

**Citizen's Budget Advisory Committee  
Report and Recommendations to the  
Des Moines Public School Board  
February 21st, 2012**

**CBAC Committee Members**

Ed Linebach (Chair), Carrie Bening, Joyce Bruce, Melissa Cano Zelaya, Joe Henry, Todd Jacobus, Shelley Keeton, Jay Radcliffe, Connie Ryan Terrell, Shane Schulte, Paulette Wiley, Robert Wootten

**Staff (ex Officio)**

Dr. Nancy Sebring, Superintendent; Thomas Harper, Chief Financial Officer

**Mission**

Provide quality education for the children of the Des Moines community, preparing them for the future they choose.

**Goal**

Bring groups together to share in the responsibility to maintain and provide a quality education in the Des Moines Public School District.

**Community Values**

Quality education; educational diversity; maintain current levels of staff to insure quality learning environment; maintain classroom size; innovation; safety; accountability; fiscal responsibility; living wage in a competitive environment

**Summary**

In 2010, as a result of the Great Recession, Governor Chet Culver implemented a 10% across the board budget cut to address decreased revenues. Although the district attempted to include the general public in determining appropriate budget cuts, the proposed FY2011 budget was a tremendous shock. Des Moines Public Schools (DMPS) reduced many important programs, including Arts, Music, Physical Education, Counseling, and Remedial Instruction.

In an effort to improve communication and feedback from Des Moines residents, the Des Moines Public School Board and Superintendent Dr. Sebring created the Citizen's Budget Advisory Committee. A group of concerned residents from across the city, their goal was to learn the complexities of school finance and advise Dr. Sebring and the School Board on areas within the budget to address expected shortfalls.

In FY2012, the CBAC was asked to address an expected shortfall of \$6M. Our recommendation asked all areas of the community; the State, the District, and the Community, to share in the responsibility of expected budget cuts. In the end, residents were asked to contribute more in property taxes. The state, in the face of uncertainty, set school funding levels at a historic low. Teachers and Administrators were granted a 3% wage increase. Support staff agreed to wage freezes instead of outsourcing. Fortunately, Congress provided stimulus funds that allowed schools to recover nearly 50 of our lost positions from FY2011.

For FY2013, we face similar challenges. An initial budget shortfall of \$5M has been revised to \$2.5M. But this time, we do not have federal funds to make up the difference.

The CBAC understands that we have no authority to set policy. Our only assets are our understanding of the challenges the district faces and our understanding of the priorities our neighbors and communities have imparted on us. Simply, we have a voice, and our goal is to start the conversation from the perspective of the larger community.

### **Goals**

Governor Branstad has challenged Iowans to provide a World-Class education to our students. Des Moines Public Schools believes that we can be the highest performing urban district in America. Education should be treated as a long-term investment towards the economic prosperity of the State of Iowa.

### **Challenges**

As an urban school district, DMPS faces unique challenges. The number of English Language Learners (ELLs) has doubled in the last decade. A majority of our children live in poverty, as nearly 67% of children are enrolled in the free and reduced lunch program.

DMPS serves a diverse and challenging population with more students that are at risk of under performing in schools, leading to a wider achievement gap and lower graduation rates.

Since 2008, DMPS has lost 264 positions, including 154 teacher positions and 7 administrative positions. There is a consistent trend to under-fund education, leading to fewer and fewer programs and services.

The fact is, without adequate resources, schools cannot provide the outcomes we hope to achieve. Without adequate resources, we cannot pursue the innovation necessary to meet the challenge of a World-Class education. Without adequate resources, we cannot meet the demands of accountability measures that force schools to choose between tracking progress and teaching our kids.

### **Recommendations**

The CBAC again looks to all stakeholders for help in addressing our expected budget shortfall. Without concessions from our stakeholders, we can expect fewer teachers and fewer learning opportunities for our children. From the State, we must insist on a commitment to consistent and adequate funding for public schools. From the Community, we ask for continued support for existing tax levies and their advocacy for public education issues. From the District, we ask the administration to seek operational efficiencies that lower costs and we ask all employees to agree to measures that limit compensation and benefits in the face of current State funding levels.

### **Conclusion**

Members of the CBAC understand there are no easy solutions to the problems our schools face. Ultimately, long term success will come from hard work and persistence. But we cannot hope to provide World Class results without the unwavering support of our communities. We hope we have started a conversation around educational funding that will be taken up by parents, residents, community and business leaders.