

JERSEY COUNTY JOURNAL

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Details on cuts at Southwestern

TO THE EDITOR:

Did you know the Southwestern budget cuts will have the following impacts?

Elementary school impacts:

- No art, music, band, physical education, library, or computer classes with trained staff.
- No pre-kindergarten program. The current pre-K program teaches not only academic skills but also social expectations. With no pre-K, the most at-risk students will be falling behind and the Kindergarten teachers will have to slow down instruction to keep everyone on task. This will have a rippling effect on all grade levels.
- Shipman's Kindergarten and first grade classes could be bused to Brighton West.
- The loss of training for Reading Recovery will impact the effectiveness of the program.
- Reading Recovery provides one-on-one instruction for struggling first grade readers.
- The Talented and Gifted (TAG) program will not be offered.
- Class sizes could be around 30 and 34 students per room in some buildings.
- Shipman and Medora will share one principal.
- Brighton West and Brighton North will share one principal.
- Medora, the high school and the middle school will share one nurse, as will Brighton North, Brighton West and Shipman. Our schools have major medical concerns: asthma, diabetes, seizure disorders, etc. A nurse will not always be available to handle emergency situations, sick children or the administration of prescription medications.
- With no full time principal or nurse at the elementary schools, the secretaries will be forced to fulfill the duties of these positions on top of their already enormous workloads.
- Elementary teachers will be asked to perform supervisory duties that teachers' aides previously fulfilled allowing no time for planning lessons, grading papers or contacting parents.
- No computer lab aides will be available to update school web pages which will also affect parent/school communication.

Middle school impacts:

- Art, which is a state-mandated class for middle school students, will not be offered.
- The current Directed Learning Center Reading (DLCR) class will not be offered. This class currently does state-mandated benchmark testing (AIMS web testing), auto skills testing,

provides access to the reading academy program, and provides student access to the library. This class also allows for one-on-one reading interventions that are mandated by the Response to Intervention (RTI) requirements from the state. These interventions are shown to significantly improve reading levels and again are required by the state or the grant from which funding was obtained. If we do not utilize these grant-funded programs, we will lose that funding and those programs.

- English and literature teachers will be required to complete the state mandated testing and provide necessary interventions for RTI. This will take away from the current instruction of grammar, writing and literature.
- Technology/computer class will not be offered, therefore our students will not have the opportunity to improve their typing skills or learn how to use the computer programs that are necessary for high school, college, and/or the work force.
- The middle school will be forced to go from a block schedule, where classes are offered every other day in 80 minute blocks, to a schedule that mimics the high school's schedule. Classes will be held daily for shorter periods of time giving teachers less time to help students with daily work, meaning more homework for the students.
- With every class meeting daily for shorter periods of time, there will be more passing periods and transitions. Elementary students coming into the middle school are not accustomed to this and may struggle with the pace.
- The after school activity buses have been cut. This will affect the middle school more than any other school in the district in the fact that any club or sport that is able to be retained will be negatively impacted since our students are not able to drive.
- Careers will not be explored due to losing the guidance counselor for the MS/IIS.

High school impacts:

- The high school science labs have been nonfunctioning for the last five years. Not a single lab station has access to gas, running water or electricity. Lab equipment, such as microscopes and hot plates, is almost nonexistent. Obviously with the budget cuts, these will not be fixed or purchased. This means that our students will go to college without the simple lab experience necessary to be successful.
- The social studies department will have only two teachers to teach the required classes for graduation to the entire student body which will cause class sizes to average around 40 students per class.
- By having only two social studies teachers, the nine other social studies electives taught in the past for graduation will NO longer be offered.
- The English department may be reduced by one teacher with one of the current Spanish instructors teaching English. This will cause the electives to be cut in both the English and Spanish departments. With fewer electives in both departments, students wanting to take higher level classes will have a hard time working them into their schedules.
- Cuts in the business department, along with no computer classes at the elementary or middle school levels, will severely limit our students' success rate in the business world where knowledge of technology is vital.
- With reduced staff, graduation requirements will more than likely be lowered which will not allow our students to receive the education which previously allowed them to be more than adequately prepared for college.

- No art classes at the elementary or middle school levels will negatively affect the high school art program. Students interested in careers associated with art will have a disadvantage compared with students pursuing the same goals from other districts.
- No band or chorus at the elementary schools will eventually end band and chorus at the middle school and high school. Students interested in careers associated with music will be at a disadvantage compared with others in our area pursuing the same goals.

Overall district impacts:

- No teachers' aides except those needed to fulfill the needs of an individualized education plan (ITT). This will mean:
 - Less one-on-one help for struggling students.
 - No one to consistently maintain our libraries.
 - An impact on student safety with fewer adults to supervise throughout the day.
- Fewer principals and nurses which will affect student safety and health. Fewer custodians and maintenance employees.
- Fewer speech pathologists available to work with students needing speech services.
- Technology and computer issues will not be addressed as quickly due to one of the specialists being reduced to part-time.
- Less community involvement (i.e., mini art museum, Christmas programs, band concerts, etc.) due to band, art and music being cut at the elementary level.
- No fine arts or enrichment programs which will affect learning and state standards being met.
- Cuts in Title I and reading programs, fewer resources, and larger class sizes which will result in less individualized attention for the students. This means standardized tests scores, such as ISAT, ACT and PSAT, will likely go down.
- Astronomical fees will now have to be paid to assure your child receives a "free" public education.

What can you do?

At this time, the Southwestern School Board has not prioritized what should be brought back if funds become available. Please take time to study this list and then let the board members know how these impacts are going to affect you and the lives of your children.

Thank you in advance for taking the time to show that our children's education is what is most important.

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