



Superintendent's E-Mail Newsletter

"Staying in touch..."



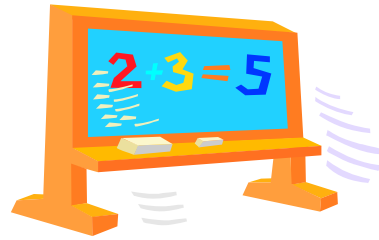
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*"Building a foundation of excellence.....
.... one student at a time."*

"Life is not measured by the number of breaths you take, but by the moments that take our breath away."

- George Carlin



It's Not about The R's and D's...It's About The K's

How about this one: A Democratic governor in his second term is sidelined by a historic business recession and dwindling tax revenues. Republicans, who hold a majority in the state Senate, demand cuts rather than tax increases. Add to the mix a sizable new group of legislative leaders who vow to bring change -- and unpredictability -- to the budget talks. Sound familiar? This exact scenario happened in 1991 and it is happening again...sort of.

What is different now? For starters, the budget deficit is estimated to be six times larger at 3.2 billion dollars. At the same time, the leading indicators in the economy are starting to improve. However, unemployment, a lagging indicator, is likely to increase before a real recovery takes place. Like many local school districts, we enter the new school year with no subsidy checks in sight from the state coffers. Our bills will be paid from our reserve funds. No one expects any progress on the budget for the rest of the month. It is not a rosy scenario.

We have already initiated some very strong measures to deal with the immediate circumstances. Non-essential purchases are being deferred, some staffing positions are going unfilled, and we are arranging for emergency "bridge loans" to ensure that we can meet our future obligations. These credit lines are necessary as well as costly. We have estimated that our borrowing costs could be as much as \$48,000. That is equivalent to 8 tenths of a mill of tax in our district. If and when the budget crisis is resolved, it is likely we will not be reimbursed for our borrowing costs. Is it fair? As Bill Gates once told a group of high school students, "Life is not fair, get used to it."

So, what can you do to help? I would ask that you do what you always have done. Turn off lights when they are not in use, use supplies sparingly, and continue to treat our students like they were your own children. You have always risen to meet these challenges. I can't say "Thank You" often enough for your help. This budget crisis is severe, and your actions make a difference. There is also one more thing you can do...

"I walk slowly,
but I never
walk
backward."

-Abraham
Lincoln



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You Have To Speak Up...Now !



Your individual voice and your individual contacts to legislators do make a difference. I can tell you without reservation that Senator Eichelberger and Representative Stern care deeply about this area and this school district. With this budget crisis, they are part of a larger and major political constraint: the desire of the state and national Republican party to win back a majority in the House and the Democrats' determination not to lose it. The big prize for the winner is the ability to control the required redistricting of our state, based on the results of the 2010 census.

The bottom line for us is this: When party political objectives become the game and the budget becomes the ball, it is difficult to foresee an outcome in which the needs of Pennsylvania come first in the process. As I alluded to earlier, we have to rise above our political ideologies and labels. Staying the course of returning Pennsylvania schools to a more equitable funding formula is an investment in our future that cannot be deferred. If the current budget proposals from the Senate were adopted outright, over 740 million dollars of temporary federal stimulus monies would be substituted for state monies. The result would be disastrous in just a few years. By 2012 when the federal funds go away, Spring Cove would have an education subsidy equivalent to our payments from 2005-06. The six year funding formula that was adopted by the legislature last year cannot be abandoned without dire results.

According to the Pennsylvania Budget and Policy Center (a non-partisan, statewide research project), Pennsylvania funds a smaller share of public education at the state level than all but four other states. In the 2006-07 fiscal year, Pennsylvania funded an average of 35.5% of public education costs in the Commonwealth, while 57% of the costs were borne by local taxpayers and 7.5% was provided by the federal government. Only Nebraska, South Dakota, Illinois and North Dakota fund a smaller percentage of public education at the state level. In other words, PA ranked 46th out of 50 states in regard to state share of K-12 funding.

I sincerely ask that you contact our legislators and other legislative leaders in the PA House and Senate. Let them know that education is a priority and an investment in Pennsylvania's future. Let them know that you appreciate the difficult choices they are considering with this budget and ask them to sincerely consider the impact on local taxpayers if the state retreats from and diminishes its support for public education. We have two excellent legislators who appreciate hearing from their constituents. And by all means...be nice. Thank you everyone!

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