

SCHOOL BOARD OF POLK COUNTY

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GAIL F. MCKINZIE, PH.D.
Superintendent of Schools

Dear Staff Members,

Yesterday Governor Crist placed a precautionary 15 percent hold on general revenue spending for the last quarter of the budget year. This means that the state funds that our school district receives will be at a level of 85 percent for the remainder of our fiscal year through June 30th unless the receipt of the stimulus money is determined whereby funding for this school year could be restored. There is some sentiment among lawmakers in Tallahassee that the federal stimulus money needed to offset revenue shortfalls will be received in time to make up the difference. However, until that money arrives, Governor Crist will hold back the 15 percent, releasing money to government agencies on a monthly basis at the reduced amount.

This latest action is in response to last week's Florida General Revenue Estimating Conference where the expected revenue projection numbers for this fiscal year were reduced by \$1.1 billion statewide. Next year's projected revenues for the state are estimated at a \$2.3 billion reduction.

What does this mean to our school district? First, the freeze on school and district budgets will remain. As the governor is doing, we will be holding back on spending these monies. We simply cannot afford to count on the federal stimulus money helping us until it is received and we know exactly how it can be used. We do realize that there are critical needs in order for us to continue to educate our students and sustain our operations. We will review these requests on a case-by-case basis.

This week I was at the "Rally in Tally" along with school board members, PTA representatives, principals, teachers, students, PEA, and community representatives. We had the opportunity to spend time with some of our legislators and, again, urge them to hear our concerns, challenges and solutions. I am pleased to share that all of the phone calls, e-mails and other correspondence that many of you, parents and other community members have made, are working. They hear us, but we need for them to *take action* accordingly. We are only three weeks into the Legislative Session and we have six weeks remaining. I encourage each of you to continue corresponding with these elected officials. We cannot stop now and risk that our individual and collective voices not be heard.

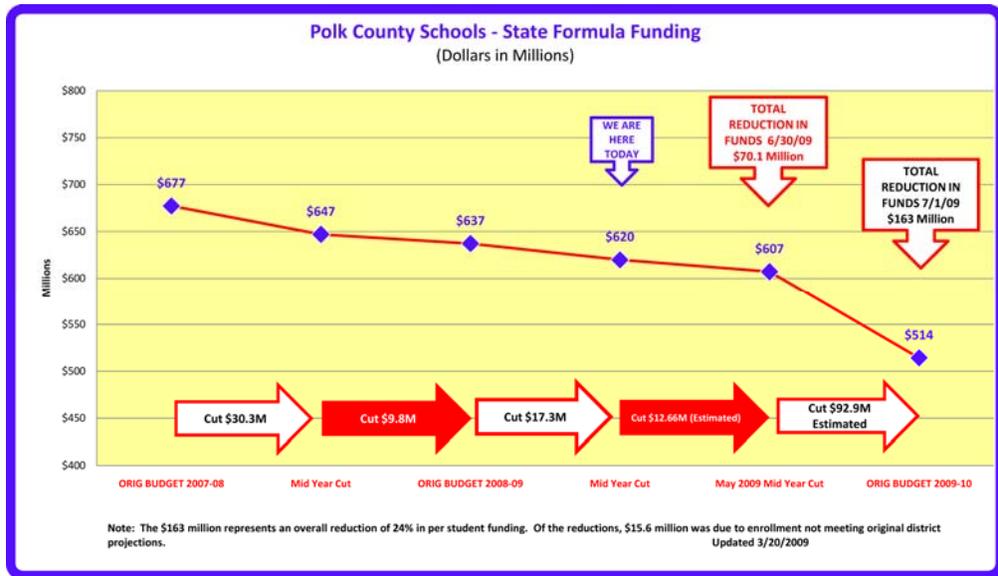
Thank you for the many cost-cutting suggestions you sent to our e-mail address Budgetquestionsandsuggestions@polk-fl.net and also offered during the eight Informational Meetings around the County. Your responses have been reviewed and considered. I also appreciate the many questions that have been asked as it is important that these be answered. We will keep this e-mail address active so that our lines of communication remain open.

On a going forward basis, I will continue to keep you updated on the financial status through my e-mail messages and on our website under District Budget Info. One of our next steps is to present a plan with suggestions for next year's budget reductions. This is exceedingly difficult because of the necessary timing and the many unknowns as it relates to financial projections. The direction from the Department of Education is to plan for an additional reduction of 15%. That is \$92.9 million.

*Polk County Schools-
an equal opportunity
institution for education
and employment*

The mission of Polk County Public Schools is to ensure rigorous, relevant learning experiences for our students that result in high achievement.

Below you will find a chart outlining the decline in our state funding.



The budget document as it relates to the 2009-2010 school year will be posted on the website on April 7th. It will be presented for discussion with members of the School Board at the Work Session on April 14th.

The financial information coming from Tallahassee sources fluctuates weekly, even daily. I ask for your patience and understanding. With your support, we will continue to work diligently so that legislative leaders hear our collective voices and act to ensure that education is held harmless during these dire economic times.

Sincerely,

Gail F. McKinzie, Ph.D.
Superintendent