

Last night the Borough Assembly set the floor for FY18 school funding. Mayor Navarre did propose an increase to funding which would have offered a little more certainty for the District to move forward and hire for necessary positions we have been holding as we still await the state funding determination.

But, unfortunately, the Mayor's proposal was amended on the floor by Assembly member Jill Schaeffer to flat fund schools. The flat funding amendment was supported through a 5 to 4 vote. I would like to thank Assembly members Cooper, Dunne, Bagley and Ogle for supporting the mayor's proposed increase and voting against the Schaeffer amendment to flat fund schools. As you know, flat funding is a CUT to our budget. With flat funding KPBSD faces a \$3.5 million deficit and have already implemented \$2.6 million in cuts that will impact our staffing at all levels of the organization.

We currently have 30 positions in our FY18 budget that we have been unable to fill due to funding uncertainty from the State and the Borough Assembly. We had hoped to begin filling some of the essential positions with the proposed increase from the borough, and the Mayor's support. These positions would have been kindergarten, first grade, and math/science positions around the district. What is unfortunate is that we are now essentially on hold for all hiring until we get a better sense of what the State and Borough Assembly will do. The longer we have to hold these positions the harder it will be to find quality candidates to fill them. There is a strong possibility that these positions will go unfilled throughout the next school year, which will negatively impact class sizes and quality instruction at our schools.

A comment was made by an assembly member that it doesn't make sense that the district's costs have increased despite declining enrollment. Without even talking about inflation, our district has seen significant increases to health care costs. This is a national issue and is out of our control. We have also seen our population of students with intensive needs and other at-risk student populations significantly increase. All students are guaranteed a free and appropriate public education. There are increased costs associated with supporting this education that have been determined by the State.

Our district has cut over \$8 million over the past four years from its budget. We have significantly reduced district office services, reduced curriculum materials, travel, and increased class sizes. We have still improved our results as evidenced through our graduation rate, nationally normed assessments and the citizens our graduates have become. We make our funding constraints work because we always work to become more efficient through modernizing the system and we are a highly professional organization which puts kids first.

It is imperative that our stakeholders are engaged in the funding process at all levels. Talk to and write letters to elected officials on the Assembly and in the Alaska State Legislature.

The Assembly will be working to adopt their full budget in the next couple of meetings so there is a possibility of amending school funding, but only if our stakeholders weigh in.

The next Assembly meeting is May 16, 2017, and I will give an update to the Assembly on June 6.