

**Puyallup School District  
2009-10 Draft Budget**

**FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS**

General questions are listed first. Questions about specific topics follow in alphabetical order. Finally, questions specific to the staff are grouped at the end.

Responses to these questions reflect the draft budget that was presented to the public in April. The Superintendent is currently analyzing the feedback from the April budget forums as well as the recently released State budget. His final recommended budget, which may include modifications from the draft budget, will be released in late May and presented to the public at the June 8 public hearing.

**GENERAL QUESTIONS**

**Why does the Puyallup School District have to reduce the budget?**

The state is expecting its revenues for the next two years to be substantially lower than in the past because of the recession. The current state revenue projections anticipate about a \$9 billion state deficit if state programs were left at the same level. The state legislature has developed the budget for the next two years and has cut the money allocated for K-12 education by a significant amount. The district currently estimates that after the stimulus money is applied it will get approximately \$9 million less next year from the state than it did this year.

**What is the district's current financial situation?**

The district has a history of being financially stable. Strong financial stewardship is evidenced by a string of six consecutive perfect audits, an unusual accomplishment for such a large school district. Additionally, its credit rating was increased in recent years as it demonstrated its ability to plan for, manage, and deliver the opening of three new schools on or ahead of time and within budget.

**How do state budget decisions affect our schools?**

State money makes up approximately 73 percent of the district's operating budget. Some of that money, about 15 percent is earmarked for specific categories such as grants and cannot be spent on anything else. Any change in the state funding portion of the general operating fund has a significant impact.

**Will teachers or other staff members be laid off?**

About 84 percent of the district budget is spent on people—on staff salaries and benefits for teachers, paraeducators, support staff, administrators, and others. It is virtually impossible to cut close to eight percent of the budget without affecting people. At this time we anticipate some staff members will be laid off.

**Will class size be affected?**

Yes, in some classes. The budget proposal is listed in three tiers, with tier three being our last resort. Increasing class size and eliminating assistant principals are in tier three. We are hoping that once the state budget is fully analyzed we may be able to remove tier three cuts from our budget proposal.

## QUESTIONS BY TOPIC

In alphabetical order

### Administration

#### **What administrative cuts are included in the proposed budget?**

The draft budget includes elimination or reduction of central office administrator positions in career and technical education, facilities, information technology, professional development, and special education. It also includes elimination of building administrator positions (principals and assistant principals).

#### **Does the proposed budget include salary reductions for School Board members?**

No. Our School Board members are volunteers and serve without compensation.

#### **How does Puyallup's cost of central administration compare to other districts?**

Puyallup is the 9<sup>th</sup> largest school district in the state out of a total of 295 school districts. Puyallup's cost of central administration ranks 19<sup>th</sup> in the State (2008-09 F-195) which is similar to districts which are 2/3 the size of Puyallup.

#### **Will the Superintendent's parent brunches be cancelled for next year?**

No. The Superintendent highly values opportunities to meet with parents and communicate with them in an ongoing manner. Also, other communications activities will be added to further the communications efforts with the entire community.

### Athletics

#### **Are we eliminating 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> grade sports?**

No. The proposal is to still provide 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> graders opportunity to participate in sports through an intramural rather than an interscholastic program.

#### **What is the difference between interscholastic and intramural program?**

An interscholastic program provides for competition between schools. For some specific sports, the 8<sup>th</sup> grade program is a "cut" program in which not all students who turn out are selected to be a member of the team. The instructional level in the interscholastic program is at a deeper level.

An intramural program provides for competition between teams within the same school. These are "no cut" programs and all students who turn out can participate on the school's intramural team(s).

#### **Why can't parents volunteer to coach?**

All coaches who are responsible for running the team are represented by the Puyallup Extra Curricular Athletics and Activities Association (PECAAA). This enables the district to select the individuals best suited and qualified to oversee the program. These employees are held responsible for teaching and safeguarding students and provide a reliable, consistent presence for the entire duration of the season. Employees are held accountable for the program and the safety of our students.

We value our volunteers and encourage parents and citizens to consider participating in the sports program on a volunteer basis. As such, they are not paid, nor are they held accountable for times when they are absent.

**Will high school athletic buses be eliminated after school to sporting events?**

No. However, with mounting costs, every opportunity to streamline our transportation is being examined for cost reductions.

**What are the duties of the Director of Athletics, Health, and Fitness and do we need a district position with athletic coordinators at each high school?**

High schools have only a .2 full time equivalent athletic director each to coordinate the site issues related to athletics. In addition to athletics, the district's director is responsible for all K-12 health, fitness, physical education classroom based assessments, coaches/teacher training and certification, Title IX Compliance, community facility usage, and all related curricular issues.

**Can parents pay more so we can keep 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> grade interscholastic sports?**

Providing equitable access to programs is important. As poverty levels rise, an increasing number of students' families are simply unable to pay the multiple hundreds of dollars that would be required to fully fund the program.

**How will the 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> grade intramural program be organized?**

Details of the program are under development to reduce the cost of our junior high athletic program will be shared with students and families as soon as they are available.

**AVID**

**What is the status of the AVID (Advancement Via Individual Determination) Program next year?**

AVID is meant to be a grade 9-12 program and is currently at six of our seven junior high schools in grades 8-9. Although not licensed at Edgemont Junior High School, we use the AVID strategies there. Under this proposal, we would eliminate the grade 8 option and offer this program in grade 9 only next year.

Currently AVID is offered at Emerald Ridge High School. The proposal is to bring the AVID strategies to Puyallup and Rogers High Schools next year although there is no funding to expand the certified program (including the fees that accompany this certification) in the proposal.

**Compensation**

**Are any employees getting a pay raise?**

Yes. Many of our unions, including teachers, previously negotiated contracts that call for pay increases in 2009-10. At this time there are no agreements to reduce, eliminate, or delay the increases that were previously negotiated.

**What about the superintendent and other administrators? Are they getting a raise?**

No. Following the superintendent's example, other non-represented groups have agreed to freeze their pay for next year. Pay is frozen for the superintendent, all central office administrators, all principals and assistant principals, all confidential employees, and all professional technical employees (a total of 152 employees). Many of these individuals were scheduled for salary increases based on years of experience. These increases are now frozen.

### **Full Day Kindergarten**

#### **With student achievement as the top priority, how can you eliminate full-day kindergarten?**

Unlike many other districts, Puyallup receives no state or federal funding for full-day kindergarten. We only receive funding for half-day kindergarten. We currently take \$115,000 of our basic education funding that is meant to support our ongoing instructional program and divert it to the full-day kindergarten program.

There are other factors contributing to this decision. Increasing numbers of parents are pulling their child from the program mid-year when they can no longer pay the tuition. This mid-year loss of revenue is causing the \$115,000 subsidy to grow. Additionally, more students are qualifying for free or reduced price lunches thus qualifying them for a tuition reduction or waiver. Tuition revenues to the program will be decreasing. This will also cause the \$115,000 subsidy to grow next year.

With reductions happening throughout the district, we could no longer ask other program areas to forgo this funding. We continue to value full-day kindergarten as an excellent program and look forward to a time when the state will fully fund it.

#### **Why can't parents pay more to fund full-day kindergarten?**

That option was considered, but is not included in this proposal. The potential for equitable access problems ultimately made this option not desirable.

### **Fund Balance**

#### **Why don't you use the fund balance to balance the budget?**

Like most school districts, Puyallup maintains an ending fund balance equal to about five percent of its budget, exclusive of carry over commitments, pursuant to the Board's policy. This cash reserve protects the district with its cash flow through months when expenses are high and revenues are low. It provides reserve funds for extraordinary or emergency expenses. And it also gets the district better interest rates when it borrows money. The financial market considers five percent to be the very lowest amount a district should have to be considered financially sound. It's a good business practice to maintain this level of reserves.

### **Highly Capable**

#### **Is the Elementary Quest Program being eliminated or reduced?**

Although we have developed a less costly model, it will actually expand the opportunity to serve more students than we do today. Currently we have two separate models for our elementary Quest Program: a pull-out model and a self-contained model. This proposal calls for eliminating the pull-out model and expanding the self-contained model for students in grades 3-6. In addition, it calls for services to be provided within a regular education classroom for 2<sup>nd</sup> grade students at each of our 22 elementary schools. These students will be clustered into one 2<sup>nd</sup> grade classroom at each school.

The pull-out model provides services to students just one day a week when they are "pulled out" of their regular classrooms and receive instruction in a Quest classroom at Maplewood Elementary. Transportation is provided in the morning but not in the afternoon. Approximately 300 students in grades 1-6 are served in the pull-out model.

### **Highly Capable (Continued)**

#### **Is the Elementary Quest Program being eliminated or reduced?**

The self-contained model provides for 3<sup>rd</sup>/4<sup>th</sup> grade and a 5<sup>th</sup>/6<sup>th</sup> grade classrooms at Meeker and Zeiger Elementary Schools. Students receive Quest instruction full time. Approximately 100 students are served in the current self-contained model.

This proposal calls for the self-contained model to be expanded to six additional schools (eight schools in all and eventually being expanded to nine total schools). Approximately 400 students in grades 3-6 will be able to be served in the first year of this proposal. In addition, up to 189 2<sup>nd</sup> grade students could be served in the cluster grouping model. Once implemented, this model can be expanded in future years with little additional cost to serve up to 750 students.

#### **What happens if not enough students apply and are selected to fill all the slots in the expanded elementary Quest self-contained model?**

If necessary, classrooms would revert to regular basic education classrooms. When there are more students, additional classrooms would be added.

#### **Will the junior high PAGE (Puyallup Accelerated Gifted Education) Program at Kalles be continued next year?**

Yes. It is currently offered in grades 7-9 but will be limited to grades 8-9 next year. This will enable all students currently in the program to continue in the program.

#### **For more information on the Quest program, or to ask additional questions, please visit the following website: [www.questabc.org/blog/](http://www.questabc.org/blog/)**

### **Hilltop Elementary**

#### **Has the district considered changing the elementary boundaries to bring more students to Hilltop as an alternative to closure?**

Yes. In 2007 when elementary boundaries were redrawn, 100 additional elementary students were assigned to North Hill. Without these 100 students, the elementary population on North Hill would be 670 students (projected to decrease to 650 in 2009-10) distributed among three schools.

Expanding the North Hill schools' boundaries even further into the valley would effectively result in valley schools no longer being within their own attendance areas.

#### **Has the district considered closing Northwood or Mountain View instead of Hilltop?**

Yes. However, other compelling factors resulted in Hilltop being the school identified for closure. This is primarily because Hilltop Elementary is on the Edgemont Junior High School campus, thus forcing the Edgemont fields to be across the street. This overriding factor pointed to Hilltop being the North Hill elementary school targeted for closure.

#### **Does the district plan to ask voters to approve bonds to build a new elementary school on North Hill in the foreseeable future?**

Although that is a possibility, no decision has been made.

**If so, would rebuilding Waller, Spinning and Firgrove Elementary Schools, which were included in the last bond proposal, be a higher priority for the district?**

No decision has been made. Just as in past elections, an advisory committee will examine the options and make a recommendation to the Superintendent and School Board. Following study, the School Board will make a decision at that time.

**What does it cost to keep Riverside Elementary building open with no students attending? What are the district's future plans for the site?**

Utility and custodial costs are about \$100,000 per year. This budget proposal includes plans for relocating operational programs that are currently in leased space to be moved to Riverside upon expiration of the lease.

**Why are we just hearing about this now?**

Although the potential closure of Hilltop has been under consideration for more than twenty years, it became more urgent to examine this option now in light of the state revenue shortfall. In the mid-1990s when the decision was made to build Edgemont Junior High School at its current location, the School Board declared its intent to close Hilltop with six to twelve years. This intent was declared at a public Board meeting and was accompanied with considerable written communication in the district's newsletter and by the media.

**Can the existing Northwood and Mountain View Elementary Schools accommodate the additional Hilltop students?**

Yes. There is enough existing space to accommodate the Hilltop students. The cost of a slight increase in paraeducators and clerical support is more than offset by the savings from the elimination of such positions at Hilltop. The estimated savings of \$350,000 is net of these additional costs. We are not anticipating any reduction of teacher positions on North Hill.

**If the Board decided to close Hilltop, when will parents know which schools will be assigned to our students?**

The hope is that assignments will be completed by June 1<sup>st</sup>.

**If Hilltop students and staff are reassigned in the spring, what will happen if the Board decides not to close Hilltop?**

The process for reassigning staff is governed by our collectively bargained agreement with the Puyallup Education Association. Accordingly, reassigned Hilltop staff will remain in their new assignment.

**Library**

**Will libraries be closed when the librarian is not at school?**

No. Currently some libraries are closed during the school day. Under this proposal, all libraries will remain open during the school day. Libraries will be staffed part of the day by certified librarians and part of the day by classified library assistants.

**How will libraries be staffed?**

Libraries will be staffed with a combination of certified librarians and classified library assistants.

**If librarians are not at school, will students still receive the designated instruction?**

Yes. Certified librarians are responsible for the instructional program including designing lesson plans. The district uses paraeducators to assist in delivering the instructional program to students in many programs. Under this proposal, the library assistants (paraeducators) will similarly assist in delivering the instructional program to students.

**Music, Elementary Instrumental**

**Exactly what is this proposal all about?**

While many districts are eliminating elementary instrumental music, Puyallup examined options to preserve this valuable program. Under this proposal 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> grade band and orchestra students will receive their instrumental music instruction at their neighborhood junior high school before the elementary day begins. Students would then be transported by bus shuttle to their elementary school for the regular day.

Currently these students are pulled out of their core instruction during the elementary day to receive instrumental music. Under this model these students will not be pulled out and, therefore, receive an additional 90 minutes of instruction in core academic subjects each week.

**What are the estimated class sizes for the proposed “zero hour” model for 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> grade instrumental music?**

Classes may be somewhat larger than they are right now; and in most cases, this is an advantage to the program. Currently some of our classes have less than a handful of students in them making it difficult to have sufficient numbers for all the instrument types. Having the appropriate instrumentation is critically important for a quality program.

One advantage of this model is that by being on the junior high campus, students will become familiar with other students who will likely be in their junior high music classes and with teachers with whom they are likely to study once they become junior high students. This has the potential to strengthen the junior high program and enhance these students' experience in music class.

**Does the proposed elementary instrumental music model include 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> graders in the same classes or will the grades be separated?**

The grades will be separated so 5<sup>th</sup> graders are taught separately from 6<sup>th</sup> graders.

**Will 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> graders be transported on the same bus as junior high and/or high school students?**

Yes. Younger students will be assigned seating toward the front of the bus. Older students will be assigned seating toward the back.

### **Outdoor Education**

#### **Are there additional reasons for eliminating the Outdoor Education Program beyond the \$10,000 savings?**

Yes. High school students serve as camp counselors and collectively miss thousands of hours of their own instruction. This is particularly difficult when high school students have so much at stake as they prepare for graduation and beyond. Additionally, considerable amounts of staff time are devoted to this effort. As we have fewer employees, it is increasingly important that the activities on which they focus is prioritized.

#### **Can parents pay more to keep the Outdoor Education Program?**

No. That option was considered, but is not included in this proposal. The potential for equitable access problems, plus other reasons cited above, ultimately made this option not desirable. Parents may wish to provide outdoor education types of activities for their own children on weekends, vacations, or during the summer months.

### **Restoration of Reductions**

#### **How will the district determine what to restore if the budget is not as bad as projected or as additional funding becomes available?**

We are hopeful there will be sufficient resources to avoid implementing Tier Three reductions of classroom teachers and assistant principals. As the Superintendent develops his final recommended budget which is scheduled to be completed by the end of May, he will take into consideration feedback received from stakeholders as well as the constraints and limitations imposed by the State budget. This recommended budget may potentially include fewer reductions. However, with more budget reductions necessary for each of the next three years, restorations if any are likely to be nominal. Another option may be to delay implementation of a proposed reduction for a year. The Board has directed the Superintendent to develop a program reinstatement process based on district priorities

### **Stimulus Money**

#### **Will the stimulus money eliminate the need for cuts?**

No, reductions will still be required. We anticipate receiving funding from the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA—sometimes referred to as stimulus money) in the areas of special education and remediation. It is possible these funds could partially or fully backfill proposed reductions in these two programs only. Any funding received in these categories may only be used for these programs and may not be used to offset reductions in other areas.

### **Transportation**

#### **Exactly what is this transportation proposal all about?**

The district receives transportation funding based primarily on the number of student bus riders whose bus stop is one or more radius miles from school. The district has always identified areas with one radius mile that do not have safe walking paths and have provided transportation for those students, even though there is substantially no funding for it. Over the years, primarily for the convenience of parents, the district has gradually added stops within one radius mile in other areas that do have safe walking paths.

### **Transportation (Continued)**

#### **Exactly what is this transportation proposal all about?**

Under this proposal, a Safety Advisory Committee will establish safe walking paths within one radius mile from school. Students residing on those paths will be expected to walk and no transportation will be provided. All others within one radius mile, those without access to safe walking paths, will be transported by bus.

The study committee identified a number of bell time changes for consideration. Of those identified, only two are still under consideration.

1. Expanding the elementary student day by 15 minutes. This would likely mean school starts a few minutes earlier and ends a few minutes later. This option potentially results in additional savings, but is not included in the estimated cost savings listed in the draft budget. More work is required before this option can move forward.
2. Late arrival for secondary students on Wednesdays instead of early dismissal. This option has no effect on cost. However, it would afford our secondary teachers a much better opportunity for common time together in which to receive training, work, and plan together. More work is required before this option can move forward.

#### **What criteria are used to determine safe walking paths?**

The State of Washington has developed criteria to determine safe walking paths.

#### **Will students have to walk to school if they live within one mile of school?**

Transportation will not be provided within one radius mile of school in areas where students have access to safe walking paths.

#### **How will the members of the Safety Advisory Transportation Committee be selected?**

Half of the members of this 10-12 member committee will be parents. Although the charter has not yet been presented to the Board of Directors, we anticipate members will serve three year staggered terms. The criteria for selection have not yet been firmly established. Parents who have interest and would like to be considered can submit their name to Karen Hansen, Executive Director Communications.

## **STAFF QUESTIONS**

#### **How will staff be notified about specific personnel reductions?**

Notices of Reduction in Force (RIF) for certificated employees must go out by May 15. We are targeting to release those notices by May 8. Classified staff and those represented by other groups will be notified as soon as possible in accordance with their collective bargaining agreements. The district's budget will not become final until the Board approves it in August. Should changes in the budget take place after RIFs occur, staff will be recalled according to their Collective Bargaining Agreement.

#### **Will the district recruit and hire for open positions for the 2009-10 school year?**

The district may need to fill specific open positions that are funded in the 2009-10 budget. The overall level of hiring is expected to be very low for the next school year.

2009-2010 Draft Budget Proposal  
Frequently Asked Questions

**Has the district considered moving to a four-day workweek?**

No. State law requires a 180-day school year. The state legislature would have to pass a bill to allow more flexibility in schedules before the district could consider such a move.

**Will there be a cost-of-living adjustment this year?**

The state legislature has suspended I-732, the initiative which calls for cost-of-living increases for educational employees. As a result, the district will not be able to provide general cost-of-living adjustments to any staff members next year. Any adjustments that are otherwise included in Collective Bargaining Agreements will be honored. The following Unions will receive pay raises via their Collective Bargaining Agreement: Puyallup Education Association, Bus Drivers, Interpreters, Paraeducators and Mechanics.

Note: Responses to the questions in this document reflect the draft budget that was presented to the public in April. The Superintendent is currently analyzing the feedback from the April budget forums as well as the recently released State budget. His final recommended budget, which may include modifications from the draft budget, will be released in late May and presented to the public at the June 8 public hearing.