



SUPERINTENDENT'S MESSAGE



A WORD FROM DR. ANDERSON

Have you heard the one about the state of Illinois fully funding K-12 public schools? If you have, you probably heard legislators stating that they were able to completely support Illinois schools for the first time in 6 years. If you've heard this...I'm sorry to tell you...the joke is on you. This simply isn't true. And I can't stand back and listen to this rhetoric any longer. As an educator and superintendent of Wood River-Hartford School District, I find it insulting to my district and all the local citizens who pay more than their fair share to make certain that our children get the quality education they deserve.

The problem is fairness in school funding. According to the National Education Association, Illinois is dead last in providing revenue for public K-12 schools. The state of Illinois is supposed to provide support for public schools in the way of General State Aid (GSA) and mandated categorical aid (transportation, special education, early childhood, etc.). The problem is twofold. GSA had been prorated significantly since 2010 and now mandated categorical payments (aid) has not been paid. In the Wood River-Hartford School District we have lost nearly \$1 million dollars due to proration since 2010, and are now doing without close to \$700,000 dollars if categorical payments are not made. The loss of nearly \$1.7 million dollars for our district has negatively impacted programs, curriculum, personnel, and other needed resources for our students and staff.

In addition, the lack of a measure to maintain the consumer price index-urban (CPI-U) increase for districts has caused all Illinois school districts to receive \$2.9 billion dollars less in revenue. I wish it stopped there, but it doesn't. On top of the lack of CPI-U, proration decreased state funding by \$2.4 billion dollars. In all, schools across Illinois have seen nearly \$5.3 billion dollars in cuts over the last six years. And has this loss of state revenue been made up by an increase in local property taxes? No. Throughout Illinois, property taxes have only seen an average increase of 1.04 percent. Politicians can continue to pat themselves on the back, but the reality is that districts are still not receiving the necessary funds to run our schools.

I wish my frustration was simply because the lack of funds is keeping me from doing more for my students. It's not that. These continued losses keep us from maintaining the basic necessities that are needed to educate our students. At what cost are school boards and superintendents maintaining budgets? It's at the cost of our students and staff. Without proper funding, providing up-to-date curriculum, fair wages, professional development, and proper personnel is impossible. These cuts hurt kids. At the Illinois Association of School Administrators Annual Leadership Summit in Springfield, retired Superintendent of Highland Schools, Jim Burgett, explained the situation best in his keynote address. Mr. Burgett made it clear that many districts are forced to balance their budgets with less revenue from Illinois. In order to be fiscally prudent they eliminate programs, reduce staff, increase class sizes, or take a variety of actions that look primarily at the bottom line rather than what is best for students. Often times these changes reflect negatively on staff and community morale. These statements ring true for each administrator and school board in Illinois. At what cost are we allowing this to continue? At a time when our teachers need more resources and our students need more guidance and support, we are being forced to make do with less. It's simply a travesty that the needs of our students are being held ransom by the inability of lawmakers and other politicians to solve their problems.

As I reflect on my career as an educator, I find it very difficult to remember a time when Illinois public schools were in this bad of a situation. I've always thought of myself as an optimist when it comes to public education because I witness the dedication and commitment that our teachers and staff give our students each day. With children needing more resources due to broken homes, trauma, and poverty, we find ourselves being cheated out of funds necessary for us to be successful.

Please join me in letting our legislators know that this madness must end. We have come to a breaking point in public education and the only way to resolve the problem is to demand that our students get what they need. Please contact your legislators and demand that our teacher and student needs become a priority.

HARTFORD ELEMENTARY

Every year during the month of February, Mrs. Gwin does a project on heroes. This project coincides with the Lead 21 Unit of Study on Heroes. The students base their project on their own selected hero. There are many heroes that students wrote about. Abe Lincoln, Firefighters, Police Officers, Roberto Clemente, and dads were some of the heroes selected. The teachers and staff vote on their favorite project to select a winner.



LEWIS & CLARK ELEMENTARY

LCE is currently in the process of collecting used shoes for the Shoe Man Water Project. The "Shoe Man" attended our Character Assembly on Friday, March 10th, to teach our students about the program and to give the initiative a big kick off. The students and families of LCE are going to recycle old tennis shoes and dress shoes that they no longer wear. The shoes are then sold to help pay for the materials needed to bring water to 3rd world countries that do not have clean drinkable water. The water project

purchases the materials to dig and maintain wells that provide clean water to villages and towns that do not currently have it. This project ties into our Character Word of the month for March, Cooperation. Through the cooperation of the LCE family and friends, along with the Shoe Man Water Project, we will be able to help bring clean drinking water to those that desperately need it.



LEWIS & CLARK JR. HIGH

Each year the Madison County Regional Office of Education sponsors a Senior Olympiad (high school) and Junior Olympiad (6th, 7th & 8th grades). Lewis & Clark Jr. High was represented by four-person teams that competed in a variety of problem-solving activities requiring higher level thinking and group task skills. Each Olympiad requires a four-person team consisting of the best problem-solving students. Teams competed in solving a variety of problems requiring higher level thinking skills and group task

skills. Exercises and projects have varying degrees of difficulties, but all are challenging and exciting. We are very proud of our students and sponsors.

