



# MEAD MATTERS

Volume 20 No.2  
February 2010



## A Letter from the Superintendent: State Funding Cuts

Dear Mead Community,

A little less than a year ago the district sent out an issue of Mead Matters that was dedicated to profiling and explaining the challenges our district faces in the current financial environment. You will find many similarities in this particular issue of Mead Matters

because we are facing similar financial challenges and issues this year. It appears that the reality of the present economy will continue to affect our district for the immediate future.

**More than any other message that we want you as a Mead Community member to understand is that this is a state financial problem that continues to be "pushed down" to the local level. Unfunded and partially funded mandates, declining state support for required learning programs, and increased legislated requirements have severely strained our local school system. The state has created a situation where locally collected taxes are being forced to cover state responsibilities. Of major importance is the loss of choice and flexibility for our district to use our resources to meet the needs of the Mead community.**

The Board of Directors, Superintendent, and staff are extremely proud of the long history of local support for our student learning, extra-curricular programs and

facilities. For many decades our community has been exceptionally generous in their support of the K-12 public school system. In turn, Mead School District is widely known as a *lighthouse* district for innovative, effective curriculum, for providing renowned co-curricular and extra-curricular activities in the arts and athletics, and employing well-trained, experienced staff. The Mead community can be proud of the fact that we have done our part to go above and beyond the basic state program for our students.

In the early fall of this school year, elected and state officials began predicting that the state would be several billion dollars short in revenue. Legislators are currently working under the assumption that there is an approximate 2.8 billion dollar shortfall. In addition, the state is predicting another deficit next year of equal gravity. Our state government is required by law to have a balanced operating budget. Public schools make up nearly 43% of the state budget, so districts across the state will be affected by the substantial reductions.

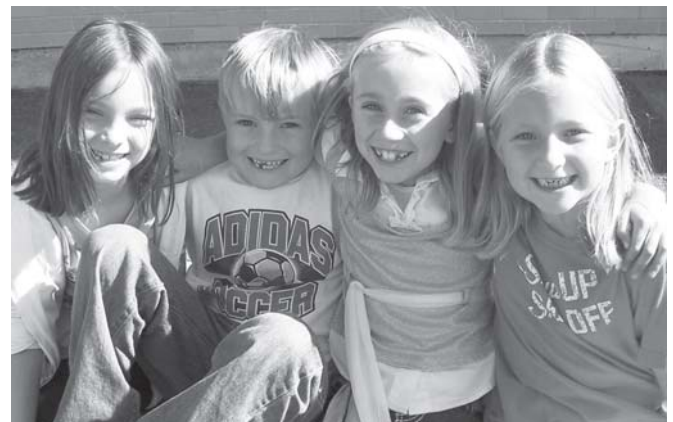
Mead School District, like the state, must also pass a balanced operating budget every year. With a large percentage of our budget coming from the state funding (68.1% this year), we will definitely feel the impact. Our district is again faced with the difficult task of balancing our community values with serious financial reductions that can affect learning, co and extracurricular programs, and the day-to-day operations of the district.

Mead School District administration is currently working to develop a series of budget proposals that they will deliver to the Mead School District Board of Directors. Due to the severity of the reductions in revenue, every aspect of the Mead budget is being reviewed and analyzed. **The challenge for Mead School District is that although this is a State problem, it will be up to us to fix it!** Please take the time to read this publication and contact us if you have questions or concerns.

In addition to this newsletter, the school district will be providing information to the community via our district website ([www.mead354.org](http://www.mead354.org)). We will post continuing updates as more budget information comes in from the state.

Sincerely,

Superintendent Tom Rockefeller and  
Mead School District Board of Directors



### Mead Matters

Mead School District #354  
12828 N. Newport Hwy  
Mead, WA 99021

ECR WSS  
Postal Customer

Non-Profit  
Organization  
U.S. Postage  
PAID  
Spokane, WA  
Permit No. 622

Inside this Issue:  
Questions and Answers about State  
Funding Cuts for Schools

**Mead School District Board of Directors**

**President**

Ron Farley – 468-8133  
RFarley@mead.k12.wa.us

**Vice-President**

Maureen O'Connor – 466-0505  
MOconnor@mead.k12.wa.us

**Directors**

Denny Denholm – 466-2316  
DDenholm@mead.k12.wa.us

Tom Hunt – 467-4331  
THunt@mead.k12.wa.us

Robert Olson – 466-9340  
ROlson@mead.k12.wa.us

**Superintendent of Schools**  
Dr. Thomas Rockefeller

**Mead School District Guiding Principles**

- As the Mead Community we are:
- Focusing on students and their learning
- Creating democratic structures for participation
- Increasing the connections between parents, business, community and our schools

**Published by**  
Mead School District No. 354  
12828 N. Newport Highway  
Mead, WA 99021 (509) 465-6000

**Website**  
[www.mead354.org](http://www.mead354.org)

**Editor**  
Mary Jane Thompson

**Layout**  
Kim Osterback

**Questions or Comments?**  
Questions, comments or news to share? Write to us at: Mead Matters, c/o 12828 N. Newport Highway, Mead, WA 99021 or e-mail us at: MeadMatters@mead.k12.wa.us

**Questions and Answers**

**What does the Governor’s budget mean for the Mead School District?**

In December of 2009, the Governor published a statutory (legally required) budget with significant cuts to K-12 education. Based on the first budget presented, it is estimated that Mead School District would lose \$5,965,407 from the current budget. The largest cuts come from loss of levy equalization (\$3,606,000), K-4 enhancement (\$1,167,619) and the remaining I-728 funding (\$888,219).

You may recall that media reports indicated that the Governor was very concerned with the cuts in this budget and would publish a second budget prior to the legislature convening. When the second budget was presented, the amount for levy equalization was restored, which would result in reductions of approximately \$2.4 million dollars. The legislature is currently in session and although the budget news continues to look grim, at this time, we are waiting to see the final budget before making any decisions. The legislature is scheduled to be finished around the 12<sup>th</sup> of March.

**What will the district reduce to make up for the lost state revenue?**

When addressing the shortfall from state revenues the last two fiscal years, Mead left some support-staff positions vacant, eliminated some administrative positions, cut travel, cut some summer building maintenance, adjusted bus routes and reduced heating and cooling expenditures.

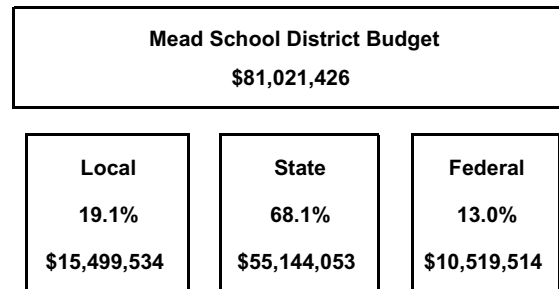
The following year, in addition to maintaining those cuts, the district reduced teaching positions through retirements and attrition, reduced the Gifted Program, eliminated the curriculum budget, eliminated the technology budget and eliminated the equipment replacement budget for the maintenance department. We also reduced building budgets 30%, and received contract concessions from the district administrators and coaches.

Mead made reductions of \$600,000 in the 2007-08 budget, \$1.7 million dollars in the 2008-09 budget and \$2.8 million dollars in the 2009-10 budget. This is over \$5 million dollars of reductions in 3 years.

Although no decisions have been made, the magnitude of the proposed loss in state support this year will likely result in loss of staff and programs. In the current economic environment and with declining levels of state support, there are simply no easy choices. The district administration continues to do preliminary work on the challenges this budget represents while not knowing what the specific reductions and overall reductions will be.

**Where does Mead School District get its money ?**

Mead, like all school districts in the State of Washington, receives its revenue from three major sources; federal, state, and local. As the diagram on the right illustrates, the majority of our funds come from the state, followed by local and federal funds. The percentage of funds received from the state has typically been about 75%. However, in the current fiscal year large portions of state funding were replaced with federal stimulus money. Unfortunately, this was for the most part a one-time allocation and is not likely to be renewed.



**Why are there so many cuts in K-12?**

In the current downturn, state tax collections have dropped off so sharply, the state has not been able to maintain existing programs at current levels. In the prior two years of budget reductions K-12 education funding was reduced less than other state agencies and higher education. The state’s remaining discretionary budgets are getting smaller, forcing more reductions in K-12 education. Cities and Counties have also been faced with major reductions in their tax collections as well.

**I thought Basic Education was protected from reductions?**

In response to a lawsuit initiated in 1976, State Superior Court Judge Doran directed the state legislature to define and fully fund a program of basic education. Funding was provided for each full-time equivalent student based on staff/student ratios and allocations for staff salaries, benefits, and nonemployee related costs. Subsequent court decisions in the 1980’s expanded the state’s basic education responsibility. Special education, bilingual education, institutional education, learning assistance program, and pupil transportation are now considered “basic” and the state funds the formulas as defined in the law.

Once a program is defined as “basic education,” it becomes part of the state’s on-going responsibility. As a consequence, funding increases are often labeled “enhancements to basic education” and therefore are subject to reductions, even though some of these “enhancements” have been funded by the state for over twenty years. Examples of these would be K-4 enhancement, and levy equalization.

As a result, today, a significant portion of state funding is not “legally” considered basic education. The adequacy of the funding provided by these formulas has also been the subject of much study, debate and legal challenges. Yet an even more pernicious effect of the erosion of state funding is that the state continues to mandate requirements that are underfunded or for which no funding is provided. This forces the district to use local levy dollars for state mandated programs.

**What is Levy Equalization?**

Levy equalization, also referred to as Local Effort Assistance (LEA), is state matching money provided to districts who have passed local maintenance and operation levies and who have above average property tax rates due to lower than (statewide) average assessed valuations. In the 2009-10 budget Mead expects to receive \$3,606,000 in levy equalization payments.

**What is the K-4 Enhancement?**

The K-4 enhancement is additional state funding provided to school districts to lower class size in kindergarten through fourth grade. To qualify for the additional funds districts must show that they are using the funding to lower class size. The formula currently funds 53.2 teachers for every 1,000 students in grades K-4. Funding may be lowered to fund only 49 teachers for every 1,000 students in grades K-3. Grades 5-12 are funded at 46 teaching positions for every 1,000 students. This change represents funding for 14 fewer teaching positions.

**What is I-728?**

Initiative 728 was passed by voters in 2000. The intent was to provide school districts additional money of up to \$450 per student. Funds were to be used for lowering class size, provide extended time programs, such as before and after school tutoring programs, early childhood programs and provide for professional development of the teaching staff. Mead received \$3,952,000 in I-728 funds in the 2007-08 fiscal year. In 2008-09 this was reduced to \$3,193,000. In 2009-10 this was reduced to zero and replaced with \$1,180,000 of federal stimulus money. Next year it is eliminated.

**We passed the levy, why do we have to make cuts?**

As shown above, the district's revenue comes from local, state and federal sources. The renewal of our M & O levy provides continuing local revenues for another two years. As was mentioned in the campaign, this was a renewal of an existing levy, not a new tax providing additional resources. Passage of the levy prevented the district from having to make further budget reductions. The current funding issues are related to state funding issues, not local funding, which has been supported by Mead's citizen's.

**What impact will the federal stimulus money have on Mead School District?**

Federal stimulus money replaced lost state revenue in the 2008-09 fiscal year. A small portion of that will continue to help Special Education funding next year but the majority of this funding ends June 30<sup>th</sup>, 2010.

In the Governor's second budget, she is counting (hoping) on additional federal money to help fill this year's budget gap and restore levy equalization funding. In our view this is highly unlikely and we encourage the state legislature to develop and implement a meaningful educational reform package, including reform of the funding system.

**Does the district have a rainy day fund or cash reserves that can cover some of the cuts?**

Mead has a history of providing programs for students above the level of other districts in the area. This is possible because of consistently high levels of community support for local levies and bonds. As a consequence Mead operates with a much lower level of reserves than all comparable districts. Due to fluctuations in monthly revenues and expenditures, a 2-3% cash balance is necessary in order to pay our monthly bills, including monthly payroll. This lower level of cash reserves does not leave any wiggle room when state funding is cut.

District	2008-09 Fiscal Year		Fund Balance	Fund Balance	
	Enrollment	Expenditures		Per Pupil	% of Exp.
Wenatchee	7,351	69,833,467	11,562,223	1,572.87	16.6%
Yakima	14,552	147,995,900	13,342,639	916.88	9.0%
Richland	9,989	93,579,288	10,061,512	1,007.30	10.8%
Moses Lake	7,120	69,582,053	5,230,180	734.55	7.5%
Walla Walla	5,934	58,926,086	5,947,953	1,002.35	10.1%
Spokane	28,610	298,447,642	21,447,312	749.64	7.2%
Central Valley	11,925	110,763,894	5,236,587	439.11	4.7%
Mead	9,002	81,173,196	2,274,220	252.62	2.8%

At this time we find ourselves in a catch 22 of our own making. Although a larger cash balance would cushion the impact of the current state cuts, it would be necessary to cut existing programs in order to achieve a larger cash balance.

**How does Mead compare with other Spokane districts for per pupil spending?**

The perception that we often deal with is that Mead is a wealthy district with resources above other districts in the area, which is not the case. Mead School District is well known throughout the state as a lighthouse district for innovative and effective curriculum, for providing renowned co-curricular and extracurricular activities in the arts and athletics, and employing well-trained, experienced staff. However, according to OSPI (Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction) of the 14 school districts in Spokane County, Mead collects and spends less per student than all other districts except Deer Park. For example, Spokane School District receives \$9896.00 per student and Central Valley receives \$8673.00, while Mead receives \$8464.00.

**Can Mead continue to offer its current learning programs in the face of State reductions?**

After two years of major financial reductions from the State, Mead School District has worked diligently to protect the classroom and student programs as much as possible. The major challenge at this time is that the State has not addressed the financial challenges through substantive actions and, in turn, the State portion of our budget has continued to decrease year by year. In addition, legislated mandates, policies, and requirements continue to increase without any relief from the unfunded and partially funded mandates already required.

Please be aware that the Board of Directors and the administration are currently considering all alternatives relative to the budget. It is the intent of the District to keep student programs at the forefront of what we do, however in light of continued State reductions it may not be possible to completely protect student programs.

**What is the District doing to address student numbers at Prairie View Elementary?**

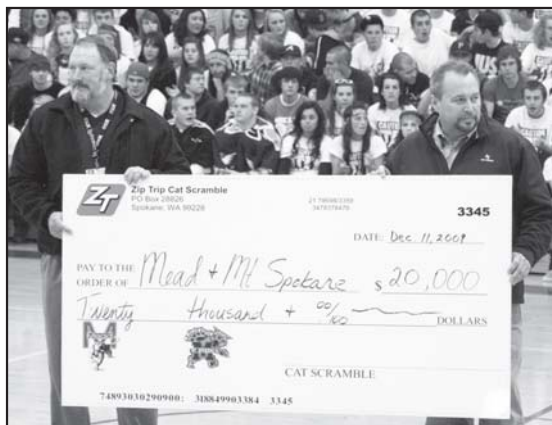
After much consideration the district has decided that placing modular classrooms, for use at the beginning of the 2010-11 school year, is the best solution to the crowded situation we experience at Prairie View. A little over three years ago Prairie View Elementary opened its doors to more students than it was designed to house and many were questioning the size of the building. During that time the only option available to us was to transport 80-100 students to other school sites.

Mead School District has had a long-standing practice of adopting an elementary school design model that houses 540-600 students, which is the optimum number of students for a successful educational program. This same model was used in planning Prairie View, even though it is the largest elementary school in our District, in square feet. More than 600 students housed in an elementary building would overburden core area space such as gym, commons/lunchroom, multipurpose room and parking, and it would impact instructional programs. In immediate response to this issue the District proposed a "portable and technology" levy that was subsequently turned down by the voters. That proposal was issued because the District was still in the process of finishing Prairie View and in mid-construction of Mountainside Middle School. The prudent budgetary practice of reserving "capital budget" dollars was necessary until the completion of these two projects. Now that both projects have been completed the Board of Directors may now appropriate the remaining capital resources to the purchase of portable classrooms at Prairie View and alleviate some the space issues.

**Send your questions or concerns to: [questions@mead.k12.wa.us](mailto:questions@mead.k12.wa.us).**

## Community-wide Involvement Helps Fosters School Success

### Mead/Mount Spokane Cat Scramble Golf Tournament



Mead Superintendent Tom Rockefeller and Ian Johnstone from Cenex/Zip Trip present the proceeds from the 2009 Cat Scramble Golf Tournament to district high school students.

This fall, 136 golfers participated in the 12<sup>th</sup> annual **Cat Scramble Golf Tournament** at Wandermere Golf Course. This annual event raises money for the athletic programs at Mt. Spokane and Mead High Schools. Since the tournament's humble beginnings in 1998, it has grown to provide just over \$20,000 per year split evenly between the two high schools. The funds are used to augment athletic program budgets for uniforms, equipment, etc.

This tradition would not be possible without the generous support of the Mead Community. Last year's Title Sponsor was **Cenex/ZipTrip**. Corporate sponsors were **Frito-Lay, Perfection Tire, Therapeutic Associates (Wandermere and Mount Spokane), KXLY, Pepsi and Core-Mark International**. In addition to the seven corporate sponsors, there were 22 hole sponsors in 2009. The Cat Scramble Committee hopes to see the event continue to grow and expand to a full 36 hole sponsors for 2010.

The Cat Scramble for 2010 will be Saturday, September 18<sup>th</sup> at Wandermere Golf Course. At least \$2,000 in prizes will be given out as part of the tournament. If you would like to learn more about being a sponsor for this year's event, volunteer to help, register to play or just donate to this great cause, please contact the high school Booster Clubs for more information or go to the Cat Scramble website: <http://meadschooldistrict.schools.officelive.com>

### Colbert Elementary Wins National Award

Colbert Elementary was one of only 314 schools across the nation to earn the designation *Blue Ribbon School* from the U.S. Secretary of Education. State assessments show nearly 80% of all Colbert students meet the standards in reading, math and writing. In 2009, 94% of fourth graders and 98% of sixth graders met Washington Assessment of Student Learning reading standards. Washington State Senator Maria Cantwell offered praise for Colbert's success. "Principal Jared

Hoadley, the staff and the students of Colbert Elementary exemplify how a commitment to excellence can provide outstanding educational opportunities to children," she said. "We need more schools like this in Washington state."

### Mead High Students Earn Avista Video Honors

This February, **Avista Corporation** recognized several Mead High students as winners in the first annual *Every Little Bit* video contest examining energy efficiency. High school students throughout the utility's three state service area were challenged to examine energy use and develop videos that inform and inspire others to take part in saving energy and conserving resources.

The Grand Prize Winner selected from 138 entries was *Cleaner, Greener, Healthier*, the video produced by Mead High students **Rachael Becker, Shelby Foo and Isabel Apperson**. The entries were reviewed and scored by a panel of judges from Avista, E-Source, North by Northwest Productions, 14 Four and Pierpoint Media. Each Grand Prize team member will receive a Flip HD Video Camera, and Mead High School will receive a \$2,500 technology grant from Avista. In addition, the students will get to spend a day with **North by Northwest Productions** editing their video for public commercial viewing.

Recognized as Honorable Mention Winners were the videos *Dreaming About Energy* by Mead High students **Chelsey Larson, Matt Schroeder and Katherine Jorgenson** and *Going Green* by **Savannah Miller, Heather Lundgren and Jessica Moore**.

Mead High School teachers **Regan Drew, Adam Daniel and Lee Chambers** provided student direction.

### High Schools honored as Best of the Best

Mead High School was recently awarded silver medal status as part of the third annual U.S. News and World Report study on America's Best High Schools. Mead Principal, Ken Russell states that the *U.S. News and World Report* study demonstrates student achievement of both state academic standards in reading and mathematics and student achievement of college-level academic standards.

In addition, Mt. Spokane High School earned *Newsweek Magazine's "Top of the Class"* honors for the third year in a row. The Newsweek list recognizes the top 1500 high schools in the nation.

### Congratulations!

Fairwood Retirement Village resident Hazel (Baker) Rodes will be 100 years old on February 26<sup>th</sup>. Mrs. Rodes graduated in 1928 from Mead Union High School on Market Street, the forerunner of Mead High School. She can remember picking the school colors for Mead High, blue and gold. Congratulations on your 100<sup>th</sup> birthday Mrs. Rodes and great job on picking those colors!

### Mead Education Foundation Announces Grant Winners

Nearly \$9,500 was recently handed out to Mead schools, courtesy of the Mead Education Foundation.

Created to support the teachers, staff, and students of the Mead School District, the MEF gathers and focuses community resources through fundraising efforts, enabling the foundation to fully fund an endowment for educational excellence and sustainable future growth – as well as grants for teacher innovation. Since its inception, the group has distributed more than \$70,000 to Mead schools.

Recent grantees include:

- Travis Franklin, grade 5-6 teacher, **Shiloh Hills Elementary** – \$1,400
- Nancy Phillips, library media specialist, **Farwell Elementary** – \$1,470
- David Stedman, English/social studies teacher, **Mead High School** – \$1,500
- Dave Gamon, science teacher, **Northwood Middle School** – \$1,500
- Susan Hornor, grade 3-4 teacher, **Evergreen Elementary** – \$1,500
- Celia Lundin, LAP facilitator, **Prairie View Elementary** – \$1,400
- Kim Montecucco, kindergarten teacher, **Prairie View** – \$550

According to Mead School District superintendent Dr. Tom Rockefeller, the foundation, now in its sixth year, continues to play an important role in Mead schools. "Both students and staff," he said, "have greatly benefited from the additional technology, instructional materials, and student activity support that the MEF has provided above and beyond basic funding."

The MEF, online at [meaeducationfoundation.org](http://meaeducationfoundation.org), is a non-profit organization under Section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Service Code. All donations to the fund are tax-deductible, and volunteers are always welcome.



An MEF grant of \$550 purchased new classroom books for Kindergarten students at Prairie View Elementary