

From: Superintendent
Sent: Friday, June 14, 2013 7:41 AM
To: EPS.MailList
Subject: Budget -- knowns and unknowns
Importance: High

Dear Colleague,

As I wrestled with how to summarize this year's uncertain school funding picture, I found the opening lines of the June 11 Legislative Report from WSSDA to be as clear as possible in these times of muddy waters.

Governor calls for second special session; no clear path forward

After taking the Senate Majority Caucus to task at a "[media availability](#)" ... Gov. Jay Inslee announced ... he would call legislators back for a second special session starting tomorrow at 9 a.m. No one was surprised.

The second special session can run up to 30 days. Unlike last year, when the Legislature needed just a few more hours after midnight to complete a second special session, the outlook isn't positive.

Whether or not the legislature completes its work on time each year, school districts around the state must, by law, (with rare exceptions) make a preliminary budget available to the public by July 10 each year. July 10, according to the potential timeline of this second special session, could be the same day that special session ends – not much time to pull together a budget for our \$210 million educational enterprise. Special thanks and accolades go to our finance staff and school and department administrators who have been following the legislative saga closely and proposing fluid budget scenarios to align with many, widely varying, potential legislative outcomes.

Naturally, it is best to make budget decisions based upon funding "knowns." This year Everett Public Schools, like other Washington school districts, has made some budget decisions based upon what we project "might" happen this session.

District decisions we have already made that will impact actual funding from the legislature for 2013-14:

- **No teacher RIF for 2013-14.** This is a risk I calculate worth taking. Past state and federal funding cuts have eliminated our flexibility to adjust class sizes and to provide essential support for struggling students. I hope the public's expectations that the Legislature honor the McCleary Decision requirement to fully fund education will prevent more state cuts to staff funding for next school year.
- **No change to school start and dismissal times for 2013-14.** Although the legislative session is not complete, there is indication that there may be more funding for transportation next year. Based upon that possibility and the importance of getting schedule information to staff and families before this school

year ends, we will not make changes to the start and stop times for 2013-14. Schools will operate during 2013-14 on the same schedule in place this year.

Next year district staff will review and evaluate transportation funding and efficiencies – and whether adjustments are advisable for 2014-15 or beyond.

- **Five additional middle school positions will be in place next school year.** We know that the earlier students take challenging math courses, the more likely they are to be prepared for and take higher level math in high school. Our new math curriculum involves both compacting math for middle school students AND ensuring that each student meets each of the Common Core State Standards in math. To provide equitable and challenging math to each student requires more resources.

Some major “unknowns” about funding for next year include:

- Will the levy lid be 24 percent or 28 percent or somewhere in between; when will we know?
- Will there be funding for more all-day kindergarten classes? If so, for how many schools? This information is critical to ensure that we have enough qualified kindergarten teachers for potentially more kindergarten students – and that we have enough classroom space for those children.
- Will there be funding for smaller primary classes?
- Will transportation be more adequately funded? When will we know?
- And of course, how long will this second special session last before their decisions, and the implications of those decisions, are available?

At the school board meeting Tuesday night, the Fiscal Advisory Council (FAC) submitted its report.

The FAC too deserves our gratitude for months of work to understand school financing concepts and to engage in legislative scenario possibilities to make their recommendations to me. The full FAC report, including the council’s work timeline and processes, is available on [BoardDocs](#). Those recommendations are summarized in five points:

- **Ensure** that any restoration or enhancement of programs focuses on the strategic plan.
- **Enhance** student learning by focusing investments in the classroom.
- **Preserve** the organization’s financial stability.
- **Align** resources and enhancements with priorities identified in 2013-14 budget priority matrix. (Matrix is available on page five of the narrative FAC report [online](#).)
- **Reconvene** the FAC if legislative actions between now and the end of the special session negatively impact district finances.

Yes, I am, at times, discouraged and disappointed that legislative inaction has muddied the waters for us in something as important as budget planning. However, I am more often encouraged and ever-so-impressed with district staff and community volunteers

who have soldiered on through these uncertain budget-decision processes and who have maintained focus on the priorities of our strategic plan and its desired outcomes:

- That we get **100 percent** of our students to graduate, and
- That we bring the next **20 percent** of students in all grades up to standard, and
- That we have **zero** achievement gap among demographic groups of students.

Our focus and our purposes are clear; we are doing the world's most important work. Continuing in that direction is the wise and ethical thing to do when outside influences and political disagreements gnaw at our edges.

Most district staff will depart for the summer before we have final budget clarity. I invite you to check district email periodically as I'll be sharing more budget information as it becomes available this summer – and other exciting information about next school year.

Warm regards,
Gary