

PARENT PRINCIPAL CORNER



Important News

- December 18th ... Finals Begin
- December 21st ... Finals
- December 22nd ... Finals & early release
- December 23rd - January 5th ... Holiday Break
- Semester grade cards mailed week of Jan. 5th

Budget Issues ...Again

The news out of the Capital continues to be bad for education. Due to a shortage of over 250 million dollars, the governor was required, under state law, to balance the budget. This meant more cuts for school districts.

For USD 450 this meant an additional \$730,000 needed to be cut from the current budget. This is a different kind of cut than last year. The fact is the budget for this year is already committed, so the school board needed to cut the money from money that had already been committed. (For the cuts see page 3 of the newsletter).

The board was able to make the

cuts for this school year without cutting anyone's job. However, there are two problems facing the district.

First, there is some concern that another cut will be needed in the spring. This means finding more from the current budget.

Second, while the board was able to make these cuts without cutting staff, the budgets from which this money came will need to be replaced next school year. The district might be able to survive a year without these funds, but in time this money has to be returned to continue moving forward. This means staff cuts this fall. Decisions on

fall cuts have NOT been made yet, but it is these types of cuts that create concern. We have reached a point that no matter where we make cuts, it WILL impact our kids. So where do we cut? What do we do without next fall?

I have noticed a solution to which some in our community have turned to meet the cuts from last year. Fund raising. A number of organizations are turning to the community to raise funds for coaches, and support for grade level sports. This creates a couple of concerns on my part (continued pg 2).

Budget

First, we are raising funds for sports teams but what about the academic cuts? I know the high school lost a counselor and a social studies teacher, and what about other cuts across the district related to educators? Isn't our first obligation to our children's education?

My second concern is the burden fund raising places on our community. Both the businesses and the families in our community are also facing tough financial times and fund raising is just one more burden on them.

While we are making hard decisions on what needs to be cut next, it might also be time to look at activities and events that are placing a burden on businesses and families.

Let me give you an example that I know won't be popular. I've experience my first "Winter Formal". Now, this dance really isn't a big cost to the school, yet as I looked at the dresses, flowers, etc., I wondered how much money parents had to spend on the evening. Not only are we facing economy hardships, this is also the holiday season which in itself can be expensive. Don't get me wrong, I love seeing the kids all dressed up, but do we need this dance? We have two other dances during the winter as well, Winter Festival and Spirit Night. How important is it to have a

Winter Formal? When I offered this as a suggestion to STUCO one student asked "Why should the school dictate to parents how they spend money?" I believe as a school we are in a role of community leadership. While some parents may have no problem forking out the dollars, what about the others? Parents are placed in a tough situation of telling their daughter/son they can't go because they don't have the money, or finding the money by placing pressure on other aspects of their home budget. As parents we don't want our children to go without or face telling their friends that they cannot afford something.

While the Winter Formal might have hit a nerve with some, I have to tell you what hits a nerve with me, cutting programs, course offerings, educators, all which impact giving our students the best possible education we can. Then, factor in larger class sizes caused by cuts with staff and we begin to impact the educational process of our students in all kinds of ways.

I know this newsletter is directed to high school parents, but I'd like to share one additional thought. As the district makes decisions on cuts for next year, I have to state how important our elementary schools are. They set the foundation by which the middle school and high

school operate. If asked which I would support first, larger class sizes in the elementary classroom or cuts of electives at the high school (which would mean larger class sizes at the high school), I would have to say cut the electives at the high school. This pains me to say because I know the impact that brings to the high school, but in the long run I know what the impact will be on the high school if elementary teachers are forced to teach larger classrooms. In time, the high school would need more resources to close the gaps created by these larger classes in the elementary rooms.

What can you do? You might consider contacting your legislator and let them know your concerns. They too face some tough decisions, but more cuts in education, which many feel will happen again about this time next year, will cause major impact on our students' future.

Budget Cuts

- 1.The district had more students enrolled than expected, that will generate \$250,000 in new revenue. For each student the district is given \$4,012.
- 2.Cut in supply line items \$17,000.
- 3.Refund on worker compensation insurance \$25,000. This is a onetime funding source. The district will not have this money next year to use to cover any cuts.
- 4.Cuts in building budgets \$123,000. This means we will not be able to buy supplies and other resources for the classrooms. The classrooms will need these funds next year to replace the resources used up this year.
- 5.Transportation cuts \$25,000. This will impact field trips and other school activities.
- 6.Building Repairs/Grounds Budget cut \$35,000. This means various repairs and improvements will just have to wait.
- 7.Reduce Special Education transfers \$157,000.

The worker compensation refund and reductions in building budgets, Building and Grounds, Transportation, and Special Education Transfers are short term reductions that would range from very difficult to unwise to continue past this year. This amounts to approximately \$365,000 which will need to be accounted for as we plan for next year. This is why the district will need to look at cuts with its staff. Also, remember there has been talk of another cut in the spring as well as another one that will affect next year's budget. All of these cuts will impact our staff throughout the district.

Policy Change Goes Into Effect

Reminder, the new attendance policy goes into effect in January. Parents are limited to 5 parent excuses per semester. If you provide the school office with some form of medical/legal documentation for the absence, it will be considered a medical excuse and will not count against the 5 parent excuses.

You can find more about this policy change on the high school website, it also includes a FAQ.

FINAL SCHEDULE

This year there will be a few minor changes in finals. In an attempt to help reduce stress for our students taking finals, we are reducing the number of finals taken in one day. At most, a student should not have to take more than three finals, and usually will only take two a day.

We are also building in time for students to get make-up work completed while working with their teacher. On the last day (Dec. 22nd) we will complete testing around 1 p.m. If a student has work they owe, a test to make up, etc. they need to return to that teacher and get the work done. Once they are done with all make up work, **they are excused for the day.** If a student has no work to do they will be excused at 1 p.m. Students riding the bus can stay with a teacher or hang out in the cafeteria.

Teachers will be notifying students weeks in advance if they have outstanding work that needs to be completed. Students can get that work done at any time before the 22nd as well.

Parents, it is important for students who owe work to understand the need to see their teachers on the 22nd. Failing to at least check in with a teacher on the 22nd will result in all incomplete work being converted to a 0 and could lead them to fail the class.