

## ERPS and its School Budget

Eaton Rapids Public Schools ends the current school year in a similar financial position to most schools in Michigan but in many ways is in a far better position in its programming for students. Let me explain this statement by giving a little background, an update on finances, and conclude with how we move forward.

For the past several years, Eaton Rapids Public Schools has faced declining enrollment while receiving the lowest level of funding per student in the state. We have been reducing expenses continuously; just last year, we closed Union Street School. With strong support from our Board members, we managed to create some financial stability in tough times. With the sales of King Street properties and the lease of some airwave spectrum to Sprint, we have even increased our savings. At a recent Board meeting, we reviewed the budget of more than a dozen neighboring districts and found that we were doing the best job in matching our expenses to our revenues in terms of having a balanced budget.

The current financial picture for all Michigan schools is pretty gloomy as our funding sources from the state (sales taxes and income taxes) are far less than in the past due to the chaos in the auto industry and overall economy. It is so bad that all the Federal stimulus money allocated for education in Michigan could be used in just funding the remaining months of this school year and next year's 2009-2010 budget. To make matters worse, most schools will have fewer students due to families leaving the state to seek better employment opportunities. For the next two years, we face shortfalls of over \$1 million in our district alone.

While we face tough budget decisions in the next couple of years, we have created some wonderful programs and partnerships which make school life better for your children:

1. Art, music, and physical education classes are offered to all elementary students. Our band program starts in fifth grade. Additionally, we have classes using fine arts and computers at the high school (digital art, web page design, and photography).
2. We have child care programs in new classrooms at Greyhound Central.
3. The use of Union Street Center has given new homes to a children's theater troupe and the YMCA. The YMCA will offer a full range of after school classes for students and adults in the fall. Our community education and swimming pool programs are also in full swing.
4. We have introduced the Lucy Calkins writing programs and are putting in place a new mathematics curriculum (Everyday Math).
5. Our enrollment in advanced placement (AP) classes at the high school is sky rocketing as we add more classes in this area.
6. The new grade level buildings at Lockwood (K-1) and Northwestern (2-3) have helped us in delivering consistent curriculum to students.
7. We are continuing our Montessori program at Lockwood and adding a K-1 section so we will now have two classrooms.

8. Our enrollment in our alternative high school (Greyhound Central) has grown steadily due to our growing use of popular online classes.
9. LCC is coming to town in the Fall with computer, speech and college writing classes. We also continue to have use of the wonderful LCC programs for our high school students who want to start training in vocational careers.

I hope this gives you some examples of how we are exercising stewardship and developing programs that serve your children well. While all of us want to see our financial situation improve, we still will have bright days for your students during the school day.