

For Your Information

Lowell Joint School District "A Tradition of Excellence"

Board of Trustees: Janet Averill, Darin Barber, Eugene Dunford, Gayle Rogers, Fred Schambeck
Superintendent: Patricia Howell, Ed.D.

GOVERNOR'S BUDGET PROPOSALS – INFORMATION FOR PARENTS January 30, 2008

The Governor recently released his budget proposals for the 2008/09 fiscal year. As many of you may have read in the newspaper, the budget proposals call for drastic cuts in funding for education. This is a "starting point" for the legislature to work from for the next several months before a final budget is signed by the Governor.

An updated budget projection for the current year and for next year's revenues and expenses will not be provided by the Governor's office until May 15, 2008. Until this May revision is provided, school districts must use the Governor's January budget proposals, which include decreased funding to schools, to monitor the current year's budget and to develop future budgets by the June 30, 2008, deadline.

While building a budget on fewer dollars is a difficult task, it gives teachers, classified staff members, administrators, and parents (working through their local PTA organizations or School Site Councils) the opportunity to work together and come up with creative solutions.

2007/08 Possible Budget Impact:

The Governor's proposal is to "sweep up" unallocated categorical dollars in the current year, thus not impacting the schools this year. However, if the desired sum of \$360 million is not reached through this action, the Governor proposes to recoup the balance by cutting the money available to school districts. Experts say there are not enough unallocated categorical dollars and school districts should plan on a half percent (0.5%) cut in funding.

Impact to the District:

- A loss of \$90,000 this year.

District Response:

- All vacant positions will be reviewed before advertising and hiring replacements in order to generate savings in the current school year.
- All employee expense reimbursements must be pre-approved by the principal or manager.
- Principals and managers will be asked to "tighten the belt." All expenditures should be reviewed and only necessary items should be purchased. Attendance at professional development workshops should be on a limited basis and only as needed.

2008/09 Possible Budget Impact:

The Governor's proposed cuts to the education budget are so steep that school districts are advised to reduce spending in 2007/08 in order to "stockpile" dollars in their reserves to assist with "riding out" the losses that will accumulate in 2008/09. The Governor's proposal is an "across the board" reduction of ten percent (10%) to the entire State budget.

Impact to the District:

- It is anticipated the 2008/09 COLA (Cost of Living Adjustment) of 4.94 percent will not be funded.
- An additional cut of two percent (2%) is anticipated and after-school hourly and summer school programs are included in these cuts.
- Given this loss of revenue, it is estimated the District needs to eliminate \$900,000 to \$1 million of expense for the 2008/09 school year.

District Response:

The Board of Trustees and the Superintendent have requested the formation of a Budget Committee. The role of the committee is to analyze the information regarding the reduction of State funding for the 2008/09 school year and its impact on the District. The Committee will also be asked to make recommendations to the Superintendent of proposed cuts in the District's budget if needed to absorb the reduced funding. It is the expectation that the committee will be prepared to present recommendations to the Superintendent by the end of March, 2008.

In addition, a Health Benefits Committee will begin meeting in February. The purpose of the committee is to examine the current health benefits provided by the District, explore options offered by different health benefits organizations, and make recommendations to the Superintendent and the Board of Trustees. These recommendations may include moving to another health benefit organization or examining the current level of services in order to continue to provide quality health benefits to employees, while lowering costs.

What Can Parents Do:

Hopefully, when the State budget is adopted later this summer, changes will have been made in order to avoid the extensive cuts that all school districts are now facing. Parents may help by:

- Becoming involved in your local PTA as the PTA supports programs in our schools
- Supporting PTA and school fundraisers – the funds raised go directly to programs for students
- Attending School Site Council meetings – this group makes decisions on funding programs at each respective school
- Contacting your local representatives in the State Legislature and encouraging them to support continued funding for schools
- Volunteering in your child's classroom or at the school
- Having your child attend school every day – research shows that students who attend school daily get higher grades
- Providing homework assistance to your child as needed

Parents and community members are encouraged to contact the school principal, PTA President, or the Superintendent if you have ideas you would like to share. As the District approaches this difficult task, please keep in mind that everyone's voice is important and valued. While it is hoped that the State's final budget does not include these drastic cuts to education, the District must begin the process of developing its 2008/09 budget very soon.

While these decisions are not going to be easy, please know that the Board of Trustees and the Superintendent will continue to make decisions based on what is best for our students. With all of us working together, we can accomplish this goal.