

SHS PARENT ASSOCIATION BULLETIN

Special Edition

March 7, 2011

A NOTE FROM.....

Editor's Note: Below is a letter from Lake Bluff Principal, Kirk Juffer, that he sent to his school's parents. With his permission, I am reprinting it here as several people, myself included, feel that it is a message worth sharing with a wider audience. Please take a few moments to read his thoughtful and thought provoking note. Then read on for a list of additional resources.

(Due to space constraints, I am sending this as a "special edition" bulletin, rather than including it in the "regular" bulletin, which is scheduled to be published on Wednesday this week.)

~ Debbie Eder – SHS Parent Bulletin Editor

Dear Lake Bluff Community,

Well, as promised, the elephant in the room will be described this week. Take my views for what they are worth, and I don't speak for the entire organization, but know that, as your faithful public servant, I will be fair and balanced.

Three aspects of Governor Walker's plan stand out from my perspective: increasing employee retirement and health care contributions (all Unions have agreed to this); essentially eliminating collective bargaining (still being hotly contested); and the third of which we became aware this week: making severe cuts to school funding.

Walker's budget, which he unveiled on Tuesday, calls for a \$500 per student reduction of state aid. For the past several years we have received approximately \$200 additional dollars of funding per student. So with the proposed reductions, this becomes a \$700.00 drop in aid per student from last year. I had naively thought that the greater contributions to health and retirement would at least balance Shorewood's budget next year and that no reductions would need to be made. When the smoke clears from all of this, our finance manager is estimating that we will need to reduce at least \$800,000 of expenses to move forward next year.

If Governor Walker's budget plan is successful, it leaves us with an array of problematic choices at the local level: 1) deeper cuts than what have already occurred, could be made to employee compensation; 2) employees could be laid off and their services privatized with the hope of saving money; 3) programs could be cut, class sizes increased, space closed; or 4) taxes could be raised beyond the level called for in the most recent referendum. Each of these choices is potentially painful for some segment of our school community and not so painful for others, thus the choices become potentially divisive and disruptive and those decisions will be have to be made locally.

Our Governor wants to shrink government and privatize wherever he can and this includes schools. His is not a gradualist approach. Following the budget plan we can expect to see strong charter laws passed and limits on vouchers lifted. The new charter laws won't require votes from the teacher's union or authorization from a school board. I would expect community school systems, especially in urban areas, to splinter. The lack of money to fund current configurations will accelerate the process.

What do we want for all of elementary age kids when it comes to education at Lake Bluff and across our state? What is a reasonable class size? What should teachers be paid, and how do we attract smart and talented people to our classrooms and keep them once they are here? What should staff development look like and how much preparation time should be given to teachers? Should kids be segregated across our city by income and race? Should foreign language, music, art, P.E. be offered? Junior kindergarten? What level of technology should be present in classrooms and in labs? How much should parents pay in fees? What level of resources should be devoted to children with special needs? After 20 years of working in Shorewood, and having three kids graduate from our schools, I think I can get pretty close to answering these questions from the perspective of Shorewood parents. Unfortunately, the money we will receive from the state and feds next

year will not give us the answers we would like. \$700.00 less in state aid per child next year will have a decided impact, and keep in mind that this is 18 years after revenue caps were put in place, so it is not like we haven't been shrinking already. Your child and your pocketbook will soon feel the effects of the new state budget proposal.

This is a great time to exercise your citizenship at the state and national levels. At the local level, please learn about the funding referendum that has been proposed in Shorewood, and stay abreast of the budget meetings where your voice can help shape our district budget.

--Kirk Juffer, Principal

EDITOR'S FOOTNOTE

For more information and to find ways to get involved, see the resources below.

~Debbie

To Learn More About the Proposed Referendum:

- Attend the Referendum Overview Sessions on Saturday, March 12 at 10:30 in the SHS Library
- Read about the [District's Referendum Proposal](#) on the school district website.
- [Friends of Shorewood Schools](#), an independent group, has a list of FAQ's, and links to even more information on their website.

Additional Resources, Advocacy Groups and Ways to Get Involved

- School District [Budget Development Information](#)
- SEED – Supporters of Excellence in Educational Development
 - [Main Page](#) – Information, Events, Donate
 - Upcoming Event – [Swing with Shorewood](#)
- [SAFE](#) – Shorewood Action for Education – a local education and advocacy group that focuses on school funding.