

REDWOOD CITY SCHOOL DISTRICT

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Board of Education

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Superintendent

Jan Christensen

February 11, 2010

Dear Parents,

On Wednesday, February 10, our school board made the very difficult decision to lay off some employees in the middle of the school year, including temporary teachers, custodians, clerical employees and instructional aides. Temporary teachers are non-tenured teachers who are filling positions of tenured teachers on leave or who work in non-classroom positions throughout the district. Many parents have contacted me in the last few days to express their dismay about these mid-year cuts. I am also dismayed that our state has cut funding for education so grossly that we were forced to take this drastic action. I want to make sure that you understand the reasons we had to take this action right now.

Our district has faced historic levels of cuts in the last few years as a result of the massive budget crisis facing California. We have made budget cuts seven out of the last eight years. In the last 3 years, we have seen our unrestricted general fund -- our primary source of paying salaries -- drop by 17%. Our reserve fund, or district savings, has dropped from more than 15% in the 2003-04 school year to a projected 3.69% at the end of the 2009-10 school year – barely above the legally required 3% level.

We expect to cut \$4.7 to \$13.7 million dollars for the 2010-11 school year. The money the district received from the federal stimulus package has now been spent, and the jobs and programs saved last year with those funds are now at high risk. The state budget remains extremely volatile, and most experts expect the final budget to be much worse than the current proposed budget recently released by the governor.

Many have asked: why not wait until 2010-11 to make cuts? Every dollar we cut today reduces the amount we have to cut next year and keeps our reserve fund at the legally required minimum. The reserve fund is important because it allows the district to pay its staff in an emergency, such as the state running out of cash, which the state controller has projected for April. If we don't reduce our budget right now, we could face insolvency if the state imposes additional budget reductions for the current school year, as it did in 2008-09 after the fiscal year had already ended.

We did everything we could to avoid disrupting classrooms in the middle of the year, but there are very few decisions that are legally available to the school district at this time of the year and laying off temporary teachers is one of the few options possible. Experienced teachers that are currently serving outside of the classroom will replace temporary teachers that are laid off. Our principals will work with staff to ensure that there is a smooth transition, when new teachers come into a classroom. With fewer custodians, classrooms will be cleaned once a week, but trash will be disposed of daily.

We are thankful for the high caliber of our staff and our well-maintained facilities in this difficult time. Please know that we are doing everything possible to ensure that your child receives a high quality education, and is learning in a safe environment. If you have additional questions, please feel free to contact your school principal or me.

Sincerely,

Jan Christensen
Superintendent