

The State of Your School District
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Superintendent of Schools

From time to time, it is probably a good idea to give everyone in our community feedback on the “State” of **your** school district.

Let’s start with a review of the financial standing of our school system. Pursuant to our most recent audit, we have a fund equity (money in our saving account for emergencies and other unforeseen expenses) of \$1,583,779. This is 11% of our budgeted expenses and right in line with the 10-15% that is recommended by financial experts. We have also balanced our budget for this year after making difficult decisions to reduce our staff expense in areas that have no effect on what goes on in the classroom. It’s hard to predict what the financial picture for next year will look like as funding is uncertain with the downturn in the economy and increases in the cost of energy unknown. However, we have reached excellent contractual agreements with both our teachers and support staff groups that will limit our increases in expense especially in the area of health insurance.

We have a three-year agreement with our teachers and support staff that, through hard work and compromise on the part of all groups, limits our increase in expense for insurance during the entire length of this agreement to a total of approximately \$96,000. No matter how much the cost of insurance goes up your school district won’t have to pay anything over this amount.

When it comes to academic performance, we are definitely headed in the right direction though improvement in certain areas is still our top priority. Your school district has obtained AYP (Adequate Yearly Progress pursuant to No Child Left Behind) for each of the last five years. All of your teachers are Highly Qualified per the requirements of NCLB and continually receiving quality professional development and additional advanced degrees and certifications. Our high school has moved to a trimester master schedule to meet the needs of students in fulfillment of the new, state-mandated graduation requirements; we now offer students the opportunity of taking classes online to make-up lost credits, provide for personal curricula, have increased Physical Education to an everyday class at Norman Elementary, added Character Education at Norman, and **kept class size at the elementary level lower than any other district in the area.**

Planning for the future is also of vital importance to any school district. I’m happy to share that we have just completed RAPS II, our second strategic plan. Our strategic plan provides the vision and direction that you, the community, have told us we need to go. You can pick up a copy of RAPS II at any school building or access it on our web site (www.reedcity.k12.mi.us). On our web site you can also review the accomplishments from RAPS One. Our strategic plan is **how you can hold us accountable**. If we don’t accomplish a significant number of the goals in our plan (the things that you told us are important), you should be at one of our board meetings demanding an explanation.

Our facilities are in excellent condition, and plans to keep them that way (Capital Improvement Budget) are in place. We are constantly looking at ways to reduce the expenses of

running our buildings and providing of transportation. We are currently installing a computerized light monitoring panel in our high school to save thousands of dollars in electricity costs. The panel will pay for itself in one year and continue to save you, the taxpayers, significant dollars in the future. It's also time for us to purchase some new buses as we've put this off as long as we can. Just this week, we test drove a propane-powered bus that (if purchased) can reduce our expense for transportation considerably. The bus costs the same as a diesel, has the same performance and power, runs much quieter and cleaner (which means less maintenance expense) and is far less expensive to fuel. Approximate cost of the propane is \$2.25 per gallon plus we would receive a rebate (for going green) of .50 cents per gallon. We still have some additional research to complete before we move forward, but this is just another example of how we are always looking for the best bang for your buck.

In summary (and, yes, this is certainly somewhat my opinion; however I'm happy to provide any documentation you would like) **the State of your school district is excellent! Our finances are in order, facilities and grounds in great shape, we have an excellent, dedicated, professional staff, a school board that has done an outstanding job, and a community that is supportive and cares about kids!**