

Economy Affects School Funding

You may know from recent news stories that the state is facing a budget shortfall. The economy affects school districts just as it does everyone else, and school districts must reduce or reallocate costs wherever possible, while still providing essential services to students.

The district must prepare for several possibilities, including:

- reduced state funding
- no increase in funding, or
- an increase amounting to less than needed to maintain our current level of services.

In addition, Johnson County school districts will experience reduced funding next year because of the expiration of the Johnson County education sales tax, which brought approximately \$5.4 million to our district annually.

Last year, through careful planning and judicious cost-saving measures, we were able to reduce the 2008-09 expenditures by approximately \$3.5 million. The district is facing a deficit of \$8.6 million for next year. This is due to the loss of the sales tax revenue, enrollment growth, increases in health insurance and utilities, and the requirements of No Child Left Behind.

We are now in the process of identifying additional cost avoidance for the 2009-10 school year. These cost-saving efforts are absolutely critical to our district. Our Board of Education has made every effort over the past three years to reduce the mill levy and in some cases, use reserves to reduce the burden on the taxpayer.

You can help by being aware of the school funding situation. We will post information about the budget, along with frequently asked questions about school funding, on the district web site. If you have questions or would like additional information, please contact our Communications Office, nbrownec@olatheschools.com, (913) 780-8245.