

A Message from the Superintendent

June 8, 2009

Funding for public education in California is in crisis. The failure of State propositions at the May 19, 2009 elections, and reduced revenues have caused unprecedented reductions in funding for local school districts. Next year our “revenue limit,” the basic amount we get per student, will be 18% less than before. Some experts note that reductions of this size have not been made in California since the 1930’s.

In Mt. Diablo, the staff and Board take our responsibility to have a balanced budget very seriously. By March, we made difficult reductions in order to have a positive Second Interim Report. We then asked voters to support a school funding measure to restore essential student programs, but we failed to get the two-thirds vote necessary. When the Governor issued the “May Revise” to the budget, we learned that more cuts were necessary.

We are committed to balancing our budget as required by California law. We will make the necessary expenditure reductions, even though we are aware that we are limiting educational opportunities and services for students. This is the only way to maintain local control of the school district.

How much has MDUSD reduced from its budget in 2008-09?

Through June 2, 2009, the Board has made over \$26 million in reductions during the 2008-09 school year with an additional \$12 million (\$4 million over three years) needed by June 30, 2009. A complete list of the budget reductions to date is available on the district website and at the district offices at Dent Center. Due to declining enrollment and reduced funding from the state, MDUSD needed to reduce:

- Nearly \$8 million between December 16, 2008 and February 24, 2009.
- Over \$8.3 million on March 3, 2009, when the Governor signed the state budget in February that reduced additional funds to K-12 public education.
- Almost \$31 million over three years (\$10 million each year) on June 2, 2009, in response to the revised state budget (May Revise) that issued “mid year” cuts, the failure to pass state propositions and the disappointing loss of the district’s parcel tax, Measure D that would have brought in \$7 million annually for five years.

These reductions are above and beyond the \$14 million reduced during the 2007-08 school year.

What were the new reductions made at the June 2, 2009 School Board Meeting?

At the June 2, 2009, Board meeting a number of reductions and eliminations totaling \$31 million were made. They included:

- Eliminated Class Size Reduction 1st through 3rd and 9th grade, 5th grade instrumental music, one Director in the Personnel Department, one Child Welfare and Attendance position, one Senior Secretary in Special Education/Student

- Services, one Program Specialist and five Beginning Teacher Support and Assessment (BTSA) Coaches in the Curriculum and Instruction Department.
- Reduced the general fund dollars to support Curriculum and Instruction Department in the amount of \$338,404 annually and elimination of funding for the GATE Science Center.
 - Eliminated the district contribution to Deferred Maintenance \$1,588,790 and reduced ongoing contributions to Deferred Maintenance as well.
 - Reduced the work year from 11 months to 10.5 months for Elementary School Secretaries, reduced prep period for elementary librarian/vocal music to match reduced need from Class Size Reduction by 4.0 FTE.
 - Transferred funding previously restricted to special programs to help balance the budget.
 - Used 50% of the federal stimulus funds to offset anticipated increased Special Education costs.

Will the district need to make additional reductions?

Yes, the district will need to make additional reductions in response to the new information that was released from the state on May 29, 2009. Prior to this date, it was anticipated that the district would need to make \$28 million in reductions over three years (2009-2012) to balance the budget. After May 29th, this amount jumped to over \$43 million in additional reductions. We will bring an additional \$12 million of reductions to the School Board June 16th for approval and action. As in the past, an effort to make reductions as far away from the classrooms will be made, however, as seen in the last two rounds of budget reductions, this is proving to be near to impossible to achieve.

How does the stimulus money help the district?

The district is scheduled to receive \$20 million in federal stimulus money (American Reinvestment and Recovery Act (ARRA) of 2009) to offset budget reduction. This is one-time money that helped to reduce the amount the district needed to reduce. The Board has designated all (\$9 million) of the “stabilization” money to help cover the state funding shortfalls. The Board has also approved using up to 50% (\$3.6 million) of the ARRA money designated for Special Education to help reduce the budget deficit. Despite these extra funds, the district needs to make \$43 million in reductions over 3 years.

What options does the district have to balance its budget for 2009-10?

The reductions already made in combination with the new state reductions do not leave the district with many options that do not directly impact students, staff and community. The list of recommended budget reductions for the June 16, 2009 meeting will be available on the district’s website late in the afternoon on Friday, June 12.

Why not just cut central administration and spare cuts to schools?

The Mt. Diablo Unified School District is a \$300 million business. Due to the requirements of State and federal law, it is a complex business. The number of certificated administrators is limited by California law, and we have about half of the allowed amount. A minimum of managers, secretaries, clerks, maintenance workers, and other support staff are required to keep the organization running. We have already

eliminated the following management positions: Director and Assistant Director of Maintenance and Operations, Director of Budget & Accounting, Director of Research and Evaluation, Supervisor of Technology & Customer Services, Sr. Administrative Assistant to the Supt./Communications Specialist, Internal Auditor, Personnel Coordinator, Workers Compensation Manager, Curriculum Specialist, and Director of Personnel.

How can parents and the community help?

Parents, community and staff have already displayed a wealth of support and interest to help the district through these trying times. Many have already offered their time to volunteer in the schools, given countless hours trying to pass Measure D, established foundations such as the Athletic Foundation to restore sports in the district and taken the initiative to help with fundraising and collect donations on behalf of the district. In response to these efforts, the district has set up multiple venues for staff, parents and community members to make a donation to the district.

On the district website, directions about how and where to send donations is described. Within the week, payment options will be expanded to accepting credit cards through Paypal. All donations should be sent to the district office at 1936 Carlotta Drive, Concord. Donations can be made for a specific purpose or to support district programs and services in general. All donations are tax deductible and a receipt will be issued upon request. Additional ideas to generate funding can be shared with Director of Development, Stephanie Roberts at (925) 682-8000 x6201 or robertss@mdusd.k12.ca.us.

There is also a local campaign evolving within the district to move forward as if Measure D had passed and rally all who care and want to make a difference for students and families in MDUSD to donate their \$99 despite Measure D's defeat. If every student in MDUSD (34,953) and every employee (4,000) made a \$99 contribution we would be able to collect over \$3.8 million and restore some programs and services to K-12 students. We urge you to join this campaign now and help save your local schools!

What happens next, and when will we know more?

A lot of what happens next, and when, depends on what the legislature ultimately decides. We hope that the final resolution will be better than the bleak picture painted by the media and others. For now, we are forced to plan based on the best available information. Consequently, for the next few days and weeks, we will be focusing on additional details and alternatives to the reduction list. As we add new ideas and/or details to the reduction list, we will be as transparent as possible.

There is a saying that reads, "Every problem has a solution and every solution has a problem." That is certainly true of each of these potential budget reduction recommendations. In some cases, there is a significant disagreement about what is most valuable for our students.

Now is the time for us to pull together, rely on one another and work together to find the solution that is best for the students and families in the Mt. Diablo Unified School

District. As one MDUSD teacher said at the June 2, 2009 board meeting, we need to strive to be like the Three Musketeers.... "All for One and One for All". It is only through teamwork, patience, understanding, and empathy that we can survive through this treacherous storm. I look forward to working in partnership with students, parents, staff, and community to protect our local schools in the Mt. Diablo Unified School District.

Dick Nicoll
Interim Superintendent