

## Important Q&A regarding the LPS budget

### What has the Board already done to reduce costs since 2007?

- Closed two of 24 schools in the district (represents an eight percent reduction of school buildings);
- Cut jobs-- LPS employs about 400 fewer people (part- and full-time) now than it did three years ago;
- Frozen salaries;
- Increased fees, such as athletics and activities;
- Increased class size, by as much as 50 percent in some areas;
- Reduced programs (gifted/talented, fine arts, PE, and literacy);
- Cut programs that provide additional help to students (AVID at the middle and high schools);
- Cut the International Baccalaureate Program at the elementary and middle levels;
- Furloughed all employees for two days (the only district in the metro area to furlough employees);
- Reconfigured transportation routes for maximum efficiency;
- Rolled back school supply budgets to the level they were 20 years ago;
- Used reserves to the extent possible (\$3 million left would cover about one week of expenses)

### If the override is refused, what costs will be reduced?

The Board and staff continue to examine what reductions will have to be made for school years 2011-2012 and beyond, assuming the state's economic situation does not improve. Because more than 80 percent of the district's budget is dedicated to people, significant budget decreases mean significant cuts in staffing, benefits, compensation, school days and perhaps, schools.

As a result:

- Class size will continue to increase;
- Fees will increase; and
- Deeper cuts will have to be made to programs like art, music, and PE.

*The tradition of excellence in LPS will be in jeopardy.*

**What are some of the ways in which the budget shortfall has affected teachers?**

LPS enjoys a long-standing positive relationship with the Littleton Education Association. The LEA agreed to no cost of living increase for two consecutive years and agreed to absorb additional increases in health costs. The LEA also agreed to two furlough days, which means less pay for teachers. Class sizes have increased in all schools across the district. The LEA was also cooperative during the placement of teachers as a result of school closures two years ago.

**What are some of the ways in which the budget shortfall has affected administrators?**

Administration has done all it can to keep drastic cuts away from the classroom as much as possible. Twenty-one administrative positions were eliminated in past three years, both at the central office and at the schools. Central office department budgets were reduced. Administrators did not receive a cost of living increase for two consecutive years, and all administrators were furloughed two days, which means less pay for administrators. They also absorbed additional increases in health costs. All of these actions saved teaching positions. But, mandates drive a number of costs, such as special education, transportation, and English as a Second Language services. In addition, state-required processing of school improvement planning and state-required administrations of CSAP carry high price tags for the district.

**What are the enrollment numbers for the recent history years?**

Total district enrollment for the past 10 years:

2010-2011 (projected)	15,473
2009-2010	15,521
2008-2009	15,488
2007-2008	15,584
2006-2007	15,883
2005-2006	16,016
2004-2005	16,138
2003-2004	16,335
2002-2003	16,267
2001-2002	16,481
2000-2001	16,443

### **What is the employee count for the years with declining revenues?**

The following is an employment history for the last three years:

#### ***2008-2009***

1,059 teachers

1,028 classified staff

113 administrators (principals, assistant principals, central office support)

**2,200 total**

#### ***2009-2010***

1,056 teachers

995 classified staff

108 administrators (principals, assistant principals, central office support)

**2,159 total**

#### ***2010-2011***

866 teachers

820 classified staff

97 administrators (principals, assistant principals, central office support)

**1,783 total**

***There are 417 fewer employees in LPS today than there were three years ago.***

### **Why hasn't a school been sold?**

There are several reasons:

- Use of the facilities is self-supporting:
  - Ames is home to the local Meals on Wheels program and the Career/Technical programs for medical career and teacher cadet training, which are jointly funded by Cherry Creek Public Schools, Douglas County Public Schools, Englewood Public Schools, and Sheridan Public Schools.
  - Whitman is home to Littleton Soccer.
  - The Arapahoe County Head Start Program and South Suburban share use and share the cost of grounds.
- There was a district need for classroom space for Pathways and Options students (Whitman);
- LPS promised its community that the district would keep the facilities active so that they would not look abandoned;
- There is concern about the marketability and redevelopment potential of these facilities.

**If the override is approved, what is the plan for the next budget years?**

These revenues would help offset future state funding cuts and therefore keep them from being as detrimental to LPS, beginning in school year 2011-2012. The funds would help stabilize the district – help ensure that schools can keep what they currently have in place and keep teachers and programs. The reality is that the community can no longer count on the state and federal government to appropriately fund its public schools. A citizens’ oversight committee would oversee the expenditure of mill levy funds. None of these funds would be spent on administration.

**Would this override carry LPS through the predicted economic problems?**

Yes. Depending on how severe cuts from the state continue to be, mill levy funds will help bridge LPS over these difficult financial times. LPS is also continuing to make fundamental changes to the way in which it conducts business and delivers quality services to students.

**What fees can be charged to students for extracurricular activities?**

Currently, fees are already charged for almost all activities and athletics at the elementary, middle and high school levels. Fees for athletics were increased by 50% for the 2009-2010 school year. Currently, LPS is near the top in fee charges compared to other school districts in the Denver metro area.

Some fees, particularly at the high school level, for activities such as athletics and band, can be extensive. Many of these groups fundraise for several years to raise money to perform in national competitions.

The Board has examined the possibility of charging an instructional supply or technology use fee of \$125 per student. However, due to the impact this would have on families and the potential legal issues involved, it was not part of the budget solution for 2010-2011. Having parents pay all of the costs for athletics and activities would prohibit many children from being able to participate in these programs, which enhance education and keep students in LPS.

**Can LPS charge students who ride the bus to school and home?**

Legally, yes. There is a process that must be followed to implement a fee. We cannot charge a transportation fee to students who are eligible for free and reduced lunches. We also cannot charge students who receive transportation as identified in an IEP (special education).

In addition, the Board feels that this is not a solution in alignment with the community’s values at this time. Children of families who choose not to pay the fees could potentially be required to walk long distances and cross major urban thoroughfares, a direct conflict with the district’s priority for student safety.

**What is being done to recruit out of district students?**

LPS has been successful in marketing to out-of-district families. Options that attract families include preschool, school age childcare, all day kindergarten options, an award-winning fine arts program, online options for home-schoolers, and award-winning technology programs proven to increase student achievement. Our three high schools are regularly named as America's Best High Schools by *Newsweek Magazine* and *5280 Magazine*.

LPS works closely with local Realtors, the South Metro Denver Chamber of Commerce, and homeowners associations.

Nearly 18% of LPS students are enrolled from outside the school district boundaries and clearly see LPS as the preferred choice. This is the highest percentage of any school district along the Front Range of similar size or larger.

Out-of-district students bring the same amount of state funding to the district as do in-district students.

Strong academic programs attract out-of-district families to LPS and expand the district's financial ability to provide extra-curricular programs, such as band, speech, debate, and athletics for ALL LPS students.

**How many in-district students aren't enrolled in LPS?**

During the last demographics student conducted in 2006, the consultant estimated that 750 students attended other public school districts and 2,500 attended private schools, which are often schools founded and operated by religious groups. They are often K-8 schools only.

**How many out-of-district students are enrolled in LPS?**

Currently, about 18% of the entire student body in LPS is open enrolled, or about 2,800 students.

**What percentage of the budget are salaries?**

Approximately 80 percent of the district's general fund budget goes toward people: salaries and benefits. This includes ALL employees.

**If we don't have kids in LPS, why vote for the override?**

Property values in any community are significantly influenced by the strength and reputation of the school system serving it. Business owners and homeowners want their property values to remain high and stable. A quality school system helps ensure that the community remains attractive to potential homeowners and customers.

**Can you reduce teacher cost by using more classroom volunteers or part-time teachers?**

Currently, LPS has extraordinary volunteer programs in all of our schools. Last year, volunteers logged 184,307 hours in our schools. Volunteers are one LPS' greatest assets. They are part of the district culture. But, they cannot provide the level of expertise of a classroom teacher, any more than volunteers can replace the expertise of other professionals (doctors, lawyers, and university professors). Additionally, the federal No Child Left Behind Act requires that teachers in all core academic areas be highly qualified, with specialized degrees appropriate for their academic areas.

**Can you save money by lengthening school day time and having only four day weeks?**

No. Most of the perceived savings would come from the assumption that there would be less transportation, utility, and employee costs and that the school facilities would be closed one day a week. Due to activities and athletics schedules (which are set by the Colorado High School Activities Association), employee contracts, and the need in the community for the year-round childcare provided at our elementary schools, our schools would likely be open and transportation would be needed five days a week. Additionally, having children out of school one full day each week would put a tremendous financial burden on parents and grandparents for childcare and employers for available jobs. It would mean literally thousands of unsupervised teenagers out in the community, with greater potential for making poor choices.

**How many schools are “magnet” or charter schools? How many students in each?**

LPS includes two charter schools:

- Littleton Academy, with about 460 students grades K-8
- Littleton Prep, with about 500 students grades K-8.

Both schools, particularly Littleton Prep, enroll a large number of out-of-district students.

LPS magnet schools include:

- Centennial Academy of Fine Arts Education (fine arts); enrollment grew by 31 percent in 8 years
- Littleton High School (International Baccalaureate program); enrollment grew by 60 percent in 7 years
- Euclid Middle School (leadership academy, new in 2010); focus on strong academics plus character development
- East Elementary School (English Language Learner program); 25 different languages are spoken by students at East.

*(Twenty years ago, seven languages were spoken in LPS. Today, 53 languages are spoken in LPS. LPS teaches ALL of these students English.)*

- Some districts have Gifted/Talented magnet schools. LPS chooses to allow G/T students to attend their neighborhood schools. ALL LPS schools serve G/T students.

**If this election passes, can LPS survive without any further increases from property tax?**

LPS will HAVE to survive without further tax increases for many years. LPS is asking for most of the override that is available and allowed by state statute. Any further cuts of funding by the state will result in future budget reductions. LPS is currently working on a long-term fiscal plan to change how educational services and support services are provided to help offset the need for even further loss of quality.

**Are the high school extra-curricular activities/programs completely self funded? If not, why not?**

No. The general fund provides 47.4 percent of the funding for middle and high school athletics and activities, which is similar to the contribution other districts of our size with similar commitments to athletics and activities make. The rest of the funds come from pupil participation fees, gate receipts, and other fund-raising activities. The complete self-funding of these programs would be cost-prohibitive to families. Fees were raised by 50 percent in 2009-2010. Currently, LPS is near the top in fee charges compared to other school districts in the Denver metro area.

**How much of the high school budgets are being subsidized by the lower school's PPR?**

None. All LPS schools receive funding for staffing and supplies through formulas based on enrollment. No one level or school subsidizes another.

**What are the property tax levies in the adjacent districts?**

The total property tax levies are as follows:

Adams 12	70.179
Aurora	53.455
Cherry Creek	48.825
Jeffco	48.145
Douglas Co.	46.681
Littleton	46.081
Boulder Valley	39.999
Denver	39.262
Sheridan	37.627
Englewood	37.199

Total property tax levies are a combination state statutory levies  
+  
Locally passed levies (to supplement the general fund for operational costs)  
+  
Locally passed bond levies (for capital projects, ie. facilities maintenance and construction)

The amount of revenue generated through mill levies varies among communities and is influenced by the economics of the area and the density of commercial property.

**Has LPS considered merging with any other districts to cut administrative costs?**

While a complete merge is not being considered at this time, and is rare across the state, LPS has merged services with other districts for efficiency and cost effectiveness. For example, LPS staff manage IT services and Food Services in Sheridan (Sheridan pays LPS a fee.). LPS participates in cooperative bidding with several other school districts for many items (about 40 percent of its natural gas, for example). LPS also enters into vendor contracts with other districts. Additionally, it is difficult or virtually impossible to pick up the cost of a merged contract obligation or bonded debt. Plus, districts must be contiguous and our neighbors’ financial conditions and debt make it a disadvantage. It would actually cost more.

**Teachers are paid by years of service in the district. Does LPS have more experienced teachers than do other districts?**

LPS teachers' average years of teaching experience is 13. This does tend to be higher than in surrounding districts. This means that LPS has experienced teachers in more of its classrooms, which is a benefit to students.

**What are some of the groups supporting this election?**

- South Metro Chamber of Commerce
- South Metro Board of Realtors
- Arapahoe Credit Union
- Elected leaders
- Parents
- Community members

**How much will the election be for?**

\$12 million annually

**What is the cost?**

A homeowner would pay about \$6 per month for every \$100,000 of actual home value.

**What is the projected deficit for next year? What is causing it?**

It will likely be \$10 to \$11 million dollars. It is caused by an estimated loss of six percent in state authorized funding and an increase in mandatory spending for such things as PERA, healthcare, fuel, and utilities. The deficit will be less or more depending on the level of state authorized funding but will continue to grow each year. Either way, costs LPS cannot control will continue to increase, and state funding will continue to decline. There is no indication that this will improve.

We thank you for engaging in this issue with us, and we encourage you to stay informed. Your opinions and your thoughts are important to us. LPS belongs to you.

Please contact us if you have further questions or comments:

Board of Education/Superintendent 303.347.3391

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