

Information about School Budget Decisions

February 27, 2009

Dear Parents and Guardians,

As most of you know by now, the Edison Collaborative School Committee recently approved a school budget for the 2009-10 academic year that does not include funding for a visual arts teacher. The district cut the instructional budget by 2% this year, which equates to approximately \$50,800.00. (I apologize for the misprint in a previous communication.) The CSC did not easily arrive at the decision to exclude visual arts. The committee weighed many factors in reaching its decision to fund a music class and physical education instruction, with a dance component, and not offer visual arts. The overall budget allocations from the District, the potential class size for individual classrooms, a mill levy mandate that requires two arts classes at the school, input from teachers about the ability to integrate visual arts into the classroom curriculum, and mechanisms for supporting visual arts at Edison, even without a funded art teacher position, all factored into the CSC's decision-making process.

The CSC does not desire to lose the visual arts program at Edison. Instead, the committee members made a difficult decision to allocate limited funding to classroom teachers, paraprofessional support, and to retain Assistant Principal Larry Nelson. These funding priorities are aimed at supporting academic achievement for all students at Edison and align with the goals of the School Improvement Plan. When budget allocations increase, or if money raised through fundraising activities is sufficient, the school will consider funding for the arts program a priority.

The committee did not forego enrichment activities when deciding on the budget. The CSC members recognized the strength of the physical education program offered by Mr. Robert Auday, a past recipient of the Mile High Teacher Award. The dance component of his curriculum satisfies the mill levy arts program mandate. In addition, the continued offering of physical education permits students to participate in active learning during the school day.

The Committee also discussed the difficulty of providing a substitute for music instruction in the classroom setting. Teachers on the committee and on the school's leadership team felt more comfortable integrating visual arts into their curricula than trying to teach music or lead physical education. CSC members encouraged the hiring of a music teacher who can incorporate drama into the music program, with the potential to stage performances for students at all grade levels. To support this endeavor, the CSC decided to hire a part-time (.5 FTE) drama teacher. Therefore, the specials next year will be Music, P.E., Dance, and Drama. Specials will include Kindergarten through 5th grades.

These things obviously do not make up for the absence of a visual arts program. However, the Edison community is already taking steps toward preventing the loss of this important part of our students' education. Since the CSC's budget meetings, PTA, FRED, and concerned parents have initiated efforts to fund visual arts at Edison.

- PTA sent home cookie sale fundraising materials a week after the committee's decision. You may recall that the last cookie sale raised nearly \$7,000.
- Many parents have already asked if it would be possible to give money directly to support providing visual arts instruction next year. We welcome this, and PTA has agreed to set up an account specifically for this purpose. You may write a check to the Edison PTA and Michele Miller in the office will take the money directly.
- Randy Thomae, a parent of an Edison kindergartener, has started a task force to address this problem: Art For Edison. This one-week-old task force has already raised \$785 for art at Edison next year. Please join with Mr. Nelson, Christopher Scott, Suzanne Leff, and me in providing your support to this important mission. You can sign up to follow their progress at artfordison.com.

They will be sending home further information next week. You may contact Randy Thomae directly at randy@artforedison.com.

If you are interested in assisting with any of these activities, please contact Christopher Scott, PTA President, at cscottrun4it@gmail.com.

Even if the fundraising activities do not result in enough money to hire an art teacher, Edison will provide opportunities for students to create art projects. At the end of this school year, Mr. Nelson will coordinate a pilot enrichment program that offers activities for students at all grade levels one day per month. In making its budget decisions, the CSC considered this potential enrichment program for the 2009-10 school year. The school will likely schedule a 2.5-hour block of time each month for these enrichment activities. Please watch for requests for parent volunteers to assist with these activities.

I understand that you may have additional questions about the visual arts program at Edison. I encourage you to contact any CSC member, Mr. Nelson, or me to discuss any questions or concerns. We appreciate your understanding with this difficult decision and hope that, through the proven commitment of the Edison community, we can turn the situation into opportunity for Edison students.

Other Important Information: CSAP, Positive Behavior Support & Report Cards

CSAP is quickly approaching! Our 3rd, 4th, and 5th grade students will be taking the Colorado Student Assessment Program in Math, Reading, Writing, and Science (5th grade only) March 3rd -12th. Please encourage your child to eat a nutritious breakfast, get plenty of sleep and to do their very best. Also, if your child is ill during the CSAP testing please have him/her stay home until he or she is well. We want our students to continue with their success.

To help keep our students safe and to build strong relations among peers, Edison staff and teachers continue to work on "bully proofing" our school. This month teachers will be attending a training session on bullying using the Olweus Bullying Prevention Program. Olweus has been used in more than a dozen countries around the world and has been successful in reducing bullying among children, improving the social climate among classrooms, and reducing antisocial behaviors. In addition, the Bullying Prevention Program helps support Edison as a Positive Behavior School. Ask your child if they can name the character traits of Edison. Edison CARRES!

Just a reminder, report cards will went home with Thursday folders this week. Please note: your child will not receive a grade in Art or Music this trimester. Due to the change in teachers, Mr. Brown and Mrs. Wilson have not had a full semester to fully assess students' learning in the areas of Art and Music. Students will receive a cumulative grade on the last report card going out on the last day of May. Please feel free to contact Mr. Brown or Mrs. Wilson with any questions you may have.

Sincerely,

Ann Christy
Edison Principal