



School District Budget Challenges

The poor economy is significantly affecting the State MAEP (Minimum Adequate Education Program) funding that the Grenada School District receives. Districts across the State have received unprecedented budget cuts caused by sales tax shortfalls. Although Mississippi has been one of the last states to be impacted by the status of the economy, Mississippi will also be one of the last states to recover. Funding from the State has been reduced significantly over the past two years with projections of continued reductions for the next two unless there is a turnaround in the economy.

Superintendent Dr. David Daigneault states, "During the present

year the GSD has sustained cuts approximating 9.5%, about 1.6 million, after a promise of full funding. Last year, even though the legislature voted to fully fund education, the State funding for the education budget was cut after contracts were issued and classes had begun. During the last 15 months, the GSD has sustained approximately 2.3 million dollars of cuts. We have already used part of the District's savings. We have tried to function with these cuts. We have postponed deep cuts as long as possible, but we are now being forced to make significant reductions in our operations."

Beginning July 1, the school's next fiscal year, the State Superintendent of Education is recommending a budget

reduction of 12-15% because of low tax projections. This translates to an additional shortfall between 2.5 and 3 million dollars of reductions for GSD this year. This would make the loss for our district's upcoming fiscal year and the past two years a total of 4.7 million dollars.

"Salaries and benefits comprise 78.9% of the GSD budget," says Dr. Daigneault. "Therefore we have no choice but to adjust personnel and extended contracts, reduce school and program budgets, cut programs, and be prudent in all expenditures. Difficult decisions have to be made to ensure the well-being and financial solvency of our District."

AmeriCorps Fosters Reading

The GSD AmeriCorps organization is comprised of twenty members dedicated to the academic improvement of K-8 students. Their mission statement, "Advancing academic skills through tutoring and reading programs," has provided the method to enable many of our students to advance their skills.

The AmeriCorps members, in collaboration with the Elizabeth Jones Library, recently completed the third of the four after-school reading programs. (A summer program is also scheduled.) The presentation was part of the Read Across America National Service Day on March 2 honoring Dr. Seuss' birthday. Many Dr. Seuss characters attended, including the Cat in the Hat, the Grinch, Mrs. Whoville, and Cindy Lou.

The next reading program will take place on



April 27 from 4:00-5:00 p.m., at the Elizabeth Jones Library. Promotional invitations will be sent to all students in grades K-5 through GES and GUES. The topic of the upcoming program will be "Caring and Sharing, Volunteering and Helping Others."

View past issues of the newsletter and/or receive the Communicator newsletter automatically each month in color via email by registering at:

<http://www.gsd.k12.ms.us/newslettersignup2.html>

GSD Public Relations Initiatives

While students, teachers, and administrators compose the front lines of a school district, many other departments operate behind the scenes. At the Grenada School District, the Public Relations department works constantly to promote and develop the district.

The GSD PR department has a designated teacher or administrator at each school responsible for capturing photographs at important school events. The photographs are forwarded to Stephanie Raper for editing and publication in the local paper. Weekly articles published in *The Grenada Star* provide the community with updates and information about District activities. Stephanie Raper serves as the reporter responsible for writing and submitting the articles each week.

This monthly newsletter is also a function of the department. The newsletter is distributed in black and white to all GSD students, posted on the District website, and emailed to interested individuals that have registered on the District website. (See instructions at the top of the page to register.)

Various members of the PR department develop numerous multi-media projects each year designed to promote and enhance the district. Past projects include brochures for each school, a sixteen-page booklet promoting the school district, website development and maintenance, and various projects and promotional items used within the school system. All of the projects created by the GSD PR department are produced within the district. The ability to produce high quality promotional materials in-house saves the Grenada School District time and money. Recently the PR department has been working on two different projects – upgrading the district’s promotional booklet and developing an interactive DVD, each developed for distribution by the Chamber of Commerce and realtors.

The sixteen-page Grenada School District promotional booklet contains pictures and articles describing each of the schools and projects within the district. Since the booklet is written and printed using Grenada School District equipment and personnel, any changes can be incorporated into the brochure quickly using cost-effective methods.

The in-progress interactive DVD features students’ voiceovers from each school. These students narrate virtual tours describing the unique opportunities offered in each school. The DVD is being produced in sections, with the Elementary and Upper Elementary sections in production now, and Middle School and High School sections slated for completion in the fall of 2010.

Students chosen to narrate the interactive DVD utilize the state-of-the-art recording studio located at the Grenada Career and Technical Center. The studio was designed and built as part of the Podcasting course offered through the 21st Century Grant program. Voice talent featured on the DVD include GES students Alexa Simco, Christopher Davis, Alonzo Lockhart, Presley Rice, and Trayla Crawford; GUES students Jaime Muilwik, Anna Blair, Bailey Muselwhite, and Isaac Spears; and GMS students Blake Tilghman, Akeelein Forrest, and Jordan Holland. Grenada High School students will also participate as narrators as development of the DVD progresses.

The Grenada School District offers many opportunities for current and future community members to learn about our district. Each school distributes brochures detailing their specific offerings. The sixteen-page district booklet is presently available through the Chamber of Commerce, local realtors, or the GSD Administration Office. The DVD, when completed, will also be distributed through these venues, providing a virtual tour for prospective residents. Compressed videos from the DVD will also be placed upon the District website.

Article written by Stephanie Raper