

As Budget Battles Rage, Education Must Remain Top of Mind

by: Nicholas Christ, Chair, Education Committee, President & CEO, BayCoast Bank

If insanity is the repetition of the same actions while expecting different results, then you'll have to call me and many others in this community crazy. Every year around budget time a battle ensues between the essential departments that make up the City of Fall River. Education is pitted against public safety, leaving the citizens of this area in an impossible position. And every year, after the battles are over, there are promises and hope that next time will be better. We won't have to continue cutting crucial resources. Yet here we are again.

Education is once again being put in the rink against public safety. Why does this situation continue to repeat itself? Where is the outrage that our future prosperity is being set as a rival to current necessities? Managing the budgets and deficits of a city is no easy task, but this type of sensationalist clash is far from the solution.

In addition to expecting more from our elected officials, it is important to ensure that education is not lost in the scuffle. Supporting our school system is not just a series of warm and fuzzy clichés. Our children truly are our future and their success is requisite to our own. An educated, employable workforce is critical to advancement and a strong school system is needed to continue to draw employers to the area, as well as to maintain those that are here. If this city hopes to thrive, it needs to invest in education.

The connection between prosperity and education cannot be stressed enough. This is something the Fall River Chamber Area of Commerce & Industry and many of our local business and community leaders have come to recognize. This awareness was the impetus for forming the Chamber's Education Committee. For the past few years we have worked to encourage Fall River to embracing the importance of education as the first step toward raising educational attainment and promoting workforce and job readiness. Our goal is to elevate the quality of life in the Greater Fall River Community through the EdUp Campaign. EdUp strives to grow individual and community aspirations through a sustained and multidimensional outreach to students, parents, and other stakeholders throughout Greater Fall River, and by demonstrating the power of education to change the future of the region and each of our roles in it.

As the Chair of the Chamber of Commerce's Education Committee and a local business leader, I advise the general public to write to their City Counselors and ask them to support our schools by advocating for 100% of net minimum school spending. A failure to fully support at least net minimum spending for the Fall River School System will be a detriment to the city and its student population.