

Why Is My Child's Teacher Getting a Pink Slip? February 10, 2009

It is with great sadness and unhappy hearts that the Ross Valley School District will begin to issue 'Pink Slips' to our teaching and administrative staff by the end of February. As you know, the state is in a fiscal crisis and education funding is on the chopping block. We are uncertain at this time as to exactly how much Ross Valley will need to cut from our budget, but the current projections call for approximately \$700,000+ for the 2009-2010 school year. Ross Valley has been making cuts to our budget for the last two years, and the current proposed cuts will require that we make some of the toughest choices we will ever have had to consider.

We wanted to make sure that our community understands the timelines and processes that must be adhered to by law. Schools are required to notify certificated employees (teachers, administrators) by March 15 of each year if they might POTENTIALLY lose their jobs. In May, we must issue final notifications to those who will ACTUALLY be laid off. This does not mean that we cannot actually hire these teachers and administrators back if the financial picture changes, but it is the procedure that we are required to follow. The district will be working from a seniority list to determine who to notify. This is a complicated procedure that takes into consideration the credentialing needs of the district, as well as the credentials held by the staff. We have been working with the unions to make sure that the list and procedures are agreed upon. We anticipate notifying many of our staff members in the initial round as we must allow for the greatest FLEXIBILITY to respond to the rapidly declining condition of the state budget. We hope that we will not need to cut this deep by the time the budget committee completes its process in May, but again we have to do the initial notification now- by law.

Our other employees, including most other staff besides teachers and administrators, are classified employees. They have a different notification timeline, under which we must notify them at least 45 days prior to laying them off. We anticipate that we will also be issuing notifications to many of these classified staff members in the coming months.

We currently have a district budget committee of teachers, classified staff, administrators, and parents from all of our schools working to grapple with the challenging decisions we will need to make as a district. This committee will work in an advisory capacity to the superintendent who will take the committee recommendations to the Board of Trustees. Our goal is to make sure that the decisions we make reflect the best thinking of our entire community, and to try to preserve as many of the things as possible that we have identified as priorities for our students. It is going to be very difficult to maintain all of the personnel, programs and offerings that our district has put in place over the years, and we are certain to be unhappy with many of the choices we will have to make. Once we identify the 'base' program that we can afford to fund, we will begin to add back personnel and items from the priority list we will be developing over the next few months.

The budget committee representatives from your school site will be gathering feedback from their communities to share in these budget discussions, but you are also welcome to attend meetings. The upcoming meetings, which are held at the school district offices, are 4-5:15 p.m. on 2/26/09, 3/26/09, 4/23/09, 5/07/09, and 05/21/09. In addition, the board will be discussing the budget at almost every school board meeting. (See www.rossvalleyschools.org for our meeting dates.)

We know that these will be tough and challenging times for our staff as these notifications go out. Please support them as best as you can until we can work through these challenging times. Please know that we wish we did not have to give out these notifications, and that we will be working very hard to maintain the staff and priorities that our community desires. We will also look at other sources of revenue and ways that our community can help us to mitigate these reductions.

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Budget News for February 10, 2009

The Big Five, the four legislative leaders and Governor Schwarzenegger are reportedly close to a budget deal. The Sacramento Bee reports that they have been negotiating for weeks behind closed doors, sharing no details with members of the Legislature. Senate President Darrell Steinberg said that “there will be action on our respective floors” this week.

The Federal Stimulus Bill funding for Education has gone through a dramatic change for education funding from the original proposal by President Obama. The funds for Title I, and IDEA Special Ed, McKinney Vento Homeless, School Renovation and Repair and Fiscal Stabilization have been reduced significantly. Let’s hope that the final version of the Stimulus Bill restores of the education funds.

Highlights of the Board Meeting of Thursday, February 12, 2009

- The Board will continue their discussion of core / basic programs for the district. The budget process this year is different from other years. The Board is discussing programs and services that will be considered basic. The cost of those services will be our baseline costs. The Board will then consider, with input from the community and staff, the supplemental programs that we wish to add back.
- The Board will approve the resolution for the Special Education Behavioral Intervention Plans Mandated Cost Settlement.
- The District Leadership Council Communication Committee has developed Norms for Effective Communication. The Board will discuss use of the norms at all district meetings.

You can view the entire board packet and view all the topics the board will be addressing at <http://rvsd.csbaagendaonline.net>

If you have any questions, please contact the Superintendent’s Office. Thank you for your continued support of the District.