

# The Journal

June 26, 2009

I'm Del Burns, Superintendent of the Wake County Public School System. Our principals and staff are preparing for the coming school year with a continuous focus on learning and teaching for all students, and I hope to be able to tell you more about that soon. But there is news about our funding situation that is more pressing --news that principals will also have to prepare to deal with as we start a new school year -- and that means you need to be informed about this potential impact at your school.

You may have seen in the news that it's increasingly likely that our state government will not adopt a budget before June 30. The House and Senate have passed their versions of the budget. It is now in a conference committee between the two bodies. When they come to a consensus, the House and Senate must adopt the budget. At that point the Governor can either sign or veto the budget.

Without an adopted budget, all of state government, our school system included, will shut down at midnight on June 30 -- the end of the fiscal year -- unless the legislature adopts a continuing resolution. Continuing resolutions are temporary authorizations to keep the lights on and government functions running until a budget is adopted. In the past, continuing resolutions have simply kept funding going at the last year's levels -- but there is no way for our state to do that this year, given the fact that state revenues simply aren't there.

Instead, we are hearing that a continuing resolution may include larger cuts to K-12 education spending beyond those that were predicted earlier this year, when we advised principals to fill only 95 percent of their positions. There has also been further talk about increasing class sizes, possibly reducing the number of teacher assistants funded by the state. I discussed some of these possibilities in last week's journal in case you want to review the details; in the meantime it's important to understand these possibilities are rapidly becoming probabilities.

The prospect is very real that even though a final budget may not be adopted by the state for some time, the continuing resolution may mean real cuts in state funding for teachers, teacher assistants, and schools. While I'd like to give you some clearer direction of where we see things heading, the situation with our state funding is changing almost daily.

The final budget may set funding levels at a higher or lower level than the continuing resolution, and while we may have to make further changes after the school year begins, we are taking the steps we need to be prepared for any result. We cannot spend funds now, that we would have to cut later, thus making a bad situation worse. To that end, we are continuing to be as proactive as possible.

We have now instructed principals to immediately freeze hiring of teachers in grades 6 through 12. In addition, all vacant teacher assistant positions are now frozen. We have extended the ban on out of state travel and local funds, those from the County, will be spent on only goods and services considered to be ESSENTIAL to maintaining our base operations. These are just a few of the proactive measures we are currently putting in place.

In the days leading up to July first, I encourage everyone to follow the developments at the state legislature closely. Once the details are established for our funding for the next year, our reactions to the budget will need to be swift. That is why we are making an effort now to keep you as informed as possible.

Our principals, teachers and staff are working very hard in a tough situation to support our childrens' learning. On their behalf, I know that they appreciate your support and for that, I thank you. You see day in and day out their dedication and concern for all children. Especially this year, given our challenges, I encourage you to find new ways to stay involved and partner with us in your child's educational success.

Thanks, and I'll talk to you again soon.