

Fleetwood Area School District Report  
by Dr. Paul Eaken

Our economic difficulties are forcing us to reevaluate the services that we receive from our local, state, and national governments. We have all read about cuts in police departments, postal service reductions, and cutbacks in public schools. It appears that the budget for next fiscal year may be even more difficult. With the continued decline in state funding for education, it is becoming more and more difficult to make up the difference with an increase in property taxes. It is time that we take a serious look at the services our government provides and identify those that are truly essential.

As we begin work on our school district budget for the 2012-13 school year, it is becoming clear that many districts across our state will be forced to make difficult choices to balance their budgets. School districts are realizing that they may not be able to maintain the services currently provided for students.

During the 33 years that I have been in education, the services that public schools are expected to provide have grown dramatically. Some of these include individualized instruction for at-risk students, drug and alcohol assessment and counseling, full day kindergarten, breakfasts for students, payment for students attending cyber charter schools, pre-school programs for special needs children, alternative education for students who have been removed from school due to discipline problems, English as a second language programs, bully prevention programs, parent education programs, specialized courses where high school students can earn college credits, and a whole range of instructional requirements from safe use of the Internet to numerous health issues including Aids and the dangers of smoking.

As a state and as a nation, we must decide what we want our public schools to provide. Our founding fathers felt that a strong public school system was essential to maintaining our democracy. All citizens need to be able to understand and participate in selecting our representatives in government. Federal law requires states to provide a 'free and appropriate public education' for all children. Public education provides this essential service for all children regardless of their needs, along with many opportunities that are not available to children in other countries.

Our schools in Pennsylvania have provided a well rounded education, including education in the arts and the opportunity to learn and participate in numerous sports. Many public schools in Europe do not have athletic teams or instruction in the arts. Parents must pay to have their children participate in these activities outside of school. If we adopt this model however, we will be excluding children whose parents cannot afford to pay for these activities outside of school.

Our public schools address many needs. If we want our schools to provide opportunities for all of our children, regardless of the community in which they live, we must continue to help poorer communities that cannot afford the additional instruction and support services that so many children from disadvantaged homes need. On our present course, schools make

decisions about what must be cut each year based on the available funding. This is not what is best for our children, their parents, or our communities. One thing is for certain: We cannot continue to expect our schools to provide the broad range of programs designed to educate the 'whole' child if school funding continues to decline. An open discussion needs to take place state-wide to identify priorities for our public schools followed by a commitment that schools will have adequate resources to provide those services.

*Upcoming Events in the Fleetwood Area School District*

*January 3 – School Resumes*

*January 16 – In-service day, no school for students*

*January 17 – School in session (emergency closing make-up day)*

*The Board of School Directors will hold meetings on January 10<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup>, both at 7:00 pm.*

