

HIGHLINE PUBLIC SCHOOLS

March 26, 2009

*Memorandum*

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TO: All Employees  
FROM: John P. Welch



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John's Journal

*Reflections from the Superintendent*

Dear Colleagues:

As you may have seen in the news, the state just released new figures on Washington's projected budget shortfall. The current estimate is \$9 billion, up from the \$5 billion projected when the Governor released her budget in January. This is sobering news.

Nearly 70 percent of our school district budget comes from the state. So when the state is short of funds, our revenues are profoundly impacted. The legislature will not be able to close a \$9 billion budget gap without cutting funding to public schools. Though we won't know precisely what the impact will be until the legislature finalizes its budget, we anticipate a shortfall for 2009-10 of \$5 to \$8 million dollars. Regrettably, we will be forced to cut programs, services, and staff to make our expenses match our revenues.

Budget cuts are painful because they have real impacts on people. Eighty percent of our costs are in personnel. It isn't possible to make cuts this deep without affecting employees and their families. Cuts also have real impacts on students when we are forced to reduce or eliminate programs that support their success.

Given the stakes, I am committed to ensuring that budget decisions will be made thoughtfully and remain true to our vision of preparing all students for college, career, and citizenship. The school board has identified areas of priority where we will concentrate our resources: math and literacy; closing achievement and college-ready gaps; and accountability. We will keep our eyes on these and our district's strategic goals. I have presented the school board with a slate of proposed cuts in administrator and managerial positions totaling \$1.1 million. The cuts include the elimination of ten positions:

- One of the three executive director positions supervising schools.
- Director of Recruitment and Retention.
- Principal on Special Assignment currently overseeing athletics, activities, and student development; reassigned to a school.

- Nutrition Services Manager.
- Security Investigator.
- Assessment and Evaluation Manager.
- Coordinator of Budget and Financial Management; replaced with a lower-level position.
- Two elementary assistant principals.
- One secondary assistant principal.

In addition, we will postpone hiring for two positions in Teaching and Learning: Director of Curriculum and Instruction and Coordinator of Instructional Technology.

Finally, employees in administrator and managerial positions will get no salary increases or cost of living adjustments.

We still need to make several million dollars of additional cuts in our system. We are committed to an open and inclusive process. Staff and citizens are encouraged to share their thoughts through the anonymous comment form on our website home page. The Senior Leadership Team is preparing a slate of budget reduction options, which will be posted on our website. We invite employees and community members to attend one of two budget forums to study these options and help us prioritize cuts.

April 23, 6:00-8:00 p.m.

Pacific Middle School Cafeteria

April 27, 6:00-8:00 p.m.

Evergreen Campus Cafeteria

Staff and public are also invited to attend board work sessions on **April 20 and May 27**. There we will look at the budget situation in greater detail and in light of updated information from the legislature.

These are not easy times. It is natural to feel threatened and fearful about the future. I encourage each of us as individuals to keep our eyes fixed on the things that are most important to us, both in our personal lives and in our work. If we do the same as a system - stay focused on our most important priorities - we will get through this and see a brighter day on the other side.

There is some cause for optimism. The economic downturn is focusing attention on the need for real reform of state education funding. For the first time in decades, lawmakers are seriously considering changes in the way schools are funded. In spite of the dark storm clouds above us now, perhaps we are taking our first steps toward that brighter day.