

Message to School District 271 employees by Supt Matt Handelman Thursday, Dec. 18, 2014

Dear Colleagues,

I wanted to touch base with you all one last time in 2014. There are certainly a lot of amazing things going on around the district, from Jingle Books to heartwarming stories of giving at so many schools. Staff and students alike have done so much to help others - signs of an amazing organization made up of wonderful people - a true extended family. Of course, all of this is occurring with the backdrop of continued great teaching and learning, straight up until break.

Though not ideal to be part of a holiday greeting, I want to take a moment to communicate directly and as openly as I can with everyone about what you have probably heard or read in the news: Our construction bond budget gap. Yes, it is true – about \$1.8M. This is troubling, but not insurmountable.

This week, I spoke with our Certified Advisory groups about the situation (you might ask your building rep for more details if you are interested). I can tell everyone this: Rumors that someone has “run away” with money are not true ... no kickbacks, nothing illegal. We certainly have a huge challenge on our hands – reminiscent of what happened with/to the Lakes remodel long before my arrival. But this situation is actually extremely different: in the Lakes situation, our district overspent; this time, it was about being overly optimistic about savings from other projects – savings that didn’t materialize.

There are bits of good news around this which make me confident we will get through this latest challenge: Financially, our district is now much more solvent than back then – over the last five to seven years, our board and administration have committed to (and CEA has supported) securing a strong fund balance. These funds are designed specifically to help us through situations like this, hence the phrase “contingency reserve.” Also, bridging this funding gap is a one-time expense, so it won’t encumber us long term. Lastly, we will indeed be finishing the Winton reconstruction, which is progressing on schedule, to open for the start of the 2015-16 school year.

Most importantly, I wish you all a very joyous and peaceful holiday season, a Merry Christmas, and Happy New Year. Take time to cherish some quality time with family and friends, and to rest and rejuvenate over the two week vacation. You’ve earned it. Looking forward to a great 2015 together.

Sincerely,
Matt