

Superintendent's State of the District Address January 2011



The enormity of the financial crisis facing the Coronado Unified School District is difficult to describe. We continue to call this event a recession, or just recently some have been calling it “The Great Recession.” Although it may not be called by definition a depression, it is certainly a horrific financial event that has caused difficult social and emotional issues for almost everyone in our state and community.

Our district continues to be set apart from other local state agencies because of the wisdom of the former and current Governing Board and because of the sacrifice and dedication shown by our faculty and staff. Last year the Board devised a plan that recognized the enormity of this crisis and set budget conditions over a five year span, much longer than any other school district. Our employee associations wisely agreed with this philosophy, which is why we find the district fiscally solvent, not needing to borrow money for expenses, and able to continue to plan for the future of our children.

Last year Governor Schwarzenegger’s plan for 10-11 included an additional \$1.5 billion in education cuts. Adding this to the already unbelievable cut of \$1.5 million and we faced the reality of well over \$2 million in ongoing cuts last year. To summarize in a simple manner, from 2007 through 2010 we lost \$3.1 million in revenue. The budget passed for 2010-11 in October added another \$2.7 million to this loss. The total loss of revenue to CUSD from 07-08 through 10-11 equals a staggering \$5.8 million or approximately 23% of total revenues.

Governor Brown will also wrestle with this financial beast and the result will be continued hard times for all of us. The additional cuts proposed by the Governor will have a staggering effect on our state. Fortunately, it appears that there will be no more cuts for K-12 institutions since school districts have already absorbed more than 60% of all state budget cuts. However, the cost of living continues to rise and so do ongoing expenses; this district will continue to deficit spend for years to come. And if the proposed June election does not see the Governor’s proposal for continued taxes passed, even more cuts will need to be made to all state agencies.

“Normal” is gone forever; it is time for us to accept this loss, end our time of grief, and get on with the task of educating our children. This is not to say we have neglected this task, but it is obvious to the community by now that services in our schools and at the district office are at a minimum. Although core subject instruction is protected, subjects other than core classes have been reduced, class sizes were increased, all employees received pay cuts via furlough days, and many teacher positions were not filled.

Because of the depth of this crisis, I am calling for the community to rally together in a series of discussions, or an Educational Summit. This summit will take place on consecutive Thursdays in February before our next regularly scheduled School Board meeting on February 17th. The purpose of this summit is to discuss and understand the implications of continued deficit spending by our local district and to decide on those things that are most important to us educationally. This prioritization of educational values will allow the faculty and staff to prepare

a budget for school board approval that not only attempts to balance financially, but to also maintain those programs and classes that the community deems important.

Because of various (sometimes nonsensical) deadlines imposed on us by the state, it is important that this summit be held quickly. Therefore, I am not only calling on the community to attend these meetings and participate actively, but I am also asking that the Governing Board consider several proposals that I have configured in order to either take advantage of efficiencies or to improve student achievement.

These proposals are aligned with the Governing Board Goals for 10-11. Many of these proposals overlap goals, some of them require additional funding, and others must be negotiated with the employee associations. Nevertheless, I believe it is important to discuss the financial crisis and these proposals in a setting that invites the entire community to participate.

GOAL #1– *Discern the unique characteristics of 21st century students and implement plans to educate students using online instructional techniques and digital tools*

- Introduce STEM to all K-12 students. The acronym STEM stands for science, technology, engineering, and mathematics. The fields are collectively considered core technological underpinnings of an advanced society and are viewed as an indicator of a nation's ability to sustain itself.
- Add the Arts to the STEM programs already existing at the high school to form a collective instructional movement named STEAM. Promoting the Arts in this way will round-out the learning experience, involve CoSA in the general education of all K-12, and protect the integrity of the Arts programs.
- Strengthen online learning movement by housing such educational services at Palm Academy. Palm would serve all high school students daily by lengthening its school hours, broadening the scope of offerings, and promoting online learning to a greater number of students.
- Continue the move toward virtualization of services such as cloud computing by contracting with the San Diego County Office of Education for data storage or warehousing. This service will include migration of data, onsite/offsite backup, and retrieval.
- Continue moving towards one to one (1:1) student computing by introducing digital textbooks in high school science courses.

GOAL #2– *Communicate the District's fiscal prudence and stress the need for additional significant financial support in order to sustain and expand student success*

- Continue work on building “dashboard” access to data retrieval for improved decision-making to target academic, financial, and personnel resources.
- Request renewal of the SATT 21 grant from the DoDEA; renewal of this \$1.25 million grant would continue the 1:1 trend and encourage individualized learning for all students.

GOAL #3– *Improve the content and frequency of communications with and among shareholders by using written, digital, and face to face methods*

- Call for an Education Summit in Coronado to begin with the District Strategic Planning session on January 31st and continuing on February 3, 10, and 17.
- Encourage district-wide collaboration and articulation by creating three days of professional development within the school year (August, October, and January) for all district staff.

GOAL #4– *Promote character education community-wide and encourage all shareholders to model the Six Pillars of Character*

- Develop stronger relationships with community organizations such as Coronado SAFE to build programs that educate students and parents on social skills, life skills, civic virtue, and emotional stability using the Six Pillars of Character as the foundation for such learning.

GOAL #5– *Encourage a culture where all shareholders seek the highest level of performance and develop assessments that evaluate progress toward this goal*

- Elevate the importance of professional learning communities (PLC). The PLC is an extended learning opportunity to foster collaborative learning among teachers within a school or district. This new emphasis on PLCs would feature “best practices” as a priority for discussion and accountability.
- Create a new form of evaluation for all teachers and administrators (certificated staff) that is designed to promote effectiveness, with multiple measures of assessment using input from all shareholders (similar to proposal from CA State Board of Education that was approved on 12/15/10 agenda item #5).
- Create a new form of evaluation for all classified staff as their job performance relates to student achievement. Develop criteria for assessing the impact on student achievement as it pertains to the idea of customer service philosophy from companies such as Nordstrom.
- Provide continuous formative assessments (i.e. NWEA-MAP) for all students that provide a high level of data to teachers and principals in order to inform instruction.
- Emphasize an environment of student-centered thinking whereby the student believes he/she is personally in charge of their education and therefore motivated to be responsible for the outcomes of learning.
- Create a system of instruction that develops an Individualized Learning Plan for each student that is understood and adopted by each student utilizing measurable and frequently measured outcomes.

Homework Policy Proposal in Response to “Race to Nowhere” Film & Discussion

- Homework practices have been consistently identified by parents as an issue critical to the stress problem. I propose we establish a formal “No Homework” calendar for consistent process, and in addition closely examine our homework policy through a teacher committee to ensure homework has purpose, is given in appropriate amounts, and is consistent across courses, among other aspects of the issue.
- I also propose that homework may be assigned only four nights per week, Monday through Thursday. Weekend and holiday homework shall not be assigned. Teachers are encouraged to provide assignments in advance to allow flexible time management opportunities to students and their families. Of course, when a student does not use his/her time well s/he will have more work to do at home. And when a student takes a course which is generally offered above his/her grade level, that student can expect to spend a greater amount of time doing homework for that course.