

Dear Colleagues,

As we begin the new year, I would like to take this opportunity to communicate with you directly about the district's budget outlook. I hope you will take a few minutes to read and reflect on the information I'm sharing in this message.

The projected budget deficit for next school year is neither unexpected nor unique to Vancouver Public Schools. Although the legislature provided an additional \$2 billion of McCleary money to districts for 2018-19, the levy swap takes away \$1.2 billion for 2019-20 by imposing a cap on local levy resources. The McCleary legislation also worsens the inequities that existed under the old funding system. As a result, districts throughout the state are anticipated to face major financial challenges in the coming months and years.

Even after the McCleary investments, the state continues to underfund K-12 education. In VPS, about \$4 million in local levy resources are needed annually to cover the cost of special education. The state only pays for 3.5 nursing positions and 4.2 safety and security positions in our 37 schools and specialized programs. The state also significantly underfunds teaching positions necessary for grades 4-12 class-size reduction as well as counseling positions and custodial staff. All of these costs, and much more, still must be paid through local levies. Yet, due to the state-mandated levy cap, the 2019-2020 amount of our education and operations levy, if approved by voters on Feb. 12, combined with forecasted state levy equalization matching funds is estimated to be \$22.5 million less than our 2017-18 fiscal year collections, a decrease of nearly 40 percent.

I have asked our governor, OSPI and the legislature to fix the new funding system as soon as possible. If they don't, we will have no other choice but to cut valued programs and services, including employee positions, to balance next year's budget. I am 100 percent committed to continuing my legislative advocacy on behalf of the students, families, employees and community of VPS. I encourage you to contact our state elected officials throughout the legislative session to let them know that their work on the McCleary legislation is not finished.

Please know that I respect each and every one of you, and I deeply appreciate the work you do for all of our children. The board of directors and I are committed, and always have been committed, to attracting and retaining a world-class workforce by providing professional compensation for educators and fair and competitive wages for support staff. The district must honor, and will honor, all contract provisions with its employee associations. Now is the time for us to come together to put pressure where pressure belongs—with our elected leaders in Olympia.

Sincerely,

Steve

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