

FINANCIAL CONCERNS GROWING

I probably don't need to remind you of this, but the economy of Ohio, and the nation as a whole, continues to be a major concern for all of us. This concern isn't just limited to who has a job and who lost their job; it is now so serious that unemployment funds and even retirement funds could be affected. This is startling news for most of us because we have not seen an economic situation of these proportions since the 1930's.

School districts across Ohio, as well as their employees are forced to deal with Ohio's budget woes just as each and every household is dealing with it. The Adams County/Ohio Valley School District is no different in this regard. Whether it looks like it or not, we continue to scrutinize our budget and how our dollars are utilized. We are constantly looking for ways to stretch your tax dollars so that we don't have to ask you for additional tax millage now or in the near future. As an example, we try to purchase updated texts on a rotational basis for each subject. This is especially true for the core subject areas. New math texts may be purchase every 5 or 6 years, and so on. This is one way we stretch our dollars. Right now, a new school bus costs just under \$80,000.00. In two years, that cost will jump to close to \$100,000.00 per bus. We have to keep our fleet relatively new and in good safety order. That is why we try to purchase 3 or 4 buses per year. At this rate, we turn over every bus in about 12-15 years. While our bus fleet is one of the best maintained in the area, it is preferred that a bus be replaced after about 10-12 years of steady service. The bus is then used as a spare bus for a few years until permanent retirement.

As the board members and I continually look for ways to preserve and stretch your tax dollars in this economy and state of school funding, we are now giving a serious look to dual bus routing for all students effective with the 2009-2010 school year.

Dual routing is a system whereby grades 7-12 would be brought to school on one shift, and grades K-6 would be brought in on a different shift or schedule. This is not the same thing as split sessions because in split sessions all students attend the school in the same building in that attendance area. They just attend at different times. In dual routing, you are still using both buildings within the attendance area. You are merely bringing students to and from school on different schedules. We have actually been looking at dual routing for almost a year. And, we have been doing so openly.

Why would we consider dual routing in the AC/OVSD? First, we have a concern with student safety on the bus. Even though there were “interesting things” that occurred on school buses 40-50 years ago, those activities were somewhat mild when compared to what younger students are occasionally exposed to at times on school buses today. So, one advantage to dual routing would be the separation of younger children from the older students. As we prepare for the move into our new elementary schools, possibly as early as next December, the traffic around our campuses is going to increase dramatically in each attendance area. Dual routing would eliminate a lot of this congestion and, once again, promote better safety for all. Finally, dual routing will save the district money, as we will be able to go from 46 routes, plus 5 handicapped routes, down to 32-33 routes, plus the handicapped routes.

Several of our neighboring school districts have been using dual routing for a number of years. They are doing it for two reasons---safety and savings.

Our school district is still studying this option and a plan is being put together for the board's consideration. The board hopes to make a decision sometime after the first of the year regarding dual routing for the 2009-2010 school year. More updates on this possibility will be forthcoming. In the near future, we want to hear from parents regarding the two possible options

for dual routing. So, we are going to create a very short survey (1-2 questions) that we will add to our district website as a new link. As soon as this survey is ready, I will contact parents via our School Messenger System to let you know that it is ready for your input. In the meantime, ask us questions and tell us what you think.

HAPPY HOLIDAYS TO ALL!

I would like to take this opportunity to wish all of you a Happy Holiday Season. While things may look a little grim this year as compared to recent years, we still have much to be thankful for when we stop to reflect on it. Certainly, we can all hope that we will be in better economic shape by the end of 2009 than what we are at this time. Regardless, let's not forget to count our blessings. Happy Holidays, everyone!

If you have any questions about this or any of my articles, please feel free to contact me at 544-5586. Thank you.

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Superintendent