

From: [Superintendent](#)
To: eps.MailList@everettsd.org
Subject: Budget action on Tuesday board agenda
Date: Monday, April 18, 2011 11:51:40 AM

Dear Colleagues,

What we know and don't know

As of last week, three steps toward establishing the state budget are complete. First, the Governor released a budget proposal in December. In April, the House released a budget proposal, and that was followed eventually by a Senate budget proposal. The House and Senate proposals result in a projected funding shortfall of between \$3.2 million and \$3.6 million for this district for 2011-12.

The final state budget may be a compromise between the three budget proposals. That state budget could be set by April 24 when the Legislature is tentatively set to close, but most legislative leaders quoted in our daily updates, and those with whom I've spoken, expect the session to extend beyond April 24. That means we don't know when complete answers will be available to us. It also means, as explained below, that last minute budget decisions could come with both good and bad news and are likely to involve surprises.

Every year, Washington school districts plan their next school year budgets amidst the winter-through-spring uncertainty of this state process. We do so each year, facing May 15 as the state required date to notify any continuing contract certificated staff if they will not be retained for the upcoming school year.

I've shared in the past my frustration with the uncertainty and confusion of this system and its timing. With our school board, I have expressed to our legislators the system's destabilizing effect on students, families and staff.

How we plan during this uncertainty

Our school board and district leadership are committed to this district's mission, to this district's staff and to this district's students and families. Our budget work begins each year well before the spring May 15 deadline, and our goals in this work involve much more than compliance with a state deadline. In our annual budget planning, we balance how to allocate available funding to support student learning and how to involve staff transparently, fairly and humanely through a less-than-perfect state process.

To achieve our goals, we've conducted an open, public budget-setting process, involving your bargaining representatives, a broad-based community council, multiple public meetings, a community and staff budget survey and regular communications with you, including opportunities for feedback and

involvement.

Our school board meeting on Tuesday

Early this morning, the school board's April 19 meeting agenda was published on [BoardDocs](#). The agenda includes board discussion and consideration of a Reduced Educational Program (REP) for 2011-12. If approved by the board on Tuesday, the REP will authorize me to cut next year's expenses according to the amount the board approves.

The REP process is becoming an all-too familiar and unwelcome action for our school board and other school boards in the state. I am grateful for and very supportive of the thorough and thoughtful work of many parents, students, and staff that resulted in this year's REP proposal. AND, I am saddened about state and federal policy decisions that diminish funding for students.

The REP being presented to the board on Tuesday is another reasoned effort to balance next year's budget. As you know, all of the legislative decisions have taken direct aim at classrooms and students. Legislators have retroactively cut funds this year and potentially into the future for class size and student programs. The REP again spreads those reductions across many areas in the district as we have repeatedly done during a decade of making cuts to K-12.

We have all felt the result of fewer staff doing more work and continuing to meeting increasing state and federal requirements. Together with our school board, I and other district leaders and leaders from other districts have demonstrated for our legislators that such slicing away of support for classroom programs is impacting how we are able to serve the learning needs of each child.

Uncertainty remains the constant

Even after the board approves a REP, and we begin implementing cutbacks for next year, many questions will go unanswered. We will not know on Tuesday whether the REP will require a certificated staff Reduction in Force (RIF). Before we can make that decision, we must know more about certificated attrition for next year and a better indication of what "compromise" is ahead to meld the budget proposals of the Governor, House and Senate.

Even after the board approves a REP, Olympia may surprise us with new decisions coming in the legislators' attempts to develop a budget. Certainly, last week's Senate proposal is an example of such surprises. It came with a 3 percent salary reduction for all staff and a funding model based upon "Average Daily Attendance." These "proposals" come with detrimental impacts on students, families, staff and schools and little regard for bargaining agreements made in good faith or the additional, unfunded work responsibilities the proposals imply.

How to help

At this time last year, I asked for your patience with this unwelcomed ambiguity, and I make that request again this year. Please extend this patience and understanding to our co-workers – many of whom are uncertain about how budget challenges will ultimately impact them. I am especially mindful of and committed to clear, concise and timely-as-possible information and support for our colleagues who may be in different positions or not with us next school year.

Our website includes much information about the state budget process, our district budget process and [ways to be involved](#) or comment upon actions that have brought us to this point. Please visit that site through the hyperlinks below to be fully informed and to be involved.

- [How our spending compares to other districts of similar size](#)
- [History of reductions](#)
- [More school finance resources](#)
- [Ways to be involved](#)

Sincerely,

Gary