

January 2016

I don't like to deliver bad news. Unfortunately, there are times where my job requires me to convey information that is less than encouraging. Following that delivery, I always want to find a "silver lining" in the cloud we are under. My disdain for bad news kept me from sending an email to our staff until they returned from the Winter Break. I actually started composing the message before the break began, but my thoughts shifted to not wanting our staff to shoulder any burden of concern for our future during the break. I was hoping they could enjoy their time with family while I went through numerous drafts and revisions of what I would tell them in this message. I sent the message to all of our staff on their first day back, January 4th.

In the message, I explained how the state revenue failure will affect our district. Since that message was composed, I have gleaned more information. The news is incredibly disappointing for maintaining the forward progress our district has begun. The "state revenue failure" that we are experiencing means our state aid will be reduced by approximately 3% for this year. That means funds which were expected to be allocated by the state to support this year's budget are going to be reduced. This also signals greater potential problems with funding for next year. This did not come as a shock to us after the drop in oil prices and we have planned accordingly. We will use some carry-over funds to make up shortfalls during this school year as we brace for what could be very serious cuts for 2016-17. Guthrie Public Schools' reduced state funding for this year is just over \$451,000 from the initial notice we received in August from the State Department of Education.

At Guthrie Public Schools we already run on what I would consider a very lean budget. Our staff members have found amazing ways to "make it work with what we have." Fortunately, our community showed their support in the recent bond election so some of the most drastic facility needs can be addressed but bond funds by law must be used for what was placed on the ballot for voters. Prior to my arrival as Superintendent, the district made some drastic cuts to services. Some of those cuts were restored since the financial picture improved. Some of the services eliminated were leading to state accreditation deficiencies. Following the restoration, you may remember our assessor lowered the assessment ratio for property taxes in Logan County. That action removed approximately \$300,000 from our budget annually. Each time we have seen a forecast for cuts, we have acted accordingly to maintain the fiscal stability of our district. Those cuts over the last two years total in excess of \$575,000 in teaching salaries. Now we will be hit with approximately \$451,000 in cuts during this year with a promise for even greater reductions on the horizon for 2016-17.

I have been issuing warnings at every opportunity, but I know this will not be "real" until people are personally affected. It is inevitable that programs and services will be cut and classes will be larger at every level. I consider that very sad, especially since I believe one of my roles as Superintendent is to help provide our staff with the resources necessary to do great things in the classroom.