

Information Packet

For Public Distribution

**For the
October 28, 2009
Board of Education Meeting**

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October 28, 2009

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Ann Arbor Public Schools
2555 South State Street
Ann Arbor, MI 48104
734.994.2230

Todd Roberts, Ed.D.
Superintendent of Schools
robertst@aaps.k12.mi.us

MEMORANDUM

To: Board of Education Trustees
From: Todd Roberts *TR*
Date: October 23, 2009
Subject: Information Update

Information Presentation

At Wednesday's Board meeting we will have a presentation about our environmental education program and the school district's environmental conservation efforts. This is similar to the presentation we gave to the Gray Panthers group a few weeks ago. I believe that it is very informative and points out the significant efforts we make to both educate our students and be good examples of environmental stewardship. Environmental education teacher Dave Szczygiel, physics teacher and planetarium director Stephen Schaffer and Randy Trent will do the presentation.

School Funding Crisis

I have included in the Information Packet (Tab 1) an update on our school funding as it stands today. It has been an amazing week regarding school funding. Our funding has been reduced by \$398 per student this week with another \$127 per student reduction to take place in 30 days unless the state addresses the shortfall in the School Aid Fund. In the Information Packet I have included a letter that I have drafted explaining the funding situation for AAPS. This letter will be posted on our website and school websites. It will also be sent to staff. Along with my letter I have provided you with information that came from the state regarding the funding reductions. This information may be helpful in understanding what is happening in Lansing, if that is possible.

If you have any questions let me know.

H1N1 Update

I have included in the Information Packet (Tab 2) an update that we are sending to families regarding H1N1. The state and our district are seeing an increase in flu like illnesses. We are working with the Washtenaw County Health Department to host H1N1 vaccination clinics at Huron (11/5) and Pioneer (11/10). Since the Health department has only received 30% of its shipment of the H1N1 vaccine, the clinics will only provide vaccinations to the priority groups listed in the letter.

If you have any questions let me know.

Second Briefing Items

The contracts for Pediatric Therapy Associates, Environmental Services, Asbestos and Lead Paint Abatement, and Integrated Pest Management Services are all on the agenda for second briefing. If you have any questions let me know.



Ann Arbor Public Schools

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Todd Roberts, Ed.D.

Superintendent of Schools
robertst@aaps.k12.mi.us

October 23, 2008

Dear Ann Arbor Public Schools Parent/Guardian:

With all of the news this week coming from Lansing regarding school funding, I have been getting questions regarding the specific impact on funding for our school district. The State School Aid bill signed this week by Governor Granholm reduced funding for all school districts by \$165 per student. The Governor also vetoed the Section 20j item in the School Aid bill that further reduces funding for the Ann Arbor Public Schools along with 39 other school districts in the state. The veto of Section 20j reduces our funding by an additional \$233 per student. The total reduction in funding for our school district in the State School Aid bill signed this week is \$398 per student which equals 6.6 million dollars in lost revenue for our school district for the current 2009-2010 school year.

We also received notice today that the state has determined that based on the Department of Treasury's projections there are insufficient revenues in the State School Aid Fund to fund the recently signed budget. Thus, the Governor has issued a proration order that reduces funding for schools by an additional \$127 per pupil that will take effect in 30 days unless the state finds additional revenues for the School Aid Fund. This additional reduction in funding will mean another 2.1 million dollars in lost revenue to our school district this year.

The Ann Arbor Public Schools stands to lose 8.7 million dollars in funding for this school year. Losing any funding four months into our fiscal year and two months into the school year creates a significant hardship for the school district. Losing almost nine million dollars in funding is completely unacceptable. Addressing this loss in funding mid-year will create financial hardship for the district and may require mid year cuts to both programs and services.

I would encourage you to contact both the legislature and Governor to help them understand that reducing funding to our schools by almost nine million dollars is unacceptable. They need to stop playing political games and work together to address the state's budget in a way that adequately funds education for our students. You can contact Governor Granholm at 517-373- 3400, Senate Majority Leader Mike Bishop at senmbishop@senate.michigan.gov and House Majority Leader Andy Dillon at andydillon@house.mi.gov . If you have any questions please let me know.

Sincerely,

Todd Roberts



STATE OF MICHIGAN
OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR
LANSING

JENNIFER M. GRANHOLM
GOVERNOR

JOHN D. CHERRY, JR.
LT. GOVERNOR

October 19, 2009

Michigan House of Representatives
State Capitol
Lansing, Michigan 48909-7514

Ladies and Gentlemen:

Today I have signed Enrolled House Bill 4447, the state school aid budget for the fiscal year that began nearly three weeks ago on October 1, 2009. However, I have disapproved several appropriations in the bill, as authorized by Section 19 of Article V of the Michigan Constitution. The specific item vetoes are detailed in the attached copy of the bill, which has been filed with the Secretary of State. While my approval of this bill will enable the continued operation of public schools and allow school districts to make scheduled bond payments, the Legislature has much more work to do to complete a balanced funding plan for our schools.

As presented, Enrolled House Bill 4447 is fiscally flawed. In simple terms, if this School Aid bill were a check written on a bank, it would be returned for insufficient funds. By some estimates there may be as much as a \$264 million gap between the expenditures called for in this bill and the School Aid Fund revenues needed to pay for them. Failure to address this revenue shortfall quickly will only make future education funding cuts deeper and more destructive to our schools.

As a first step in addressing this shortfall, I have exercised my constitutional line item veto authority. Specifically, I have disapproved of the following appropriations, totaling \$54.0 million:

- Section 20j of the bill, a provision that would authorize special supplemental foundation allowance payments totaling \$51.5 million for certain districts with the highest foundation allowances.
- Section 32c, which would provide specialized funding of nearly \$1.6 million for secondary prevention services programs.
- Section 57, earmarking \$285,000 for advanced and accelerated programs.
- Section 99p, dedicating \$100,000 to assist some districts in providing cultural experiences to students.

- Section 39a(1)(m), a provision that would allow for up to \$50,000 in 21st Century Community Learning Center funds to be used to support the Michigan After-School Partnership.
- Section 61a(3) , a provision that guarantees vocational education funding to a specific intermediate district up to the amount it received in fiscal year 1997, or \$388,700.
- Section 65(3), that provides funding of \$75,000 for a pre-college engineering program in the Kalamazoo area.

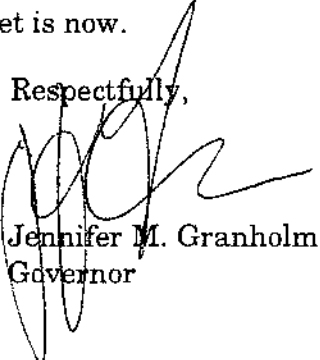
Because these reductions will not fully resolve the shortfall in the State School Aid Fund, other actions will be necessary. If the Legislature fails to secure the revenues needed to fully fund the budget it has passed, state law requires a proration in payments to school districts beyond the mid-year \$165 per pupil reduction already assumed in Enrolled House Bill 4447.

Our schools deserve sufficient funding to fulfill the critical mission we have given them and they deserve an honest budget that allows them to make necessary adjustments in their own spending. Enrolled House Bill 4447, as presented to me, gives them neither. It demands urgent additional action by the Legislature.

To provide direction regarding the implementation of this appropriations act, I note that Sections 20(15) and 104(2) of the bill include statements of legislative intent. While the Legislature has the right to state its advice, preferences, or wishes through a statement of intent, such statements do not impose conditions upon appropriations and are non-binding.

By presenting me a school aid budget for fiscal year 2010, you prevented an immediate fiscal crisis in our public schools. However, unless you act to fully fund this budget, it is only a matter of weeks before that crisis confronts our schools with additional destructive mid-year cuts. There is no time to waste. The time to complete work on this school aid budget is now.

Respectfully,



Jennifer M. Granholm
Governor

Michigan House of Representatives
October 19, 2009
Page 3

Attachment

cc: Michigan State Senate
The Honorable Terri Lynn Land, Secretary of State

KEY MESSAGES ON SCHOOL AID BUDGET

Did the Governor sign the K-12 School Funding budget today?

Yes. The Governor signed the HB 4447 that was presented to her by the State Legislature. The Governor signed the bill so the state could make its October 20 School Aid payments to schools. Without a K-12 budget in place, schools may have had to close their doors or unable to meet their bond payments.

Did the Governor use her line-item veto power and eliminate funding for any programs?

Yes. The Governor exercised her line-item veto authority on HB 4447 because the State Legislature spent more money in the bill than they have money to spend. In fact, the bill was underfunded by at least \$60 million. By some estimates there may be as much as a \$264 million gap between the expenditures called for in this bill and the school aid fund revenues needed to pay for them.

What did the Governor cut from the K-12 budget?

The Governor vetoed funding for the following programs:

- Section 20j of the bill, a provision that would authorize special supplemental foundation allowance payments totaling \$51.5 million for certain districts with the highest foundation allowance.
- Section 32c, which would provide specialized funding of \$1,593,800 for secondary and prevention services programs.
- Section 57, earmarking \$285,000 for advanced and accelerated programs.
- Section 99p, dedicating \$100,000 to assist some districts in providing cultural experiences to students.
- Section 39a(1)(m), a provision that would allow for up to \$50,000 in 21st Century Community Learning Center funds to be used to support the Michigan After-School Partnership.
- Section 61a(3), earmarking an extra \$388,700 for extra vocational education center funding in a single county;
- Sections 65(3), which would provide \$75,000 for an engineering program in a single county.

If the Governor supports funding for schools why is she vetoing spending from the K-12 Budget?

The Governor knows that education is the key to Michigan's economic turnaround and funding education -- both K-12 and Higher Education -- is a top priority. But the Governor cannot appropriate money into the budget. She can only sign what state lawmakers send to her desk and, unfortunately, state lawmakers chose to send her a

budget for K-12 Education that overspends. They have not provided funding for all of the programs they included in the budget.

Why is the Governor singling out school districts that receive 20j dollars?

The Governor is not trying to balance the budget on the backs of 20J school districts. In fact, under the budget that was sent to her desk all school districts will see a \$165 reduction in the per-pupil foundation grant. Without the Governor's action today the K-12 Budget would not be balanced and school districts would have to pay the price down the road.

Does this mean school districts will not see any more cuts?

No. Not only is the budget that was sent to the Governor's desk not balanced, it does not reflect the State Treasurer's estimate that the school aid fund will be down \$264 million from earlier projections for the current fiscal year. It is entirely possible that school districts will be forced to endure further cutbacks beyond the \$165 per pupil cut and the vetoes approved by the Governor today.

Senate Majority Leader Mike Bishop has been quoted that the Senate passed a balanced budget. Why is there a discrepancy in what he said and the budget that was sent to the Governor?

The Senate Republicans voted on a budget that was funded, in part, with revenues that were transferred from the general fund, even though all the money in that fund was already spent in other budgets. In short, Senator Bishop has given school districts an IOU and school districts cannot operate on IOUs.



JENNIFER M. GRANHOLM
GOVERNOR

STATE OF MICHIGAN
OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR
LANSING

JOHN D. CHERRY, JR.
LT. GOVERNOR

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
October 19, 2009

Contact: Liz Boyd
(517) 335-6397

**Governor Granholm Signs State School Aid Budget,
Warns That K-12 Education Underfunded**
Governor vetoes \$54 million in appropriations

LANSING – Governor Jennifer M. Granholm today signed the state school aid budget bill for the 2010 fiscal year, but warned that the budget presented to her by the legislature is seriously underfunded.

“The school aid budget presented to me is inadequately funded,” Granholm said. “If this school aid bill were a check drawn on a bank, it would be returned for insufficient funds. To bring the budget into balance, I have vetoed \$54 million in appropriations. But even these reductions will not fully resolve the shortfall.

“While my approval of this budget will allow public schools to keep operating and school districts to continue making scheduled bond payments, the legislature has much more work to do to complete a balanced funding plan for our schools.”

If State Treasurer Robert J. Kleine indicates later this week that reduced revenue will result in a further shortfall in the state school aid fund, state law requires a proration in payments to school districts beyond the \$165 per pupil reduction already approved by the legislature.

The school aid budget as presented to the governor authorizes the expenditure of \$12.9 billion to support Michigan’s K-12 education system in fiscal year 2010, including \$10.8 billion from the state school aid fund, \$1.6 billion in federal funds for education, \$450 million in federal Recovery Act funds, and \$38.1 million from the state’s general fund.

This represents a decrease of \$382 million, or 2.9 percent, in total expenditures from the prior state fiscal year. More than \$260 million of that decrease is achieved by the across-the-board reduction of \$165 in per pupil funding.

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Subject: School Aid

We don't have final info at 6:30 p.m. Monday but the governor apparently has signed the school aid bill after vetoing Section 20j. No veto message has been made available, but news accounts suggest she vetoed \$54 million and 20j includes \$51.8 million. See the attached on your 08-09 allocation should you be contacted by the press. I'll share when I know it.

Rick Simonson

Section 20j Adjustments - FY 2008-09

District Code	District Name	County	Per Pupil Foundation	Sec 20j (incl n Found)	Total S 20j Allocation
02022	HURT TOWNSHIP SCHOOL DISTRICT	ALGER	\$10,577	\$193.08	\$11,948
03982	SALGATELICK PUBLIC SCHOOLS	ALLEGAN	\$8,820	\$300.25	\$248,255
11340	BRIDGMAN PUBLIC SCHOOLS	BERRIEN	\$8,843	\$298.38	\$266,245
17250	DETROIT AREA SCHOOLS	CHIPPEWA	\$9,528	\$247.92	\$51,309
23490	ONEIDA TOWNSHIP S/D #3	EATON	\$11,171	\$167.75	\$2,446
32130	PORT HOPE COMMUNITY SCHOOLS	HURON	\$9,447	\$732.21	\$23,110
32260	COLFAX TOWNSHIP S/D #1F	HURON	\$3,217	\$283.00	\$8,620
33010	EAST LANSING SCHOOL DISTRICT	INGHAM	\$8,571	\$314.45	\$1,038,848
33216	WAVELAND COMMUNITY SCHOOLS	INGHAM	\$9,148	\$275.46	\$812,500
50210	CENTERLINE PUBLIC SCHOOLS	MACOMB	\$10,334	\$211.02	\$574,937
50203	SOUTH LAKE SCHOOLS	MACOMB	\$9,447	\$293.42	\$596,272
50230	WARREN CONSOLIDATED SCHOOLS	MACOMB	\$9,571	\$245.26	\$3,701,805
50240	WARREN WOODS PUBLIC SCHOOLS	MACOMB	\$9,278	\$272.11	\$860,349
52110	RIVER PUBLIC HIGH GAMME SCHOOLS	MARQUETTE	\$9,071	\$281.55	\$29,594
56010	MUSKOGEE PUBLIC SCHOOLS	MICHIGAN	\$8,904	\$293.21	\$2,487,415
58090	CLYDEBURN SCHOOLS (MONROE)	MONROE	\$11,649	\$149.96	\$313,559
63010	BIRYNGHAM CITY SCHOOL DISTRICT	OAKLAND	\$12,366	\$122.23	\$853,631
63040	SCHOOL DISTRICT OF THE CITY OF ROYAL OAK	OAKLAND	\$9,340	\$261.90	\$1,352,459
63060	SOUTHFIELD PUBLIC SCHOOL DISTRICT	OAKLAND	\$11,449	\$156.78	\$1,336,956
63070	AVONDALE SCHOOL DISTRICT	OAKLAND	\$8,755	\$304.10	\$1,124,191
63080	BLOOMFIELD HILLS SCHOOL DISTRICT	OAKLAND	\$12,443	\$119.25	\$625,777
63090	CLARENCEVILLE SCHOOL DISTRICT	OAKLAND	\$8,584	\$318.87	\$574,556
63100	NOVI COMMUNITY SCHOOL DISTRICT	OAKLAND	\$9,380	\$280.59	\$1,116,367
63150	TROY SCHOOL DISTRICT	OAKLAND	\$9,523	\$248.18	\$2,943,550
63160	WEST BLOOMFIELD SCHOOL DISTRICT	OAKLAND	\$9,375	\$258.94	\$1,707,474
63200	FARMINGTON PUBLIC SCHOOL DISTRICT	OAKLAND	\$10,558	\$191.22	\$2,212,809
63260	LAMPHERE PUBLIC SCHOOLS	OAKLAND	\$10,925	\$177.00	\$437,512
63290	WALTON LAKE CONSOLIDATED SCHOOLS	OAKLAND	\$8,928	\$231.38	\$4,468,411
63740	GANGOR TOWNSHIP S/D #8	VANBUREN	\$8,801	\$301.96	\$6,433
81010	ANN ARBOR PUBLIC SCHOOLS	WASHINGTON	\$5,723	\$233.25	\$3,742,866
82030	DEARBORN CITY SCHOOL DISTRICT	WAYNE	\$9,083	\$280.72	\$4,875,565
82046	MELVINDALE NORTH ALLEN PARK SCHOOLS	WAYNE	\$9,262	\$267.27	\$730,532
82056	GROSSE POINTE PUBLIC SCHOOLS	WAYNE	\$10,382	\$198.39	\$1,655,929
82095	LIVONIA PUBLIC SCHOOLS	WAYNE	\$8,594	\$316.81	\$5,012,460
82120	RIVER ROUGE SCHOOL DISTRICT	WAYNE	\$9,104	\$279.17	\$307,503
82130	ROMULUS COMMUNITY SCHOOLS	WAYNE	\$9,139	\$276.63	\$1,076,495
82155	TRENTON PUBLIC SCHOOLS	WAYNE	\$9,031	\$285.11	\$779,881
82300	GROESBEIL TOWNSHIP SCHOOLS	WAYNE	\$9,075	\$280.63	\$523,111
82320	CITY OF HARPER WOODS SCHOOLS	WAYNE	\$8,157	\$323.61	\$390,782
82330	NORFOLK PUBLIC SCHOOLS	WAYNE	\$8,535	\$320.87	\$2,213,897
	TOTAL				\$51,823,509

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82320	CITY OF HARPER WOODS SCHOOLS	WAYNE	\$8,497	\$323.61	\$390,762
82390	NORTHVILLE PUBLIC SCHOOLS	WAYNE	\$8,539	\$320.87	\$2,213,897
TOTAL					\$51,823,509



JENNIFER M. GRANHOLM
GOVERNOR

STATE OF MICHIGAN
OFFICE OF THE STATE BUDGET
LANSING

ROBERT L. EMERSON
DIRECTOR

October 22, 2009

Dear Superintendent:

On October 22 2009, I received an official notice from the State Treasurer that the Department of Treasury has determined that the amount appropriated from the State School Aid Fund under 2009 PA 121 exceeds the amount available for expenditure from the State School Aid Fund for the fiscal year that ends on September 30, 2010. As provided for by the Legislature in section 11(3) of The State School Aid Act of 1979 ("Section 11(3)"), proration is therefore required and today I notified the Legislature that without additional legislative action in 30 calendar days, state school aid payments will be prorated in the manner prescribed by the Legislature to reflect the amount actually available for expenditure from the State School Aid Fund in fiscal year 2009-2010.

According to the State Treasurer, it is currently estimated that State School Aid Fund revenues are insufficient by \$212.0 million. Consistent with the requirements of section 11(4) of The State School Aid Act of 1979, it is estimated that annualized state aid payments to school districts and public school academies will be reduced by approximately \$127 per pupil, payments to intermediate school districts will be reduced by approximately \$8.8 million, and payments to non-school entities in the school aid appropriations act will be reduced by approximately \$1.3 million. These estimates may be modified by revenues and pupil counts agreed to at the consensus revenue estimating conference in January of 2010, and other cost data updated by the Department of Education as it becomes available. Pursuant to Section 11(3), payments for the Proposal A guarantee, Headlee-mandated special education and school lunch payments, Durant settlement payments, other specified payments, and federal grants are not affected by proration.

The Governor and I stand ready to work in a bi-partisan manner with the Legislature and the school community to find solutions that will provide critical funding to our schools.

Sincerely,

Robert L. Emerson
State Budget Director

Attachment: Proration notification letter

cc:

Governor Jennifer Granholm
Robert Kleine, State Treasurer
Mike Flanagan, Superintendent for Public Instruction
Senator Mike Bishop, Senate Majority Leader
Senator Mike Prusi, Senate Minority Leader
Representative Andy Dillon, Speaker of the House
Representative Kevin Elsenheimer, House Minority Leader
Senate Fiscal Agency
House Fiscal Agency



JENNIFER M. GRANHOLM
GOVERNOR

STATE OF MICHIGAN
OFFICE OF THE STATE BUDGET
LANSING

ROBERT L. EMERSON
DIRECTOR

October 22, 2009

Michigan House of Representatives
State Capitol
Lansing, Michigan 48909-7536

Michigan Senate
State Capitol
Lansing, Michigan 48909-7536

Dear Legislators:

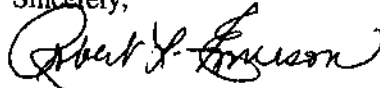
On October 22, 2009, I received an official notice from the State Treasurer that the Department of Treasury has determined that the amount appropriated from the State School Aid Fund under 2009 PA 121 exceeds the amount available for expenditure from the State School Aid Fund for the fiscal year that ends on September 30, 2010. As provided for by the Legislature in section 11(3) of The State School Aid Act of 1979 ("Section 11(3)"), proration is therefore required and I am notifying you that in 30 calendar days state school aid payments will be prorated in the manner prescribed by the Legislature to reflect the amount actually available for expenditure from the State School Aid Fund in fiscal year 2009-2010.

Under Section 11(3), the Legislature may prevent proration from occurring, by, within 30 calendar days, enacting legislation appropriating additional funds from the general fund, the Countercyclical Budget and Economic Stabilization Fund, any State School Aid Fund balance, or another source to fund the projected shortfall. As you are well aware, additional revenue will be required to fund the shortfall.

According to the State Treasurer, it is currently estimated that State School Aid Fund revenues are insufficient by \$212.0 million. Consistent with the requirements of section 11(4) of The State School Aid Act of 1979, it is estimated that annualized state aid payments to school districts and public school academies will be reduced by approximately \$127 per pupil, payments to intermediate school districts will be reduced by approximately \$8.8 million, and payments to non-school entities in the school aid appropriations act will be reduced by approximately \$1.3 million. These estimates may be modified by revenues and pupil counts agreed to at the consensus revenue estimating conference in January of 2010, and other cost data updated by the Department of Education as it becomes available. Pursuant to Section 11(3), payments for the Proposal A guarantee, Headlee-mandated special education and school lunch payments, Durant settlement payments, other specified payments, and federal grants are not affected by proration.

The Governor and I stand ready to work in a bi-partisan manner with the Legislature to find solutions that will provide critical funding to our schools.

Sincerely,



Robert L. Emerson
State Budget Director

Attachment

c: The Honorable Jennifer M. Granholm, Governor
The Honorable George Cushingberry, Chair, House Appropriations Committee
The Honorable Ron Jelinek, Chair, Senate Appropriations Committee
Senate Fiscal Agency
House Fiscal Agency



JENNIFER M. GRANHOLM
GOVERNOR

STATE OF MICHIGAN
DEPARTMENT OF TREASURY
LANSING

ROBERT J. KLEINE
STATE TREASURER

October 22, 2009

Robert L. Emerson
State Budget Director
Office of the State Budget
111 South Capital Avenue
Lansing, Michigan 48933

Dear Mr. Emerson:

Consistent with the requirements of section 11(3) of The State School Aid Act of 1979 (MCL 388.1611), as amended this week by 2009 PA 121, I am writing to notify you that the Department of Treasury has determined that the amount appropriated from the State School Aid Fund under 2009 PA 121 exceeds the amount available for expenditure and that a proration of state aid payments to schools will be required.

At the consensus revenue estimating conference held on May 15, 2009, the Department of Treasury, the House Fiscal Agency, and the Senate Fiscal Agency jointly determined that \$10,563,000,000.00 would be available in State School Aid Fund revenue in fiscal year 2009-2010. Combined with an estimated \$171,000,000.00 in revenue carried forward from fiscal year 2008-2009 into fiscal year 2009-2010, an estimated \$10,734,000,000.00 will be available for expenditure from the State School Aid Fund in fiscal year 2009-2010.

The state school aid budget for fiscal year 2009-2010 as approved by the Legislature and presented to the Governor on October 9, 2009 (Enrolled House Bill 4447) authorized expenditures from the State School Aid Fund totaling \$10,793,954,100.00. The amount authorized by the Legislature in Enrolled House Bill 4447 therefore exceeded the amount available for appropriation from the State School Aid Fund based upon the May 15, 2009 consensus revenue estimate by \$59,594,100.00.

As signed into law and enacted by the Governor, House Bill 4447 (now 2009 PA 121), authorizes expenditures from the State School Aid Fund totaling \$10,741,605,400.00. Item vetoes by the Governor of State School Aid Fund expenditures totaled \$52,348,700.00. Including the item vetoes, State School Aid Fund expenditures authorized by 2009 PA 121 exceed revenues available based upon the May 15, 2009 consensus revenue estimate by \$7,605,400.00.

In addition to this shortfall, since the May 15, 2009 consensus revenue estimate for the State School Aid Fund was determined, State School Aid Fund revenue has fallen below projections. The Department of Treasury now projects that State School Aid Fund revenue available for expenditure in fiscal year 2009-2010 will total \$10,529,600,000.00, including \$10,434,300,000.00 in revenue for fiscal year 2009-2010 and \$95,300,000.00 in revenue carried

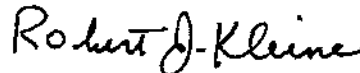
State Budget Director Robert L. Emerson
October 22, 2009
Page 2

forward from fiscal year 2008-2009 into fiscal year 2009-2010. Based on the department's revised projections, total State School Aid Fund revenue generated in fiscal year 2009-2010 will be \$128,700,000.00 lower than the May 15, 2009 consensus revenue estimate, and revenue carried forward from fiscal year 2008-2009 into 2009-2010 will be \$75,700,000.00 lower.

Given these projections, the amount appropriated from the State School Aid Fund for fiscal year 2009-2010 under Section 11 of 2009 PA 171 \$10,741,605,400.00 exceeds the amount available for expenditure from the State School Aid Fund in fiscal year 2009-2010 \$10,529,600,000.00 by \$212,005,400.00. Given this shortfall in the State School Aid Fund, proration will be necessary and required under MCL 388.1611.

The Department of Treasury will continue to closely monitor and keep you updated on available State School Aid Fund revenue for fiscal years 2008-2009 and 2009-2010.

Sincerely,



Robert J. Kleine
State Treasurer

c: Governor Jennifer M. Granholm



Michigan Senate

Michael D. Bishop

State Senator

Senate Majority Leader

12TH DISTRICT
LANSING OFFICE: (517) 373-2417
TOLL-FREE: (877) P-BISHOP (24-7467)
FAX: (517) 373-2694
E-MAIL: mdebishop@senate.michigan.gov

October 22, 2009

Dear Superintendent,

Like so many others, I am frustrated beyond belief by the governor's decision to eliminate nearly \$52 million in funding for 20j schools. People around the state are shaking their heads and wondering what is going on in Lansing. As a longtime supporter and graduate of our public schools, and as a father of public school children, I am stunned that this governor would deliver such a devastating blow to our schools and eliminate these critical funds. 20j is a promise to schools that's been kept by the Legislature in the decade and a half since Proposal A.

While the governor says she did what she had to do, and that the Legislature forced her into making this decision, her statements couldn't be further from the truth. Eliminating millions in 20j funding was completely unnecessary. She chose to cut your school's funding in a futile attempt to coerce the Legislature into raising taxes. Unfortunately, your school district and 39 others, along with the students and families, are now expected to shoulder the burden for a \$52 million cut.

The governor has accused us of not fully funding the K-12 budget - this is untrue. When Senate Republicans passed the K-12 budget, we included a plan to move \$100 million in savings to the School Aid Fund in an agreement with the House to reduce the per-pupil cut from \$218 to \$165. My fellow Senate Republicans and I did everything in our power to keep intact the 20j funding and limit the per-pupil cut by sending the governor a balanced K-12 education budget. The funds are there, but the House must act.

It was the governor's decision alone to redline the 40 districts around the state including yours and yield her veto pen as an ax on your school. Unfortunately, your students, teachers, and families are the ones hurt by her flawed maneuver.

My intention with this letter is to set the record straight. As Senate Majority Leader, I made it my top priority to send the governor a balanced K-12 budget that adequately funded 20j school districts. As always, I want to be part of a solution so please feel free to contact me directly if you would like to discuss this matter with me, personally.

Sincerely,

Senate Majority Leader
Michael D. Bishop

STATE CAPITOL • LANSING, MICHIGAN 48913

JoAnn Emmendorfer
Executive Assistant to the Superintendent



Ann Arbor Public Schools

2555 South State Street
Ann Arbor, MI 48104
734.994.2230

Todd Roberts, Ed.D

Superintendent of Schools
roberts@aaps.k12.mi.us

October 22, 2009

UPDATE - H1N1 Flu & The Ann Arbor Public Schools

Dear AAPS Families,

The Washtenaw County Department of Public Health continues to notify the district weekly with updates on the H1N1 and seasonal flu activity.

As of this week Washtenaw County is reaching the peak of influenza activity. Confirmed cases of influenza have increased sharply for both Influenza A and H1N1. The age range is mostly in the 5 – 24 year group.

In the Ann Arbor Public Schools we have seen an increase in respiratory illness associated with flu and flu-like symptoms. We also know that a few schools on the west side of the state have already had to close for a few days because of the high absent rate. On the advice of Public Health if a school reaches around the 30% absence rate for students or staff that school may close for a period of time.

We also learned this week that Public Health only received about 30% of the shipment of the H1N1 vaccine. Because of this shortage the H1N1 vaccine will only be given to priority groups:

- Pregnant women
- Caregivers/contacts of children under 6 months old
- Children 6 months – 4 years old
- Children 5-18 years with underlying medical conditions, and
- EMS and health care workers with direct patient contact.

The AAPS will still be hosting 2 H1N1 vaccination clinics for the priority groups only:

- November 5 at Huron High School, 2:30 – 8:00 p.m.
- November 10 at Pioneer High School, 2:30 – 8:00 p.m.

We still need your help to contain the spread of the flu virus.

KEEP SICK CHILDREN AT HOME for at least 24 hours after they no longer have a fever or do not have signs of a fever without using a fever-reducing drug. Keeping children with a fever home will reduce the number of people who may get infected. It may take up to 7 days for the illness to subside.

DO NOT SEND CHILDREN TO SCHOOL IF THEY ARE SICK. Any children who are determined to be sick while at school will be sent home

Other steps we continue to take....

- ✓ **We will send sick students and staff home to stay at home until a fever of 100 degrees or higher returns to normal for 24 hours without the use of fever reducing medications**
- ✓ **We will move students and staff who become ill at school with flu symptoms into a separate room until they are able to be picked up and leave school**
- ✓ Surfaces such as desks, doorknobs, and door handles are cleaned following CDC protocol. Remember, this is mainly an air-born transmitted virus
- ✓ Personal protection masks are available at school and will be offered to students who exhibit flu-like symptoms and are waiting to be taken home

The district have developed an educational plan based on the recommendation from the Federal and State Department of Education for extended absences or school closing in a severe outbreak which includes;

- The district will post curriculum maps for the core academic courses at each grade level K-12 on the district and school websites
- On-line resources will be posted for each course such as textbooks, E2020 (Grs. 6-12)
- Links to on-line tutorial resources will be posted for each subject area
- Teachers are being encouraged to post assignments weekly in PowerSchool for student/parent access

One of the most important things you can do to help keep our schools open and operating as usual is to develop a family plan to address any illness that requires your student to remain home.

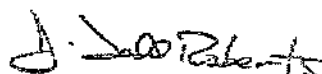
- ✓ Teach your children to wash their hands often with soap and water or an alcohol based hand sanitizer. Include small containers of hand sanitizer in their backpacks.
- ✓ Teach your children not to share personal items such as drinks, food, and unwashed utensils and to cover their cough and sneeze with tissue or the side of their arm.
- ✓ Know the signs and symptoms of the flu which include fever (100 degrees Fahrenheit, 37.8 degrees Celsius or greater), cough, sore throat, a runny or stuffy nose, body aches, headache and feeling very tired. Some people may also vomit or have diarrhea.

For more information the district and school websites (www.a2schools.org) have a direct link to current information on H1N1 including a link to the Washtenaw County Public Health school portal:

http://www.ewashtenaw.org/government/departments/public_health/school_portal/index2.html

You can also visit the CDC site for current information www.flu.gov or call 1-800-CDC-INFO.

Sincerely,



J. Todd Roberts
Superintendent



October 22, 2009

Dear Washtenaw County Parents and Guardians:

The H1N1 influenza virus continues to circulate in our community. Several area schools are reporting increased absences due to flu-like illness, and the amount of H1N1 vaccine available locally is very limited. Until H1N1 vaccine supplies are more plentiful, vaccination clinics planned at local schools will serve only prioritized, high-risk individuals in accordance with guidelines from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). Please review the priority groups below carefully. A consent form and additional vaccine and clinic information are included.

Individuals within these priority groups are currently eligible for H1N1 vaccination:

- Pregnant women
- Household contacts and caregivers of children under 6 months of age
- Children 6 months through 4 years
- Children 5 to 18 years who have medical conditions associated with a higher risk of influenza complications (such as asthma or diabetes)
- Health care and EMS personnel who provide direct patient care

H1N1 Priority Group Vaccination Clinics. Hours are while supplies last.

Date	Location	Time
Tuesday, Oct 27	Washtenaw Intermediate School District (WISD) facility	3:00 pm to 9:00 pm
Monday, Nov 2	Ypsilanti High School	10:00 am to 8:00 pm
Tuesday, Nov 3	Creekside Intermediate School, Dexter	10:00 am to 8:00 pm
Thursday, Nov 5	Ann Arbor Huron High School	2:00 pm to 8:00 pm
Friday, Nov 6	Milan High School	11:00 am to 7:00 pm

If you or your children are among those prioritized, you may go to any of the clinics listed. Forms are available online at www.ewashtenaw.org/flu and at the vaccination site. Please bring your completed, signed consent form or forms with you, if possible, to speed processing.

There will be more opportunities for vaccination, as more H1N1 vaccine becomes available locally. We appreciate your patience with this process.

Sincerely,

Diana Torres-Burgos, MD, MPH
Medical Director, Washtenaw County Public Health



Washtenaw County Public Health
588 Central Street, Ypsilanti, MI 48197
734-547-6100 www.ewashtenaw.org



CALL TO ORDER

7:04 PM

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

Trustee Nelson led the pledge

ROLL CALL

Present – Trustees Baskett, Friedman (Treasurer-arrived at 7:50 pm), Hollier, Mexicotte (President), Nelson (Secretary), Patalan (Vice President)

Absent – Trustee Gates-Bryant

Present from Administration – Simpson, Margolis, Trent, Osinski (Recorder)

Guests – Harry Sheehan

INTRODUCTION OF NON-VOTING MEMBER AT THE TABLE

President Mexicotte introduced Dr. Todd Roberts, Superintendent of Schools.

APPROVAL OF AGENDA

Approved by consent.

PUBLIC COMMENTARY

None

REPORTS

Youth Senate – To reinforce parent encouragement and academic success for teens, Candy Grams will be conducted during Parent/Teacher conferences at Huron and Skyline. An information table was offered at Pioneer conferences. Noted that there are several new school-based organizations for student involvement. Information from these groups can be used to identify motivational ideas for teen involvement. A district-wide survey is in the planning stages to explore how extracurricular activities reflect student culture.

Ann Arbor Parent Advisory Committee – Reported on a planning meeting with administration to discuss loss of instructional time due to transportation issues and ensuring proper equipment is available for special needs students attending field trips. Thanked Bill Harris for attending the October meeting to update on Middle School services. Disability Awareness Workshops begin in November. Voiced support for the county enhancement millage.

Ann Arbor Administrators Association– Mike Madison thanked various members of administration for their assistance and expertise throughout the year.

BOARD COMMITTEE REPORTS

Performance - have not met since last Board meeting. Next meeting is November 12, 2009 at 6:00 pm, Balas Superintendent's Conference Room. Open to the public.

Planning – met on October 6 to discuss tonight's first briefing items. Next meeting will be held November 3 at 6:30 pm, Balas Superintendent's Conference Room. Open to the public.

INFORMATION

Pioneer Stormwater Containment Project - Mr. Trent and Harry Sheehan, Water Resource Commissioner, presented an update. This project is a multi-year, collaborative effort between the city, county and Ann Arbor Public Schools, to manage stormwater runoff to Allen Creek.

FIRST BRIEFING

09-033 Integrated Pest Management Services – Presented by Mr. Trent. District's policy is that we use products with the least impact/toxicity.

09-034 Environmental Consulting Services – Presented by Mr. Trent.

09-035 Asbestos and Lead Based Paint Abatement Services – Presented by Mr. Trent.

09-036 Pediatric Therapy Associates – Presented by Mr. Simpson. Trustees appreciated the contractor evaluation.

SECOND BRIEFING – scheduled for approval at this meeting

09-031 Community Education and Recreation Catalog printing bid recommendation – no further discussion.

09-032 Adoption of Practical Assessment Exploration System (PAES) - no further discussion.

ACTION – CONSENT AGENDA – scheduled for approval at this meeting

09-031 Community Education and Recreation Catalog printing bid recommendation Vice President Patalan, supported by Trustee Hollier moved to award Woodward Printing a contract in the amount not to exceed \$130,000 for printing the Community Education and recreation Activity and Youth Catalogs for the 2009/10 and the 2010/11 school years. On roll call vote, the motion carried 5-0, Trustees Gates-Bryant and Friedman absent.

09-032 Adoption of Practical Assessment Exploration System (PAES)

Vice President Patalan, supported by Trustee Hollier moved to approve the purchase of the Practical Assessment Exploration System (PAES) from Talent Assessment, Inc. in the total amount of \$136,318. On roll call vote, the motion carried 5-0, Trustees Gates-Bryant and Friedman absent.

Approve minutes of the 9/23/09 Regular Meeting

Vice President Patalan, supported by Trustee Hollier moved to approve the minutes of the 9/23/09 Regular Meeting. On roll call vote, the motion carried 5-0, Trustees Gates-Bryant and Friedman absent.

Approve minutes of the 10/1/09 Regular Meeting

Vice President Patalan, supported by Trustee Hollier moved to approve the minutes of the 9/23/09 Regular Meeting. On roll call vote, the motion carried 6-0, Trustee Gates-Bryant absent.

Approve Executive Session minutes of the 8/19/09 and 10/1/09 meetings

Vice President Patalan, supported by Trustee Hollier moved to approve the minutes of the 8/19/09 and 10/1/09 Executive Session. On roll call vote, the motion carried 5-0, Trustees Gates-Bryant and Friedman absent.

Gift Offers

Vice President Patalan, supported by Trustee Hollier moved to accept the gift offers as presented. On roll call vote, the motion carried 5-0, Trustees Gates-Bryant and Friedman absent.

ACTION – BOARD ITEMS

Student Discipline

Vice President Patalan, supported by Trustee Hollier, moved to expel Student A from the Ann Arbor Public Schools for 180 days for violation of Michigan Compiled Law 380.1311 and the Ann Arbor Public Schools Discipline Policy, for actions occurring on September 25, 2009. Furthermore, the district recommends Student A attend COPE as an educational opportunity consistent with the student's academic needs. On roll call vote, the motion carried 5-0, Trustees Gates-Bryant and Friedman absent.

SUPERINTENDENT'S REPORT

Dr. Roberts informed the Board and public that new legislation to decrease student funding \$165/pupil is being considered. This will create a \$2.7 million loss in our district, plus additional early childhood funding deductions. He continued with his prepared report.

ITEMS FOR AGENDA PLANNING

No items


ITEMS FROM THE BOARD

Nelson noted that the state has not distributed stimulus funds as was intended, thus leaving school districts behind once again. Reiterated the need for local control of funding wherever possible.

Baskett – Requested that the Village Fund could possibly pay for a high school parking pass for a family in need, and if not appropriate, she would pay it herself.

ADJOURNMENT

8:15 pm

 David Jesse AnnArbor.com Staff

Community High School newspaper up for Pulitzer Prize of student publications

Posted Today, 4 hours ago

0 Comments | 0 Likes | 0 Likes

All morning, Tracy Rosewarne dropped hints to her journalism students that she was going to deliver big news during that afternoon's class.

Then during class time on a recent school day, the Community High School teacher pulled up the list of National Scholastic Press Association Pacemaker Award winners for this year.

She slowly scrolled down the list, and when she reached the listing for overall quality for news magazines, she slowed down even more.

Casually, she pointed out one listing - The Communicator, Community's newspaper.

The student-run paper is one of seven news magazines from across the nation up for the award, which is considered the Pulitzer Prize of high school journalism.

About 20 Community High students will travel to Washington, D.C. in November to see if they win the award.

It's the first time the newspaper has been named a finalist, even though a blackboard in Rosewarne's room is covered with awards from the Michigan Interscholastic Press Association.

The difference from last year's product?

Staffers say it had a lot to do with a redesign of the paper, which worked at reflecting the mood and energy of Community High, an alternative school in Ann Arbor.

"We wanted to find the design and content that would reflect what it meant to Community," said Kayla Stoler, this year's co-editor-in-chief.

Other staffers agreed.

"What we do really well is reflect (our school) and we're always improving. Each edition is better," said Austin Hughes, this year's managing editor.

Everyone on staff at the paper writes for each edition, then the students go through a process of deciding what makes it to print. They're quick to point out that neither Rosewarne nor the school's administration does any prior review on the paper.

Another advantage the Communicator has is the school has other means of communicating general news, like when Curriculum Night is, the students said. That leaves them free to write stories that dig into Community's culture and students.

David Jesse covers K-12 education for AnnArbor.com. He can be reached at davidjesse@annarbor.com or at 734-623-2534.

Share this post Tags: Ann Arbor school district, Community High School

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9 Comments:

Congrats to Community's editors and teachers/advisors and the past editors as well. They all play a part in a remarkable paper!

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Economy/AP

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New Internet posting rules will show public \$382 million in budget cuts hitting Mich. schools

By: **TIM MARTIN**
Associated Press
10/09/09 5:25 PM EDT

LANSING, MICH. — Michigan's public schools will likely be required to make more of their financial information available on the Internet, providing taxpayers a glimpse into budgets that will be slashed by \$382 million this fall.

The budget bill approved by lawmakers cuts funding for K-12 schools by about \$165 per student. School officials said the cuts will lead to layoffs and more districts operating under deficits, though they acknowledged that the cuts could have been more severe.

The bill, which provides the state aid portion for the schools' budgets, is expected to be signed soon by Gov. Jennifer Granholm. Overall, K-12 education will get about 3 percent less this academic year than during 2008-09.

The legislation passed by the Legislature late Thursday includes several policy changes that would affect how schools operate. Among them is the requirement to include a link from Internet home pages to detailed budget information.

"We have for the first time a transparency requirement that's going to let the public know exactly how school districts are spending their money," said Rep. Kevin Elsenheimer of Kewadin, the top-ranked Republican in the House.

The plan requires districts to post pie charts breaking down spending by categories. Schools also must list compensation information for employees paid more than \$100,000 a year, include copies of labor union contracts, provide information about employee health care plans, post lobbying expenditures and link to financial audits.

The requirement adds an undetermined, likely modest expense for schools that will vary by district. Schools already were required to provide links to their annual budgets and some already post much of the budget information required by the new bill.

Those budgets soon will lose millions of dollars, which school officials say will lead to layoffs, crowded classrooms and fewer preschool programs. More districts could face severe financial trouble as they struggle with falling enrollment and a lingering recession.

Detroit schools, the state's largest district with nearly 86,000 students, will lose \$14 million under the budget

plan. Saginaw schools are set to lose nearly \$1.5 million, Ann Arbor schools lose nearly \$2.7 million and Alpena schools, with about 4,300 students, more than \$718,000.

About 25 of Michigan's 840 school districts, intermediate school districts and public school academies are already operating with deficits. The reduced funding could force roughly 95 more to exhaust their financial reserves and go into the red, said Brad Biladeau, government relations director for the Michigan Association of School Administrators.

The Michigan Education Association, the state's largest teachers' union, acknowledges the cuts could have been worse. A \$218-per-student cut was on the table just a week ago.

"But the lack of a full investment in public schools is disturbing, especially since the vast majority of our legislators ran for office touting the importance of education to our economic recovery," MEA President Iris Salters said in a statement.

The legislation eliminates the \$1.4 million set aside for school bus inspections, but schools still will be required to make the inspections. Schools will have to come up with the cash from other areas of their budget.

Some early childhood development grants will be reduced. Grants to help create small high schools and money for math and science centers will be scaled back.

Schools will have the flexibility to trim the \$165 per student spending from programs of their choosing as long as they agree to a service consolidation plan aimed at reducing overall costs.

"That is a real step forward," Elsenheimer said.


The push for consolidation comes as enrollment in Michigan's public schools has fallen from more than 2 million students in the late 1970s to about 1.6 million today.

Most Michigan state departments are operating under a temporary budget that expires Oct. 31. Lawmakers missed their Oct. 1 deadline to balance the budget and erase a \$2.8 billion deficit and instead adopted a continuation budget.

Granholm has signed yearlong budget bills covering community colleges, courts and the state department for military and veterans' affairs. But Republicans who control the Senate have refused to send the Democratic governor some other budget bills because they are worried she will veto them.

Find this article at:

<http://www.washingtonexaminer.com/economy/ap/new-internet-posting-rules-will-show-public-382-million-in-budget-cuts-hitting-mich-schools-63889147.html>

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Washtenaw County students get advice from congressmen

Posted Today, 55 minutes ago

1 Comment | 0 Likes | 155



U.S. Rep. John Dingell answers a question posed by a student at the Washtenaw Congressional Student Forum at Pioneer High School Monday. Angela Cesere | AnnArbor.com

From how much of a proposed bill they read to the one vote they regret casting, two local congressmen spent about an hour Monday morning filling in local government students about life in the United States House of Representatives.

The students - from Ann Arbor's Pioneer, Huron and Community high schools, along with Chelsea, Dexter and Saline high schools - gathered at Pioneer to hear from Rep. John Dingell, D-Deerborn, and Mark Schauer, D-Battle Creek.

The program was put together by Pioneer teacher Tracey Van Dusen, who spent the summer in Washington, D.C., working for C-SPAN. During a meeting with Schauer, she got the idea to let local government students learn about what goes into being a congressman from those who are currently serving.

A panel of students spent time Monday asking questions of the representatives.

Pioneer's Heather Hoopaw led off with a question about how the representatives weigh their personal views on a issue, their constituents' views and what's best for Michigan and the nation when voting.

"I don't go there as an empty vessel," Schauer said, adding he carefully weighs the opinions of those he's been elected to represent - even though he knows not all the people in his district will agree with his vote.

Other students asked the congressmen if they read every bill before voting on it.

Dingell said he uses staff members and other resources to go over what's in a bill.

"Reading the bill doesn't necessarily tell you what's in the bill," he said. "It's written in good legalese."

Schauer said he reads the bills, thanks in large part to his lifestyle in Washington, D.C.

"I don't have a TV in my apartment," he said, noting his wife and kids stay in Michigan as well. "(So) I read."

Solomon Rajput from Pioneer asked the representatives about any votes in their careers they would do differently.

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Goed?

Dingell took the students on a bit of a history lesson saying he regretted voting for the Gulf of Tonkin resolution that he said basically authorized the Vietnam War.

"I think that was one of the greatest mistakes in my career," he said.

At the end of the event, Dingell told students they should "diligently interest yourself in your country" and doing so would allow them to make a difference.

David Jesse covers K-12 education for AnnArbor.com. He can be reached at davidjesse@annarbor.com or at 734-623-2534.

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Tags: Chelsea High School, Community High School, Dexter High School, Farmington Hills, Grosse Pointe Woods, Grosse Pointe Park, Grosse Pointe Public High School

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1 Comment:

I don't care for Dingell but admire his candor for his comments about the Gulf of Tonkin resolution. No one at the time had any idea of what this would lead to. The lesson being the path to unnecessary wars is often a slippery slope with many small steps. Since there appears to be no commitment in this country to do what it takes to win in Afghanistan, we should leave before more American boys are killed.



12/11/11

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Heritage Newspapers (heritage.com)

Ann Arbor Journal > News

School district environmentally conscious

Thursday, October 8, 2009

By Lisa Allmendinger, A2 Journal

Each year, before the Ann Arbor Public Schools has an unexpected pest or other environmental problem, Randy Trent, executive director of physical properties, issues bids for competitive pricing.

Should a bee problem or potentially hazardous asbestos or lead paint situation arise, the schools will be ready to handle it -- and not pay emergency costs, Trent told the Board of Education's planning committee.

He told board member Irene Patalan -- the only one of three members of the committee at the meeting -- "that the district is being as environmentally conscious as possible."

Trent said there were 3.5 million square feet of buildings, 3 million square feet of roofs and 2.5 million square feet of mechanical and tunnels in the district's buildings.

Patalan told the six high school students who attended the meeting that the schools regularly test the indoor air quality in the buildings.

Trent told the students that the district has 33 buildings, the oldest dating back to about 1910 and the youngest was Skyline High School, built several years ago.

"In both the old and new buildings, things need to be maintained," Patalan told the students.

Lisa Allmendinger can be reached at lallmendinger@heritage.com or at 1-0877-995-NEWS (6397).

URL: http://www.heritage.com/articles/2009/10/08/ann_arbor_journal/news/doc4ace4dfcb36d1985675156.prt

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Heritage Newspapers (heritage.com)

Heritagewest > News

School superintendents rally for millage

Saturday, October 10, 2009

With the instability of state funding for Washtenaw County Schools, superintendents from across the district say the proposed Washtenaw Intermediate School District millage on the Nov. 3 ballot is a way to maintain adequate funding for local schools.

If passed, all of the proposed 2-mill levy will stay in Washtenaw County and be used for operating budgets in the individual schools districts.

Charter schools will not benefit from the millage because they are not "constituent districts" of the Washtenaw Intermediate School District.

The ballot question asks voters to approve a 2-mill levy for five years, which would raise about \$30 million from 2009-2013 or about \$680 per student.

For a home valued at \$200,000 with a taxable value of \$100,000, this is a \$200 tax increase per year.

Revenue from the millage will be used for student programs and operational expenses, the superintendents said.

With estimated state per pupil cuts of \$165 and the potential for further reductions later this year, "in two years, we are looking at close to a reduction of \$600 per student and this millage will just about cover it," said Dave Killips, Chelsea's superintendent of schools.

Killips said the passage of the millage was crucial to the Chelsea School District, a statement echoed by other superintendents in the county.

"An ISD (Intermediate School District) millage is the only option we have under state law," Killips said.

Michigan law states "a regional enhancement millage may be levied by an intermediate school district to enhance other state and local funding for local school district operations if approved by a majority of the intermediate school electors voting on the question," according to millage proposal information.

Currently, the Chelsea schools have about 2,600 students and a \$25 million operating budget. Killips said the district has cut about \$7 million since 2002.

Chelsea receives \$7,650 per student from the state and lost about 40 students in the most recent student count day.

"Our chamber of commerce board of directors unanimously supported the millage," Killips said.

If the millage doesn't pass, he said there will have to be "significant cuts," naming extracurricular activities, transportation, programs and class size as possible areas where changes may have to take place.

In the Ann Arbor Public Schools, for instance, Superintendent Todd Roberts said the district already has cut about \$16 million during the last four years and is projecting "the need to cut \$15 million in the 2010-2011 school year."

This equates to a reduction of more than 200 positions across the district.

He says it's time "to act locally to ensure the schools have the resources necessary to educate our children."

"Funding is an extremely important issue facing our district," Roberts said.

All the superintendents stressed that this millage should not be confused with bond issues that were recently passed in a number of districts.

"Bond issues are only used for capital projects," Killips said, adding that money cannot be used for day-to-day operations.

Milan Superintendent Bryan Girbach said bond money helps improve facilities.

"Millage money can help improve the education of the students while in those facilities," he said.

His district has about 2,600 students and a \$23 million operating budget.

The foundation grant for Milan students is \$7,316 per pupil.

"The millage money would enhance the education of our students and provide programs," Girbach said.

Rob Glass, Dexter superintendent of schools, said the main point of the millage is it's not for buildings or roofs.

"This is to preserve the programs we have and it's the best opportunity we have to hopefully add to what we are already offering," he said.

Glass said the Dexter Community Schools have a strategic plan that includes "all-day kindergarten, 21st century skills and best practices."

Glass said the district plans to go ahead with its strategic plan, but it will be done "on a shoestring" without the millage.

"We can do a better, more complete job" with the passage of the millage, he said.

Dexter schools have a \$36.5 million operating budget and 3,642 students. The district receives about \$8,000 per pupil from the state.

Saline Superintendent of Schools Scot Graden said his district is facing a \$900,000 shortfall.

"We're concerned for our future and we feel as though we can't count on Lansing," Graden said.

His district has a \$53 million operating budget and 5,450 students. The district receives \$7,643 per pupil and the district's count was down 30 students this year.

Lisa Allmendinger can be reached at lallmendinger@heritage.com or at 1-877-995-NEWS (6397).

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Ann Arbor Journal > News

Local student captures images of New Orleans

Saturday, October 10, 2009

By Sheila Pursglove, Special Writer

In 2008, Emma Raynor, an American culture major at the University of Michigan and Community High School graduate, took a semester off to volunteer with OnSite Relief, a rebuilding team working mostly in the Lower 9th Ward of New Orleans.

A keen photographer, her camera was never far from her side. Her series of color photographs is on display at the Ann Arbor District Library's downtown branch. "New Orleans: Two & a Half Years After Katrina" runs through Wednesday.

Raynor spent four months in New Orleans helping with the rebuilding effort, volunteering at an animal shelter and participating in other volunteer projects.

"I was there to work on houses, but of course I had my camera ready," she says. "There is no way to describe the clash of feelings in that city -- despair and optimism twisted together. These are the conflicting emotions I attempted to capture in my photographs, the beauty and the destruction.

"When I came back to Ann Arbor, I realized I needed to get these photographs in the public eye, as a reminder of the amount of work that still needs to be done in New Orleans. The progress is rarely discussed in the media, and it's easy to forget there are still people displaced, houses decomposing, and mold growing. I think my photographs can speak for themselves, and give a small glimpse into my experience in the short amount of time I knew the city."

A few months ago, Raynor came across "Blood Dazzler," a book of poetry by Patricia Smith depicting experiences of New Orleans and the hurricane from numerous perspectives, including the eye of the storm.

"I got permission from the author to hang two of her poems with the photographs in my show," Raynor says. "I think they add an important aspect because my photographs are all from my point of view, an outsider, who never even knew the city before the storm. The poems in this book sound very much like the stories I heard while I was down there, and they brought me to tears numerous times."

Raynor got an early start as a shutterbug.

"One of my earliest memories is stepping out of the spinning door into the red light of my father's darkroom, when I was 3 years old," she says. "However, photography has really been my passion since I first made my way into a darkroom the summer before ninth grade."

Raynor took a couple of photography classes in high school, learning how to develop and print photos. She gained experience and confidence in her art when, in early high school, she took photographs for the literary magazine No

Comment, put out by the Volume Youth Poetry Project. She also photographed events for the Neutral Zone Teen Center in Ann Arbor.

"These two projects helped me to feel comfortable behind the camera, and encouraged me to pursue photography further," she says. "I'm a quiet person, and I realized that behind the camera is where I like to be. I can be involved in something without being the center of attention."

Raynor has taken two photography classes at U of M, giving her an opportunity to get back into the darkroom and to learn about different techniques, artists and approaches.

However, the source of most of her learning and inspiration came from other students, after she joined the student organization Fighting Obstacles Knowing Ultimate Success in her freshman year. She currently serves as the group's co-president. F.O.K.U.S. organizes a range of events in Ann Arbor, from film screenings and concerts, to art exhibitions and educational forums.

"We're an arts advocacy organization seeking to bring people together using art as a common medium," she says. "We believe everyone has an art to share, and our goal is to provide opportunities for people to discover and express their art.

"I've gained countless valuable experiences from my role in the group, and I've been encouraged and inspired to continue to pursue my own art."

Although Raynor does not intend to make a career out of photography, she knows it always will be her passion.

"As I go through my day, I periodically catch myself staring at something as if looking through the lens of a camera -- framing a scene just the right way, so it can stand alone and still catch the eye.

"This is how I know I will be snapping away forever."

Sheila Pursglove is a freelance writer. She can be reached at bingley51@yahoo.com.

In focus

Who: Emma Raynor, photographer, U-M student and Community High School grad; co-president of the U-M group F.O.K.U.S.

What: "New Orleans: Two & a Half Years After Katrina" photography exhibit.

Where: Ann Arbor District Library downtown branch.

When: Runs through Wednesday.

Visit: www.visualstenographers.com, www.onefokus.org and www.aadl.org/gallery/pictureAnnArbor/emmaraynor.

URL: http://www.heritage.com/articles/2009/10/10/ann_arbor_journal/news/doc4ac952205942d357475138.prt

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Ann Arbor Journal > News

Student's family may file lawsuit

Saturday, October 10, 2009

By Art Aisner, Special Writer

The attorney for an Ann Arbor Muslim family whose daughter was injured in a fight involving several Skyline High School students is contemplating filing a lawsuit and wants federal authorities to investigate allegations of a hate crime.

Nabih Ayad, the Canton-based attorney for the family, said the 16-year-old girl was assaulted because of her Muslim faith during a confrontation with at least five other students on their way home from the high school Sept. 8.

He said he will request an investigation of the incident and the school district's reaction from the U.S. Department of Education's Office for Civil Rights as soon as possible.

"There is no doubt in my mind that this is clearly a hate crime, and should be prosecuted as such," Ayad said. "This girl has had to change schools and is basically living in fear of her life now."

Ayad's statement followed the Washtenaw County Prosecutor Office's decision not to file ethnic intimidation charges against the teens that allegedly struck the girl and ripped off her head dress, or hijab, while shouting racial slurs outside the North Maple Estates apartments. The girl needed six stitches for a laceration.

The fight started on the bus, was broken up by the driver, and then resumed when the students got off at the same stop. Ayad said the school district could be culpable for not providing a safe environment for the student. The district also could be scrutinized for its review of the incident and subsequent disciplinary action, which included suspending the victim and one other student, Ayad said.

School officials said they took disciplinary action against the students involved, but would not release those details.

Any determination of ethnic intimidation or the need for further review by federal authorities could be grounds for a criminal investigation.

Chief Deputy Assistant Washtenaw County Prosecutor Steve Hiller said four teens will be petitioned to appear on undisclosed charges in juvenile court for their roles in the investigation. He declined to discuss further details about the case, other than the facts determined by the police investigation did not meet the legal definition of ethnic intimidation.

"Suffice it to say, we did not feel there was evidence to justify any ethnic intimidation charges," Hiller said.

At least some of the alleged assailants are black.

The case received regional and statewide media attention after the Michigan Chapter of the Council on American-

Islamic Relations issued a statement demanding state and federal investigations on the grounds of a hate crime.

"We called for an investigation as a hate crime and the Washtenaw County Prosecutor's Office came to a decision that it wasn't," Walid said.

"We're very disappointed that ethnic intimidation charges weren't sought. Particularly, given some of the remarks students made during the incident."

Ann Arbor police said the charges stemmed from the actions of different students involved in two separate but related confrontations. Parents were also allegedly involved in the fray, which swelled to nearly 30 people before parents came home.

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Ann Arbor Journal > News

Teens attend Congressional Student Forum at Pioneer

Wednesday, October 14, 2009

By Lisa Allmendinger, A2 Journal

Pioneer High School Class President Solomon Rajput is even more convinced he would like to pursue a path in politics after listening to U.S. Reps. John Dingell, D-15th District, and Mark Schauer, D-7th District, at a Congressional Student Forum held Oct. 12 for students across Washtenaw County.

"It was a valuable experience," said the high school senior, adding that listening to the congressmen in person at Pioneer, rather than on television, was something special.

"I'm really interested in politics," Rajput said, "and now even more so."

The teen credited Pioneer High School teacher Tracey VanDusen for setting up the forum, which was attended by students from Saline, Chelsea, Dexter, Huron, Pioneer and Community high schools.

"This was a way to learn things you can't learn from a textbook," said Heather Hooppaw, a senior at Pioneer High School.

She, too, said she would love to get involved with current issues, which was one of the messages both officials emphasized to the students.

Schauer told the students: "Be the change you want to see in the world," in encouraging them to develop skills for the future.

"This is your country, your world and this is your future," said Dingell, who on Feb. 11 became the longest serving member of the House of Representatives.

Dingell stressed that it only takes one person to change the world.

"I hope you'll try," he told the students.

Amy Morrow and Greg Morsfield, both juniors at Saline High School, were two of the student panelists at the Congressional Forum. They were part of a contingent of about 100 students from the school who asked questions and listened to the discussion, which covered topics ranging from health care to the environment.

Ben Holewinski, a junior at Saline High School, said he wanted to learn more about Michigan's government and how it works.

Fellow Saline High School student Will Bordo said he was looking forward to the discussion because it was the first time he had been to anything like it.

Stephanie Boyle, a junior at Saline High School, said she was looking forward to seeing some of the officials who represent Michigan.

Milan Griffes, a senior at Huron High School, said he was interested to hear what Dingell had to say.

"It's exciting to have such an influential person here," he said.

Devon Micow, a senior at Huron High School, said he wanted to learn about proposed healthcare reforms.

Greg Hughes, Sean LaForest, Aimee Mesko, Kyra Yanko and Casey Hirth, all seniors at Chelsea High School, were part of a contingent of about 17 students who attended the forum from their school. They said they were looking forward to hearing how things had changed in Congress during the many years that Dingell had served the district.

Schauer said he weighs the ideas of his constituents, the Constitution and his conscience before casting a vote on a bill.

Dingell said he considers what's right, what's in the best interest of the country and the wellbeing of his constituents before he casts a vote.

Students learned that both members of the House are mindful of the youth in their districts and the future of the country as they bring forth proposals and vote on bills.

There are about 4,000 bills introduced each session, Dingell said, and about 300 are passed, some of them as many as 1,000 pages long.

Lisa Allmendinger can be reached at lallmendinger@heritage.com or at 1-877-995-NEWS (6397).

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Heritage Newspapers (heritage.com)

Opinion

Letter to the editor: Republican group opposes school millage

Wednesday, October 14, 2009

Republican group opposes school millage

Last week, the Washtenaw County Republicans voted to oppose the 2 mill (\$30 million) tax increase that is now on the November ballot in this county.

There were many reasons for this decision -- too many, in fact, to compress into one brief letter to the editor. So we will be communicating frequently on this important subject.

Let's start, though, with asking ourselves whether it is wise to impose this large of a tax increase in the middle of a recession. Property values are falling, and the people with whom we speak are increasingly asking for tax relief. Far too many are worried that they won't be able to hold onto their homes. Almost all are in no position to pay any more, and, of course, higher property taxes make it more difficult to sell real estate, as well.

A tax increase at this time will push some homeowners over the edge, thereby jeopardizing the whole county tax base.

We will be writing more letters to the editor before the election to explain our position further.

Wyckham Seelig

Vice Chairman of the

Washtenaw County Republican Party

Ann Arbor

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GUEST COLUMN

Downtown Ann Arbor walking tours mark 'new era' in local history education

Posted: 10:04 p.m. October 14, 2009

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A new era in the teaching of national and local history will open in Ann Arbor this week.

Today 200 Skyline High School students and their teachers will be bused downtown to meet community leaders who will guide them on 10 carefully organized local history walking tours. Former Mayor Ingrid Sheldon is among the tour guides.

This is the latest step in the work of the Downtown Ann Arbor Historical Street Exhibit Program. Celebrating the history and life of our downtown, 20 transparent glass frames, artifacts and almost 50 wall plaques are already a part of the downtown streetscape. Appealing to all ages and to residents and visitors alike, these permanent exhibits have brought history out of books and libraries and put it on our public sidewalks.

Exhibit program planners have always hoped to coordinate with the city's public schools to integrate the program and a downtown historical walking tour into the school curriculum. The opening of Skyline High School last year has made that possible. Principals Sullura Jackson, magnet teacher Patricia Jenkins, and Skyline faculty have worked with twelve members of the Street Exhibit Education Committee over the last two years to develop the current pilot project that will have its first test on today.

Tours are not just about identifying historic places and areas in our community. They are also not just about investigating relationships of people, places and local historic themes. Those things are important. But it is about relating local themes, issues and developments to a national or international scene. It's about connecting students to racial, ethnic, gender, religious and experiential differences that relate to their own identity. Providing opportunities to develop skills in accessing primary and online resources, as well as interviewing individuals who have a special relationship with local history, are also goals of the new educational program for Skyline.

How do the patterns of downtown Ann Arbor development illustrate broad changes in American life? In architecture? Communications? Business? Banking? Shopping? Ethnic and racial migrations? What is the relation of 19th century railroad consolidator Cornelius Vanderbilt to James B. Ashley, builder of the Ann Arbor-Toledo Railroad?

What new resources made possible the construction on Huron and Main of the Glazier Building, Ann Arbor's first "skyscraper"? Chelsea stove manufacturer and State Treasurer Frank P. Glazier built it in 1907. He later ended up in prison for embezzlement. Was he an example of a "Robber Baron"? How does the growth of Ann Arbor's north side "Supply Side of Town," with its transportation and power developments, illustrate the patterns of national industrialization? These are among the questions that 10 tour guides hope to touch on during their downtown walks.

The Downtown Ann Arbor Historical Street Exhibit Program has already won state and national prizes for its unique contribution to downtown public space. Next year program promoters will seek state and national prizes for innovative education for Skyline High School and the Street Exhibit Program.

Ann Arbor resident Ray Dettler is project coordinator for the Downtown Ann Arbor Historical Street Exhibit Program.

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Skyline High School students get a lesson in Ann Arbor history

Posted: 11:00 p.m. October 15, 2009

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Skyline High School students saw history come off the page and into the streets Thursday with the launch of a project that introduces them to Ann Arbor's past.



Skyline High School student Libby Barber takes notes on one of the glass frames during a tour of historical markers in downtown Ann Arbor Thursday.

Mark Blalock | for AnnArbor.com

The students, numbering about 200 and divided into small groups, participated in one of 10 different walking tours Thursday morning that stopped at the three-dimensional transparent glass frames and wall panels installed on buildings around the city.

The students learned about Ann Arbor founders Elisha Rumsey and John Allen, who each using ill-gotten gains to buy land to establish the city. And about Mary Foster, who in 1876 became the city's first female lawyer, and only the 14th in the nation. She was 52. And about the Luick brothers, who donated land next to what is today

Kerrytown for use as a farmer's market.

While the Downtown Ann Arbor Historical Street Exhibit Program began overseeing the installation of the frames and panels that tell Ann Arbor's story 10 years ago, organizers of the tour decided it was time to make sure they are seen.

"We didn't want to just put history on the street," said Ray Detter, one of the organizers. "We wanted to activate the exhibit, to get people involved. One of the best ways to do that was to integrate it into the school system." Skyline was a natural place to start, he said, because it was new and open to making the walking tour part of its curriculum.

Skyline teachers developed teaching plans around the tour, Dettler said, that spanned all of this week.

"As a new school, we're trying to establish relationships with businesses and organizations," said Sean McBrady, Skyline history teacher. "And this fits in well because we are teaching about technological, political, education and social changes."

The tours gave a local look at several broad themes:

- **Immigration:** While transplanted New Yorkers and New Englanders first settled here, immigrants followed. Germans were first, followed by Greeks, Italians, Irish and others.
- **Business:** North of the Washtenaw County courthouse was the supply side of town, providing lumber, marble, farm implements and more.
- **Industrialization:** Power came from the Ago dam (built in 1832). But Ann Arbor has never been an industrial powerhouse. That was left to Ypsilanti.

Susan Nenadic, volunteer tour guide and retired Saline School District teacher, led a group of students around the old Fourth Ward, covering a geographic area that spanned the area from the Washtenaw County Courthouse to Zingerman's Delicatessen.

Her students learned:

- The building that now houses the Ann Arbor Observer is the second-oldest commercial building in the city and has hosted businesses ranging from farm implement seller to underwear maker.
- Argiero's Restaurant was once a gas station.
- The Fourth Avenue Birkenstock store is in a building that was home to the city's first Dunbar Community Center, a string of community centers around the nation that offered lodging and services to the African American community and were named after poet Paul Laurence Dunbar.
- Vestiges of the trolley that traveled down Detroit Street to the train depot can be seen where the brick road is patched.


• Ann Arbor wanted to be named the state's capital. As a consolation prize, it got the University of Michigan.

The Downtown Ann Arbor Historical Street Exhibit Program has overseen installation of 20 transparent glass frames and almost 50 wall plaques that detail, through words and pictures, Ann Arbor's history. While the city owns the exhibits, private money has paid for most of the project, Detter said. He hopes the pilot student tour project will eventually expand to all of the city's high schools.

The street exhibit program has won international, national and state awards. One more frame will be installed at the University of Michigan Student Union to mark where President John Kennedy announced plans for the Peace Corps. About 10 more wall images are also planned, Detter said.

Skyline sophomore Christian Lewis said he learned things he didn't know about the city, including the fact that the Kerrytown neighborhood just barely escaped a wrecking ball in the early 1960s. And the tour was worth braving the October chill, he said.

"If I wasn't here, I'd be in geometry right now."

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Tags: Downtown Ann Arbor Historical Street Exhibit Program, Skyline High School

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The New York Times



October 15, 2009

Sluggish Results Seen in Math Scores

By SAM DILLON

The latest results on the most important nationwide math test show that student achievement grew faster during the years before the Bush-era No Child Left Behind law, when states were dominant in education policy, than over the years since, when the federal law has become a powerful force in classrooms.

Scores increased only marginally for eighth graders and not at all for fourth graders, continuing a sluggish six-year trend of slowing achievement growth since passage of the law, which requires schools to bring 100 percent of students to reading and math proficiency by 2014.

On the most recent test, 39 percent of fourth graders and 34 percent of eighth graders scored at or above the proficient level.

“The trend is flat; it’s a plateau. Scores are not going anywhere, at least nowhere important,” said Chester E. Finn Jr., president of the Thomas B. Fordham Institute, a research organization in Washington. “That means that eight years after enactment of No Child Left Behind, the problems it set out to solve are not being solved, and now we’re five years from the deadline and we’re still far, far from the goal.”

The test, known as the National Assessment of Educational Progress, was given to 329,000 fourth- and eighth-grade students. Results in reading are to be released next year, officials said.

“This is the first time in 19 years that fourth-grade math scores are flat,” said Secretary of Education Arne Duncan. “We’ve got to get better faster.”

The latest scores were especially disappointing because score gaps between white and minority students did not diminish at all since the last time the math test was administered, in 2007. On average, the nation’s fourth graders scored 240 on a 500-point scale, just as they did in 2007. White fourth graders, on average, scored 248, Hispanics scored 227 and blacks scored 222.

Eighth graders, on average, scored 283 on the same scale, up from 281 in 2007. White eighth graders, on average, scored 293, while Hispanics scored 266 and black eighth graders scored 261.

The gap of 32 points separating average black and white eighth graders represents about three years’ worth of math learning.

Enactment of the No Child Left Behind law in 2001 followed a decade dominated by a standards and accountability movement that brought deep changes to public schools. Educators and policy makers, in nearly every state, laid out standards as to what students were expected to know in each grade and subject, and required schools to use those standards to guide instruction. They also established standardized testing

regimes intended to measure whether students were meeting the standards and to hold schools accountable for student achievement.

The federal law, proposed by President George W. Bush and passed by bipartisan majorities in Congress in his first year in office, sought to build on the standards movement with many new federal rules, including a requirement that states administer reading and math tests every year to students in grades three through eight and once in high school.

It required schools to publish their scores on state tests not just as averages, but broken down by students' race, sex and other groups, a rule that most educators agree has focused attention on narrowing achievement gaps.

And it raised the importance of the National Assessment, requiring the Department of Education to increase the frequency of its administration in math and reading to once every two years, to help Americans monitor progress toward the goals of universal proficiency and the elimination of the achievement gap.

The latest results on the National Assessment show that in the six years since the law took effect, fourth-grade scores have risen by five points, to 240 from 235. That is slower growth than during the seven years preceding the federal law, when average fourth-grade math scores grew by 11 points, to 235 in 2003 from 224 in 1996.

"Either the standards movement has played out, or the No Child law failed to build on its momentum," said Mark Schneider, who from 2005 to 2008 was commissioner of the arm of the Department of Education that oversees the National Assessment. "Whatever momentum we had, however, is gone."

No one can say for certain why achievement progress has slowed since the federal law took effect, and Mr. Schneider and other experts warned that economic, demographic and social factors other than the law itself may be to blame.

But an unintended consequence of the law has been that many states have lowered the rigor of their standards and the difficulty of their tests to avoid sanctions the law imposes on failing schools, a process Secretary Duncan has called a "race to the bottom."

David P. Driscoll, chairman of National Assessment Governing Board, said at a news conference in Washington announcing the scores: "Mathematics achievement is not close to where it should be."

"A major reason," he said, "continues to be the lack of content knowledge and mathematics preparation of our teachers."

William Schmidt, an education professor at Michigan State University, also called the results disappointing.

"We're just inching upwards, and we've only got about a third of our students proficient," Professor Schmidt said.

The large variation in average scores by state, he said, should be a focus of national analysis. In Massachusetts, for instance, where educators have sharply raised math scores in recent years by carefully

reworking standards and instruction, 57 percent of fourth graders scored at or above proficient on the latest test. That compares with Mississippi, where only 16 percent of students scored at proficient.

“How can we as a nation allow such disparity?” Professor Schmidt asked.

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Hosting a Japanese student: How sweet it is

Posted: 4:46 p.m. October 15, 2008

2 Comments. [Comment Now](#)



Students and host families from Hikone-Ann Arbor exchange gather at Gallup Park

"Travel is fatal to prejudice, bigotry, and narrow-mindedness. Broad, wholesome, charitable views of men and things cannot be acquired by vegetating in one little corner of the earth all one's lifetime." — Mark Twain

Or, as my teen son summed it up on Facebook (not as eloquently, but I must admit, it captured the sentiment):

"There's a fr\$%kin' sweet Japanese kid at my house!"

Oh yes, how sweet it was.

We had a great week hosting Kohei, our 14-year-old exchange student from Ann Arbor's sister city of Hikone, Japan. A dozen middle schoolers from Hikone visited Ann Arbor last week, and Ann Arbor Public Schools will send twelve middle schoolers to Japan next month.

Prior to his visit, as I tried to digest the cultural information we had received, I worried about whether our home was welcoming or clean enough, how we would communicate, and whether he would eat well or miss his home. I wanted to make sure he had a great time, that he appreciated our fair city, and that we pretended to act like a normal American family. Or maybe even better than normal, whatever that is.

There was no need to worry. Kohei was delightful, and he spoke terrific English, to our great relief. He was social and engaging: playing football with the neighbors, riding ripstik with my younger son, and teaching my daughter magic tricks. He deemed all of my food "delicious." Of course it was—even the squash soup and the boxed mac 'n cheese. I hope my own kids were paying attention.

By opening our home to a visitor from afar, we learned so much. The state of my house wasn't so important; by the end of the week it was as messy as usual. Despite language hurdles and minor cultural differences (learning to work the shower, doing neat little bundles of laundry each day, no miso soup for breakfast), we're not so different. Teens don't need major entertainment. They are happy hanging out with friends, wherever they are. They like to flirt and tease each other, just like our kids. They enjoyed seeing the local sights, but more importantly, they wanted to make connections.

When I asked Kohei what he wanted to do most while he was here, he promptly answered, *"I want to make lots of friends."*

Mission accomplished.

The Japanese host Mr. Ikegami, after describing the impact of this relationship between Hikone and Ann Arbor at our *Sayonara* party, framed it like this:

"I cannot change the war of the past, but it is my duty to make sure it never happens again."

If we are honest, we all have our history and prejudices. Conflict with the Japanese is not in my personal history, but it is for many who still feel the sting of World War II. But regardless of the differences, if we make a friend--a real human connection--it becomes impossible to hate or paint broad negative assumptions about an entire group of people. Because we'll always remember that one friend who was so kind.

So now we have a dear friend in Japan, who my son will visit in just two weeks. I must agree with my son: *It is very sweet.*

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Ann Arbor Journal > News

Students learn about health at Teddy Bear Clinic

Sunday, October 18, 2009

By Lisa Ailmendinger, A2 Journal

Sydney Bumpus and Alexa Hughes were among about 130 kindergartners and first-graders at Carpenter Elementary School in Ann Arbor who recently learned more about health and their five senses.

The students were part of a Teddy Bear Clinic put on by nursing students from Washtenaw Community College who manned a series of health-related hands-on health stations at the school Oct. 14.

Zachary Brewer, a first-grader, learned he still had a few germs left on his hands after he washed them by looking at them in the "Glitterbug."

The Glitterbug, a black-light, showed areas that had been missed during the hand-washing process.

"We tell them to sing 'Happy Birthday' or another song, while they are washing their hands and also to scrub their nails," said Glenda Tate, a WCC nursing student.

Meanwhile, Andrew Ma and Marielle Lanczki, kindergartners, learned more about their senses of taste by trying different concoctions in paper cups.

Diane Leistner, another nursing student, said salty, bitter, sour and sweet are tasted by different areas of the tongue as the students tasted salt, vanilla, lemon and sugar to experience the difference.

The students also had an opportunity to practice brushing teeth by using shaving cream on tooth brushes and practicing on laminated teeth.

Soren Knudsen, a first-grader, and his classmates also had an opportunity to color a page that reminded them to brush after meals.

Trevor Emch, a kindergartener, put his nose to the test to smell a container with vanilla at another station in the room.

Gayathri Gunda, a kindergartener, learned about sound at the health fair.

Students were also able to test their sense of touch by finding objects on flashcards inside a closed container.

"Nursing students from WCC plan health fairs four times a year, said nurse Sherry MacGregor.

She said each is a little different, but includes teeth brushing, hand washing, exercise, nutrition and information about all

five senses.


Lisa Allmendinger can be reached at 1-877-995-NEWS (6397) or at lallmendinger@heritage.com.

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Foes, backers ramping up Washtenaw County school enhancement millage campaigns

Posted: 10:00 a.m. October 18, 2009

 129 Comments. [Comment Now](#)

Betsy Marks is a bit conflicted.

She got a mailing the other day from the citizen's committee in Ann Arbor pushing approval of a 2-mill tax to benefit all schools in the county. The group pointed out the dire circumstances facing local schools and the budget shortfalls its members say could lead to massive layoffs and the disruption of education.

But Marks worries about having to pay more taxes and wonders whether the schools have done a good enough job managing the money they already have.

And so, she's not quite decided on how she'll vote when she heads to the polls on Nov. 3.

A lot of folks in Washtenaw County share her indecision.

They're faced with deciding whether to believe supporters, who say passing this ballot measure is the only way to preserve the quality of education in area schools, or opponents, who say the tax is too large and schools could find ways to be more efficient.

With less than a month to go before Election Day, both sides are ramping up their efforts to educate voters - holding forums, sending mailings and updating Web sites.

Much of that action is concentrated in the Ann Arbor school district, which both sides say is key to success on Election Day. If Ann Arbor voters approve the millage, it's likely to pass, no matter which side voters in other districts are on. The opposite is also true.

2

The basics

The millage would raise about \$30 million countywide each year. It would cost the owner of a home with a \$100,000 taxable value \$200 per year. It would be in place for five years.

The money raised would be split among the county's 10 traditional school districts - Ann Arbor, Chelsea, Dexter, Lincoln, Manchester, Milan, Saline, Ypsilanti, Willow Run and Whitmore Lake. Charter schools in the county would not receive any funds from the tax. It would be collected by the Washtenaw Intermediate School District and distributed to the school districts based on student enrollment.

Ann Arbor would get the largest chunk of the money - about \$11 million each year.

The overall county vote is what will determine passage. If, for example, voters in one school district vote it down, but it passes countywide, all county property owners, including those in the district where it failed, would be assessed the tax.

The money would go into each district's general fund. There would be no restrictions on how it would be spent.

The case for the millage

Ann Arbor schools Superintendent Todd Roberts says the case for the millage is simple: The state has made steep cuts in school funding to balance its budget, and districts need to find a way to replace some of that money.

Per-pupil state aid makes up the bulk of local school districts' revenue. As it has dropped, many districts have had to repeatedly cut money from their budgets, jeopardizing the quality of education they can offer, administrators say. A spending plan approved by the state legislature for this school year cuts funding by \$165 per pupil.



Todd Roberts

And under Proposal A, local school districts can't go directly to voters and ask for operating money. But they can band together and seek a countywide enhancement millage that will benefit all the districts in the county.

Ann Arbor has already made millions of dollars in cuts in the past several years and is facing an estimated \$15 million budget shortfall next school year. That equates to about 200 positions.

"We believe that the quality of our community would suffer" if the millage doesn't pass, Roberts said.

Roberts said Ann Arbor has tightened its belt by reducing its staff, negotiating a no-pay-raise contract with the teachers union this school year and working with other county school districts to look at consolidating services.

"Locally, we're trying to take control" of our finances, Roberts said, adding even if the millage passes, cuts would likely be needed next year. "We can't wait for the state to solve the problem. We're hoping the community will support us take some control over our destiny. This is not an Ann Arbor issue. It's a county issue."

The other area school districts are pinning their hopes on the millage as well.

"I think a misnomer out there is that this is an enhancement millage. I don't believe there is one district in the county that will be enhancing," Chelsea School District Superintendent David Killips said. "This is about maintenance and survival."

Bryan Girbach, the superintendent of Milan Area Schools, agreed.

"As we've trimmed back and trimmed back ... we're getting to the point where there's nowhere to trim without affecting the program for our kids. I don't think the residents of Washtenaw County will be happy with the education program we can offer with that kind of cut."

The case against the millage

While supporters of the millage focus a lot of their attention and rhetoric on what would happen in the schools if the enhancement millage passes or fails, Kathy Griswold, a former Ann Arbor school board member, and Ted Annis, a local businessman and member of the Ann Arbor Transportation Authority board, decided instead to focus on what would happen to taxpayers if it passes.

The two, who are among the leaders of the anti-millage group Citizens for Responsible School Spending, didn't like what they saw.

"I find it to be an unreasonable request," Annis said. "It's an 11 percent increase (in the number of mills levied for schools). That's a lot in hard times."

Ann Arbor homeowners already pay more than 17 mills to support schools, millage opponents point out. A mill is a tax of \$1 per \$1,000 of a home's taxable value.

Annis puts a twist on the supporters' "It takes a millage to educate a child" mantra. Referencing the six millages Ann Arbor residents already pay to the local district and the intermediate school district, he said, "evidently it takes six millages, and soon a seventh, to educate a child."

The group sees bloat in the Ann Arbor school district - noting that when you divide the number of students by the number of teachers, you get a ratio of about 14 students to every teacher. The district should be able to realign its teaching resources to make sure students still get a good education, millage opponents say.

Annis said millage supporters are engaging in scare tactics when they predict gloom and doom if the millage fails.

The citizens' group is also upset that all the money raised in some districts won't be spent in that district.

For example, in Ann Arbor, \$16 million will be raised each year. Only \$11 million will be sent to Ann Arbor. The rest will go to other districts.

Griswold said voters shouldn't think Ann Arbor school officials are simply being generous to other districts.

"It's easy to say, 'Let's help our brothers in Ypsi,' when it puts revenue in the bank for Ann Arbor as well."

The citizens' group isn't the only one against the millage. The Washtenaw County Republican Party voted recently to oppose it.

"The proposed 2 mill (\$30 million) annual tax increase will push already struggling taxpayers over the edge, causing them to lose their homes, and further weakening the tax base of the county," Wyckham Seelg, vice chairman of the party, said in a statement. "It will achieve nothing beyond putting a temporary bandage on a fundamentally flawed educational finance and expenditure system."




"What we need to have is a serious, non-stop cost control effort, including much more privatization of non-teaching functions, vigorous competitive bidding for all school system business, and, most importantly, more cost effective teacher compensation packages."

David Jesse covers K-12 education for AnnArbor.com. He can be reached at davidjesse@annarbor.com or at 734-623-2534.

THIS WEEK IN LOCAL EDUCATION

WITH POLL: Enhancement millage is the talk in Washtenaw County education circles

Posted: 9:25 a.m. October 19, 2009

 63 Comments. [Comment Now](#)

In Washtenaw County education circles, the enhancement millage on the ballot Nov. 3 will likely take center stage for the next few weeks.

A host of meetings are planned - both large public town hall type events (check with your local school district for days and times in your area) and smaller house-party fundraisers.

It's not just educators who are keenly interested in the issue. My story yesterday on the arguments both for and against the 2-mill tax is nearing 100 comments as I type this around 9 a.m.

We're planning more stories on the millage in the coming days. Please comment below or e-mail me at davidjesse@annarbor.com if there are specific questions you want answered.

And while you're here, vote in our poll.

How will you vote on the countywide schools enhancement millage?

- I've got enough information and will vote yes
- I don't have enough information yet, but am leaning towards yes
- I have enough information and will vote no
- I don't have enough information, but am leaning towards no
- I'm undecided

[Vote](#)

[View Results](#)

Two school board meetings tonight have interesting items on the agenda.

The first is a board retreat in Ypsilanti. It will be held from 6 to 8 p.m. at the high school. The board will work on relations with the new superintendent and discuss key issues facing the district.

The other is at 7 p.m. at Dexter's Creekside Intermediate School. The school board will conduct its regular business, including receiving the audit of last year's finances.

As always, feel free to e-mail me or call me at 734-623-2534 with any story ideas. I'd love to get into more classrooms and report on the good teaching that's going on out there.

--

Roundabouts near Skyline High are unsafe due to lack of lighting

Posted: 4:30 p.m. October 19, 2009

0 Comment. [Comment Now](#)

Editor's note: The following letter was addressed to the Washtenaw County Road Commission.


I am writing to urge you to expedite your negotiations and finalize an agreement regarding the maintenance of roundabouts in Ann Arbor. I have been told that a draft agreement is currently being negotiated relating to the roundabout near Geddes & US23 and that this agreement will be used as a template for the other roundabouts in the area.

I am hopeful that you are already aware of the unsafe state of the three roundabouts on North Maple Road near Skyline High School. Several streetlights have been toppled by car accidents and other streetlights have been turned off due to the wiring exposed by the toppled lights.

As a result of the lack of proper lighting, Skyline students who navigate the roundabouts as pedestrians are put at serious risk every day. In addition to the inadequate lighting, the roundabouts also pose safety risks due to the poor sightlines caused by the elevation of the center islands and neglected snow plowing on the roundabout sidewalks.

We, the parents of Skyline High School students, urge you to quickly finalize the maintenance agreement for the roundabouts and immediately apply that agreement to the North Maple Road roundabouts so that our children can avoid these unnecessary safety risks.

Brian Mielewski
Skyline PTSO President

 Share this post ▾

Tags: [letters to the editor](#), [opinion](#), [roundabouts](#)

National Educational Technology plan to be discussed in Ann Arbor

Posted: 5:58 p.m. October 19, 2009

0 Comment. Comment Now


Two University of Michigan professors will hold a conversation on a new National Educational Technology Plan Wednesday.

Dan Atkins from the school of information and Barry Fishman from the school of education are both members of the technical work group putting together the plan. The plan aims to assemble goals to shape state and local school technology plans.

The purpose Wednesday's meeting, which will run from 4-6 p.m., is to gather input from various members of the public about the plan.

Local school officials, students training to be teachers and other interested parties are expected to attend. The event is open to the public.

It will be held at two different locations in Ann Arbor: The Atkins conference room at SI North, 1075 Beal Ave. on North Campus and the Tribute Room in the School of Education, 610 E. University.

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Tags: University of Michigan, Washtenaw County schools

Heritage Newspapers (heritage.com)

Ann Arbor Journal > News

Flooding issues to be fixed at Pioneer High School

Tuesday, October 20, 2009

By Lisa Allmendinger, A2 Journal

Following the departure of the last University of Michigan and Ohio State football fans from the Pioneer High School parking lot Nov. 21, a stormwater project will begin to fix a flooding problem.

The Ann Arbor Public Schools, the Office of the Washtenaw County Water Resources Commissioner and city of Ann Arbor have collaborated on a project that will improve water quality and reduce flooding on the city's west side.

Allen Creek runs under the north lawn of high school property, said Harry Sheehan, an engineer for the Office of the Washtenaw County Water Resources Commissioner.

The property is a popular parking area for football fans.

Included in the \$3.1 million project is the installation of two large underground tanks and pipes that will be part of an underground water treatment system.

About 130 trees will be planted along the Allen Creek corridor on the site. The creek empties into the Huron River and the project is slated to clean the stormwater before it reaches the Huron River.

About 40 percent of the project will be paid for by federal stimulus money.

Board of Education President Deb Mexicotte called it "a great project for the community."

Parents of Pioneer students were sent a letter explaining the timeline and project details, said Superintendent of Schools Todd Roberts.

There will be a permanent fence erected along the sidewalk.

In the initial phases, about three or four pieces of heavy equipment working at a time, Sheehan said.

"This is really the only time there will be a big hole," said Randy Trent, executive director of physical properties.

A retaining wall will be added along the southeast corner of the driveway and a brick plaza in the southeast corner at South Main and Stadium.

The project also will be used as a teaching tool for science teachers and their classes.

There will be football parking in the area for the 2010 season.

Lisa Allmendinger can be reached at 1-877-995-NEWS (6397) or at lallmendinger@heritage.com.

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Heritage Newspapers (heritage.com)

Opinion

Letter to the editor: A call for responsible school management

Tuesday, October 20, 2009

A call for responsible school management

The school administrators in Washtenaw County are being melodramatic. They are predicting dramatic school program cuts and degradation of school performance. They go further in saying that our communities will not be desirable places for anyone to reside or locate businesses in. Hogwash and more hogwash.

High taxes are the prime consideration of where a business will locate. All you have to do is look at the southern, low-tax states that are capturing the bulk of new manufacturing jobs.

What are we talking about here? The state is cutting the per student allocation by about 2 percent. Almost nothing. How do the schools cut 2 percent (or more) from their budgets? By doing what they have been stubbornly avoiding --outsource services like busing, custodial, grounds, lawn and snow removal, and cafeteria services.

Get back to the school's core business -- education.

What else? Increase class size. Class size is not an indicator of classroom performance, teacher quality is. Salaries amount to some 85 percent of a school's budget. Reduce the number of administrators and teachers, reduce costs.

It is offensive to hear administrators ask for more money at a time when businesses, facing a similar shortfall, are cutting employees, freezing or reducing salaries, and suspending 401K matching funds. We should expect our schools to be similarly innovative. Why not ask the teacher unions to come to the table for salary and benefit reductions? Why should schools be immune to such measures?

The only way, it seems, to get administrators and school boards to become more efficient is to force them by stop bailing them out with millages. Capital or operating millages result in the exact same thing -- more money for school operations, either by removing capital burden on operating budget or directly adding to it.

Don't be fooled by the rhetoric. Join me in voting "no" on the millage, and for responsible school management.

Bob Spink

Chelsea

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Ann Arbor Journal > News

Students celebrate Walk to School Day, call attention to new crosswalk at intersection

Wednesday, October 14, 2009

By Lisa Allmendinger, A2 Journal

Anton Ferguson, a second-grader at Carpenter Elementary School, said it best with a homemade sign.

"Carpenter Rocks!! We love to walk for Carpenter," it read.

Anton made the sign in honor of both National Walk To School Day Oct. 7, and, more importantly, the completion of a new cross-walk at a dangerous intersection near the school.

The intersection at Packard and Dalton roads was the site of three pedestrian injuries when students were hit by cars in the last five years.

"It was something that was recognized six years ago when I came to Carpenter," said Ron Collins, the school's principal, crediting Annette Ferguson, a member of the Carpenter Elementary School Safe Routes to School Team since its formation, as a driving force for the changes.

Ritchie Coleman, Pittsfield Township's Department of Public Safety's community coordinator, said between 40 and 75 children cross at the site and he's been working toward improving this new intersection since November 1990.

"We didn't have sidewalks on the east side of Dalton; there were no walkable paths," he said.

Crossing guard Isiah Harrison said the new intersection was wonderful because before this new crosswalk was installed, the students had to cross two roads.

A new crosswalk was added on the west side of the intersection, while the crosswalk on the east side of the road was removed.

In addition, new crossing signs and a mounted traffic signal with countdown numbers was installed.

"It's pretty great," said Cindy Walton, who said she walks with her children to school whenever they can. They live almost a mile away.

The \$11,860 improvement was a collaborative effort between representatives from school administration, staff, parents, Pittsfield Township elected and safety officials, the Washtenaw County Health Department, the Washtenaw County Road Commission, FedEx and U of M Mott Children's Hospital.

"It was nice to see it continue to evolve into a success story," Coleman said.

In fact, a group of eight fourth- and fifth-graders at Carpenter also got involved voicing concerns about the safety of people crossing Packard from two nearby apartment complexes.

About 25 percent of the 330 students walk to school in good weather while about 3 percent ride bikes.

Lisa Allmendinger can be reached at lallmendinger@heritage.com or at 1-877-995-NEWS (6397).


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LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

School enhancement millage is needed

Posted: Today, 3 hours ago


 3 Comments. [Comment Now](#)

I disagree with Wyckham Seelig's comments concerning a tax increase for schools. If he opposes a millage increase that is his prerogative but don't hide behind the Washtenaw County Republican Party tag unless you have polled each one of us individually.

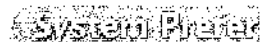
Had you and your cohorts done something in Lansing this situation would not exist. I believe the only way our schools will continue to prosper in this current environment is through a millage increase. I have lived in Ann Arbor for 45 years and have voted for every school mileage that was presented. There is no greater gift we can give a young student than an opportunity to receive a good education.

Max M. Ziegler

Ann Arbor

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Tags: education, letters to editor, millage, opinion, schools, tax

 System Printer

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Schools using fear-mongering to get millage passed

Posted: Today, 3 hours ago

0 Comments. [Comment Now](#)

Thank goodness for Mr. Seelig and the Washtenaw County Republican Party ("Now is not the time for a tax increase in Washtenaw County").


Now I think Newt Gingrich lowered the bar for party politics over public interest to the lowest level possible, but someone needs to challenge the fear-mongering of the school districts, unions, and politicians in their quest to maintain their elevated financial expectations at the expense of homeowners with a seemingly endless stream of tax increases. Some of which are not even voted on but implemented at leadership discretion and just show up on my tax bill.

Where does the manipulation of the public end? The strategizing of issues on the ballot, the timing and placement of tax proposals designed to confuse or prey upon the public's good will with the manipulation and surgical use of facts to support their tax increases. It's like suffering a death by a thousand small cuts, each insignificant but together very deadly.

And why aren't the charter schools crying in their milk? Oh yeah, they don't have unions, pensions, buyouts, tenure, or bloated administrative costs. Is it really all about the kids or is self preservation and maintaining status quo the motivating factor in these manipulative pleas for increased funds?

Frank G. Dalimonte

Ann Arbor

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Tags: education, Letters to the editor, millage, opinion, schools, tax

Granholm's veto of school funding will cost Ann Arbor \$3.7 million

Posted: Today, 4 hours ago

16 Comments. [Comment Now](#)

An unexpected cut in a special state aid category will combine with a previously announced cut in the Ann Arbor Schools' per-pupil foundation grant to put the district on the edge of steep cliff, Superintendent Todd Roberts said Tuesday morning.

"It was an unwelcome call last night. We're going to have some challenges in dealing with it," Roberts said.

Michigan Governor Jennifer Granholm last night vetoed funding for what's called the 20J portion of the state's school aid fund. That money goes to 39 school districts statewide. It was part of Proposal A, the measure that reformed school funding in 1994. The payments were an attempt to maintain the level of per-pupil funding for the highest-funded districts when Proposal A switched financing of schools from local districts to the state.

The state now pays each district a varying amount of money per each student it has enrolled. Ann Arbor gets about \$9,600.

In Ann Arbor's case, the money cut was \$233 per student. The Legislature could override the veto, but if it stands, it will mean a \$3.7 million hit to the district's \$180-million plus budget, Roberts said.

The state school budget also takes away \$165 from each district's base per-pupil funding. That's going to cost the district \$2.8 million.

Combined, that's a hit of about \$395 per pupil, or more than \$6 million.

"It's a big deal," Roberts said. "When we got the first cut, we had hoped to make it up with part of our fund equity (more than \$20 million). We can't use the fund equity to cover all of this."

That's because the district uses that extra money to cover the bills in the months each year it doesn't get a state aid payment.

That's because the district uses that extra money to cover the bills in the months each year it doesn't get a state aid payment.

"The problem could get worse," Roberts said. "We've been told to expect another cut in February." School officials also expect districts will have to take another cut next year of \$400-\$500.

Combined, the cuts could amount to \$1,000 per student. The district has more than 16,000 students.

The cuts come as the district, along with all the other school districts in Washtenaw County, are asking voters for a 2-mill tax increase.

The tax would raise about \$11 million a year for Ann Arbor. Even that won't be enough, Roberts said. "If all the cuts come, the millage doesn't touch the total," he said.

As for making up the two cuts announced in the last couple of weeks, Roberts said the district is looking at all its options, but making cuts well into the budget year - it starts July 1 - is very hard to do.

"This is ridiculous. To make this cut in late October makes it almost impossible for districts to handle."

In all, Granholm's cut to the 39 highest-funded districts will cost them \$51.6 million. Overall, the Democratic governor vetoed \$54 million in spending from the budget. School aid payments are to go out Tuesday.

Losing the extra money would mean \$4.9 million less for Livonia Public Schools and a cut of the same amount for the Dearborn City School District. The Walled Lake Consolidated School District would get \$4.7 million less and Warren Consolidated Schools would get \$3.8 million less. Districts ranging from Saugatuck to Detour and East Lansing also would see decreases.

School officials have said even the \$165-per-student cuts will lead to layoffs, crowded classrooms and fewer preschool programs. More districts could face severe financial trouble as they struggle with falling enrollment and a lingering recession.

Districts will have the flexibility to trim spending from programs of their choosing as long as they agree to consolidate services to reduce costs.


Michigan Education Association President Iris Salters said the \$54 million Granholm vetoed from the school aid budget and the threat of more cuts to come shows the state needs to change how it pays for education and other services.

"We have a chronic budget problem, and cuts aren't making it go away," Salters said in a release.

In her letter to lawmakers announcing she had signed the K-12 budget, Granholm warned that unless lawmakers raise more money for schools, districts could see even bigger cuts than the ones included in the bill. State law requires school payments be cut if there's a deficit.

She said the shortfall could be as much as \$264 million in the \$12.9 billion K-12 budget. Some lawmakers have said they plan to raise more money for districts, but they haven't sent any revenue bills to her desk. Lawmakers didn't pass the school aid bill until late Oct. 8, a week after the fiscal year started.

The Associated Press contributed to this story.

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LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Proposed school enhancement tax would just feed the beast

Posted: Today 5 hours ago

10 Comments | Comment Now

Editor's note: The following letter to the editor was submitted by Beverley Geltner, former superintendent of Saline Area Schools.

I'm writing this because my husband and I have had many discussions in recent weeks about the forthcoming Washtenaw County Education Millage. I have been a lifelong defender and supporter of public education, and have always voted YES for every education millage no matter where I lived.

However, I am writing to tell you that we have already voted NO on the countywide millage that is coming up for a Nov. 3 vote.

We did not come to this decision lightly. For me, it was truly a moral dilemma that I pondered deeply.

However, my experiences as a senior educational administrator in several school districts have convinced me of that the current model and structure of public education in Michigan is a total disaster. We are operating an inefficient, unequal, immoral, and unsustainable "system" (non-system) of public education.

Continuing to fund the model that we have is simply "feeding the beast" and delaying the ultimate and necessary date of reckoning.

Students in Michigan will continue to be shortchanged as dollars are wasted in funding 549 individual, local school districts, including, as a corollary, 549 individual superintendents, 549 central office staff, etc., serving students numbering as few as several hundred or one or two thousand in individual school districts. The costs of the unnecessary duplication of services operating under this present structure are unsustainable (and almost unimaginable), and continue to divert our public dollars from direct service to students. This model, quite simply, is inefficient, ineffective, and very bad business. (For the record, the entire state of Maryland has 25 school districts.)

Students throughout Michigan continue to be the "victims" or beneficiaries" of hugely varying amounts of dollars of per-pupil state funding depending on the good or bad fortune of their residence. The size of the funding gap now is approximately \$5,000 per student, depending on geography.

There is a long history behind this sad tale; suffice it to say that since 1994 -- now almost 16 years ago, and even long before Proposal A put the current financing system in place, we have supported a shamefully unequal process of funding education in Michigan. I resent that my tax dollars are used to sustain this immoral policy. I have voiced my protests to my local state representatives who have remained silent or expressed regrets that they could do so little. Thus, today, in 2009, this is where we find ourselves:

The State Aid Financial Status Report issued by the State of Michigan dated 8/20/2009, revealed the following unequal amounts of basic funding (per-pupil foundation allowance) for school districts in the Washtenaw County Intermediate School District:

Ann Arbor \$9490
Chelsea 7650
Dexter 7938
Lincoln Cons. 7318
Manchester 7513
Saline 7543
Milan 7316
Whitmore Lk. 7316
Willow Run 7840
Ypsilanti 7983

Thus, in just our own county, \$9,490 of our tax monies are directed to support the education of each Ann Arbor student, while \$7,316 is directed to students who live in Milan or Whitmore Lake -- a funding difference of \$2,174 per student. The differences in state per-pupil funding far greater when we look at what the wealthiest districts in Michigan receive, noting amounts over \$12,000. Thus, every dollar we send in taxes to Lansing results in a differential of approximately \$4,500 in the opportunities we give Michigan's children to learn. As a life-long public school teacher and administrator and university professor, I can assure you that money does indeed make a difference!

School boards and administrators are brought to their knees as local unions, guided and coached by their state and national organizations, use the threat of walkouts, refusal to settle school year calendars, etc., by demanding health care coverage as part of the negotiations process. The preferred provider for most Michigan school districts --which are allied with the MEA, is MESSA, owned and operated by the MEA. It is common knowledge that million(s) of dollars are sent by the MEA/MESSA to the national parent organization, the NEA, to fund that office.

Negotiations with other possible carriers for different insurance plans are very difficult to conduct as state legislation permits the MEA/MESSA to keep private and confidential their claims records. Thus, efforts to bring in other health insurance alternatives--often for lower cost and with greater benefits--are stymied as no comparative health claims data are available. Believe me, this is a disaster.

Part-time employees working a certain number of hours per week are typically entitled to health and benefit insurance coverage which average more than \$12,000 per employee, while their salary is often less than that.

We currently have an estimated \$1.8 billion deficit in the Michigan budget, which is expected to increase unless the underlying costs at all levels of government in Michigan are decreased.

Andy Dillon, Democratic speaker of the House, put forth a proposal 3 months ago to place all public state employees (including school employees) into one huge pool, which would reap savings of an amount he estimated at around \$900,000,000.

"For too long," he stated, "Michigan has wasted precious tax dollars on an inefficient patchwork of thousands of separate, widely varying health care plans for its public sector employees and retirees ..."

Requiring public employees to pay more for their health care in a new benefit structure that would take effect Jan. 1 would mitigate unpopular cuts to local schools, health care providers and municipal governments. It also would provide the structural reform that must accompany any tax reform.

If we continue the present model and structure, we continue to "feed the beast" and we funnel money away from direct educational service to Michigan's millions of students. Last September, even State Superintendent of Instruction Mike Flanagan stated, "My daughter's benefits are more likely to be preserved under a statewide system than when local school boards are freaking out over costs."

To my great dismay, Gov. Granholm almost immediately rejected Dillon's proposal. She stated that the idea was a bad one that wouldn't save the state any money in the foreseeable future. Granholm said the proposal wouldn't help resolve the state's current financial problems in 2010 or 2011, and might even detract from negotiations to erase a looming \$1.7-billion deficit next fiscal year because lawmakers might think they don't need to cut state programs or find new revenue to plug the budget hole.

Granholm said she doubted a larger pool of employees would save the state money, noting that the state already pools 55,000 employees in large health insurance pools. She also said that the timing is bad, that the state should not consider any reform proposals until we see what comes out of the current debate over healthcare reform at the national level in Congress.

So, alas, where did that all leave my husband and me? We decided that we could NO LONGER act in support of any measure that permitted our terrible, unsustainable public education model to continue. In other words, we would NOT continue to direct our financial support to plug the leaky holes of a system that should not be continued.


We know that the schools in Washtenaw County, and in Michigan, are hurting. There have already been huge cuts made over the last 5 years or more. (Yet I must say that I just spoke with members of the community, including two former AA school board members, who have been investigating expenditures of the Ann Arbor School Board and discovered that from 2003-2008, expenditures rose from \$157 million to \$188 million--\$31 million in additional expenses, NOT including funds gained and used from the Sinking Fund and other sources of revenue. That is over a 20% increase in expenses, while inflation has remained relatively flat, and while programs and direct services to students have been continuously reduced or eliminated.)

We must all vote as we wish according to what we value. Having spoken to a number of people recently, my husband and I decided to share our thoughts and concerns with others. There comes a time when the charade of public education in Michigan must be called out. Our students, our communities, and indeed our entire state is at great risk.

In the end, the real task is to insist that our state legislators have the courage to stand up and demand that a more moral, more equitable, more efficient, more affordable and more sustainable system of public education is designed and implemented in our beleaguered state. So far, I think we've been unfortunate witnesses to a sad tale of lack of clarity and courage.

Beverley Geltner

Ann Arbor

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Shortage causes delays in swine flu vaccinations for students

BY TINA REED
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Washtenaw County schools have been told they won't be able to offer as many swine flu vaccinations as originally projected — at least for now.

The news came Wednesday as schools reported to the county that they saw flu levels last week that rival the typical peak of flu season. And local health-care providers have reported increases in calls from parents about flu-like symptoms.

The weekly amount of illness reported by schools to the county was double the previous week, likely related in part to cases of the novel H1N1 flu virus, said Laura Bauman, an epidemiologist for the county. October is much earlier in the year than when those levels of the flu would typically be seen, she said.

But the amount of vaccine that's arrived in the county so far is only about 30 percent of what the county says it needs. And it is much less than what was expected at this point — a problem being seen around the country.

The first H1N1 flu vaccination clinic will be available to people who fall into high-priority groups. It will be Tuesday, from 3 to 9 p.m., at the Washtenaw Intermediate School District facility, 1819 S. Wagner Road.

Those who fall within those highest priority groups include pregnant women, caregivers of children younger than 6 months, children ages 6 months through 4 years, children between the ages of 5 and 18 who have medical conditions linked with higher risk of flu complications, such as asthma, and health-care workers who provide direct patient care.

Several clinics have also been scheduled at schools for pregnant staff members and those students who have medical conditions that put them at higher risk of flu complications.

activity on the west side of the state, where some schools have closed because attendance was too low to hold classes.

Manchester has seen absence levels of about 15 percent to 17 percent, which is more typical of peak flu season. There was a spike in the absence rate Monday. In Milan, absentee rates are higher than usual for cold and flu season, but that could also be attributed to parents being more vigilant in keeping their

children home when they feel ill, said Superintendent Bryan Girbach.

The Ann Arbor school district has seen upticks in cases of the flu, and some classrooms have seen higher spikes. But so far, the flu hasn't been widespread, said district spokeswoman Liz Margolis.

Tina Reed covers health and the environment for AnnArbor.com. You can reach her at tinareed@annarbor.com, call her at 734-623-2535.

Those clinics include:

» **Ypsilanti Public Schools:** Nov. 2 at Ypsilanti High School from 10 a.m. to 8 p.m.

» **Dexter Community Schools:** Nov. 3 at Creekside Intermediate School from 10 a.m. to 8 p.m.

» **Ann Arbor Public Schools:** Nov. 5 at Huron High School from 2 p.m. to 8 p.m.

» **Milan Area Schools:** Nov. 6 at Milan High School from 11 a.m. to 7 p.m.

"Given our limited supply, we have to concentrate on vaccinating those children and adults most at risk of complications," Richard Fleece, health officer for Washtenaw County Public Health said in a news release.

It will not be clear when the vaccine will become available to other children, adolescents and the general public. About 70 percent of those affected by the flu are between 5 and 24 years old, and respiratory illnesses of some sort were reported in every district in the county, Bauman said.

School and county officials are keeping a close eye on flu

