

Dear Parents,

June 9, 2010

I wanted to take a moment to update you on our financial status and enlighten you about some program changes that will take place next year.

As many of you are aware, our district has been deficit spending for years. We tried to correct this situation with a tax rate referendum in the spring of 2009 but were unsuccessful. Despite the failed referendum, the school district was able to cut the deficit almost in half with approximately one million dollars of expenditure cuts and staff reductions, as well as new revenue generation through the addition of full-day kindergarten and participation in the federal lunch program. The district was also able to restructure a portion of existing debt and utilize its remaining bonding authority to generate funds to help offset the budget deficit projected for this school year.

As we consider the challenges in addressing our deficit, our options are becoming limited. The bonding power that has offset our expenses for many years is now minimal. The State's plan to cut education funding will cost our district approximately \$600,000 next year. Additionally, the State is planning to reduce categorical grants that help fund our early childhood programs, bus transportation, and special education. Our district was operating with a large budget deficit before the reduction in State funding. Truthfully, this bad news from Springfield couldn't come at a worse time for District 145.

The district's goal has always been to keep the need for expenditure cuts from having a significant impact on our students. When the referendum failed, we tried very hard to maintain all of the programs and services that our families have come to expect. With the exception of some class sizes reaching 30 we were able to keep the referendum's failure from impacting our students' learning opportunities. While some districts have cut programs and eliminated extracurricular activities to reduce their deficits, our district has avoided measures that will change the school climate significantly. This goal has become impossible to maintain however as we near exhaustion of borrowing power and must prepare to lose significant State funding as well.

Next year, to help offset some program costs, our district will need to institute a number of changes as to how we operate. These changes are necessary to keep some current programs available to our students. First, any student participating on an athletic team will be required to pay a \$50.00 participation fee. While the participation fee does not pick up the entire cost for participating in a sport it will help to diminish some costs associated with coaching stipends, referee costs, equipment needs and conference dues. Students involved with clubs or activities, (non-sports related), will be asked to pay their portion of any supplies or materials needed to participate in that activity.

The other change taking place is that the district will no longer provide an activity bus before or after school. Parents will need to transport or make arrangements with a neighbor or friend if their child is coming to school early or staying after school for any activity or event. The district will continue to provide daily transportation to and from school during normal school hours and we will provide transportation for athletic team travel to out of district events. This change will save the district the cost of running multiple buses throughout the district to and from three of our schools. These changes will allow us to offer extra curricular activities for the 2010 – 2011 school year. With the State's ongoing financial crisis, it's difficult to predict what will happen beyond next year.

It's becoming more challenging to keep financial concerns from impacting our students. I understand the two changes I listed above will have an influence on your decision as to whether or not your child will participate in any after school activities next year. As educators, it's important that the district still provides you the opportunity to choose to participate in any extracurricular activities compared to just eliminating all after school programs at this time.

Our district will continue to look for ways to reduce the deficit and access all available funds to help maintain the programs our families and students utilize. While our goal is always to operate a balanced budget, we also accept our responsibility to comply with state and federal mandates, like the adequate yearly progress goals defined under NCLB (No Child Left Behind) as well as provide an educational program that will best prepare our students to be successful in high school and beyond.

Thank you for your support and words of encouragement throughout the year. Have a safe and restful summer.

Allen J. Jebens Jr.
Superintendent