

April 14, 2009

To: Monterey Hills Elementary School Community
From: Joe Johnson, Principal
Re: Impact of Budget Cuts on School Operations

This memo was originally disseminated to the Marengo community by Ms. Hamilton, Principal of Marengo and elementary principal representative on the district's Budget Advisory Committee. Much of the information included herein has been shared with the SPUSD administrative team courtesy of Ms. Hamilton. Each site has adjusted the language to reflect the impact the budget will have on their school.

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

With the budget cuts recently made by the Board of Trustees of SPUSD, here are changes I anticipate for the 2009-2010 school year.

While we may be able to prevent **some** of these cuts through increased future revenue (such as the passage of the 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 MHS 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. * **Measure S**

Staffing/Program Reduction

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 MHS 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 school site and district committees, the PTA, and your labor union (TASP and CSEA).

Increase in Class Sizes and Change in Teaching Personnel

If the 'Class Size Reduction' (CSR) programs in our elementary and high schools are eliminated, the district will be laying off up to 44 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 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.

Reduction of Visual and Performing Arts (VAPA) and Band Positions

The three VAPA itinerant teachers - drama, visual arts and music - as well as the elementary band teacher position will be eliminated. Classroom teachers will need to provide all instruction in the visual and performing arts curriculum. Students interested in band will need to begin in sixth grade.

Reduction of Instructional Intervention and Support Services

No English Language Development (ELD) instructional aide Position Eliminated will provide small group and individualized assistance to English learners. Classroom teachers will not have the additional aide support, therefore, be responsible for all ELD instruction.

Designated Instruction and Services (DIS) Counselor Position Eliminated Special Education counseling or support is provided for some students with an Individualized Education Plan (IEP) or Behavior Support Plan (BSP). The services included in IEPs will need to be provided by classroom teachers or the principal.

Early Intervention Counselor Eliminated This service includes facilitation of 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.

Reduction in Substitutes Student Study Team (SST) and Individualized Education Program (IEP) meetings would need to be scheduled outside of regular school hours (before or after school), pending available funds for substitutes to release teachers during these times. Substitutes due to teacher absences will of course continue.

Reduction in Library and Media Center (LMC) Services

Currently we have a librarian (30 hours) and a computer lab aide (19.75 hours) that account for 49.75 hours of paid work per week.

If LMC funding is completely cut, we would need to consider closing the LMC because parent volunteers may not assume the duties of classified personnel who have been laid off. Further, trying to maintain an orderly and functional computer lab and library without trained district personnel would be problematic. Labs and libraries run by a staff of busy teachers quickly deteriorate, particularly when combined with cuts in technology support. If we are to consider teachers checking out and shelving their own books, this would need to be worked out among the staff with me. The same would need to be 'negotiated' with the use of the computer lab.

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 could visit the LMC once every two to three weeks (rather than once per week).

Reduction in Technology Support

It appears that there may be little to no technology support for classrooms should the computer lab aide position be eliminated. Staff members with the most technology background would be more likely to use the computer lab.

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.

Reduction in Office Services

We anticipate a reduction in office services due to reduction of staff hours by one (1) hour per day for a total of 5 hours per week. This cut includes reducing the full time clerk's position from 40 to 35 hours per week. 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 7:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m., five days per week. **Proposed reduced hours will be 7:30 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. Monday through Friday.** These would be the hours that the school is open to the public; staff would continue to be able to utilize the workroom.

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 responsibilities will increase. In addition to all paperwork, teachers will need to submit list of **approved** drivers to our secretary three weeks prior to the field trip. Teachers will be responsible for DMV clearance, including copying and faxing.

Things to Keep in Mind - Be Mindful

I agree with Ms. Hamilton as she states the following in her memo to the Marengo Community:

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 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 “MHS 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 utilize our computer lab as a 'Language Lab', providing a Saturday Language School to generate revenue and support our English-learning students and families or others who want to learn a second language.

Increased collaboration with families, the community, and other organizational partners committed to educating our youngsters may produce savings from sharing resources and may help produce new programs. 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.