

ADVOMTACATE

CTA

Ontario-Montclair Teachers Association

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GOVERNOR PROPOSES BUDGET FOR 2012 – 13



Governor Brown released his proposal for the 2012 – 13 budget the week before we came back from Winter Break. His proposal relies upon getting voters to pass an initiative that would raise an additional \$7 billion a year through a temporary increase in income taxes on the wealthiest Californians (those with incomes in excess of \$500,000) and an increase in the state sales tax of .5%. This would raise approximately \$4.4 billion through the income tax increase and \$2.6 billion through the sales tax. He would use the additional tax revenue to give schools a \$4.9 billion increase and the rest to increase the state contribution to higher education. The taxes would be temporary and expire in 2016.

For education, if the initiative is successful K-12 education would receive essentially flat funding for next year. That's because the Governor is proposing to use \$2.3 billion to reverse some of the deferrals which exist now. Currently school districts receive about 20% of their funding for the current year in the next fiscal year. This would be like an employee receiving an annual income where 20% of it is not paid to them until the next year. It amounts to a loan that the state takes at the expense of schools. It has allowed the state to keep school funding higher than it would be otherwise, but amounts to a loan the state is taking from schools in order to balance its budget. Needless to say it creates serious cash flow problems for school districts. The balance of the \$4.9 billion dedicated to schools would allow us simply to keep pace with what schools get now. If the initiative does not pass the \$2.3 billion deferral would continue and schools would face a real cut for the rest. That would result in a cut for OMSD of about \$8 million. (see From the President column for commentary on this)

The Governor has also proposed to permanently eliminate funding for transportation, to consolidate all categorical programs, including class size reduction, into one block grant that districts could use any way they want, as well as a proposal to not pay for transitional kindergarten for next year. The Governor also proposed using a weighted student formula to be transitioned in over 5 years. This would result in districts receiving this money in proportion to the number of students they have on free and reduced lunch and students who are EL. Without more detail it's hard to know what the implications of this are.

From Your President

Rick McClure



In the last Advocate, I wrote about the need for schools to give teachers time during site level meetings to meet and collaborate. Since that Advocate was published, Assistant Superintendent of Learning and Teaching, Karla Wells has sent a memo to all principals telling them that they need to give teachers time to develop common assessments in their grade level or

department meetings. She also said that the common assessments need to be developed by teachers and that they need to be in a format that teachers want (e.g. multiple choice tests, exit cards, brief essays, etc.). That's a very good first step towards giving teachers not only the time they need to do the work being asked of them, but also giving them the professional respect they are entitled to. Since teachers can't develop assessments in a vacuum, the time allotted for developing common assessments should also include planning time to discuss other classroom concerns. All schools should be doing this by the time you read this. If it isn't happening at your school, you should have your rep get in touch with me about that.

The state budget proposed by Governor Brown has both opportunities as well as potential challenges for schools. His proposal that voters be asked to pass temporary tax increases will give the state an opportunity to finally balance its budget and pay off its debts without decimating school funding any further than it already has. Even if voters pass the tax initiative, schools will not receive any additional funding for next year. Instead, the state will begin to pay off the deferrals built into the budget that exists now. Currently, of the \$48 billion that the state is paying to schools this year, \$10 billion is paid to schools in the following budget year. At some point, the state needs to move all that money into current year funding. Doing that will cost the state money in the budget, but will not result in any additional funding for schools to spend. This will be part of the pain we'll have to absorb to fix the fiscal mess the state has created with the budgets that have been passed over the last 10 or so years. If the state is to ever fix its budget problems though, it must be done. I believe we'll be able to expect in future years, as the economy improves, that with the additional taxes we hope the voters will approve, the state will not only be able to pay off the deferrals, but will also be able to begin to give schools more money to replace programs and positions that have been lost over the last four years.

If the initiative doesn't pass, the reduction in funding for OMSD would be about \$8 million. Currently the district has a reserve of about \$55 million. I haven't had a chance as of my writing this to discuss this with Dr. Hammond or Kim Stallings, Deputy Superintendent of Administrative Services, but it's my belief that the district should be able to absorb that without too much difficulty. If cuts like that continue, though, sooner or later we're going to feel more pain too.

You'll be hearing a lot more between now and November from both CTA and OMTA about the importance passing this initiative. I want to be clear with everyone that the failure of the state to do that will almost certainly result in more cuts to K-12 education. With class sizes at a maximum in most districts around the state, there is no longer any way for districts to handle a reduction in funding without slashing salaries and benefits for its employees, or a scheduling a significant reduction in the school year,

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...FROM YOUR PRESIDENT

which of course would result in a loss of income for us. So far in OMSD, we have been able to avoid taking any furlough days or reductions to our salary schedule. I doubt that will continue if we have to take another big cut to our funding. We'll have a clearer picture of where this is going when the Governor releases his revised budget in May. I'll keep you informed as all of this develops.

As I've visited schools this year, teachers have shared with me that some site administrators have become unrelentingly negative about what they and district administrators are seeing when they do classroom walkthroughs. We all understand the need for constructive criticism. After all, we do that with our students all the time. Never hearing any praise, though, becomes not only depressing, but creates unnecessary stress for teachers. As one teacher put it to me at one site I visited, "If we were as negative with our students as they are with us, they'd be all over us." I couldn't agree more. If this describes how things are at your school I would encourage you to have someone sit down with your principal and point this out. We all understand the pressure that is on everyone to increase test scores, but creating a positive atmosphere is far more likely to increase test scores than one where teachers feel that nothing they do is ever enough. Everyone needs a little pat on the back once in a while, including teachers. I hope site administrators will remember that when giving feedback to you.

Another phenomenon that is occurring at some sites is that principals are using extremely time consuming documents for "reflection" as part of the formal observation process. Teachers are being required to complete pre-observation "reflections" and then post-observation "reflections." I want to be very clear. I do not think there is any reason for a teacher to fill out any form for an observation other than perhaps a brief lesson plan. Whatever reflection is necessary can occur in the conference that takes place between the teacher and evaluator. I know that this has been addressed in a principal's meeting by Human Resources, but feedback I'm getting tells me some principals didn't get the

message. If your evaluator is requiring you to fill out time consuming forms for your observations, refer them to this Advocate and ask them to stop. If that doesn't work, get in touch with me.

Finally, a word about subs. The contract allows teachers to request the sub of his or her choice unless that sub is unavailable, unacceptable to the site administrator, or is not qualified to fill the position. If any of you are being told by your principal that you have to request a certain sub instead of the one you want, be aware the contract is on your side. Any problems with this should be reported to me.



SPECIAL EDUCATION ISSUES

It has become a common practice around the district for schools to use special education teachers to teach programs like READ 180, learning centers, etc. There are two reasons this is a concern: one dealing with credential authorizations and the other with providing adequate services to the students with IEPs who are on the caseloads of those teachers.

The first issue is credentialing. Special education teachers must have the appropriate credential(s) to provide instruction to students in their classrooms. This means that any special education teacher who is teaching regular education students along with their special education students *must* possess a multiple subject credential. Special education teachers who have a mild/moderate special education credential probably don't have a multiple subject credential. If they don't, the school and district are in violation of ed code and are potentially subject to sanctions by the state as a result. The only way the district could have these teachers doing this legally would be to have them working alongside a regular education colleague, in the same classroom, who does possess the proper credential.

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...SPECIAL EDUCATION ISSUES

The second issue is diluting services to students with IEPs. A special education teacher's first and primary responsibility is providing services to the students on their caseloads. If they are spending time teaching regular education students (assuming, of course, they have a multiple subject credential) there is the potential that they are not providing adequate service to students on their caseload.

OMTA has been having discussions with the district on these issues. We've been promised that special education teachers who do not have a multiple subject credential and are teaching regular education students will have their assignments fixed so that they are no longer violating ed code. OMTA has also recommended that the district form a committee consisting, at least in part, of special education teachers to discuss this practice going forward to assure that our special education students are receiving the services they are legally entitled to.

If you are a special education teacher who is working with regular education students as part of your teaching assignment please let the OMTA office know by calling or emailing President Rick McClure at president@myomta.org.

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OMTA
Executive Board Meeting
February 6th
Rep Council Meeting
February 27th

OMSD
School Board Meetings
February 2nd & 16th
7 pm at Central Language
Academy

