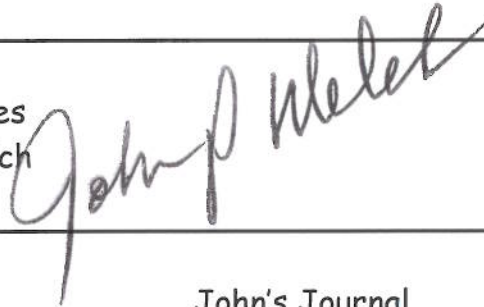


HIGHLINE PUBLIC SCHOOLS

May 15, 2009

Memorandum

TO: All Employees
FROM: John P. Welch



John's Journal

Reflections from the Superintendent

Dear Colleagues:

I want to thank you all for your patience this spring as we have grappled with impending revenue reductions from the state and their impacts on all of us and our work. I have appreciated the supportive comments from many of you who have acknowledged how difficult these budget decisions are. I am also grateful for the many comments and suggestions submitted by staff, students, and community members and the thoughtful participation of so many of you in our community budget forums. All of your input has informed and guided my decision making.

As you probably know, the legislature finalized the state budget at the end of April. We are still analyzing the numbers and the changes to the various "pots" of money that fund education—many of which are earmarked for specific activities. However, the overall budget picture is emerging. The good news is that our funding cut from the state will not be as large as we feared it might be. The final budget retains some I-728 dollars and funding for K-4 class-size reduction, which had been slashed in the senate's proposed budget; and we will receive some federal stimulus dollars to offset other state cuts. The bad news is that even with the cuts we've made, we still face a shortfall of about \$4 million. That means we still have to make significant cuts to a budget that is already lean following reductions we made this year.

I am in the process of reviewing the list of budget cuts presented at the budget forums and on our website, as well as the feedback on them. I will have decisions on those items by the end of the month.

Thankfully, we will have to eliminate far fewer teaching positions than we originally estimated in our worst-case scenario. We have sent reduction-in-force notifications to 60 certificated staff. We hope to call many of these individuals back into service between now and next fall. I would have preferred not to RIF any teachers, but with 80% of our expenditures in staff it is impossible to make \$4 million in cuts without impacting people's jobs. We will do our best to help all impacted employees find work, whether here or in another school district.

We are still working out the impacts on classified staff. I recognize that waiting for these decisions is very difficult for those of you who are concerned your job might be impacted. With that in mind, we are doing our best to work through the numbers from the state and determine where cuts need to be made. We will keep you posted and inform you of impacts as soon as we can. We need be thoughtful and make sure we are making the right decisions. I understand that this is stressful for you and your families. At the same time, I don't want to rush through the process and make hasty decisions.

I want to assure you that before considering any teacher or classified lay-offs, we looked first to administration. As you know, we have eliminated 10 administrative and managerial positions. There may be more cuts in central administration based on feedback from our budget forums and comments submitted by staff and community. I will present my final recommendations to the school board at its May 27 board meeting.

Through this entire process, we have worked to remain true to our mission of educating EVERY student and our vision of graduating all students prepared for college, career, and citizenship. We have focused on the school board's core priorities of literacy and math achievement, accountability, and closing the achievement and college-ready gaps.

Though you may not agree with every budget decision, I hope you *will* agree that we used a clear vision and priorities to guide us and that we relied on the best thinking of both staff and community.

This is a difficult time in public education, and I value your partnership as we work through it. I will keep you informed as we approach the school board adoption of our final budget.