



Welcome Back

I hope your break was restful and enjoyable!

Rejoice as the New Year unfolds with a basketful of hopes, dreams, and aspirations. When you celebrate the New Year with gusto, you feel the positive energy flowing in your veins. You begin with renewed vitality and optimism, the much needed ingredients to a successful second semester. Share these quotes for the New Year with friends and family. We need a lot of positive energy to meet the achievement needs of our students and deal with this state budget crisis.

- Year's end is neither an end nor a beginning but a going on with all the wisdom that experience can instill in us.....Hal Boreland
- Never tell your resolution beforehand, or it's twice as onerous a duty....John Selden
- Every tomorrow has two handles. We can take hold of it with the handle of anxiety or the handle of faith...Henry Ward Beecher
- Happiness is too many things these days for anyone to wish ill on anyone lightly. So, let's just wish each other a Happy New Year and leave it at that....Judith Crist

Revenue—December Forecast Still Gloomy

While Legislative Council economists see indications of the recession ending, the Colorado economy may turn like a barge, slowly and clumsily, and it will take time before we are back on track. December projections indicate another \$40 million shortfall in the General Fund Budget for 2009-2010—this is on top of the shortfall that was projected at the time of the September economic forecast. It will be a “snail paced” recovery, according to the Legislative Council’s December 18 report to the Joint Budget Committee.

It is difficult to stress too much or too often how difficult this legislative session will be (it begins on January 13, 2010 and will last 120 days); the state’s budget story will continue to be a work in progress. We wish we had different news to report—but the truth is that all school districts should brace for more cuts, and it may get worse before it gets better. (Courtesy of CASE)

Summary of Board Recommended Legislative Action for January 2010 for PERA

(Known as 2/2/2 Plus*)

Recommended Changes for PERA retirees:

- Reduce the Cost of Living Adjustment (COLA) to an amount equal to the CPI-W with a cap of 2%, effective on the date the bill becomes law. The COLA effective date would be changed to July for all members.
- Require retirees, who return to work, to make employee contributions at the same rate as all members working for that employer. Such contributions **shall not** accrue a benefit and shall not be deposited into the member account.
- Prevent retirees, who suspend their benefit and return to work, from increasing their highest average salary and building additional service credit into the original retirement benefit. Retirees working after retirement, who elect to suspend their benefit, shall be entitled to an additional benefit segment upon re-retirement based upon years worked and salary earned during the period of suspension, if greater than one year. →

PERA....(Continued from previous column)

Recommended Changes for Active and Inactive PERA members:

- Continue to escalate the Supplemental Amortization Equalization Disbursement (SAED), beginning in 2014, for a total increase of up to 2% beyond the current rate schedule. Currently, the SAED is 1% and will increase by 0.5% per year through 2013, to the existing 3% cap. The total amount of the SAED in 2017 would equal 5%. The Local Government Division and Judicial Division SAED would be frozen at the 2010 level (1.5%). The SAED is, to the extent permitted by law, to be funded by monies otherwise available for employee wage increases.
- Change the current 3-year highest average salary (HAS), with a base year, to a **5-year HAS** with a base year, including an 8% spike cap. This change is applicable to members not eligible to draw a benefit (full or reduced service retirement) on the effective date of the statute. There is no change to the unique statutory HAS for the Judicial Division.
- Require all members with a retirement effective date of January 1, 2011, or later to receive benefits for a full calendar year prior to being eligible to receive a COLA.
- Require members to earn 5 years of service credit prior to being eligible for the 50% match. Current members with less than 5 years of earned service credit will be considered vested for the 50% match on all contributions earned through the effective date of the statute, but must reach 5 years of earned service after the effective date of the statute.

....(To be continued next week)

*2/2/2 Plus

The package is known for short “2/2/2 Plus” in reference to the three main elements:

- A 2% increase in the AED.
- A 2% increase in the SAED
- A 2% cap on the Cost of Living Adjustment (COLA) for all retirees, members, and inactive members.

“Plus” refers to the necessary additional provisions that supplement those three key elements guaranteeing amortization of the unfunded actuarial accrued liabilities and maintaining full funding.

NOTICE: Change in Location for the January 21, 2010 School Board Meeting

Because of the Vision HCP Work Session the meeting will be at the Delta Center.

The flowers of all the tomorrows are in the seeds of today. ...Chinese Proverb



Cost Savings Ideas (Continued)

A. *Eliminate or seriously reduce training and inservice that takes staff out of the building or uses expensive speakers. This concept would eliminate or have staff training only after hours, on weekends, or breaks. It would also eliminate or reduce out-of-district in-service speakers.*

For: This would cut down on some substitute teachers and not interrupt teaching (substitute savings \$8K to \$10K). It would possibly eliminate some of the staff training/in-service days. This concept could save significant revenue. Typically, out-of-district speakers receive a \$1,200 to \$1,500 honorarium per day.

Against: Many staff members feel extremely isolated in the format of a “district of separate schools” rather than a school district. The effort of district level PLCs, CAT training, school flex days and others are making significant differences in achievement. The loss of training could bring back building isolation. The loss of training/in-service days seriously reduces staff salaries.

Others (pro/con): _____

B. *Stop prorating coaching stipends throughout the year and give the stipend at the end of each sports activity. Earning interest on the money throughout the season would save the district a large amount of money. In addition, it would cut down on time spent revising contracts.*

Currently, all supplemental contracts for regular staff are paid over the entire year (12 installments). Community coaches are paid at the end of the season.

For: There may be some reduction in paperwork if payment is made only after “services” are completed at the end of the season.

Against: Savings on interest would be approximately equal. If you pay a fall coach in November, you don’t have the benefit of interest over the entire year. This is a loss in interest. If you pay a spring coach in May rather than over 12 months it is an interest gain. Thus, there is limited savings in this concept.

Others (pro/con): _____

C. *Give each school a cost savings dollar figure (a financial quota) based on students in the school and have the building staff decide how to make the necessary budget cuts.*

For: People in the buildings have a better feel for what is desired and what is an absolute necessity. Each building could develop a building consensus on how to meet the budget challenge.

Against: It may be hard to build consensus unique to each building and continue to be a school district. There are also some common beliefs that we have as a school district rather than school by school. For example, one building decides to eliminate all electives, while another reduces all custodians, or the food program in order to solve their financial quota. This would not be consistent with a district direction.

Others (pro/con): _____

D. *Cut paper and copy costs: It is very true that we need to move toward paper and copy reductions. The School Board is going “paperless” in January. A large portion of the building operating expense is not so much the cost of paper, but the cost of leasing a copy machine. Various schools have tried various strategies with mixed results on copy reduction.*

For: Copy machines can consume up to 25% of the building budget. This is a \$100K item district-wide. Many items can be sent by e-mail, or using an overhead (ELMO) for students.

Against: Copies are necessary in many instances. It is not practical to eliminate all paper and copy costs, but significant reductions make sense.

It has been discovered that for a building to own a copy machine is not a cost savings. Service calls range from \$500 and up. Copy machines to a certain degree are necessary evils.

Others (pro/con): _____

E. *Reduce all employees’ salaries by 2.5%: Last year typical salary increases by using steps only was 2.38%. This step increased costs \$457,500; thus, this would be the savings to go back one year.*

For: This concept would spread the cost of the expected budget reduction over all segments of the organization: administration, teachers, and classified staff.

This concept would address about 20% of the expected 2010-2011 shortfall. Inflation for the year is expected to be at -6%.

Against: Local living costs have gone up regardless of the Denver-Boulder Index of -6%.

People find it difficult to “go backwards” and you can never make that loss up.

Others (pro/con): _____



Cost Savings ...These are statements that came in prior to the requested timeline of December 18th. They are not prioritized. Some were sent in previously. In other cases the specific budget suggestion was consolidated with similar ideas. We attempted to acknowledge all ideas. Thank you for your thoughtful feedback.

1. Seriously consider closing Crawford School or converting it to a K-6 building and bussing 7th or 8th to Hotchkiss or Paonia.
2. Consider having only one high school and one middle school in the North Fork.
3. Better accounting of funds that Vision spends.
4. Develop a consistent ratio of student/teacher numbers across the District. (A study has been completed of district student/teacher ratios across the district.)
5. Eliminate all district vehicles not used for students or maintenance.
6. Use tests provided by adopted textbooks instead of teacher-created common assessments. Also eliminate all district-wide testing except for CSAP.
7. Eliminate "mascot" clothing for staff. Do not buy staff clothing from the school budget.
8. Alternate sites of Coordinating Council and Accountability.
9. Develop an incentive for all staff (certified and classified) to find ways to save money every day.
10. Eliminate color copies of *Mondays with Mike* available at the District Office.
11. Print all paper double-sided.
12. No plaques at Board meetings—use certificates.
13. Students pay if they get an 'F'.
14. Rent textbooks.
15. Professional development for everyone or no one
16. Offer AP classes instead of college credit classes.
17. Eliminate middle school game days.
18. No food for late starts—flex days, or meetings
19. CogAT Test (Gifted/Talented) only for proficient and advanced
20. Reduce administrator salaries by 10%, but don't reduce the number of positions.
21. Don't help fund Delta County Economic Development while times are tough.
22. Utility savings: A 10% savings would net over \$100K per year. Use energy audit and better room controls to regulate temperature.
23. Have students furnish more paper products (Kleenex, paper, etc.)
24. Drop elementary and middle school state contests (D.I., Spelling Bee, Math Counts, etc.).
25. Drop middle school Honor Band.

Change in Academic Content Standards

Last month, on December 14th, a significant change occurred for students and schools as the Colorado State Board of Education adopted new *Academic Content Standards*, the first time the standards have been refreshed since 1994.

According to Commissioner Dwight Jones, "*These are grade level specific standards that meet international benchmarks for learning. The next step for CDE is to disseminate and guide the implementation of the new standards across the State and develop and implement a state-wide test that will track student achievement, continue to hold schools accountable and provide accurate timely results for teachers, students and parents.*"

A new State test will replace the CSAP exam in the spring of 2012. CSAP results form the basis of the Colorado Growth Model, a tool that provides a common understanding of how individual students and groups of students progress from year to year. The model focuses attention on maximizing student progress over time and reveals where, and among which students, the strongest growth is happening and where it is not. This model also serves as a key component of the State's new accreditation process as detailed in Senate Bill 09-163.

Meanwhile, a group of representatives from education, business, higher education, military, and others will consider a range of test specifications that will be designed to making mandatory testing more relevant to students, parents, and teachers. As per Senate Bill 08-212, the new assessment system will include school readiness and post secondary workforce readiness tests in addition to the grades 3-10 yearly tests.

A full list of regional meetings is available online at <http://www.cdestate.co.us/publication.htm>. The closest meeting to Delta County will be in Glenwood Springs on March 24, 2010 (school readiness and primary grades) and February 16, 2010 in Grand Junction on post-secondary and workforce readiness and secondary grade assessments.

Everyday heroes don't let life's challenges bring them down. Instead, they stay positive and find a way to overcome their obstacles. Everyday heroes don't always succeed, but they consistently act on the belief that they can do something to improve their situations and those of the people around them.

...Noah Blumenthal

HAPPY NEW YEAR

Thoughts and Concerns



- ◆ Our thoughts go out to **Carol Bowling**, Technical Support. She recently had surgery. We wish Carol a speedy recovery.
- ◆ Our thoughts go out to **Debra Richards**, Personnel Administrative Assistant at the District Office. She recently had surgery. We wish Debra a speedy recovery.
- ◆ Our thoughts go out to **Sheryl Farmer's family**, Teacher at Hotchkiss K-8. Her son, Reece, was recently injured. We wish Reece a speedy recovery.
- ◆ Our thoughts go out to **Carrie Coats**, Principal at Hotchkiss K-8. She recently had surgery. We wish Carrie a speedy recovery.
- ◆ Our thoughts go out to **Virgil Bulgrin**, retired from the School District. He recently had surgery. We wish Virgil a speedy recovery.
- ◆ Our thoughts go out to the family of **Ariel Davis**, student at the Delta Opportunity School, in the loss of Ariel.
- ◆ Our thoughts go out to **Mike Beard**, Principal at Hotchkiss High School, and his family, in the loss of Mike's aunt.

Congratulations, Natalie Anderson-Coats
Natalie, student at Hotchkiss K-8, finished 6th in the nation out of 293 elite runners at the Junior Olympics in Reno.

Calendar

- January 5** District Accountability @ D.O.
at 6:15 p.m.
- January 6 & 7** Reading /Writing PLC @ Delta Center at 8:00 a.m.—3:00 p.m.
- January 12** Principals' Meeting @ D.O.
at 8:00 a.m.
- Coordinating Council @ D.O.
at 4:00 p.m.
- January 13** Delayed Start Day
- January 18** Staff Inservice
- January 21** School Board/Vision HCP Work Session @ The Delta Center
3:30 p.m. North Fork Vision
4:00 p.m. Delta Vision
4:30 p.m. Surface Creek Vision
- January 21** School Board Meeting @ Delta Center
6:00 p.m. Policy Review
7:00 p.m. Regular Meeting
- January 26** Budget Task Force Meeting @ D.O. at 5:30 p.m.

REMINDER: FLEX COMP SECTION 125 PLAN OPEN ENROLLMENT

Don't forget that the 125 Flexible Spending Accounts Open Enrollment period is this month. If you are currently in the plan, you will need to sign up again this year. This decision has to be made each year. For those of you who did not sign up last year and may have questions regarding the Section 125 Plan, feel free to call either Terry or Diana at the District Office. Enrollment forms are available at each school as well as in the **News from DO** folder on *First Class*. Enrollment forms must be completed and into the payroll department by **Friday, January 8, 2010**.

