



DATE: March 9, 2005
TO: MMSD Board of Education
FROM: Active Citizens for Education
Don Severson, President
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RE: 2005-2006 Budget Process and Proposed Cuts

There continues to be an approach of absolution of and by the majority of the Board of Education for responsibility and accountability for actions, or lack thereof, in the leadership and management of the district and its educational and fiscal stewardship. It is recognized that the district cannot change the state revenue cap system, the state aid equalization formula, the QEO, state and federal unfunded nor underfunded mandates, etc. that cause financial stresses and strains. This Board and the administration can and MUST, however manage how they handle and live with these situations until and unless the above conditions are changed. Furthermore, the Board has NOT (but has the power to do so) deal with the systemic and infrastructure issues that could make significant positive fiscal and performance impacts for the district. Demonstrative examples of the lack of responsibility and leadership and the dysfunction of the Board of Education include, but are not limited to the following:

1. Lack of open, board level discussion and decision-making processes regarding public policy issues related to curricular, extra-curricular and co-curricular programs, delivery models (inclusive of collaborative relationships with non-school entities), performance and accountability standards and cost/benefit comparisons.
2. Business as usual, as has been the case during the past several years, will continue to get the same results when public policy and delivery models are not changed. More and more money to do the same things for the same or lesser results is what needs to be cut.

3. Continual announcements of budget cuts, boundary changes, school closings and pointing of blame for the problems at others become lightning rods which pit parents, students, programs, etc. against each other. Children, teachers and taxpayers are held hostage and manipulated while the “same service” approach, administrative costs and lack of planning and accountability are held harmless.
4. The financial condition of the district is exacerbated by the Board’s refusal to take responsibility and hold itself and the administration accountable when
 - a. There are no policies for the accountability of a 216% increase (\$3.8-\$8.2 million) in the past five years of the Community Services Fund (80) not subject to the revenue cap, but taxed at the same rate as the regular budget
 - b. A highly expensive reading program which gets only a 57% performance completion rate continues without any modification and a refusal of \$2 million in federal grant money to bolster reading in the primary grades.
 - c. No interest in the review and modification of the \$10,000 per year for three years early retirement payout through the Teacher Emeritus Retirement Program (TERP).
 - d. Nearly 70 FTE highly experienced teachers and personnel classified as teachers are not returned to the classroom from central administration as resource teachers at a cost of savings upwards of \$3 million.
 - e. A new accounting system is being installed without running parallel to the old system, costing \$millions and many parts of which are non-functional
 - f. Labor contracts are approved by the Board without knowing the costs in dollars, nor how the costs will be paid for in succeeding budgets.

Time does not allow a more complete reiteration of the examples, recommendations, proposals, analyses and processes presented to the Board by Active Citizens for Education over the past 1.5 to 2.0 years.

It is a travesty the ways in which the Board of Education majority holds itself harmless and continues to defend its expensive non-performing decisions. This attitude and behavior does not encourage confidence in the public that you engage in viable long term planning processes, gather and use data correctly and make decisions in anything but “silos” whereby choices/decisions are not made in relationship to one another and the

total picture. It is important to remember this Board represents the public to serve the children and the community with responsibility and accountability.