



Community and Schools Together

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The school referendum approved overwhelmingly by Madison Metropolitan School District voters in November 2008 was based on a "Partnership Plan" that promised to maintain educational quality, initiate a community-wide strategic planning process, and mitigate the impact on property tax-payers in a variety of ways.

While the school district remains committed to the principles of this Partnership Plan, with the uncertain economy many things have changed since November. Most significantly, the recently enacted state budget has left MMSD facing what now looks like a \$9 million reduction in state aid as well as requiring an almost \$3 million reduction in expenditures for the 2009-10 school year.

As the MMSD Board of Education seeks ways to address the shortfalls created by the state budget, Community and Schools Together (CAST) believes it is important that the community recognize that this problem was created by state officials, not local decisions. The reductions in revenues and in funding for targeted programs (via categorical aids) will impact every district in the state. Madison is one of about 100 districts that have had their general state aid cut by 15%, but almost all districts are experiencing significant reductions in state support and will be contemplating higher than anticipated property tax increases.

These cuts come after 16 years of inadequate funding, annual cuts in most districts as well as reductions of the state's portion of education costs in recent years. This recent state budget moves us further away from the sustainable, equitable and adequate educational investments that are needed to keep Madison and Wisconsin strong and competitive.

It is also important that the community understand that the tax and revenue projections in the Partnership Plan and those used in the preliminary district budget passed in May were good projections made in good faith based on the best available information. That preliminary budget strengthened education and held property tax mil rate increase to 1¢ (far below the 11¢ increase anticipated prior to the referendum).

In the coming months the Board of Education must find ways to meet the shortfalls created by the state budget. There are no good choices.

These choices involve some combination re-budgeting and re-allocating, potential new cuts, use of the district's recently growing fund balance, temporarily employing targeted stimulus monies, or increasing the local tax levy. CAST urges the Board to retain their commitment to quality education and community involvement. We also ask the community to take advantage of opportunities to let all our state and local elected officials know that Madison values education.

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Community and Schools Together (CAST) is a grass roots organization dedicated to securing sustainable, adequate and equitable public education investments in Madison and Wisconsin.

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