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Cary District 26 eBulletin

April

Community Engagement Committee Continues Planning for Student Opportunities

The D26 Board of Education Community Engagement Committee has continued to discuss efforts in exploring opportunities for alternative delivery of reduced and/or eliminated programs for the 2010-2011 school year such as art, music, physical education, gifted, and band. At the Community Engagement Committee meetings in February and March, Mary Dudek, Director of Curriculum and Instruction, provided an introduction to curriculum guidelines and shared several possible program alternatives. The next Community Engagement meeting is scheduled for Monday, April 26th, at 6:00 p.m. at Prairie Hill School. The April meeting will include an update on the exploration of program delivery alternatives and a discussion on a plan to manage volunteers. We welcome the community's input and suggestions!

State Funding Reductions Impact District 26 Budget Cuts

The State Superintendent announced this last month that the State would be reducing school funding by 15% across the board to General State Aid (GSA) and State Categorical Aid to cover the cuts the Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE) expects to endure next year due to the State budget crisis. Although this decrease is speculative until the legislators act on the State's budget, it is necessary for the District to use this as a revenue budget indicator for the development of next year's budget. This 15% cut is a decrease in State Aid and Categorical Aid of an estimated \$774,000 in revenue for District 26. In order to offset this additional State funding shortfall, the Board of Education approved at its March meeting an additional reduction of 7.4 certified staff members along with the planned reduction of 65.2 staff members. Further reductions were also recommended in the areas of transportation and operations.

Board Approves Second Year of Salary Freeze for Administrators

At a Special Board of Education Meeting in March, the Board approved a second year of salary freezes for all District 26 Administrators. The Administrators voluntarily requested to receive a pay freeze for the 2010-2011 school year in an effort to assist the District with its financial situation. This two-year freeze on administrative salary increases will have saved the District an estimated \$100,000. The Board also approved the reduction of 3 full time administrative positions which included the District Curriculum Coordinator, the Maplewood Principal position, and the Assistant Principal position at Prairie Hill School. A reassignment of principals for the 2010-2011 school year will need to occur in order to replace retiring Prairie Hill principal Ann Baker.

Why Must The District Balance The Budget In One Year?

We have received many inquiries regarding the urgency to balance the budget in one year and want to take every opportunity to make certain District stakeholders understand the answers.

- The District has been deficit spending for the past 8 years. Deficit spending means the expenditures of the District exceed the revenues collected. To cover the difference over these years, the District utilized its “savings account” (known formally as fund balance) and relied on short-term loans (known as TAWs). As of last year, the fund balances have been completely spent and the District has had to increase its short-term borrowing to cover the difference.
- There are regulations on the amount a district is allowed to borrow in TAW’s, and District 26 is at its tipping point. The State’s reduction in funding to schools further compounds our financial hardship. The continuation of deficit spending, even one additional year, would put the District at risk of having insufficient funds to pay payroll and bills.
- Aligning our expenditures to meet the projected revenues is only the first step to correcting our financial challenge. We will still have \$6 million of debt to repay at the end of next year even though we will have a “balanced budget”. We have worked with the State to develop a plan to get our debt (‘negative fund balance’) paid off in 5 years. We first need to stop spending more than we are receiving. We then need to spend less than we are receiving so we can use the surplus to gradually pay off the debt. This process will require a strategic plan that will outline the steps necessary to achieve financial solvency while maintaining our focus on educational excellence. The board and administration will initiate this strategic planning process in May.

The Board of Education, at its April 26th Community Engagement Committee and Regular Board Meeting, will plan to discuss the necessity to balance this year’s budget in an effort to move the District toward a more solid financial foundation.

District 26 Staff Complete Balanced Literacy Training

In an effort to enhance and improve instruction in the areas of reading and writing, Cary D26 teachers and administrators recently completed training in the implementation of the Balanced Literacy Framework. Each K-8th grade teacher that supports the areas of reading and writing completed two days of training this year. A fall workshop focused on writing and the Six Trait Writing program, and a spring workshop focused on reading with an emphasis on Guided Reading. Both workshops provided tips and strategies for teachers on the differentiation of reading and writing instruction to meet the various learning needs within the classroom. Mary Dudek, Director of Curriculum and Instruction, worked collaboratively with Mindy Pudlo, literacy consultant expert and former Literacy Coach, to create the structure of the workshops and develop specific criteria designed to improve the reading and writing instructional framework for all

teachers. Teachers will continue to increase the integration of the Balanced Literacy Framework and the new instructional approaches and strategies as a result of the Balanced Literacy Training.

Board Approvals from March

This past month the D26 Board of Education took the following major actions at their March 8th, and 22nd, Board Meetings. For a complete listing of past Board of Education actions and Minutes, go to www.cary26.org Minutes are posted after they have been approved by the Board.

- Approved the Resolution for Proposed Honorable Dismissal of Teachers on Contractual Continued Service as presented in the meeting.
- Approved the recommended administrative pay freeze, staffing, and contract lengths as presented for the 2010-2011 school year.
- Approved a motion to authorize Mr. Coleman to approach the Cary Education Association (CEA) with cost saving options presented and agreed upon by the Board.
- Approved the Resolution for a reduction of 75.6 full time equivalents (FTE) certificated positions in K-8 due to economic reasons and declining enrollment and 23 full time equivalents (FTE) Education Support Personnel (ESP) due to the Outsourcing of Custodial Services.
- Approved revision to Policy 2:152 on Board involvement in legislative issues and appointed Aimee Williams as the Board of Education Liaison for legislative issues.
- Approved revisions to Policies 2:150 and 2:150e regarding Board Committees.
- Approved the Cary Youth Baseball License Agreement as presented.
- Approved the acceptance of the Health Life Safety Door and Hardware Bid of The Dubs Company, Inc. of Elgin, IL in the amount of \$160,779.

April School Calendar

April 21	Early Release – School a.m./School Improvement p.m. Board Policy Committee – 6:00 p.m.
April 23	Midterm Report – Elementary K-6
April 22-29	Student Art Show – Cary Public Library
April 26	Board Community Engagement Committee – 6:00 p.m. Board of Education Meeting – 7:00 p.m.