



From Superintendent Karl D. Paulson Making a Difference

May 5, 2011

Spring is here, which means graduation, new enrollments, and the State Budget are on the minds of many. I am pleased to offer all of you some thoughts on the current year and also share with you a few of our plans for 2011-12. Please read on and share with anyone you know who would benefit from my notes below.

Budget/Finances

As you certainly know from media frenzy the past few months, the State of Michigan budgeting process is underway. All of us are affected by whatever the ultimate outcome is because schools, cities, counties and other local government functions receive some or all of their revenue from State tax dollars. I encourage you to speak up with your local State House Representative and Senator to share your feelings—it will show them we are all watching and interested. I have made personal phone calls and written emails to several legislative representatives to advocate for public schools. Both Representative Forlini and Senator Bieda have been willing to talk with me on several occasions. The biggest single issue that should concern all of you is the **shifting of university and community college costs** to the State School Aid Fund revenue stream, which has traditionally ONLY funded K-12 operations. I suggest that until we all believe universities and community colleges are operated cost effectively and efficiently, NO School Aid Fund dollars should be shifted away from K-12 to help those bureaucratic behemoths. As a point of reference for everyone reading—if no university or community college costs were shifted as a part of this budget proposal, K-12 school Student Foundation revenue would be going UP for K-12 districts in 2011-12 (this is the amount we receive per pupil). In other words, we would not be facing the \$470 “cut” in per pupil revenue that was proposed. Share this factoid with everyone you know and encourage them to get involved.

So, **the big question** on everyone’s mind this spring has been—how does a cut in the Student Foundation Allowance like this factor into our plans in Lakeview? Well, we will need to be more efficient in our support staffing, contracted services, and use of supplies and materials. We will need to squeeze more out of our current teacher and paraprofessional staffing. We will need to be careful with professional development spending. We will need to use technology funds in a very, very, focused way. Assuming everyone pitches in on the aforementioned ideas and because of our Master Agreement contract settlements (thanks to all of our unions for smooth and expedient negotiations); we have planned **NO LAYOFFS OR PROGRAM CUTS for 2011-12**. Bill Putney, who has been part time in Human Resources and a great asset the past three years, will be leaving us in June. Tracy VanPeeren, Assistant Superintendent, will take over duties in Human Resources. This reduction at Central Office will mean our administrators and support staff will face a big burden; we expect to save a few dollars this way. All of the principals and assistant principals will be stepping up to take on a few extra duties to reduce the load on Tracy and other central staff. This means our administrative team and their support staff will be stretched even thinner—thank them the next time you see them! It also means that counselors and social workers, etc. will be stretched thinner—thank them, too.

How can we avoid layoffs when all around us are cutting jobs and eliminating programs? Our administrative team works behind the scenes continuously to redefine our own roles and those of support staff. We leverage technology wherever possible to improve our efficiency. Today, we are functioning with fewer administrators and support staff with 3,600 students than were in place when there were 2,700 students in Lakeview. This means teacher

staffing or other instructional support roles don't need to be cut. Additionally, we are growing our student enrollment enough to offset the per pupil Foundation cut that is being proposed. With 3,825 students expected next year and without growing any of our support costs, one could consider this an "efficiency"—instructional expenses go up as we hire more teachers but don't hire any more secretaries, counselors, principals, etc. We are fortunate that new students continue to seek us out. This is no accident, because quality programs sell themselves to parents!

Additionally, as part of our methodical enrollment process, all new enrolling students are being required to take NWEA tests in ELA and mathematics. Collecting this information will help determine classroom placements and provide teachers academic history for the student at the start of the year. Each teacher will have this information on our current students, so having all new enrollees engage in the testing process before finalizing their registration will mean every student starts with an equal data set in September. This additional step in our enrollment process also delivers a message to the family about our high expectations for academic achievement.

Therefore, final preparations on the District Budget are coming to a close and I expect to present the Board of Education a **BALANCED BUDGET for 2011-12**. Revenue and expenses will be in the range of \$34,400,000. We also have a small bank account known as "fund balance" to weather surprises, so we don't expect to surprise anyone with a pink slip. We will also continue to purchase some additional textbooks, some additional technology, and improve our building infrastructure. Our model develops the continuous improvement, quality instruction, programs and services that matter to parents and students! So, check out the next section to hear more...

Instructional Program Improvements/Changes

For the first time, a very intentional, intense prep session series was put together at the high school for MME/ACT. Past performance data on individual students was the driving factor on selection to the program. High school content teachers taught specific skills in those sessions and it paid off—scores for those students were up significantly. It proves again that focused interventions matter. All of our teachers will take this example and think through how individual classroom interventions can be put in place on a daily basis. Focused, intense, interventions matter! Understanding quality assessment data at the classroom level like NWEA is critical; so many hours of staff meetings and PLC time next year will focus on helping teachers better understand what the data is telling them and how to proceed.

On a lighter and maybe more exciting note, I am happy to share that we have developed a collaborative agreement with Wayne State University. High School students will be able to take university courses on Lakeview's campus, during the day, next fall and winter (History, Computer Science, Psychology, and Philosophy are planned). This is a first for both organizations. Some colleges and universities offer extension courses at high school campuses during the evening, but none that I am aware of offer them during the day. Our block schedule format allows this to work. Offering a couple of courses during the day makes the opportunity available for all high school students, particularly those who also play sports or participate in clubs or Marching Band after school. This dual enrollment program also means that most of the cost of the class is covered by Lakeview, making it affordable to families to get their student started on college courses. When considering our other Advanced Placement offerings with these course options, it creates the opportunity for our high school students to leave Lakeview with the freshmen year of college completed. For the real high-flyers, they could easily get 2 years of college complete on Lakeview's dime. These are exciting times for high school students.

LHS administrators and teachers will soon begin working on reform of the LHS Block Schedule. As part of our Master Agreement settlement with the teachers, a reduction in prep

time at LHS was agreed to which will help us stave off further financial woes in 2012-13. This means the reform work must be completed by November/December 2011 so scheduling materials and staffing arrangements can be planned and budgeted. I look forward to this challenge and know administration and teachers will work closely on quality solutions with the team that will still provide time/options for students like the WSU program noted above. On Tuesday, May 3rd, the Board approved several mathematics textbook purchases totaling over \$80,000. Thanks to the mathematics department members who did the research. This purchase finished our K-12 core content textbook and materials replacement that started in 2007-08.

At Jefferson, we begin the first year of implementation of the two (2) year foreign language requirement. For 2011-12, ALL 8th graders are required to take a foreign language (all 9th graders will also be required in 2012-13). This required us to shift how/when we provide the 8th grade human sexual development class (HSD). To minimize impact on other electives, the HSD content will be taught to ½ the 8th graders during one semester of T2R (the daily reading block). The other ½ of students will take it during the opposite semester. Coming up with innovative solutions like this is a result of collaboration and honest dialogue.

Lastly, as mentioned earlier, our Response to Intervention framework building will continue even though our ARRA funds are gone. Teachers will now have significant amounts of data to make decisions with—but what strategies work best in particular situations will still need refinement. Special education co-teachers also continue to get better at pushing into regular education classrooms. Director of Student Services Chris Brown, Jefferson Middle School Assistant Principal Sherry Michalowicz and teacher Jennifer Donnelly have done a great job leading this effort with each of the building teams, our principals and central administrators. Related thanks also goes out to teacher Bill Jones for taking on the temporary Dean of Students job at JMS the past two years. As was planned in 2009, Mr. Jones will head back to LHS as an English teacher for 2011-12.

Staffing changes are coming, too. **Again, no layoffs or program cuts are planned!** As a result of Marcia Nowakowski's upcoming retirement, Sherry Michalowicz is headed to lead Princeton as Principal. Our new assistant principal at JMS, Jason Townsend, was welcomed by the Board after his formal approval May 3rd. He comes to Lakeview with several years of experience in a similar role in L'Anse Creuse Public Schools. Unique to our administrative team, prior to his work as an administrator, Mr. Townsend was trained and worked as a school counselor. Regrettably for Lakeview, Amy Gaglio has decided to resign to stay home with her three young children. We will begin interviewing for the Harmon Principal position in the next few days.

Lakeview continues to be an innovator and problem solver with children and programs coming first. I'm proud to lead this great team now assembled in the District. Please share this information with your family, friends, neighbors, etc. If you have any questions or comments you can reach me at 445-4000, ext. 2501 or email me at kpaulson@scslakeview-k12.com.

With warmest regards,



Karl D. Paulson
Superintendent of Schools