



San Juan Unified School District

Superintendent of Schools

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Steven W. Enoch, Superintendent of Schools

February 6, 2008

Dear Parents:

I need to bring to your attention my deep concern about the proposed budget presented by the Governor and the negative impact it will have on the San Juan Unified School District. We face the immediate prospect of staff layoffs, elimination of important student support programs, and a setback to the progress we have been making as a school district. I am asking that you join me in fighting this devastating budget proposal.

The proposed budget from the Governor would set aside the voter-approved minimum funding guarantee known as Proposition 98. The result will be a \$4.8 billion budget reduction for California's schools, resulting in layoffs, overcrowding of classrooms, and loss of programs that matter to parents, students and staff. In addition, it proposes significant reductions in categorical funding for our classrooms and schools, including funding for special education and transportation services. This news, on top of new restrictions for summer school funding, paints a VERY grim picture for the future.

As I listened to the Governor's budget proposal, I must tell you that I found it to be of great irony, as the day before the Governor presented his budget, a major national report placed California 46th in the nation regarding funding for public education! Based on this report ("Quality Counts"), the average spending per student in the nation is \$1,892 more than in California. New York State provides \$5,137 more per student than California. Do the math----for every 500 students that equates to an additional \$2,568,500! We need to get the word out that this huge gap in funding matters if this state is even halfway serious about accountability and quality in our schools.

I am not blind to the immediate economic issues that we face as a state. But considering how poorly public education is funded in California, reducing funding to our schools is simply adding salt to the wound, and it is unacceptable.

One of the immediate challenges we face is to tentatively identify what program reductions we might have to make because of this budget. We have a deadline of March 15th for notifying employees of tentative layoffs, so time is very limited. We have asked the Board appointed Facilities, Transportation, and Finance (FT&F) Committee to facilitate the process leading up to the final decisions, which must be made by the Board of Education. The meetings of the FT&F are open to the public and will be held in the district office on Walnut Avenue in Carmichael. Please note the following important dates and times of FT&F and Board of Education meetings:

February 7	FT&F: Understanding Budget Mechanics – (7:00 p.m.)
February 12	Board of Education – (6:30 p.m.)
February 21	FT&F: Consideration of Budget Options (7:00 p.m.)
February 25	FT&F: Discussion of Recommendations (7:00 p.m.)
February 26	Board of Education (6:30 p.m.)
March 4	FT&F: Meeting (7:00 p.m.)
March 11	Board of Education- Action Taken (6:30 p.m.)

In the meantime, the district is closely examining all vacant positions while staff examines various options for the worst case scenario, which is the implementation of the Governor's proposed budget. I will tell you that none of the options before us are encouraging. The Board is already moving forward, making difficult decisions regarding staffing, programs and bargaining with employees. What was seemingly feasible in December is now in question, which is a very unfortunate and unprecedented situation. While we are hopeful that the final budget may look better, we must prepare for the worst.

As your superintendent, please know that I am not being quiet about the impact on our school district. I have been busy contacting legislators, and I would ask that you join me in raising this issue publicly, speaking with one voice about a need to fund schools properly, and to protect our improvement efforts, which are underway. We have posted information on our website (www.sanjuan.edu) on how to contact the legislators whose districts include some or all of the San Juan Unified School District. I have several recommendations that could help in this crisis. They include the following:

1. Leave Proposition 98 alone. The public voted for this minimum guarantee for education and the public expects legislators to honor this commitment.
2. We need legislators to be open about the possibility of raising taxes, even temporarily, to help the state during this economic crisis. As a taxpayer, I am not thrilled to call for an increase, but I have personally concluded that we cannot expect the quality that we all want in our schools and fund us at 46th level among the 50 states. I believe the state will need more revenue to do what is needed.
3. A longer term solution would be to support an initiative to lower the threshold to 55% for a community to pass a parcel tax measure. This would allow communities, such as ours, that care deeply about children and their learning, to provide quality education that the state seems unable or unwilling to support. This proposal would take some of the pressure off the state and instead allow communities to decide what level of funding they want for their schools.
4. Delay the upcoming elementary math and language arts textbook adoptions. At the elementary level, we can survive another year or two with our present books. This proposal would save the state millions of dollars, which can be shifted for basic support of our schools. Our existing textbooks are standards based and the standards have not changed significantly since these books were placed in classrooms. (In reality, we need to talk about shifting funds away from the traditional publishers and more towards electronic resources which provide more current and relevant material---but this is a discussion for another day.)
5. Reduce down the number of mandated state tests. The federal government requires that we only test at three grade levels, yet in California we are testing at almost every grade level, which is costing millions of dollars that are desperately needed elsewhere. Quite frankly, we get more useful feedback for teachers with our internal testing methods, while mandated state tests take time away from instruction and cost an excessive amount of money to support.
6. Finally, we need to encourage our legislators to take seriously the Governor's Fiscal Emergency and to work hard to find a solution within the 45 day period. Any further delay will be very problematic because of staffing considerations.

Please feel free to send your ideas and suggestions to me and I will share them with the FT&F Committee. My email address is senoch@sanjuan.edu. I appreciate your serious consideration of these concerns, and I ask that we funnel our collective energy and frustration toward the state and the threat that this proposed budget presents to our school district.

Sincerely,



Steven W. Enoch
Superintendent of Schools

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