

Budget Notebook



Chronicling California's developing budget and its impact on IUSD

Superintendent's Update: The Governor's proposal is translating into very real cuts for California's schools

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In January, the Governor's proposal to cut education by more than \$4 billion sent shockwaves across our state. And yet, the potential impacts remained somewhat speculative for weeks as districts scrambled to calculate their own shortfalls.

Two months later, the ominous details are pouring in.

The Los Angeles Unified School District alone is projecting a \$460 million shortfall, while San Diego Unified is looking at an \$80 million deficit that could reduce nurses, librarians and police officers. One Orange County district is facing a gap of \$28 million.

As a result of the uncertainty, an estimated 20,000 teachers, counselors, librarians, nurses and support staff in California have received potential layoff notices indicating they may not be brought back for the coming school year. Though these notices provide the flexibility that is necessary for districts to weather our fiscal crisis, it is important to remember that they also cause a great deal of anxiety.

IUSD is not immune to the state's fiscal crisis. With our shortfall pegged at \$12.5 million, an initial list of proposed cuts and revenue enhancement ideas was introduced at the March 18 Board of Education meeting. This document, intended to be a starting point for our continuing dialog, is divided into two sections: Phase I cuts may be necessary if the Governor's budget proposal becomes a reality. Phase II reductions would be explored only if the state's fiscal health worsens.

District staff pursues strategies

Our staff has done a remarkable job of researching strategies to keep cuts as far away from the class-

room as possible. However, the reductions proposed by Governor Schwarzenegger are too big to be solved without exploring some unpopular options, such as increasing class sizes or scaling back some of the programs that contribute greatly to our world-class schools. (For more information about IUSD's 2008-09 budget, [click here](#).)

Without question, we know the next few months will be challenging. But even as we meet our legal obligations by reluctantly identifying potential cuts, we vow to continue pushing for adequate funding in 2008-09. Moreover, we will advocate strongly on behalf of strategies that would greatly help our schools without additional dollars, such as more flexibility in how we spend the funds we get from Sacramento.

Community brings forth viable options

On the subject of solutions, many of you have sent in your proposed cuts and revenue enhancements via our online [Budget Input Form](#), and I continue to be amazed at the number of constructive and viable options you have suggested for weathering this fiscal storm. We will continue to collect and evaluate these submissions through April 1.

At times like this, it's easy to get discouraged about budgetary uncertainties and the potential for deeper cuts. But please keep in mind that the fight for adequate funding is just beginning, and we in Irvine are incredibly fortunate to have parents, students, staff and community leaders who are strong and highly respected advocates for our schools.

While Sacramento's fiscal challenges may threaten our bottom line, they cannot erode our community's unwavering support for education.