

March 7, 2011

Dear colleagues,

Starting on Tuesday, you will hear that some of our certificated colleagues are being notified their jobs will not continue next school year. You will also hear of similar notification for classified staff later this month. The notifications beginning Tuesday exemplify the direct impact state and federal cutbacks and lower student enrollment are having on all of us, our students, school families and our community.

Principals are meeting Tuesday with teachers who hold non-continuing contracts (that is, those who have one-year contracts). We are giving these teachers early notice that we cannot extend contracts to them for next school year – at least we cannot do so at this time.

Last summer and fall, we did ultimately sign contracts with many of the non-continuing teachers to whom we had delivered reduction notices at this time a year ago. We were able to re-employ them because of attrition and increased student enrollment. We hope to be able to do the same this summer too; however, the economic forecast is less rosy than it was then. As state and federal cuts hit us year after year, it becomes harder and harder to protect classrooms and other school-level positions from that decimation.

Principals and directors are also meeting Tuesday with some teachers whose positions have been funded by state and federal sources. These sources include programs such as LAP math and reading specialists. In most cases, these are teachers who have continuing contracts. Therefore, while their current positions are no longer funded, our bargaining agreement language assures them a position next school year. In some cases, these teachers with continuing contracts will be stepping into the roles previously filled by teachers holding non-continuing contracts. Matching the continuing teachers to positions for which they are qualified will be a priority for the human resources department during the next few months.

In addition, principals of all middle and high schools – and some elementary schools – will be talking with staff about the need to place some teachers and counselors on *unassigned* status. *Unassigned* teachers and counselors will probably move to different schools for 2011-12 – changes driven by the projected drop in high school enrollment and huge cuts in state and federal funds.

At this time, it is clear that resources will be cut next for school year. We do not know exactly how much those cuts will be, but they will total millions, and they will be painful.

I have not determined today whether these draconian funding cuts will require a *Reduction in Force* (RIF) for certificated staff on continuing contracts. We are still collecting information from staff districtwide about retirements, resignations, and leaves of absence, all of which could offset the need to RIF. A RIF decision must be made in time to notify affected staff by May 15. In the meantime, we will meet with the Everett Education Association in accordance with the provisions of our collective bargaining agreement, and our association presidents' council will continue to meet to discuss these matters.

You may rightfully ask, ***“Why are we making such painful notifications before the legislature has done its work and before the board has adopted a budget?”***

1. I believe in telling good or bad news earlier rather than later. No one wants to hear news of cutbacks, or to deliver cutback notices to staff. I believe that doing so respectfully, as early as possible, and with empathy for the affects on individuals and families, is what I owe each member of our staff touched by these cuts. This week our reduction notifications are to certificated staff in alignment with our negotiated agreement. The timing for cutback notifications varies with different classified bargaining groups. We will begin visiting with classified staff as early as possible also – no later than the end of this month.
2. While we do not have full budget details now, we have all heard of the state’s financial challenges. In the last three months, my messages to you have endeavored to share the unsettling budget news. The mechanics of scheduling and staffing for 26 schools for nearly 19,000 students is complex and time consuming. We must now make staffing plans for next year, and we are making those plans using conservative estimates. These estimates are based on the potential of cutting up to \$5 million from next year’s budget.
3. Going into next fall with a lean staffing formula provides flexibility to add staff in areas that experience an unexpected rise in enrollment, or when there might be an unusual bulge in one grade at a few schools. If we begin next fall over-staffed, we don’t have the flexibility of hiring qualified people to fill specific needs.

I continue to hope for the best and must plan for the worst.

The state and national economies, rising material and labor costs and tax-slashing initiatives all play a role in creating the situation we now face. There are no simple solutions, quick fixes, or magic elixirs to relieve the pain of the challenges we, our community, and our school families now face – or additional challenges that could come our way by the end of this legislative session.

I can, though, share with you an honest assessment of what we must do, a timeline of when we must do it, and my commitment to be forthright and open as we make decisions impacting our lives and our students. I urge you to take an active and informed role in the budget decision making processes now underway:

1. Take the [online budget survey](#) that is open now through Friday at 4 p.m. The community and staff opinions and suggestions from that survey will factor into the recommendations the Fiscal Advisory Council makes to me.
2. Attend one of the [public budget forums](#) or the [school board budget carousel](#), or both.
3. Review the [information being presented at the budget forums](#) and that has been studied by the FAC. This information includes eight years of expense reductions the district has made resulting from continual state and federal cutbacks, and it compares how we spend our money compared to other districts our size across the state. It also highlights the good work you do every day.

4. Follow the [legislative news](#) linked from our website so you can better understand the discussions and deliberations happening about our work; be informed; be involved.

Above all else, be good to yourself and to one another. We are an incredibly successful, resourceful team doing absolutely the most important work in the world for all of the right reasons. We have created a culture of success in Everett Public Schools that surely is resilient in the face of tough economic times. We must keep the faith; the future is counting on us.

Gary