

School Council Agenda

September 24, 2014 @ 9:30 a.m.

Location: Sope Creek Elementary Leadership Lodge

Members Present: School Councils and Leadership from Area 3 of Cobb County

1. Call to order

- Called to order by Martha Whalen at 9:32 am

2. Review and approve agenda

- Agenda approved
- Invitation to watch 9 minute 40 second video about School Councils on Cobb County webpage.

3. Welcome Area 3 School Councils & Special Guests

4. Special Presentations

- **Georgia Budget and Policy Institute (Claire Suggs)**
 - Cobb County parents' involvement
 - Critical period for state legislative funding in this next session.
 - GPBI – based in Atlanta. Non-profit, non-partisan think tank.
 - What does GPBI do? Work in taxes, budget, education, health care, economic security, and economic development.
 - **Three big ideas for discussion today:**
 - Where are we today with state and local funding?
 - Information can be found in GBPI Budget Primer: <http://gbpi.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/08/Budget-Primer-Online-Version.pdf>
 - **Since 2002 in Georgia:**
 - State funding has declined 12% on average.
 - The percent of economically disadvantaged students climbed from 45% to 62%
 - In Cobb, State funding has declined by 14.5%. Poverty rate has increased from 24% to 45%.
 - State funding for education has declined over the years, requiring more reliance in education on local and federal dollars.
 - **What is causing this? AUSTERITY CUTS.**
 - Georgia has a funding formula (QBE) to distribute state dollars. This formula is based on numbers of students and the programs that serve them (Special Education, ESOL, etc.)
 - Formula was created in 1985. Beginning in 2003, legislature began to not fully fund the QBE Formula.
 - This year, the austerity cut is \$746 million. The cumulative effect of these cuts over time is \$8.4 billion.

- Austerity cut this year for Cobb = \$45 million. Austerity cut per student: \$411. Cumulative austerity cut for Cobb = \$537 million
- Change in way we provide health care for non-certified employees (custodians, accountants, bus drivers, etc.). In 2011, state stopped covering that cost. Now providing that health care is totally reliant on districts. Districts are spending 185% more this year to cover health care for these employees. In Cobb, we are paying 211% more than we did in 2009.
- In Cobb, tax digest fell 25% between 2008-2013. We did not raise the millage rate. Local revenue fell 21.8%.
- Impact of cuts of state funding and loss of local revenue
 - Impact of funding losses-FY 2014 on Districts across the State
 - 71% of districts cut the school year (fewer days in school).
 - 95% increased class size
 - 70% eliminated instructional support positions.
 - 80% cut central office staff
 - 82% used reserve funds.
 - 42% eliminated art/music programs
 - 38% cut programs for struggling students
 - There have been some improvements with the restoration of \$314 million to the budget this year, but we are not back to where we were in 2009. The impact on South Georgia is tremendous.
- State's big budget picture
 - Georgia services rely on Income Tax. This is the single biggest source of revenue for the state, meaning it is the single biggest source of revenue for the schools.
 - Education (University, K-12) comprises over 50% of the state's budget.
 - QBE Funding filters/distribute most education dollars.
 - Formula-driven.
 - Looking ahead to 2015 legislative session:
 - WILL BE CRITICAL TO EDUCATION.
 - MAKE YOUR OPINION OF FUNDING FOR PUBLIC EDUCATION KNOWN TO YOUR LEGISLATORS.
 - Parents in Cobb County got engaged, they called the legislators, the governor, and put money back into the education budget.
 - This is the time now to talk to legislators, not when it is busy in January when the legislative session starts. ***It is best to contact them now.*** Being engaged and calling makes a difference. Most of our legislators in Cobb do not send their children to public schools. Makes it even more important to call so they know.

- Contact Info:
- Claire Suggs, Senior Policy Analyst csuggs@gbpi.org
www.gbpi.org
www.factbook.com/gabudget
<http://www.twitter.com/gabudget>
<http://gbpi.org/category/blog>

- **Face It Cobb (Kristy Flowers)**

- Created 2 years ago when ESPLOST came about. Group of parents that lobbied to get parents to vote.
- Lobbied the legislature in conjunction with other groups to “Quit Putting Education on a Shoestring Budget.”
- We are unsure of the legislature will continue to fund education with the same priority as they did last year.
- How do you get your voices heard?
 - Vote. Educate yourself on the candidates. Three people who make a true impact on decision-making that impacts education are: Governor, Lieutenant Governor, State Wide Superintendent.
 - Candidate survey conducted by a group of organizations. Non-partisan view of candidates’ views:
http://www.empoweredga.org/uploads/3/7/9/7/37978573/candidates_views_2014_edition.pdf
- We still have a budget issue in Cobb County (\$75 million). If we will vote and we get active, we can make a difference in what happens in this district and we can decrease class sizes.
- Like Face It Cobb on Facebook.

5. Adjournment

- Meeting adjourned at 10:33 am.