

Peru Central

Cross-Campus Web-based Update

HIGHLIGHTS OF BOARD ACTION THIS MONTH

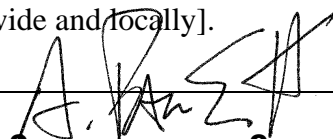
At the regular monthly meeting of **Tuesday, December 8, 2009** the Board of Education:

- A. Received** the December 2009 student president reports on extra-curricular activities, leadership development and service from sophomore class of 2012 President Raelyn Passino and Vice President Emily Garrand and **offered public recognition** for years of dedicated public service by Theresa Bair, a long-term district employee who had served in recent years as a teacher aide associated with the high school. Peru CSD flags were at half-mast November 24th and 25th, in keeping with Peru CSD policy 4311 Display of the Flag, adopted October 14, 2008. She leaves an honorable legacy of helping to provide solid programs and services for the children of our rural school community.
- B. Accepted** the ninth annual report on early progress toward district goals; **approved** the proposed set of 2010-2011 district goals; **received** the forecast of driving factors for statewide budget development and driving factors for winter/spring 2010 budget development at Peru CSD; **approved** the Superintendent's recommendations for seats on the expanded Peru CSD budget advisory committee and **adjusted** the budget development timetable to have the fourth [final] budget development workshop April 7th rather than on March 30th.
- C. Examined** the annual curriculum data book from each Principal, and received verbal briefings from Intermediate School Principal Scott Storms and Middle School Principal Cheryl Felt.
- D. Re-adopted** Peru CSD policy 1440 *Complaints About School Personnel* 'as is', and include this policy within the revamped policy manual.
- E. Commissioned** the Superintendent of Schools to engage the architect, operations supervisors and administrators in an examination of the town's plan for a town sidewalk to be maintained by the town, using the town's right-of-way along School Street. Report back to the Board of Education at the February 2010 regular monthly meeting, following that examination; and **awarded** a bid for work associated with the voter-approved EXCEL capital project [floor tiles abatement in various rooms]. The Boar then **discussed** the Superintendent's snapshot report on the ad-hoc constituents task force of parents, teachers, high school students, administrators and operations supervisors, commissioned to construct a set of winter 2010 recommendations regarding future school year scheduling & use of 'early dismissal days' and 'Superintendent's Conference Days' at Peru CSD.

Attached are the December 8th **Superintendent's Report to the Board**, the adopted set of Peru CSD 2010-2011 **district goals** and forecasted **budget development factors** [statewide and locally].

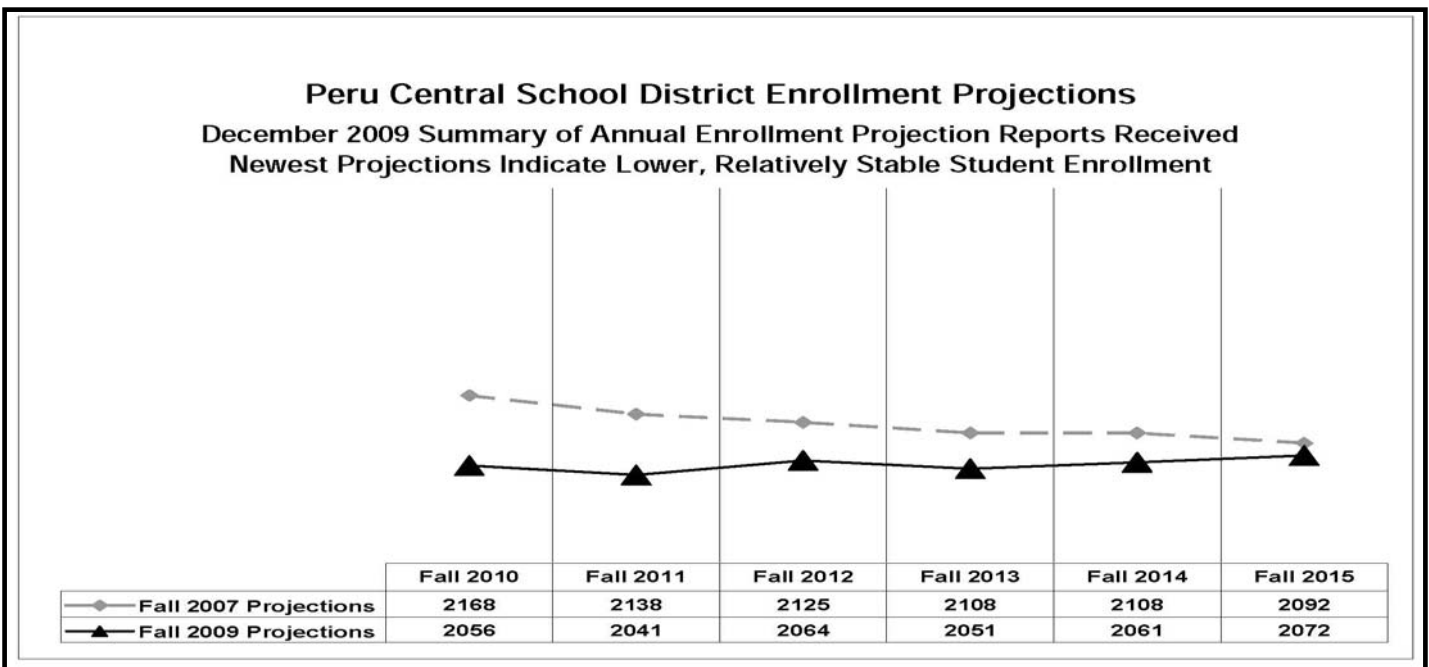
DECEMBER 9, 2009

FROM A. PAUL SCOTT, SUPERINTENDENT OF SCHOOLS



CLOSE EXAMINATION OF STUDENT ENROLLMENT, CLASS SIZE AND ATTRITION

Last week, I received a telephone call from a news correspondent regarding Peru CSD student enrollment and class size. Peru CSD examines student enrollment projections closely and reports grade level student enrollment figures monthly to the Board in public session. The newest projections reflect actual student enrollment patterns we've experienced recently, similar to nearby school districts: Total student enrollment is modestly lower at Peru CSD than in recent years. The newest projections call for modestly lower student enrollment than previously, and relative stability in the coming years for K-12 total student enrollment.



It's likely the Board and administration will consider prudent steps winter 2010 to shape the 2010-2011 proposed spending plan by responding thoughtfully and conservatively. Examples of prospective strategies for prudent actions which will pay dividends over a multi-year period:

- Continue making fact-based decisions about class size by using actual student enrollment and forecasted student enrollment, regarding how many class sections to implement per grade level. Our school district will likely be in a position to reduce the total number of class sections at some of the K-6 grade levels from eight sections per grade level to seven sections per grade level in years ahead. Class size would likely remain very similar to recent school year levels, because actual & forecasted reductions in student enrollment at particular grade levels will likely allow for one less class section, while sustaining class sizes which are at or very close to class sizes we've experienced in recent school years.
- Be very consistent about filling vacant part-time and full-time positions only if and as essential, since reduction in employment via attrition is preferable to all other methods.
- Use attrition via retirement as one method of phasing out or combining particular assignments or positions, when student enrollment decreases warrant consideration of not filling a particular faculty position, or when an individual retires or otherwise vacates a particular support staff position.

The multi-year impact of taking such action has a measurably **favorable** impact on sustainability of core programs. The multi-year impact of not taking such action would have a corresponding **unfavorable** impact on sustainability of core programs, particularly during a multi-year period of economic adversity.

EXCEL {EXPANDING CHILDREN'S EDUCATION AND LEARNING AID} CAPITAL PROJECT

BCA Vice President Mike Harris is slated to join us at tonight's regular monthly meeting. He'll focus on bids for EXCEL capital project preparatory work that involves removal of floor tiles from various rooms. He'll mention last month's special meeting, when Mike Harris met with the administrative team, support operations supervisors, School Business Administrator Randy Sapp and me. The preliminary draft timetables regarding floor tile removal and associated logistics matters was 'fine tuned' to better accommodate the instructional program during winter/spring 2010.

Some spaces, such as the district office, business office, high school cafeteria, gymnasium, auditorium and some classrooms will be subject to varying levels of preparatory work and renovations from the holiday recess forward. For example, some spaces will have their floor tiles removed winter or spring 2010, so renovations to those spaces can begin promptly after the last day of school next summer. Another example: Some spaces will not be available for a period of time, such as the auditorium. That space will be unavailable April 2010 through some point in August 2010. The auditorium is slated to be ready for use at the start of next school year.

The district office and business office will be temporarily relocated April 2010 through early August 2010. The prime reasons for doing so are project timetable and associated cost reduction. Having those spaces renovated before the summer recess will allow contractors to complete classroom space renovations during the nine weeks of summer 2010 recess. **Business office operations** will be off-campus from about the start of April 2010 through early August 2010. Several prospective venues are under consideration at this time and Peru CSD is engaged with assessing the cost and feasibility of using such spaces on a temporary basis. The community room is earmarked for use as the temporary quarters for the **district office operations** April 2010 through early August 2010, to continue the level of access and on-site service the Board, administrators, supervisors and employees have come to expect this past decade from the district office. It will be important for the district clerk to be located on campus, too, since our annual vote and election is during the time of renovations work, and since the district clerk also serves as the confidential secretary to the Superintendent of Schools. That is also the peak time of the calendar year for the annual recruitment season and annual district-authorized curriculum project work by teacher teams.

Scheduling preparatory work for winter & spring 2010 requires some moving of materials, supplies, furniture and equipment, yet the overall benefit is the prospect of such major segments of cross-campus renovations work completed in advance of the start of classes September 2010, rather than having such major segments of renovations work spread across multiple summer construction seasons. It's cost effective, too.

PUBLIC SERVICE AND OUR MISSION AT PERU CSD: 1943-1944 AND 2009-2010

Peru CSD Principal George Hall's foreword in the 1943-1944 Peru CSD handbook stated "As a central school, we receive a larger proportion of state financial support than do other types of schools in New York. A large share of the cost of our fine buildings came from federal and state funds. It is proper that central schools receive a large percent of state aid in order that students in rural areas have an equal opportunity with students from more wealthy communities for a good education. As students and teachers in one of the schools receiving this financial support, we have the responsibility to make our school the best type of school possible."

Sixty-six years later, being the best type of school possible remains important and central to our mission. Our nation and school district faced challenges during the 1943-44 school year. Our nation and school district face challenges now, yet we continue as a progressive school district. Our heritage calls for us to keep public service in mind, for our rural community and for the children of our rural community.

BUDGET ADVISORY COMMITTEE

Tonight's agenda includes recommended town representatives, PTO representatives and other representatives to serve on the Board's budget advisory committee. The first gathering of the budget advisory committee is next Monday, December 14th in the community room. At that time, the committee will receive a briefing on key budget facts and figures, discuss the October 2008 report from the NYSSBA on maximizing school district resources, and engage in conversation regarding developments in Albany associated with funding of public education this school year and next school year. By March 2010, the committee will construct a set of recommendations for Board and administrative consideration spring 2010.

AID TO EDUCATION APPEARS TO BE THE FINAL ISSUE ON STATE BUDGET DOCKET

NYSCOSS Deputy Director Bob Lowry, who formerly served the Legislature as a capable staff member, says school aid is often the last issue to be resolved by the Governor and Legislature, as part of annual state budget development. To reflect the importance of state aid to the state's public school districts, as of the start of this month, there continues to be multiple and varied strong opinions among legislators and the Governor regarding whether or not there should be a mid-year cut to public school state aid payments. The situation is dynamic, as of the start of this month.

DISTRICT GOALS FOR 2010-2011

One important agenda topic tonight is setting district goals for next school year. The momentum and pace of continuous improvement at Peru CSD relies on annual setting of worthwhile district goals, coupled with periodic progress reports and periodic recognition of accomplishments.

Tonight is the date for setting district goals for next school year. Accompanying those proposed district goals is an extensive set of forecasted statewide budget factors, coupled with a set of forecasted budget factors for our school district. The proposed goals are a product of fall 2009 stakeholder examination and comment, and associated refinement of an October 2009 preliminary draft set of proposed district goals for 2010-2011.

COLLECTIVE BARGAINING: CONTRACT NEGOTIATIONS TO LAUNCH SOON

The collective bargaining agreement with the school district's faculty association calls for the next round of collective negotiations to begin soon. Also slated for winter 2010 is a review of Appendix B from that contract, focused on stipends associated with extra-duty assignments.

THANK YOU AS WE BEGIN OUR TENTH YEAR OF SERVICE TOGETHER

I thank the Board of Education for diligent, progressive, civil, courteous and dedicated engagement with me since December 2000, when we started our public service together as this school district's governing team. As we begin our tenth year as a governing team tonight, I thank you for your active engagement, your counsel and your encouragement throughout this decade. It continues to be a privilege to serve as your Superintendent.

Respectfully submitted by A. Paul Scott, Superintendent of Schools

PERU CENTRAL SCHOOL DISTRICT

2010-2011 DISTRICT GOALS

1. Continuing to strengthen student achievement and instructional programs.

- 1.1. Publicly report on grade span progress with year-to-year gains in student achievement, as part of meeting & exceeding state-mandated annual yearly progress [AYP] indicators for English language arts and mathematics.
- 1.2. Engage each grade span with at least one public presentation at a regular monthly meeting of how analysis of recent student achievement data and recent student work samples at that grade span have driven team-based continuous improvement of curriculum and instruction.
- 1.3. Establish and launch a 21st Century ‘response to intervention’ model to support increased student achievement and success throughout the elementary grades.
- 1.4. Establish and launch a 21st Century ‘student writing model’ in grades 3-8 to further support student achievement and success throughout grades 3-8, with a measure of horizontal [grade level] consistency and vertical [grade-to-grade] alignment to provide students with a clearer, broader pathway of learning and skill development with writing and editing.
- 1.5. Increase the numbers and percents of students who complete their high school studies and earn a high school diploma.
- 1.6. Engage with Clinton Community College to further expand our dual-enrollment partnership to include an option for some 12th graders to spend a part of their school day on the college campus, earning college credit while they complete their high school studies.
- 1.7. Continue piloting innovative approaches to providing extra support and encouragement to students identified as particularly ‘at risk’ with the transition from fifth grade to sixth grade and eighth grade to ninth grade, in regard to successful completion of their studies and their solid progress toward grade level expectations and graduation from high school.

2. Updating school procedures and practices to reflect increased expectations among stakeholders for accountability and service, in consultation with those who will implement such practices.

- 2.1. Commission the elementary grades Principals and grade level teacher teams to craft an action plan for updating the K-5 social studies program curriculum and materials, as follow-up to the winter-spring 2010 internal curriculum audit reports on social studies grades 1-4.
- 2.2. Engage the Peru CSD internal curriculum audit process to identify current strengths and suggested priorities for particular attention in the years ahead regarding student use of information technology cross-campus. Engage one curriculum audit team in the elementary grades and one curriculum audit team in the secondary grades to accomplish this.

- 2.3. Commission each school's shared decision making committee with focusing collective school-based efforts among stakeholders on one or two student achievement goals and one or two conduct goals for the 2010-2011 school year. Publicly report on progress with that.
- 2.4. Sustain the collaborative updating of protocols and practices associated with extra-curricular student clubs and activities related to fiscal accountability and reporting.
- 2.5. Continue to engage the school community in examining the impact of climate change regionally, nationally and globally, to identify and promote practical steps the Peru CSD school community can take, regarding climate stability and energy conservation.

3. Providing quality support services as necessary to meet the district's mission and to maintain good stewardship of district facilities and grounds.

- 3.1. Make substantial progress by October 2010 on campus renovations and modernization within the scope of the EXCEL capital project approved spring 2008 by voters, as part of continued stewardship of the school facilities on the consolidated central campus.
- 3.2. Continue and expand regular public reporting of support services, as part of public information outreach and continuous improvement of support operations.

4. Ensuring fiscal responsibility and cost-effectiveness associated with expenditure of funds to support the goals above.

- 4.1. Sustain the school district's multi-year approach to budgeting.
- 4.2. Engage with other area Boards of Education and this region's BOCES to promote regional discussion of public education's future in the Champlain Valley region.

PERU CENTRAL BUDGET DEVELOPMENT

DRIVING FACTORS FOR 2010-2011

DRIVING FACTORS & PERSPECTIVES ASSOCIATED WITH STATEWIDE BUDGET DEVELOPMENT

1. We face a formidable statewide budget development process this coming winter, resulting from the bleak outlook for the State's near-term fiscal future, particularly after 'stimulus' monies are spent.
2. Given the uncertainty about future federal and state funding, school districts appear to be developing multiyear strategies to help prepare them for the impact of decreased ARRA funding in 2010-11. In situations like these, multi-year planning can be a vital tool for local governments, stated in the November 2009 Annual Report on Local Governments by the Comptroller's Office.
3. Several regional newspapers have editorialized this past month on the need for fiscal restraint across all sectors of public service, including public education. "Mid-year cuts to K-12 schools do too much harm, and they should be avoided if at all possible. But school officials need to slough off their denial; leaner times are here to stay," according to the November 8th Newsday editorial.
4. Commenting on his office's 'New York State's Cash Flow Crunch' report published November 20th, State Comptroller DiNapoli said that as more time goes by without meaningful effort to address the state's budget problem, the cost of inaction will grow and the consequences of inaction will be significantly more severe.
5. While not currently among the 'top ten' states in fiscal peril, New York State was spotlighted as 'close behind' the top ten: "New York's revenue decline, for example, was steeper in the first quarter of 2009 than in all but four states, and its fiscal year 2010 budget gap was six-worst in the nation, according to the nationally published November 2009 'Beyond California: States in Fiscal Peril' report from the Pew Center on the States. That report 'cuts to the chase' in the executive summary, regarding the consequences of state budget troubles on their residents: higher taxes, layoffs or furloughs of state workers, longer waits for public services, more crowded classrooms, higher college tuition and less support for the poor and unemployed.
6. That report from the Pew Center showed New York State is in worse straits than states such as Connecticut, Ohio and Pennsylvania, and even in the rare position of being behind Arkansas, Missouri and Utah, as highlighted in the November 15, 2009 feature story in the Press Republican entitled "NY Legislature Faces Crucial Fiscal Test".
7. As had been widely forecasted a year ago, New York State's extraordinary reliance on Wall Street for state budget revenues is problematic, as evidenced in the Comptroller's Office Report 'The Securities Industry in New York City', released November 17, 2009. Wall Street's share of state tax revenues could drop from 20% two years ago to about fifteen percent, despite Wall Street remaining as the economic engine of the New York State and New York City. The report stated 'Although the industry's prospects are much brighter than one year ago, it continues to face challenges as it adjusts to the postcrisis environment, and may still experience setbacks.'

8. The November 19, 2009 'Update on State Budget Cuts' from the Washington D.C.-based Center on Budget and Policy Priorities reported at least twenty-six [26] states and the District of Columbia have implemented cuts to K-12 education. Elsewhere in the update, the Center points out the key difference between federal budgeting and state budgeting: Virtually all the states are required to balance their operating budgets each year or each biennium. Unlike the federal government, states cannot maintain services during an economic downturn by running a deficit. States had record reserves heading into this recession, but those have mostly been drawn down. Since federal economic recovery funds are closing, on average, about 30-40% of budget gaps, states must address remaining shortfalls with a combination of spending cuts and/or tax increases.
9. Large job losses and declining incomes caused state and local tax revenues to fall steeply, and this is occurring at the same time that high unemployment and rising poverty are increasing the need for state services such as Medicaid. The result has been large, widespread and persistent state budget gaps of stunning magnitude. Deficits for the current state fiscal year, not all of which states have closed, total more than 25% of state general fund budgets, making these the largest shortfalls on record, according to the November 11, 2009 Center on Budget and Policy Priorities economic recovery watch report "Additional Federal Fiscal Relief Needed to Help States Address Recession's Impact".
10. Governor Paterson said "You get to a point where you're at depleted resources. When you run out of money, you start eating breakfast cereal for dinner because you don't have any money to buy the dinner foods and then maybe someone starts complaining about what kind of food you're eating. And that's because we didn't save and that's because we spent money that we didn't have," as quoted in the November 19, 2009 edition of the New York Daily News.
11. The State Comptroller's November 2009 'quick start' report on the state budget forecasts cumulative general fund gaps will total \$27.5B through state fiscal year 2011-12, approximately \$3.6B higher than the Governor's Department of Budget estimates.
12. In his October 21, 2009 testimony to the Assembly Committee on Ways and Means, NYSCOSS Deputy Director Robert Lowry suggested 'Whatever happens over the next month or so, it will not be the end of hard times for the state or the schools. So, for the same reason that the Governor resists using the State's 'rainy day' reserves to close this year's state deficit, we [Superintendents] question the soundness of expecting schools to deplete whatever resources they may have to close what would be state-imposed gaps in their budgets'.
13. The October 15, 2009 proposal from the Governor featured a \$5B deficit reduction program that includes proposed mid-year state aid cutbacks to school districts, as part of a multi-year 'fix'.
14. The fall 2009 edition of the annual State Comptroller's Financial Condition Report indicates the State of New York continues to face serious challenges to its fiscal health. It's reported the State continues on the unsustainable course of making recurring spending commitments that are not backed by recurring revenues, and it continues to rely heavily on debt.
15. The Rockefeller Institute Fiscal Studies Program October 2009 state-by-state national report on revenues pinpoints several key factors related to state-by-state economic indicators: The April-June quarter was the worst on record for states in terms of decline in overall state tax collections; Continued weakness in revenues. Mid-year budget revisions and cuts highly likely; The fiscal challenges: enormous. far from over.
16. The forecasted 'contingency budget' guidelines for public school districts are a net 'zero' year-to-year increase, rather than the roughly 4% 'contingency budget' increase of one year ago.

FORECAST OF DRIVING FACTORS AT PERU CSD FOR 2010-11 BUDGET DEVELOPMENT

1. Peru CSD and most of the this region's other public school districts will experience a formidable budget development season ahead, resulting from heavy reliance among the state's less wealthy communities on state aid for operating revenues; the bleak outlook for the State's near-term fiscal future; the looming additional impact of federal 'stimulus' disappearing after the next fiscal year, and the juxtaposition of an honorable mission of strengthening programs and services for children, with responding to an economic downturn of substantial magnitude across a multi-year period of time.
2. Sustaining solid public education programs for the children of our community will be top priority.
3. In the same fashion the Board and administration strived in recent years to better prepare the school district for fiscal adversity, the Board and administration will continue taking prudent steps in response to whatever actions the Governor and Legislature take in the months ahead. The Board will engage with the administration to construct a Peru CSD proposed 2010-2011 spending plan that balances identified needs with available resources. Or as the New York State Council of School Superintendents stated in its November 9th Vantage Point on prospective mid-year state aid cuts, 'school boards and superintendents will strive to balance what schoolchildren need with what taxpayers can afford'.
4. There will be differences of opinion among those who have the interests of children in mind about whether particular programs, services and employment should continue at current, increased or diminished funding levels.
5. Peru CSD is dependent on state aid revenues to fund the majority of our public education programs, services and employees.
6. The school board will strive to balance the interests of property tax relief with contractual obligations, annual yearly progress with state accountability programs and other factors that call for selectively increasing expenses in particular budget line items.
7. Budgets associated with professional development and in-service of employees will continue to be important, reflecting increased federal and state accountability for student achievement and conduct, coupled with continued need to hire & train replacements for long-term employees taking well-earned retirements.
8. Frustration among voters witnessing a diminished share of state operating aid over the years, and less federal monies for federal mandates, placing a much greater share of the burden on property tax revenues in lower-wealth rural communities, such as Peru CSD.
9. Downstate and urban interests for a larger share of public education funding will put at further risk the funding portion for rural and upstate communities, particularly the North Country.
10. Costs associated with salaries, employer contributions, energy prices, essential goods, materials and service fees continue to rise, reducing 'purchasing power' for items that are subject to a 'freeze' or 'cut' next school year.