

Monday, November 30, 2009

State Budget Crisis: The months of November and December are the leanest times at the state level for tax revenue to be collected. Because of the current recession, the state has no cash reserves. This creates a serious cash flow problem in Topeka. All Kansas school districts receive distributions at the beginning of each month. This month we received only half of our state aid distribution. This has caused USD 210 to tap into our idle funds to be able to pay all our teachers and staff. Please know we have a plan to ensure all employees are paid on time; however, we will be making only the most urgent orders and purchases until January. Debbie Theye, our Board Clerk, has been instructed to not approve any orders (ereqs/on-line requisitions) until second semester. By holding off on orders, we hope to limit the amount of idle funds we have to spend.

Governor Parkinson's Budget Reductions: The spirit of Thanksgiving felt a bit dim to many around the Statehouse as on Monday, November 23, Governor Parkinson reluctantly announced allotments (budget cuts) needed to get FY 2010 to a balanced budget. This spirit was only enhanced as education leaders came before the House Appropriations Committee to highlight the painful nature of district cuts already made. They were given little hope from legislators that the picture for next year would look any better. The cuts here at USD 210 will be approximately \$350,000.00. It is important to note that two factors will help us weather this loss of state funding. First, we had a slight increase in enrollment and secondly, we have a very significant increase in the number of students who qualify for free lunches. The free lunch increase will generate a large amount of additional at-risk money.

USD 210 Budget Reduction Planning: A special Administrative Team meeting was held November 24th before school. The Board of Education will also meet to preview a budget reduction plan that attempts to hold student learning harmless. With 80% of our expenses tied into bi-monthly payroll, the areas we can find to reduce expenditures are getting harder and harder.

Middle School/High School Construction: This Tuesday, the final slab on grade is scheduled to be poured. This winter, as long as temperatures climb to over 40 degrees, Buccola Masonry can continue laying blocks and bricks. The big crane on-site will begin to lay steel beams and roof decking in place this week. This new MS space of 39,000 square feet is on schedule to be completed by November 2010. Phase II is the link between the MS and the HS consisting of 22,000 square feet. Of this space, 6,000 square feet will be the cafeteria/commons area. We should see much more activity on phase II in December. The final construction project on our MS/HS campus is the new P.E./Athletic facility (phase III). This 18,000 square foot area consists of new locker rooms, a 5,000 square foot wrestling room/tornado safe room, a 3,000 square foot wrestling room and a P.E. classroom.

Early Childhood Development Center (ECDC): We are still waiting to hear if FEMA has approved the Stevens County Emergency Mitigation plan. This county plan has to be approved and in place before we can begin erecting the multi-purpose room/safe room at the ECDC. If the plan is in place and our construction design is approved, we will be reimbursed \$200,000 - \$250,000 of construction expenses. The first slab on grade should be poured early in December.

Finally, I hope your Thanksgiving break with family was a blessed one. These are challenging times, but we still have much to be thankful for. I am encouraged by the hard work and the commitment to students and good instruction that I see all around USD 210. Thank you for making a difference in the lives of all our students.

Sincerely,

Mark K. Crawford
Superintendent of Schools