

Superintendent's column

Dr. Paul Stremick, Centennial School District

There are no easy ways to make the necessary budget reductions to balance the 2010–11 General Fund budget.

The reduction range set by the Centennial School Board at its January meeting was \$3.3–\$3.6 million. Since nearly 77 percent of district expenses are in staff salaries and benefits, staff members will be affected. It can't be helped.

The Centennial School Board received a budget reduction proposal at its February 1 meeting. The proposal includes the following components:

- ❖ Reduction in teaching staff of approximately 8.6 percent or 39.35 teachers.
- ❖ Reduction in support staff of 7.4 percent or 26.33 staff members.
- ❖ Reduction in administration of 11.8 percent or two administrators.

The administration (principals, directors and the superintendent) worked together to develop the list of possible budget reductions. And that list was generated by examining every level (elementary, middle school, high school), every district program (Gifted Services, English as a Second Language, Centennial Early Reading Foundation, etc.), and every area (Community Services, Teaching and Learning, Special Education, Transportation, etc.).

Some will claim the district went too far and others will claim the district didn't go far enough. There is merit to each of these arguments. The facts are clear, and are as follows:

- Without reductions to the General Fund, the district's budget would be out of balance by about \$3.5 million.
- The state provided no increase in funding for the 2009–10 and 2010–11 school years. This trend is expected to continue and could worsen.
- Student enrollment is declining, which reduces revenue. For example, the high school has 536 seniors compared to 468 students at the kindergarten level. Currently, Centennial's largest class size is 10th grade, which is 572 students, and the district's smallest class size is 452 students in first grade.
- Reductions will impact programs and services offered in the district.
- Expenses continue to increase—heat, electricity, insurance, fuel costs, salaries and benefits.
- The state shift in funding, providing 73 percent of funding during the current school year and 27 percent of funding next year, will require the district to borrow money to meet cash flow needs. This is an additional cost to the district.
- Federal stimulus dollars did not increase school funding because the state reduced funding to districts by an equal amount.
- Both the state and federal governments have fiscal issues and are not expected to be able to provide relief to school districts.

Next, the district will conduct two informational presentations regarding potential budget reductions in mid-February along with a public forum. Details are listed below. Final budget reductions will be presented to the Centennial School Board for action on March 1.

Budget reduction informational presentations

6:30–7:30 p.m., Tuesday, Feb. 16, Centennial Middle School

6:30–7:30 p.m., Thursday, Feb. 18, Centennial Middle School

Public forum

7 p.m., Wednesday, Feb. 24, District Office, followed by a board work session