

Peru Central

Cross-Campus Web-based Update

HIGHLIGHTS OF SCHOOL BOARD ACTION TUESDAY NIGHT

At the regular monthly meeting of **Tuesday, December 9, 2008**, the Board of Education:

- A. Welcomed Marcus McLean, High School Student Council President, whose December 2008 report to the Board was featured for this month's focus on extra-curricular student activities, leadership development and service. Mrs. Hicks and Mrs. Wright are faculty advisors.
- B. Commended faculty member Diane Menard, middle school health teacher. Her middle school health program will be featured in the spring 2009 newsletter of the New York State Association for Health, Physical Education, Recreation and Dance.
- C. Expressed appreciation to the many faculty members, support staff members and administrators who assisted Peru CSD and the information technology network support team in piloting the cross-campus shutdown of computer workstations during the Thanksgiving recess period. The broad engagement across campus with this energy reduction/cost reduction effort is much appreciated. The planned shutdown was successful on many fronts, and Peru CSD did learn from the experience. The next cross-campus shutdown is slated for the upcoming holiday recess later this month.
- D. Approved the proposed set of 2009-2010 district goals and forecasted budget development factors.
- E. Completed a first reading of an updated 5000 section [students] recommended by the NYSSBA and 'fine tuned' to better reflect current Peru CSD policy, as part of the school district's first comprehensive updating of the district policy manual since 1991. The NYSSBA has recommended various Peru CSD policies be re-adopted 'as is' or with slight modifications to reflect updated school law or state regulations.

The Peru CSD code of conduct [policy 5300] will receive a first reading spring 2009, as part of the annual updating of the district's code of conduct.
- F. Approved the proposed Peru CSD corrective action plan associated with the November 2008 five-year comprehensive fiscal accountability audit of the New York State Comptroller's Office regarding Peru CSD.
- G. Approved the Peru CSD 403(b) retirement plan document, which has been amended and restated to reflect updated government guidelines for such retirement

DECEMBER 10, 2008

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plans, pending final review by administration.

- H. Approved the proposed timetable for obtaining competitive bids for 2009-2010 school year insurance for Peru CSD.
- I. Established governing team and high school administration representation at the January 8, 2009 BOCES-wide school boards association meeting at Cricket's Restaurant in Peru, featuring Commissioner Richard Mills, Regent James Dawson and a panel of students from this region's public school districts.
- J. Approved the proposed timetable for recruitment of a successor Primary School Principal to start service on or about July 1, 2009.
- K. Launched discussion of the December 2008 final report from the NYS Commission on Property Tax Relief, and the associated chart of New York State Champlain Valley Region's public school districts.

One of the Commission's recommendations is to require the consolidation of school districts with fewer than 1,000 students and granting the Commission of Education discretionary authority to order consolidation of school districts with fewer than 2,000 pupils to achieve economies of scale and to increase educational opportunities through expanded course offerings. Eleven of the seventeen school districts in our BOCES region have fewer than 1,000 students. Only two the seventeen school districts in our BOCES region have student enrollment of greater than 2,000 students [Peru CSD and Beekmantown CSD].

The approved set of 2009-2010 district goals and forecasted budget development factors is attached, coupled with the December 9, 2008 Superintendent's Report.

DECEMBER 10, 2008


FROM A. PAUL SCOTT, SUPERINTENDENT OF SCHOOLS

NEWSPAPER EDITORIALS STATEWIDE FOCUSED ON OPEN LETTER FROM GOVERNOR

Editorials in regional newspapers statewide have mentioned the economic downturn. Quite a few of those newspapers recently featured mention of the Governor's recent open letter to Boards of Education and Superintendents focused on the recent inaction in Albany regarding an estimated \$1.5B deficit.

The Albany Times Union editorial of Sunday, November 30th suggested that thanks to the Legislature's refusal to come to grips with a \$1.5 billion deficit this year, districts apparently won't have to deal with mid-year cuts. But that means any savings the state could have achieved this year will only be compounded next year.

The editorial said the potential cuts won't just come back around; they'll come around bigger, Gov. David Paterson has warned school boards and superintendents. Given the cost of education aid to the state — about \$21 billion, representing about one-sixth of the state budget — and a projected deficit of \$14 billion this year and next, it looks increasingly unlikely that schools will be spared the ax. Unless the state is willing to borrow its way out of the crisis, it will be difficult not to cut an area as large as school aid. That, perhaps, is why legislative leaders refused to answer Mr. Paterson's recent call for help in reining in the deficit: To do that, they might very well have to concede that a cut in education spending is necessary. And few politicians would want the credit for even bringing up such a politically unpopular idea.

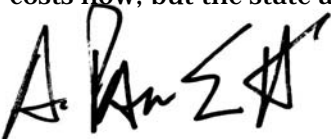
The Times Union went on to suggest educators would be well advised not to cross their fingers and hope lawmakers can keep avoiding reality next year. The governor will deliver his 2009-10 budget Dec. 16, a full month earlier than usual, and it will include his proposal for education spending. The Times Union stated that school boards, superintendents and teacher unions should not look at the numbers as something they can lobby their way out of. With most school budgets going before voters in May, they must get right to work on spending proposals that are in line with what the state can afford.

NYSSBA REPORT AND NYS COMMISSION ON PROPERTY TAX RELIEF FINAL REPORT

This school year's budget advisory committee will be examining the New York State School Boards Association ad-hoc task force report on maximizing school district resources. That report provides fifty recommendations for cost reduction and streamlining. Last week, the NYS Commission on Property Tax Relief released its final report, providing nearly three dozen specific recommendations for Governor, Legislature and constituent consideration. Given the scope of the economic downturn and the close relationship between New York State tax revenue and the hard-hit financial services sector headquartered in New York City, it's likely we will see dynamic discussion and longer-term decisions resulting from the fiscal adversity forecasted for the Empire State and for those school districts like Peru CSD which receive a majority of their revenue from state aid.

EDITORIAL CUTS TO THE CHASE

That November 30th Times Union editorial cut to the chase. It suggested the issue is the governor warning schools of cuts next year. It suggested the stakes are that schools should start looking to trim costs now, but the state also needs to help. How it might help is detailed in those two reports.



Respectfully submitted by A. Paul Scott, Superintendent of Schools

PERU CENTRAL SCHOOL DISTRICT

2009-2010 DISTRICT GOALS

1. Continuing to strengthen student achievement and instructional programs.

- 1.1. Continue to promote student achievement and conduct gains, with increased graduation rates as top priority, reflecting national and statewide attention on this key benchmark.
- 1.2. Sustain our local school community's contributions to student achievement and workforce development via the Peru CSD tuition 'seats' purchased annually by the school board for Peru CSD student enrollment with the career-technical center operated by the BOCES.
- 1.3. Increase the number and percent of Peru CSD graduates who apply for and are accepted at a college, a career-technical program or other continued education program after high school.
- 1.4. Complete the multi-year process of examining and re-establishing mathematics program materials, methods, textbooks and professional practices to further strengthen horizontal [*grade level*] consistency and vertical [*grade-to-grade*] alignment of our K-12 pathway, reflecting the state's renovated math syllabus and updated course curricula.
- 1.5. Continue piloting innovative approaches to providing extra support and encouragement to 8th and 9th grade students identified as particularly 'at risk' with the transition from eighth grade studies in middle school to ninth grade studies at the high school, in regard to successful completion of ninth grade studies and solid progress toward graduation.

2. Updating school procedures and practices to reflect increased expectations among stakeholders for accountability and service, in consultation with those who will implement such practices.

- 2.1. Complete the Peru CSD governing team's first comprehensive updating of the Peru CSD policy manual since 1991, in partnership with the state school boards association.
- 2.2. Sustain the collaborative engagement of faculty and administrators with the Peru CSD internal curriculum auditing process.
- 2.3. Sustain the collaborative updating of protocols and practices associated with extra-curricular student clubs and activities related to fiscal accountability and reporting.
- 2.4. Launch the parent portal of the school district's recently deployed Web-based student data management system, after suitable piloting, in consultation with the school board, representative administrators and representative faculty members, to better provide parents and guardians with readily available summary reports regarding their child's achievement.
- 2.5. Support the Superintendent's actively engaging administrators, operations supervisors, representative senior members of the faculty and support staff, and collective bargaining

units, to help the Superintendent identify purposeful and thoughtful strategies to sustain the organization's mission in the face of diminished revenues and fiscal resources.

- 2.6. Continue to engage the school community in examining the impact of climate change regionally, nationally and globally, to identify and promote practical steps the Peru CSD school community can take, regarding climate stability and energy conservation.

3. Providing quality support services as necessary to meet the district's mission and to maintain good stewardship of district facilities and grounds.

- 3.1. Select, purchase, install and launch an 'industry standard' rapid parent/guardian contact software system using external telephone lines to help provide rapid messaging in the event of an emergency, crisis or other unforeseen circumstance warranting such communication.
- 3.2. Move forward with the community on top priorities for renovations and modernization within the scope of the EXCEL capital project approved spring 2008 by voters, as part of continued stewardship of the school facilities on the consolidated central campus.
- 3.3. Continue and expand regular public reporting of support services, as part of public information outreach and continuous improvement of support operations.

4. Ensuring fiscal responsibility and cost-effectiveness associated with expenditure of funds to support the goals above.

- 4.1. Sustain the school district's multi-year approach to budgeting, and the school district's practice of carefully examining any prospective budget cut, prior to taking action.
- 4.2. Examine carefully class sizes, projected course section numbers, student enrollments for electives, and student access to dual-enrollment college coursework to help inform the decision making process.
- 4.3. Engage with other area Boards of Education and this region's BOCES to examine and consider partnerships to advance energy conservation, expand teacher center programming, and promote regional discussion of public education's future.
- 4.4. Sustain the initiatives by the governing team, business office, claims auditor, internal auditor and independent auditor focused on advancing school district fiscal accountability.
- 4.5. Engage the school board's budget advisory committee in examining various statewide reports, to assist the budget advisory committee in recommending to the school board specific initiatives, suggestions or proposed formal resolutions associated with maximizing and conserving school district resources while sustaining solid public education programs for this community's children.

PERU CENTRAL BUDGET DEVELOPMENT

BUDGET FACTORS FOR 2009-2010

FORECASTS OF DRIVING FACTORS ASSOCIATED WITH NATIONAL & STATEWIDE BUDGETS

1. We face an extraordinary state budget development process this coming winter, since the national economic downturn is having a significant impact on New York State's economy.
2. The prospect of a freeze or cut in state aid is significant, since most Peru CSD revenue is state aid.
3. The October 20, 2008 Comptroller's report on mid-year financial indicators states that personal income tax collections growth is falling off and 'things are looking very shaky'. The Comptroller suggests personal income taxes will likely decline significantly when Wall Street bonus payments drop off in December & January. The state faces potentially unprecedented deficits.
4. The Rockefeller Institute Fiscal Studies Program October 2008 state-by-state national report on revenues pinpointed 'three more shoes to drop' regarding the economy:
 - I. States such as New York which rely especially heavily on the financial services industry will be hit extremely hard, via the taxes they levy on the financial services sector, and through the spillover effects on other parts of the state economy;
 - II. Investment income of taxpayers is likely to fall significantly, although it is difficult to predict precisely how much and when;
 - III. Growing anticipation of a significant and prolonged recessionary period.
5. That national institute's November 2008 economic report "New York State in the National Context" forecasts income-tax states like New York will be again hit hard, with New York far worse than most. Given the scope of the economic downturn, sales-tax states will have trouble, too. That report forecasts the real economy will be much worse. Non-financial-sector incomes will be impacted, too.
6. Downstate and urban interests for a larger 'piece of the pie' for public education funding will put at further risk the relative size of the 'pie slice' for rural and upstate communities, particularly the North Country.

7. Costs associated with salaries, employer contributions, energy prices, essential goods, materials and service fees continue to rise, reducing ‘purchasing power’ for items that are subject to a ‘freeze’ next school year.

FORECASTS OF DRIVING FACTORS ASSOCIATED WITH PERU CSD BUDGET DEVELOPMENT

1. The consequences of freezes or cuts in state aid revenues for Peru CSD will include sobering discussions regarding sustainability of program, service and staffing levels in future years.
2. Sustaining solid public education programs for the children of our community will be the priority.
3. There will be differences of opinion among those who have the interests of children in mind about whether particular programs, services and staffing should continue at current, increased or diminished funding levels.
4. Budgets associated with professional development and in-service of employees will continue to be important, reflecting increased federal and state accountability for student achievement and conduct, with priority placed on hiring & training replacements for long-term employees taking well-earned retirements, and funding top priorities for Peru CSD professional development.
5. The school board will strive to balance the interests of property tax relief with contractual obligations, annual yearly progress with state accountability programs and other factors that call for selectively increasing expenses in particular budget line items.
6. The school board’s budget advisory committee will focus its conversations on suggesting strategies for the school board to consider, regarding cost reduction, conservative spending, conservative estimates associated with revenues and various proposals from state agencies & organizations.
7. Statewide economic and budget challenges suggest no easy choices ahead for Peru CSD, given our high dependence on state aid and local property tax for revenues.
8. Freezes or cuts to state aid revenues would have substantial impact on the school district’s multi-year financial planning and would likely impact the full range of programs and services.