

**GRAND COUNTY SCHOOL DISTRICT**

**264 South 400 East**

**Moab, Utah 84532**

**(435) 259-5317**

Superintendent: Margaret L. Hopkin  
Business Administrator: Robert Farnsworth

January 12, 2010

Board President: Kaaron Jorgen  
Vice President: M. Bryon Walston  
Ronald A. Olsen  
Deb Hren  
Jim Webster

**To: Public Education Appropriations Subcommittee, Utah State Legislature**

**From: Grand County Board of Education and Superintendent Margaret L. Hopkin**

**Re: Requested Information Regarding Impact of Budget Reductions for FY09, FY10 and Projections for FY11**

**Important Background Information: Celebrating Grand County School District's Strengths**

- Alignment of school goals with school board goals – establishing common lines of focus
- Data driven decisions at the District level (needs assessment / test scores) through to the classroom level (formative and summative assessment informing instruction)
- *Dedicated* teachers, support staff, administrators and Board – common focus, relentless effort
- Implementation of instructional best practices supported by District wide staff training
- Provision of comprehensive and coordinated academic and behavioral support via Comprehensive Guidance (7-12), interagency 'wrap around' services (K-12), and Skill Building support (K-6)
- Provision of an array of academic and extra-curricular opportunities, creating educational equity for rural students isolated from educational choices available to urban students
- Maintaining commendable test scores in light of generally low economic SES; continuing to meet AYP / UPASS standards – or, if requirements are not met, continuing to return to passing standards based on data driven planning / implementation
- Steady trend of increased student success in academically related areas such as debate (4<sup>th</sup> consecutive year of taking state; national recognition of team and individuals), Sterling Scholar recipients, excellence in drama, music, etc.
- Steady increase in high school graduation rate
- New High School VoTec and K-6 facilities will be in operation for the 2010 – 2011 school year!

## Summary of Fiscal Year 09 Reductions Prior to September 17, 2009

- Instituted a hiring freeze except for positions relating to health and safety;
- Instituted a freeze on purchasing of all supplies, materials and equipment except for items relating to health and safety or to emergency;
- Instituted a travel freeze except for travel deemed essential by the Superintendent;
- Reduced Teacher Quality *Program Evaluation and Inservice Days* from 9 days to 3 - funded these 3 days at Step 1 Lane 1;
- Imposed a furlough of 2 instructional days for all staff (District closed);
- Withheld Step and Lane, and COLA to employees (0% salary increase) - employees are working without signed contracts this year; and
- Utilized one-time ARRA Federal Stimulus funds to the extent possible to retain Title I / Special Education staff that would have been laid off (staff subsidized annually by the District beyond hiring capacity of ongoing funds).

## Summary of Additional Fiscal Year 09 Reductions After Discovery of Deficit in Maintenance and Operations Fund on September 17, 2009

- Under the status of Financially Distressed District, conducted a one-time transfer of at least \$940,000 from Capital Outlay and other restricted funds to avoid immediate lay-offs;
- Imposed 3 additional instructional furlough days for a total of 5 instructional furlough days in 2009-2010, as granted by the State Board of Education for this year only;
- Instituted an immediate 25% premium-share for the family insurance option on employees' health insurance premiums, previously funded by the District at 100%; and,
- Instituted \$100,000 in student co- and extra-curricular cuts for the current school year.

## Summary of Projected Fiscal Year 10 Reductions

The Grand County School District has created a Financial Recovery Plan for 2010-2011 to balance the budget by making \$1.9 million dollars in budget cuts. This total figure includes an anticipated 3% funding cut by the Utah State Legislature for 2010-2011 and the expectation of no federal stimulus revenue. These substantial cuts, property sales and revenue enhancements include:

- Reduction of total District staff by 21%; these cuts in programs and practices translate to elimination of –
  - 19 Full Time Equivalency (FTE) teaching positions and 18.5 support staff positions
  - K-6 Tiered Model of Instruction
  - K-12 Wrap-around Services (interagency teaming on students requiring academic and behavioral interventions and supports)
  - K-8 Skill Building, Tracker/Mentoring for struggling students
  - Full day kindergarten - the District will shift from full-day kindergarten for all students to one, full-day session for some students (determined by pre-assessment of readiness skills combined with 'lottery' selection) and half-day for the remaining students
  - Loss of K-6 certified Art teacher – ***please support the Beverly Sorensen Art Grant – bright and shining star in Grand's grim reality***
  - Middle School comprehensive guidance program (RIF counselor)

- Middle School certified media specialist (replace with classified staff)
  - Course offerings at the High School level – planned cutbacks threaten accreditation at Grand County High School and the administration is working to retain the High School’s current accreditation status
  - District Technology Support by 25%
  - High School foreign language French offering - Spanish remains as the only foreign language offering
- Class size increase from approximately 24 to 36 students (K-6) and up to 45 students in Core secondary (7 -12) classes;
  - Reduction of specific employee positions from a 40 to a 36-hour work week;
  - Reduction of contract days for non-classroom employees – four days reduction for 11-month employees and five days reduction for 12-month employees;
  - Provision of no Step and Lane or COLA to District employees for the second consecutive year – two years of no salary increase;
  - Continuation of 25% health insurance premium-share for family coverage;
  - Imposition of a furlough of 5 instructional days for all staff and students (District closed);
  - Continuation of the \$100,000 cut to student activities;
  - Consolidation of buildings -- declaring the Student Services/Preschool building and the District Office building surplus properties with proceeds from sales applied toward the FY09 deficit;
  - Declaration of surplus properties for up to five land parcels – proceeds from sales applied toward the FY09 deficit;
  - Promotion of a June 2010 Voted Leeway (details still in discussion); and,
  - Adjustments of the existing local property tax structure, including use of Truth in Taxation authority if needed;

At this point in cutbacks, the District is still short its \$1.9 million target. This may force the District - for financial reasons only - to request authority from the State Board of Education to move to a four-day school week. This action is viewed by **all Grand County constituencies** as a ‘measure of last resort’ to balance the budget.

**Note:** On Thursday, January 7, 2010, the State Board of Education approved a strategy that will reduce the projected \$1.9 million in cutbacks by \$230,000. Due to the recent nature of this action, the resulting savings has not yet been worked into District projections. For instance, this sum could be used to reduce class sizes K-6 from 36 to 28 students OR keep the District from the need to move to a four-day school week. As you can see, District planning is dynamic at this point.

### **How the Utah State Legislature and Governing Entities Can Help**

- **Provide maximum flexibility at the local level for Districts to allocate funds** – increase local autonomy and authority for Boards to spend funds in high-need areas, recognizing each District has its unique needs and circumstances, recognizing Boards and communities know these needs and are willing to resolve their own problems given the ability; *there is a critical difference between funding such as the Beverly Sorensen Art Grant (funding goes toward salary, benefits and support materials) and funding that is earmarked for a specific program that – in the end – results in the funneling of funds into a specific contracting firm;* because we have no money to waste in Utah, fund the WPU or use great discretion when earmarking funds;
- **Use Rainy Day funds or Trust Lands funds to supplement revenue shortfalls** to Public Education rather than impose further funding cutbacks to Districts;

- **Buffer current demands to shift funds away from rural districts** – equitable funding does not equate to equitable services when dealing with economy of scale but consider, instead, what promotes equity and adequacy:
  - **Protect existing funding formulas for rural districts** – before initiating a ‘quick’ change in any given formula, allow the USOE/State Board or other task force to conduct an extensive study of ramifications.
  - **Protect funding for Regional Service Centers** – rural districts rely on existing service centers for a myriad of technological, inservice training and other support otherwise unavailable to them as small entities.
  - **For Districts experiencing stunted funding due to location amid Public Lands, allocate portions of PILT and mineral lease money directly to school districts as well as to their counties** – currently school districts are at the mercy of their county councils, receiving little or none of this important funding.
- **As a legislative body, refuse to support or allow implementation of strategies that compromise Public Education or result in the gradual or abrupt demise of District operational infrastructure.** There is no longer any ‘fat to trim’ in Utah’s school districts. Districts are imposing cuts that will have long term economic impact on and within the State – in terms of producing an educated work force *and* in terms of our State’s ability to attract business infrastructure that will bolster economic development.

**In Summary:** In the Grand County school system, cutting 21% of the District’s employees essentially eviscerates the academic excellence we have fought so hard to build over the last fifteen years. (Please refer back to opening section on celebrating District strengths). With the approaching substantial cuts, Grand County School District is no longer able to implement the Board’s academic goals. As of the 2010 – 2011 school year, the District can no longer provide intervention for struggling students delivered through the Tiered Reading Program; comprehensive and coordinated academic and behavioral support; and fully funded academic and extra-curricular activities to educate the whole child. Due to the labor-intensity of maintaining *data-driven* planning, implementation and instruction, we anticipate difficulty in maintaining our test scores that currently meet AYP/UPASS standards. Our progress in use of technology as an instructional tool and as a tool to inform instruction can no longer be supported at an effective level. This, exacerbated by the substantial increase in class size, creates working conditions that will cause many professional educators to look elsewhere for employment. Regardless of the odds against us, District staff will continue to work diligently to provide a viable program for all students.

The Grand County Board of Education has attempted to make equitable cuts for certified and support staff, as well as ongoing cuts (vs. one-time cuts) that can be maintained and carried forth into future years as needed. The Board recognizes that, without new revenue streams, rebuilding the District to its former level of services will be difficult if not impossible.

Thank you for your time and consideration of these important issues. Needless to say, the reality of impacts described herein tears at the hearts of Grand County residents as we grapple with ways to address our District financial condition. We are strongly committed to overcoming these obstacles and request any legislative assistance you can offer to help mitigate the District’s current situation.