,300
PROFESSIONAL SERVICE CONTRACTS	\$ 136,571	\$ 170,500	\$ 130,500
PAYMENTS TO SCHOOLS DISTRICTS & OTHER BOCES	\$ 2,024,407	\$ 1,943,431	\$ 1,990,271
EMPLOYEE FRINGE BENEFITS	\$ 551,153	\$ 422,818	\$ 462,534
TRANSFER CHARGES FROM OPERATIONS & MAINT	\$ 121,135	\$ 158,233	\$ 112,924
TRANSFER CHARGES FROM OTHER SERVICES	\$ 60,968	\$ 181,140	\$ 117,711
TOTAL	\$ 4,074,016	\$ 4,008,290	\$ 3,883,347

Questar III has 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 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 to see if enrollment warrants its continuation. If enrollment further declines Questar III will work with participating districts to develop an in-district program that can best meet the specialized needs of their students.

Distance Learning

Questar III works closely with the Northeast Regional Information Center (NERIC) to offer access to a distance learning network that truly exemplifies the nature of the cooperative. This allows participating districts to share courses that cannot be offered in most districts and gives students the opportunity for Advanced Placement (AP) offerings and college courses that would not otherwise be possible. Participating schools both host and receive courses that provide for extensive offerings for students.

Online Learning

Online Learning was developed to respond to changes made to the State Education Department's regulations. School districts can now grant credit to students who have completed coursework using online learning courseware. Questar III currently works with seven courseware vendors to offer districts choices in service plans. Fifteen school districts are using the service for credit recovery, credit accrual, home schooling, tutoring and Regents test prep.

Instructional Support

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

INSTRUCTIONAL SUPPORT	ACTUAL	ADJUSTED	PROPOSED
	EXPENSES	BUDGET	BUDGET
	2011/12	2012/13	2013/14
INSTRUCTIONAL SALARIES	\$ 1,110,209	\$ 1,072,331	\$ 1,390,112
NON-INSTRUCTIONAL SALARIES	\$ 438,968	\$ 465,483	\$ 532,341
EQUIPMENT	\$ 1,439,224	\$ 1,897,172	\$ 1,677,800
SUPPLIES & MATERIALS	\$ 243,572	\$ 360,991	\$ 234,020
CONTRACTUAL SERVICES	\$ 369,574	\$ 526,313	\$ 344,425
PROFESSIONAL SERVICE CONTRACTS	\$ 118,959	\$ 148,264	\$ 88,900
PAYMENTS TO SCHOOLS DISTRICTS & OTHER BOCES	\$ 361,664	\$ 629,133	\$ 577,153
EMPLOYEE FRINGE BENEFITS	\$ 635,609	\$ 689,430	\$ 917,959
TRANSFER CHARGES FROM OPERATIONS & MAINT	\$ 86,109	\$ 149,954	\$ 107,380
TRANSFER CHARGES FROM OTHER SERVICES	\$ 60,242	\$ 88,868	\$ 83,322
TRANSFER CREDITS	\$ (283,750)	\$ (283,494)	\$ (542,083)
TOTAL	\$ 4,580,380	\$ 5,744,445	\$ 5,411,329

Questar III continues to be the only BOCES in the region that offers ongoing embedded professional development in mathematics, ELA, and integration of

technology for educators who serve all student populations. Our goal is to provide support where teachers need it the most – in the classroom.

Through its School Improvement Office, Questar III BOCES developed a regional approach to implementing the Regents Reform Agenda several years ago, before many details became final on new teacher and principal evaluation systems and Common Core standards. A Race to the Top Steering Committee – comprised of superintendents, principal coaches, and advisors – was created to provide leadership and guidance on how Questar III could best assist districts.

Nineteen school districts pooled together \$1.3 million in Race to the Top funding with Questar III to create a network of training staff for every level of the system – superintendents, principals and teachers. In total, nearly 7,500 local educators attended 315 different workshop sessions last year. Even non-participating districts continue to attend regional workshops that focus on details of implementing the Reform Agenda, ensuring alignment within the region.

To help parents understand these changes, Questar III BOCES created a brochure for families about the Common Core Learning Standards available in both English (<http://goo.gl/FxJbv>) and Spanish (<http://goo.gl/xA5B9>). It provides tips for families about how to help children meet standards in English and math.

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 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

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

District Services

Districts face many challenges that require innovative solutions or a high level of technical expertise. Whether it is providing health and safety programs, evaluation services or financial analysis, Questar III's district services extend, enhance and enrich the educational capacity of participating districts. Next year, there will be minimal rate increases driven by employee costs.

DISTRICT SERVICES	ACTUAL	ADJUSTED	PROPOSED
	EXPENSES	BUDGET	BUDGET
	2011/12	2012/13	2013/14
INSTRUCTIONAL SALARIES	\$ 503,595	\$ 724,976	\$ 670,283
NON-INSTRUCTIONAL SALARIES	\$ 1,239,211	\$ 1,538,918	\$ 1,628,163
EQUIPMENT	\$ 20,810	\$ 73,061	\$ 45,761
SUPPLIES & MATERIALS	\$ 266,359	\$ 464,093	\$ 304,570
CONTRACTUAL SERVICES	\$ 456,994	\$ 1,220,082	\$ 1,005,072
PROFESSIONAL SERVICE CONTRACTS	\$ 265,510	\$ 211,220	\$ 49,500
PAYMENTS TO SCHOOLS DISTRICTS & OTHER BOCES	\$ 4,670,984	\$ 5,562,859	\$ 5,621,878
EMPLOYEE FRINGE BENEFITS	\$ 824,475	\$ 981,884	\$ 1,040,853
TRANSFER CHARGES FROM OPERATIONS & MAINT	\$ 86,572	\$ 122,870	\$ 91,819
TRANSFER CHARGES FROM OTHER SERVICES	\$ 241,134	\$ 410,589	\$ 371,708
TRANSFER CREDITS	\$ (304,934)	\$ (463,446)	\$ (496,822)
TOTAL	\$ 8,270,710	\$ 10,847,106	\$ 10,332,785

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 developed a central business office (CBO) service. Looking ahead, we will expand this service to include grant financial management, budget analysis and long-term financial planning.

Thanks to the Rensselaer-Columbia-Greene Health Insurance Trust, local districts have successfully negotiated contract renewals with Blue Shield of Northeastern New York below the national trend for the past five years. The Trust provides health benefits to approximately 10,000 employees, retirees and dependents. By pooling 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 aggressively to contain health care costs by negotiating better pricing terms and implementing performance guarantees for vendors putting 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. Looking ahead, there will be changes in the billing methodology for equipment purchases with increased district savings.

School 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 district in New York. The service is being expanded to offer more onsite support for districts in business management or operations. In particular, the service expanded its offerings related to the state's System to Track and Account for Children (STAC) system and process for claiming aid for students with disabilities.

Questar III's health and safety team serves the vast majority of our districts. Services range from on-site support to an array of services that can be purchased separately. The department is adding an asbestos surveillance, fire and security system, and shared facilities manager services in response to district needs. In recent years, the service also added backflow inspection and kitchen hood suppression system services.

Special Aid

The Special Aid Fund represents anticipated funding for 15 programs. The proposed budget of \$6,216,664 represents anticipated 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 2011/12	ADJUSTED BUDGET 2012/13	PROPOSED BUDGET 2013/14
INSTRUCTIONAL SALARIES	\$ 2,048,098	\$ 2,375,903	\$ 2,358,807
NON-INSTRUCTIONAL SALARIES	\$ 807,823	\$ 707,227	\$ 813,775
EQUIPMENT	\$ 19,227	\$ 55,532	\$ 6,000
SUPPLIES & MATERIALS	\$ 158,375	\$ 203,553	\$ 232,397
CONTRACTUAL SERVICES	\$ 802,466	\$ 726,636	\$ 800,256
PROFESSIONAL SERVICE CONTRACTS	\$ 183,767	\$ 138,421	\$ 209,525
PAYMENTS TO SCHOOLS DISTRICTS & OTHER BOCES	\$ 98,474	\$ 97,967	\$ 87,780
FRINGE BENEFITS	\$ 1,261,478	\$ 1,464,238	\$ 1,553,295
TRANSFER CHARGES FROM O&M	\$ 179,691	\$ 159,934	\$ 154,829
TOTAL	\$ 5,559,399	\$ 5,929,411	\$ 6,216,664

The BETAC contract 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), which ended June 30, 2012, was renewed for five years. The Teacher Center is no longer based at Questar III BOCES.

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:** 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:** 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:** includes costs for the purchase of equipment, furniture and fixtures.
- **Supplies and Materials:** includes items such as textbooks, periodicals, paper, tests, records, tapes, cleaning supplies, small tools, lumber, metal, paint, hardware, uniforms, gasoline, lubricants, tires, auto 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:** 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:** represent charges to a BOCES 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). The proposed administrative budget for 2013-14 is below contingency.

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 \$4,238,898 is \$18,066 below a contingency budget of \$4,256,964.

How does Questar III plan for the future?

Questar III has a 20-year history of developing strategic plans. Our 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. Over the past year, Questar III has engaged its staff and district colleagues in reflection and dialogue that asked some fundamental questions—what do we want to be, how can we achieve our goals and how will we know we have succeeded. More than 100 individuals from Questar III and our component districts – superintendents, business officials, principals, teachers, directors, specialists and others – advised us as part of a planning process designed to respond to the challenges and opportunities facing us, from the classroom to the board room.

Working with a consultant group called Communities for Learning, we used the [ARCS Framework](#) to develop a new strategic plan. This process ensured that we:

1. made clear connections between the expertise of our staff with the actions needed to move toward our vision ([alignment](#)).
2. included diverse perspectives ([representation](#)).
3. learned from each other, and past experiences ([culture](#)).
4. paid close attention to our internal capacities and considered the long-term consequences of our actions ([sustainability](#)).

A draft of our plan, *Shared Success*, was shared with superintendents and component board members in January 2013. The Questar III Board of Education is expected to approve and adopt the plan at its April 2013 meeting.

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