

Balancing the budget with transparency and equity

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Hello Board members of TPS,

Today I would like to address the actions being used to “balance the budget deficit.” So far the tactics used have been whole programs cut and displacements of student facing staff members (teachers, ESPs, librarians, etc) which negatively impact our students. Beyond the displacements there has been virtually no transparency or professionalism granted to the staff and programs affected or the public for that matter. There has been ominous information that “more cuts are coming” but the district offices seem to be keeping those a surprise as well. The valuable staff you have allowed to be displaced will create holes in the school communities and continuity of student learning and safety while saving small amounts of money because they are the lowest pay grades of the district.

I implore the board and superintendent to be transparent, equitable and creative in balancing the budget. It has been said that TPS uses “market driven salaries” for admin. Do comparable districts have a 30 million dollar gap in funding as well? Do they also have many co- directors, 10 district admin, a deputy superintendent and large support team for the central administrators? Do we actually need all of these positions and extras like travel, large discretionary spending accounts and overnight retreats for administration or the board in a budget crisis? No we do not when the business of education should focus on actually educating students. After all, TPS has said repeatedly that staff is the largest part of the budget and I’m sure we can find places at CAB to take some of the reductions when their salaries and office budgets are incredibly high compared to the staff already displaced and slashed building budgets. Why aren’t furlough days, salary reductions, less expenditure allowances or consolidation of positions being done at CAB which would not harm our students daily learning and support? I’m sure the cost of living increase for administrators making \$200,000+ per year could have been eliminated this year to help balance the budget and not had a negative impact on their quality of life or ability to uphold their basic needs while freeing up money to save a few ESP or teaching positions who are integral to student success and safety.

Many of the TPS strategic goals and core values have not been honored by the cuts and displacements. Early learning is clearly not a priority in the restructuring for next year which removes programs and intervention staff. Operations goals including efficient business practices are not being met when there are so many repetitive administrator titles/ job overlap

and mistakes are made with the calculations of state funding per the presentation at the last board meeting. Partnerships are broken with the distrust sowed by lack of transparency or collaboration with parents and staff who work directly with students when program and staffing changes are proposed. Healthy and safe environments for students are not created when we are operating with bare bones staff in the buildings and removing long trusted staff while we have a bloated admin and admin support team at CAB. Academic excellence can not be achieved with less intervention, support, qualified ESPs and teachers at all levels and specialties. I urge you to do more than rubber stamp the reductions and ask for cuts to be made farther from the classrooms. You were voted in by Tacoma to be stewards of our district and hold decisions in check, we need to see you take that seriously while working for the good of the students by investing in student facing positions and programs instead of large spending at the district level.