

**February 23, 2009**

**To: Marengo Elementary School Community**  
**From: Betsy Hamilton, Principal**  
**Re: Impact of Budget Cuts on School Operations**

***With the current proposed budget cuts, how will things change at Marengo?***

With the budget cuts currently proposed to the Board of Trustees of SPUSD by the Superintendent, Brian Bristol, here are changes I anticipate for the 09-10 school year. *Please note that this is not a 'scare tactic'. This is an attempt on my part to take responsibility for the effect of these cuts by sharing with our school community a realistic picture of what our school will look like. Every single person in the school community will be affected by these cuts.*

While we may be able to prevent **some** of these cuts through increased future revenue (such as with the passage of a parcel tax or expansion of revenue-producing programs), it is certain that many cuts are inevitable. It is incumbent upon me to help begin the process of preparing Marengo for transitioning and adjusting to reduction in staffing, programs and services. If you find yourself saying "We can't live without \_\_\_\_\_", then please consider what else you would *propose* cutting (or what other revenue source is available) to support a program you feel is essential.

In some instances, I have included names of staff *currently holding positions* that are targeted by budget cuts. In some cases, if the position is eliminated, the program or service would also be eliminated. In other cases, the program or service is *required or essential* and would have to be 'absorbed' by other staff. Employees may have 'bumping rights' to other positions if the positions they hold are reduced or eliminated. In the process of layoffs, 'bumping rights' refers to when an employee with more seniority or special credentialing displaces a less senior or less credentialed employee.

As always, I encourage members of the Marengo Community (staff, students and parents) to participate in helping shape our future by being active in committee meetings and sharing your ideas with your representatives in site and district committees, the PTA, and your labor union.

### **Reduction of Supervision of Children Before, During and After School**

**No before school, morning recess, or after school supervision will be provided by yard supervisors. Yard Supervisors' positions will be reduced to noon supervision only.**

- Gates will be locked until 8:00am. Until school is opened at 8:00am, no adult supervision is provided. After 8:00am, the principal and teachers will need to be available to supervise students.
- Teachers will need to supervise mid-morning recess on a rotating schedule.
- Teachers will need to supervise students after school until children are picked up. Teachers will contact parents to pick up children. Principal will inform parents that they must pick up their children on time. Unless there is a legal prohibition against charging for late pick up, we will initiate the same policy as exists in SPUSD Extended Day. There will be a five-minute grace period, after which families will be charged \$1.00 per minute.

## **Reduction in Custodial Services**

- **Cut in five-hour evening custodian.** This cut, combined with not having substitute custodians for evening shifts, creates a need for teachers and students to participate in some of the daily cleaning routines such as emptying garbage, cleaning desktops and countertops, and cleaning sinks and floors. (This position is currently held by Ronnie Delgado.)

## **Reduction of Instructional Intervention and Support Services**

Two of these positions - the reading and math specialists - have not been named in the budget cut document distributed by the superintendent. They are listed below because funding is not certain for the positions in the coming year.

- **No reading specialist** services will be provided to assess reading difficulties and provide small group reading intervention. This position is currently held by Karen Sima.
- **No math specialist** services will be provided. These services include designing and conducting individualized and small group instruction for students struggling to meet grade level standards, as well as GATE students. This position is currently held by Susan Ueki Gilmartin.
- **No ELD instructional aides** will provide small group and individualized instruction to English Learners. Classroom teachers will be responsible for all English Language Development instruction. These positions are currently held by Rosa Tzeng and Liz Brokx.
- **No DIS Counselor.** Special Education counseling or support is provided for some students with an Individualized Education Plan (IEP) or Behavior Support Plan (BSP). These services were formerly provided by Rene Arrobio or Reita Bhatia. The services included in IEPs will need to be provided by classroom teachers or the principal.
- **No Early Intervention Counselor.** These services (2 ½ days per week or 90 days per year) have been provided by Kathryn Hutto and include administrative facilitation of some IEP meetings, Student Success Team meetings, parent communication and referral, and student guidance and referral for academic, social-emotional and health issues. These functions would need to be eliminated or carried out by teachers and the principal. Given the legal requirement for IEP meetings, it is likely that SSTs would be the responsibility of teachers and IEPs the responsibility of the principal.
- **Student discipline and behavior issues** would need to be addressed by teachers if the principal is unavailable. I would ask that teachers develop a 'buddy system'
- **Reduction in Substitutes** Student Study Team (SST) and Individualized Education Program (IEP) meetings would need to be scheduled outside of the school day, pending available funds for substitutes to release teachers during these times.

## **Reduction in Office Services**

**We anticipate a significant reduction in office services due to reduction of staff hours by 21.5 per week (elimination of the part time clerk position and reduction of hours of full time clerk position). We also anticipate an increased workload due to decrease in other staffing, such as counseling and yard supervision.**

- **Office hours will be reduced.** The office is currently open to the public from 7:30am to 4:30pm, five days per week. **Proposed reduced hours will be 8:00am to 3:00pm, Monday through Thursday and 8:00 am to 1:30 pm on Fridays.** These would be the hours that the school is open to the public; staff would continue to be able to utilize the workroom until 4:00.
- Due to reduced staffing, requests for non-urgent items will need to be made in writing and will be met as quickly as possible.

- Only paperwork or communications related to instruction, attendance or enrollment will be completed by office personnel. Conference paperwork will be the responsibility of the individual teacher(s) attending the conference. Field trip paperwork will need to be completed by teachers. Teachers will need to submit list of **approved** drivers to Linda Holmes 3 weeks prior to the field trip. Teachers will be responsible for DMV clearance, including copying and faxing.
- We will shift to automated attendance and lunch count; classroom teachers will take attendance on their classroom computers.
- Mail may be delayed or sorted 2-3 days per week (as compared to the current four days per week.) Staff should begin taking themselves off 'junk mail' lists to reduce time spent sorting 'junk' mail.

### **Reduction in Library Media Center (LMC) Services**

Currently, we have 60 hours of paid work per week and approximately 40 hours of volunteer work per week.

- If LMC funding is completely cut, we would close the LMC.
- If LMC funding is reduced, we would reduce services. With 15-hour employees and the loss of one instructional assistant, I would estimate that we could have the computer lab and library open for about 12 hours a week. This would mean classes being able to visit the LMC once every two to three weeks.
- If we are to consider teachers checking out and shelving their own books, this would need to be worked out with our Library Media Teacher. The same would need to be 'negotiated' with the use of the Computer Lab. Labs and libraries run by volunteers (or a staff of busy teachers) quickly deteriorate, particularly when combined with cuts in technology support.

### **Reduction in Tech Support**

- It appears that there may be little to no tech support for classrooms.

### **Increase in Class Sizes and Change in Teaching Personnel**

- If the 'Class Size Reduction' programs in our elementary and high schools are eliminated, the district will be laying off up to 30 classroom teachers. This would result in a significant increase in class size for students in Kindergarten through third grade classrooms, which would then have 30-32 students each. Fourth and Fifth grade classes can expect to have up to 36 students.
- Teacher layoffs are based on seniority (date of hire with the district) and the qualifications or credentials held by the teacher, as different credentials are required for different positions. This means that some schools will lose more teachers than others, based on seniority. A 'ripple effect' of layoffs might be that some teachers might need to be transferred, or might 'bump' another teacher, based on staffing needs and the rights of teachers in the union contract.

### **Things to Keep in Mind – Be Mindful ☺**

- Children are not responsible for our fiscal crisis, and discussing it with them or in their presence does not help them. Children are sensitive to adults' level of stress; adults should be sure to share their concerns or anxiety with other adults, not with children.
- Many of our classified staff and some of our teaching staff are experiencing extreme anxiety about impending changes, including the potential loss of income or the potential loss of jobs.

This anxiety is exacerbated by the likelihood that it will be difficult, if not impossible, to find another job in education. Some of our SPUSD employees already live at or close to the poverty line, and even a loss of one hour per day in work will present a significant loss of income. For your information, the Federal Poverty Guidelines are below:

Number of people in family and annual salary that places that family at the federal poverty level.

1- \$10,830 2-\$14,570 3-\$18,310 4- \$22,050 5- \$25,790 6- \$29,530 7-\$ 33,270 8-\$ 37,010

- If ethical behavior means ‘doing no harm’ to others, it is important to be mindful that even casual conversations can cause others distress. If you are a person whose employment or finances are secure, speaking about upcoming vacations or recent large purchases may have a negative effect on those less fortunate. It is important to be supportive and sensitive to how others feel.
- Please also understand that talk of the ‘Marengo Family’ or ‘sharing the pain’ rings hollow for some who may feel less valued or who have much more to lose during budget cutbacks. During times of budget cuts in education, one repeatedly hears about “keeping the cuts away from the classroom”. This sends a message that those who do not work in the classroom are not as valuable, and this is simply not the case. During stressful times, the use of compassionate language is paramount.

### **Hope for the Future**

**I remain hopeful that we will provide a high-quality education for our children in a safe school with a positive, enriching learning environment. What will it take to make this hope a reality?**

- **Increased revenue** will need to be gained through a variety of measures. The best revenue is ‘continuing’ revenue, not ‘one-time’ revenue. Examples might include a parcel tax, private donor or foundation support for particular programs, and increased utilization of the physical plant for filming or other revenue-generating endeavors.
- **Increased innovation** may help us develop new programs that generate revenue. For example, we could expand Extended Day programs if we had additional classroom space available. We could provide a Saturday Language School to generate revenue and support our English-learning students and families.
- **Increased collaboration** with families, the community, and other organizational partners committed to educating our youngsters. Perhaps we can join with other school districts in providing some services or programs, including professional development for our teachers and staff.
- **Increased efficiency** will be necessary to maintain productivity and morale. If you have ideas for increased efficiency, share them! If you see waste, eliminate it.

While I remain hopeful, it is not helpful to simply decry the cuts and protest them. Instead, identify an alternative cut or revenue stream for any program or service you wish to protect.

**I am certain that together we can weather this storm.** It is temporary. Remember what Martin Luther King, Jr. said: ‘Faith is taking the first step, even when you don’t see the whole staircase.’ Despair is not an option!