



## Byron Center Public Schools

"Opening the Doors of Tomorrow for Students Today"

November 24, 2009

Dear Staff, Parents and Community Members:

Today is Tuesday, November 24<sup>th</sup>. Last night we met with BCHS parents at the Van Singel Fine Arts Center to explain the financial challenges for schools in our state and Byron Center, in particular. It was the last of the six meetings we had hosted from November 12<sup>th</sup> through November 23<sup>rd</sup>.

For the most part, the meeting went very well considering the pain we all feel when flat funding and reductions over the past several years culminate to a point where they impact our children. We all wish this wasn't so.

### **The Issue**

In mid October, the State announced a deduction in school funding in the amount of \$165 per student, or \$545,000 from our Byron Center Public Schools 2009-2010 budget. In an effort to keep the cuts away from the classroom, the district accommodated the deduction through revenues, line item reductions, and by reducing its fund balance from 8.2% to 6.4%. This was the amount the district felt it could lower the balance without creating a situation that would require the district to borrow monies to meet expenses including payroll.

Two weeks later, the State announced a second possible deduction of an additional \$127 per student, (\$420,000 more from our district budget). From mid October to this past weekend, when the Senate deadline to rescind the second deduction of an additional \$127 per student passed, Byron Center Public Schools has been challenged to move forward steadily and with purpose to explain to our stakeholders the loss of nearly \$1 million. At the same time, it has been crucial that we simultaneously collect input and develop solutions that can be acted upon and implemented in time for second semester of the 2009-2010 school year. The second half of our 2009-2010 school year budget must be revised to operate on nearly \$1,000,000 less than first semester.

### **Timeline for Decisions**

Time is of essence to meet the contractual deadlines required for any second semester changes. In order to accomplish this task, a decision must be finalized by our Board of Education at its December 7<sup>th</sup> meeting. A board decision by December 7<sup>th</sup>, will enable the district to issue layoff notices by the contractual deadline of December 11, 2009. In addition to the meetings hosted over the past two weeks, the Board will host a special Work Session, Monday, November 30<sup>th</sup>, 5:15p.m. at the Central Administration Gym (old Nickels gym). The purpose of the work session will be to discuss the planning results and options prior to the December 7<sup>th</sup> Board meeting where a vote will be taken on any changes.

### **Suggestions and Input**

Be assured that we are reading and considering all input we are receiving. We have posted all suggestions on the district website under the budget update on the front page. We sincerely appreciate that most suggestions have been written with much thoughtfulness and consideration. The solution we are currently discussing and configuring (see below) would have approximately \$350,000 of the total \$420,000 needed at this time. Many of your suggestions may be added in over the next several weeks to round up the total needed.

Other suggestions such as employee concessions, closing the pool, bussing, closing buildings, etc. take more time than we have available, but will be evaluated and considered for 2010-2011 funding reductions that we expect.

### **The Horizon**

It is entirely possible that the State of Michigan could announce yet another reduction within the next several weeks as lack of state revenues become more obvious. In addition, pending the amount of federal stimulus monies (ARRA) used to offset further reductions, we are told that the 2010-2011 school year should be prepared for even more drastic cuts of \$400 to \$600 per student, totaling \$1.3-1.9 million less for Byron Center Public Schools.

On the evening of November 19<sup>th</sup>, Byron Center administrators attended a presentation at the Kent ISD featuring Ken Sikkema, senior policy fellow with the Lansing based Public Sector Consultants, Inc. I am having his PowerPoint presentation posted with other budget documents on the front page of our district website. It is well worth your review to get a glimpse of the future.

A former state legislator, Ken Sikkema is the director of GVSU's Public Policy Institute. He served 12 years in the House of Representatives, eight years in the State Senate, and was Senate Majority leader from 2002-2006. One has to believe he has his ear solidly to the ground in Lansing. In summary, he reports that we will see no tax restructuring from Lansing until schools gain control of our health care costs and collaborate as schools. He also pointed out the importance of the 2010 state elections where term limits will mean replacing our Governor, Secretary of State, Attorney General, Senate Majority Leader, 80% of our Senate and 70% of our House of Representatives. Any hope for change from our leadership in Lansing will be later, rather than sooner.

### **Current Planning**

Based on what I have shared above, all of us in Byron Center must be prepared for more drastic cuts ahead. In the meantime, as I have mentioned, the leaderships teams of grades 5-12 are working through the many details if we discontinue teaming in grades 5-8, and move BCHS from an 8-block schedule to a six-period school day. Doing so will reduce the district by approximately 12 full time equivalent teaching positions.

This, along with other suggestions, can move us to the most recent \$127 per student (\$420,000) reduction required for the second half of the school year.

### **Our Students**

While we can all agree this is going to require adjustments, I believe as educators and parents, we can work together to see our students through this change. Our BCHS leadership team and our high school students have risen to our expectations and demonstrated a high level of maturity and "can do" attitude. They are everything we have nurtured them to be – and more!

Our 5<sup>th</sup>-8<sup>th</sup> grade students will experience change, in a manner like that which they experience at the start of each school year, or at a quarter, or semester break. Together, we can nurture them through this change.

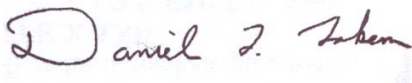
Most of our K-4<sup>th</sup> grade students will see little change. The few classes that do, will experience the same support and nurturing as when a teacher goes on maternity leave, and/or when for various reasons a teacher change occurs during the school year.

## Together

I believe, that together, we as educators, parents, and community members will see our youth through these challenging times, and that we will continue to meet our mission to “*educate and prepare each student to be a responsible citizen capable of pursuing life goals, now and in the future.*”

We are strong, our children are strong. We will all work to do what is right for our children and they will flourish as they always have. They are surrounded by tremendous role models who will inspire them and guide them as they grow. We have much to be thankful for, and for all of these reasons, we will remain grateful.

If there is hope in the future,  
There is power in the present,



Daniel L. Takens  
Superintendent

DT:jb

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