

June 8, 2009

WWVEA's perspective on the district's budget savings plan

Just under 16 education positions have been lost in the Walla Walla School District. The District maintains that due to a loss of state funding, these cuts had to be made. It seems to the WWVEA that these cuts have been made too close to the classroom.

The district cut 3.5 million out of their general fund budget for next year. This was necessitated by the state cutting their payments to the Basic Education Funds. The cuts were made primarily by not replacing retirees and not renewing one-year contracts of our certificated staff. According to the district's reporting to the state, one staff person with benefits costs approximately \$81,020. Thus, multiplying that figure by the 15.8 certificated staff positions that were not filled; we get a figure of \$1,280,116. That means that the reductions in certificated staff made up 1/3 of the district cuts.

Other cuts are being made as well. Certificated staff also will be impacted by less professional growth dollars (cut by \$200,000) Will this mean less dollars available to teachers, or less professional development offered? There is also a suspension of travel (likely to affect the administration more than certs). Also, the athletic department was required to reduce its budget by \$115,000, which impacted student participation by eliminating thirteen teams for students 6-12, cutting all 5th grade programs, and ending all intramural opportunities for middle school students.

The administrative cuts that the district has reported are really not financial cuts to the administration at all. In creating Connie Taylor-Randall's administrative position at the district office, the District cut one full-time teacher position, New Teacher Mentor, and one part-time teacher position, Title 1 Coordinator. If a teacher was able to fill these positions, why does it now take an expensive administrator? Also, the Deans of Students removed from the schools were teachers on special assignment that supported the administrators' workloads. No administrators were cut, while one was created. The district spends on average 0.4% less than budgeted on teaching activities, while they spend on average 2.2% above the budget for unit administration (principals' office). At the central office, an average of 7.7% was spent over the budget. Where are their priorities?

The salary schedules were sent out earlier that gave us some interesting and disappointing news. If you have not looked at them, you may want to take the time to. They are available on our web site www.wwvea.com. The first salary schedule showed what we would have made if the legislature HAD NOT eliminated our COLA and reduced the LID to just one. The second schedule showed our salaries as they are presently projected for next year. The third schedule showed the difference between the two previous schedules or what we are losing by not getting a COLA/LID. Those of us who have reached the bottom of the salary schedule (i.e. have 17 years + experience), will see a reduction in our salaries from this year to next year with the disappearance of the LID. Those who are still moving through the state salary schedule will continue to see financial advancements (despite RIF fears, this is an advantage for the newer teachers!) The negotiating team is working on saving our LID day in some manner that would allow us to not lose that day's pay.

If you would like to be included in our summer mailings, send your email to wwvealance@gmail.com.