

Governor's Budget Proposal Impacts School District

Shortly after the March *Plain Talk* news article, Governor Quinn announced a decrease in funding to public schools. As you might recall the article suggested that the school district would "hold its own", in the face of the potential shortfall in general state aid funding. At that time, it was anticipated that the FY 11 foundation level for general state aid would remain flat, or with a minimal decrease in funding. Reliance on the district's positive fund balances would get us through FY 11 without concern about cutting programs or increasing class size.

Governor Quinn's announcement of a 17% decrease in state funding paints a more serious picture for the district. Instead of an anticipated \$163,000 loss in state aid, the loss in revenue is closer to one million dollars. To make matters worse, the state is currently behind in FY 10 payments by almost \$343,000. A loss in funding of this magnitude is significant to the school district and requires an exercise of looking for ways to reduce district expenses. At this time, the Board of Education and district administrators and staff are working through ways to maintain our current programs, and at the same time reduce expenses in anticipation of the reduced state funding.

A list of possible cuts was presented to the Pleasant Plains Board of Education at the March 15, 2010 board meeting. The list included natural reductions due to retirements of staff, to more significant reductions related to personnel. Holding off on purchasing new buses and the replacement of district math books are also under consideration, as we strive to get through a very challenging financial year and avoid significant decreases to our fund balances.

Other cost savings measures under consideration include:

- Reduction in force in areas where enrollment is decreasing
- Reconfiguration of some job assignments to reduce costs
- Reducing travel costs across the district
- Cutting professional development for staff
- Eliminating the Pre-K for All Program (we would still run a program for 40 students)
- Doing our own work regarding resurfacing gym floors
- Reducing advertising /mailing costs (rely on website for communication)
- Not renewing the School Reach Parent Notification License
- Eliminating field trips for 2010-2011 school year
- Holding off on retiling the floors at Farmingdale Elementary school
- Delaying the purchase of new drivers education car
- Delaying the purchase of one mower
- Cutting costs associated with purchased services in our building fund
- Reducing capital outlay purchases
- Holding off on salary increases for administration
- Developing an energy savings program across the district
- Reducing supplies and materials costs
- Setting enrollment limits for Capital Area Career Center

- For the future, restricting travel for JV, Freshmen and middle school extracurricular events
- Consider replacing 6th grade extracurricular activities with intramural events
- Increasing fees associated with meals, registration, extracurricular participation, gate fees for events, possible Pre-K tuition charge, etc.

The most important step the board must take in the next couple of weeks relates to personnel. The school code requires that certified personnel be given a reduction in force notice at least 45 days before the end of the school year for non-tenure staff, and 60 days before the end of the school year for tenure staff members.

The Board of Education will hold a special board meeting on March 30, 2010 at 6:30 PM at the middle school library to discuss and determine cuts for FY 11 and take action on rehires and/or reductions in staff. The Board and administration will do as much as possible to minimize the negative impact of the state financial crisis on our students and classrooms. Open communication and feedback are encouraged and appreciated, as we face one of the toughest financial challenges that schools districts have had to face in a long time.

In closing, I urge you to take some time to write to the Governor and members of the General Assembly encouraging them to do whatever they can to avoid potential negative consequences to our school districts and students. As a district, we are committed to work with the teachers, parents and community members to find solutions and at the same time, continue our tradition of excellence in programs and services to our students.

Please feel free to send your ideas and feedback to me at mtalbert@ppcusd8.org or call me at 626-1041 Ext. 404. Thank you for your continued support as we work through these difficult times.