

3/24/2004

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: Elementary Strings – Budget Update

On Thursday, March 11th, the Superintendent released his recommendations for \$9.9 million cuts needed to bring next year's budget in line with state imposed revenue caps. Sadly, the School Board received a cut list before seeing/reviewing a proposed 2004-2005 budget. To date the School Board has not received the budget for next year. **How can the School Board make cut decisions without a reference budget?** Without a budget the School Board runs the risk of making bad recommendations and decisions for Madison's students that can be seen by the public as:

- **Capricious** – It was reported in the Capital Times on March 24th that the President of the School Board, Bill Keys, recommended considering cutting Grade 4 strings, because it's been recommended so many times before. Wrong!!! The last time Grade 4 strings was recommended for a cut was two years ago when Superintendent Rainwater said there was no place else to cut in the budget except in the classroom, which proved to be the case.
- **Inequitable** - Last year, the District Administration recommended a fee for Grade 4 strings, which the Board vetoed. The Board did approve all other fees. However, the effect was to cut the academic curriculum at the last minute after public hearings were held. The curriculum was cut, but the referendum enabled the curriculum to be re-stored.

Decisions like this hurt our children, divide the parents and the community and lower our confidence in the School Board's ability to do the best they can for Madison's students.

What Can You Do?

- **Stay informed.** E-mail Barb Schrank – schrank4@charter.net. I will keep you posted if financial changes or cuts are being contemplated in the budget for the elementary strings instrumental curriculum.
- **E-mail** the Superintendent and School Board members - comments@madison.k12.wi.us.

Madison Schools Elementary Strings – Additional Information

- **High Demand** - nearly 2,000 fourth and fifth grade elementary students participate (>50%).
- **Growing Program** – Since 1993, 4th grade strings program enrollment increased by 21% while district 4th grade enrollment decreased by 10%.
- **Low-Income Grants** - 450 low-income fourth and fifth graders receive instrument grants at no incremental cost to the District.
- **Costs Covered** - Rental fees cover the costs of new instruments and the repairs for existing instruments.
- **Cost Effective** – The entire K-12 music education curriculum costs the District \$238/participant/school year (nearly 20,000 participants). The District spends \$990/participant for elementary math; \$2,000/participant for elementary language arts, **\$600/student** on the most expensive contracts, **Administrative Contracts**, and an average of \$484/participant for extracurricular sports (ranges from \$200 - \$1,200 /student).
- **Efficient** - Elementary string teachers are efficient – 200 students/full-time strings teacher.
- **Academic Curriculum** - Elementary strings are the first two years of the MSMD School Board approved Grades 4-12 instrumental academic curriculum.