

News Release Everett Public Schools



Everett Public Schools

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District sets March 7, 9 and 29 for public comment about 2011-12 budget

March public meeting dates and locations – all from 6:30 to 8:30 p.m.

1. Monday, March 7, [Evergreen Middle School](#), 7621 Beverly Lane, Everett
2. Wednesday, March 9, [Heatherwood Middle School](#), 1419 Trillium Blvd., Mill Creek

Special school board comment session, Tuesday, March 29 at 5 p.m.

As it did in 2009, when state legislative decisions forced the district to cut \$9 million, and again in 2010 when state cutbacks forced nearly \$4 million in reductions, the school board invites community members to a comment session from 5 to 7 p.m. on Tuesday, March 29.

The March 29 meeting, organized so that those who come will have a chance to meet one-on-one with at least one board member, will take place in the board room of the [Educational Service Center at 4730 Colby Ave., Everett](#). District staff will also be available to answer questions about school finance. Those who do not want to speak with board members may leave comments in writing for the board members to review and consider as they set the budget for school year 2011-12.

What is causing another year of deep cuts for K-12 education?

The state's economic crisis. Legislators are, for a third year, grappling with a statewide budget crisis and reducing funding for K-12 education to help close the state budget gap.

The state's most recent cuts to K-12 education began in December 2010 – a month before the regular legislative session. In an unprecedented move, legislators cut school funding in the middle of the 2010-11 school year – a dollar-saving measure that has never been done before.

Funding for this school year, now reduced by the Legislature, includes hiring decisions, staff contracts and program plans made in the spring and fall of 2010 and based upon state funding considered stable. For Everett Public Schools, \$6.5 million has been eliminated before the school year has ended.

For some school districts in the state, this surprise midyear cutback is the reason for midyear program changes and layoffs.

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Superintendent Gary Cohn is grateful, "... that Everett Public Schools is able to maintain our educational momentum for this year, in large part because voters generously approved the Temporary Supplemental Educational Program and Operations Levy in August." He acknowledges the district was planning to hold the August levy funds until the 2011-12 school year.

"We are grateful those supplemental levy funds are now available to offset the state's midyear cuts so we can continue this year supporting more students to graduate, enabling more students to take challenging courses and inspire more students to go on to college and technical training institutions."

Although the legislative session has not yet ended, Everett Public Schools is prepared to spend approximately \$1.9 million from the August levy, \$750,000 from state Levy Effort Assistance funding and \$3.9 million in federal Edujobs funding to maintain the educational momentum Cohn mentions.

"I am extremely grateful for those sources of 'offset' funds this year and being able to use them earlier than expected to protect educational programs this year against the state's cuts. We are also doing everything possible this year to save money for next school year. And we have in place the community process to help guide our decisions for budget cuts for 2011-12 and beyond."

How is the community involved in district budget decisions?

One of Cohn's first actions as a newly hired superintendent in 2009 was to establish a series of councils designed to gather and involve broad perspectives and advice about district decisions.

Among them is the Fiscal Advisory Council (FAC) whose help in making budget decisions is chronicled in their [March 2010 report](#). The FAC work has begun again. The March 7 and 9 public budget meetings will be, as they were last year in March, conducted by the FAC to gather community response to their preliminary budget recommendations for the superintendent.

What has happened so far, and what is ahead for setting the 2011-12 district budget?

- From August through December, Everett Public Schools board of directors and administrators met individually and in groups with state legislators. Those meetings took place in Everett and Olympia and were designed to help elected officials understand the funding required to meet state and federal learning standards and what it takes for schools to continually improve. During the legislative session district officials have continued to accept invitations to provide data and to testify before legislative committees and to meet with Legislators.
- In December 2010, Gov. Gregoire's budget proposal and the unprecedented midyear special session cuts to K-12 education made it clear that public education classrooms are targets for funding cuts during the 2011 legislative session.
- FAC work began in January and continues through spring.
- Superintendent Cohn and the district board of directors will use information from the FAC and from the public meetings to prepare a *Reduced Educational Program* resolution, which will designate budget cuts for 2011-12. That resolution is scheduled for April 19.

- Between April and May 15, the district will make decisions about staffing for 2011-12.
- The district's 2011-12 school year budget is scheduled for approval by the board of directors on July 5, 2011.
- Based upon budget decisions, families and students impacted by budget cuts will be notified of the impact of those cuts from spring through fall 2011.

Where to find more information

The legislative session is scheduled to close April 24. When the Legislature is done, the state budget will be set, and more stable information about K-12 budget impacts will be available. Between now and when the legislative session ends, budget proposals from the governor, the House and the Senate are being adjusted and reconciled, revised and changed every day.

Online sources of information readers may find helpful include:

- [Washington State School Directors \(WSSDA\) daily legislative reports](#)
- [A Citizen's Guide to the Washington State K-12 Finance](#), provided by the Legislative Evaluation and Accountability Program Committee (LEAP)
- [League of Education Voter website](#) with details about K-12 and higher education funding impacts as well as impacts to early learning programs
- [Local, regional and national news stories](#) about school finance

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