

Council #10



CUDAHY • FRANKLIN • GREENDALE • GREENFIELD • OAK CREEK • ST. FRANCIS • SOUTH MILWAUKEE

What's Really Up With Your School's Budget?

This year, more and more members are seeing or hearing dire predictions from their districts' administrations that school budgets are in crisis and layoffs and program cuts are imminent. Even in districts without a history of declining enrollment, these warnings seem credible in light of the current economic crisis and the state budget hole.

However, before you start checking out your place on your school's seniority list and assume bargaining concessions are coming, there are some important facts about your school district's budget you should know.

First, after an initial scare that state funding for schools would decline dramatically next school year, we saw the Obama administration provide substantial federal money to prevent these cuts. The state budget is not finalized, but the Governor's budget proposal holds school districts harmless and provides for roughly the same \$275 per student increase as in previous years. He accomplishes this by using Federal stimulus money to make up for state revenue shortfalls.

Second, **over and above** the Governor's increase in revenue caps and state school aid, President Obama's stimulus package is providing a huge boost in federal aid for IDEA and Title I programs. For many of our districts this means hundreds of thousands of extra dollars beyond State aid not seen in past years. Here's what initial projections are for new federal aid for each of our school districts:

- Cudahy - \$637,000
- Franklin - \$797,000
- Greendale - \$469,000
- Greenfield - \$744,000
- Oak Creek - \$1,109,000
- St. Francis - \$259,000
- South Milwaukee - \$767,000

So, why are districts still talking about significant cuts to educational staff and programs? One factor for some of our districts is declining enrollment. This is a problem that has been crippling school districts around the state for years and has generated a broad coalition to fight for reforming our school finance system.

But, another factor is that administrations and school boards are using the current economic crisis to justify not raising sufficient property tax revenue to even get school budgets up to revenue cap limits. The level of aid provided by the State varies year to year and in any given year many districts have to contemplate increasing their property tax levy if they want to avoid cuts in staff and services.

The case for not raising the revenue is very weak and misguided. The property levy (mill rate) for almost all districts is substantially lower than it was in the mid 1990s and has even declined substantially in recent years. For example, between 1992 and 2007, Franklin's levy rate declined by 52.6 percent, and the levy rate for the 2007-2008 school year was roughly 10 percent lower than it had been for the 2004-2005 school year.

Given these facts, our recommendation is not to reconcile yourself to unnecessary cuts in staff and services, but to monitor and participate in you district's budget process.

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Council #10 Website
www.weac.org/council10

MAKE CONNECTIONS

SE Regional Bargaining
Seminar, Bowlero in Brookfield,
Tuesday, April 28, 5:00pm

Summer Academy in La Crosse,
Wisconsin, July 26 to July 29.

Great
Schools



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Posting for WEAC Board of Directors Position

With the retirement of Beth Waschow, one of Council #10's two WEAC Board of Directors positions has opened up. The WEAC Board of Directors is the governing body of WEAC. The Board meets once a month, generally in Madison. If you are interested in running for the newly opened Board of Directors seat, please nominate yourself by emailing Shorty Ott at otts@weac.org. The runner up in an election for this position will become Council #10's Alternate WEAC Board member.

Council #10 Kohl Foundation Fellowship Winners

Congratulations to **Jennifer Hussa** of Greendale High School and **Linda LaTour** of Franklin High School, winners of the 2009 Herb Kohl Educational Foundation Teacher Fellowship. The foundation gave fellowship awards to the teachers for their ability to inspire a love of learning in students, their ability to motivate others, and for their leadership and service within and outside the classroom. Each Fellow's school will also receive a \$1,000 grant.

Free Financial Seminars – Summer 2009

During these times of economic change, many Wisconsin public school employees are looking for help to safeguard their financial situation. We will be hosting free Financial Tune-Up Seminars offered by WEA Trust Member Benefits. These seminars will help you find the answers you need today and restore your hope for tomorrow. Seminars to choose from are **Retirement Planning 101** and **Turbulent Markets and Law Changes: Investment Lessons You Can't Afford to Miss**.

When: July 20, 2009

Time: Investment Lessons: 10 – 11 a.m.

Retirement Planning 101: 2 – 3 p.m.

Where: United Education Professionals Office, 13805 W. Burleigh Rd., Brookfield

For seminar descriptions or to register online, go to www.weabenefits.com. You may also register for a personal phone consultation with a Member Benefits consultant to discuss your specific situation. Evening and weekend appointments available upon request.

Leaders Who Are Smart and Creative But Lack Wisdom

In a *School Administrator* article, Tufts University psychologist and dean Robert Sternberg describes a superintendent's meltdown and firing and speculates on how such a smart, accomplished person could be so unwise. "Oddly," he says, "smart people are more susceptible to foolishness than not-so-smart ones, precisely because they think they are not susceptible." The superintendent had intelligence and creativity, two key qualities, but lacked a third: wisdom. Sternberg outlines six "cognitive fallacies" that produce self-destructive results for leaders:

- *Unrealistic optimism* – This is the belief that, because one is so smart, one's ideas can't and won't have problems.
- *Egocentrism* – Some leaders start off with the best intentions, truly wanting to do the best job possible, but as they become embattled, they focus more and more on their own needs – and survival.
- *False omniscience* – The trap here is thinking one knows everything – or at least everything that matters – and not seeing and learning from one's mistakes.
- *False omnipotence* – Some leaders believe they are all-powerful and have to assert their authority. They don't work with key constituencies who need to be brought along.
- *False invulnerability* – This is the belief that one's position will protect one from accountability. (Call it the Bill Clinton factor.)
- *Ethical disengagement* – When leaders think they are omnipotent and invulnerable, they sometimes begin to lose their ethical bearings, for example, bad-mouthing opponents behind their backs. "In administrative jobs," says Sternberg, "wisdom is as much about knowing what not to say as it is about knowing what to say."

From "Wisdom, Intelligence, and Creativity Synthesized" by Robert Sternberg in School Administrator, February 2009