

Now at the mid-year mark, the East Kingston School Board proudly reports a successful start to the 2005-06 school year at East Kingston Elementary School. Principal Jim Eaves welcomed students back on August 29th and shared that the entire EKES staff was excited to get underway with another year.

Energy costs are a pressing concern throughout our nation. The elementary school building is heated with natural gas. The District contracted over the summer with an energy broker to help control cost increases for natural gas. Our final costs will be greater than original estimates, but this will not be an overwhelming budget challenge.

The East Kingston School District ended the 2004-05 fiscal year with an unreserved fund balance of over \$148,000. These funds were returned to the taxpayers of East Kingston to offset local property tax impact this fall. The Board was pleased that their budget efforts successfully neutralized the tax impact of the elementary school this year. What that means is that the \$148,000 of returned funds was equal to the increase in the new budget so the taxpayers only had to raise essentially the same amount as last year for their elementary school. Certainly the overall tax rate rose, but your local school board is making great efforts to limit the costs they can control.

The School Board is pleased to remind folks that the debt payments on the elementary building will end with the 2008-09 fiscal year. That means we will be essentially debt-free at that time. Plus, the district has prudently established a capital reserve fund to support any future capital construction that is needed.

The school opened for 2005-06 with enrollment of 19 more students than last year. At the District Meeting in March of this year, a resident commented that the cost per pupil for education in East Kingston was higher than in other SAU 16 communities. It was suggested then that the East Kingston community has always prided itself on keeping optimum class sizes in their school. Through policy efforts of the School Board, the current class sizes could absorb additional students without need for additional teachers, major improvements, etc. These additional students would reduce the cost per pupil. Those figures are not yet published for this year, but it is anticipated that East Kingston will no longer have the highest cost per pupil in the SAU.