

## Johnson proposes balanced budget to school board

Written by Bernadeia H. Johnson, Ed.D. Superintendent of Schools  
Wednesday, 10 April 2013 12:13

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On March 15, Chief Financial Officer Robert Doty and his finance team presented the preliminary fiscal year (FY) 2014 budget to the finance committee of the Minneapolis Board of Education. You may recall that our school district faced a \$25 million budget shortfall for FY 2014, which begins July 1. I worked with my leadership team to make tough choices, knowing that strategic cuts at the central office level would be necessary to continue to focus on our priorities for schools.

I am pleased to report that the staff budget recommendation puts forth a balanced budget for MPS. The budget recommendation is preliminary and will be discussed by board committees, schools and the community this spring. The finalized budget will be presented to the full school board in early June for a vote in late June.

We began this year's budget process with the goal of adopting a structurally balanced budget that would align with our operational and strategic priorities and keep reductions as far from the classroom as possible. While in recent years we have relied on our fund balance to partially address budget deficits, this practice is not sustainable. We can no longer afford to meet annual budgetary obligations by using our fund balance.

The proposed budget addresses \$7 million of the deficit by accelerating some projects previously scheduled for FY 2014 to this school year and anticipating additional FY 2014 funding from the state while cutting \$16.3 million from our general fund and an additional \$1.6 million from MPS departments with an across-the-board cut of approximately 1.8 percent. Schools were exempt from this across-the-board cut and schools as a whole received the same core allocation as in FY 2013; however, increased enrollment at sites receiving the same funding causes the dollars to be spread thinner.

Approximately 80 percent of all school district costs are directly associated with staff. When we have significant budget shortages, we need to make position reductions. The proposed budget eliminates 50 full-time positions from the central office and three full-time positions from schools in the form of administrative support and dedicated reading specialists.

In addition to making reductions, we are also doing strategic investment and restructuring to ensure that we are dedicating appropriate funds to the areas that matter most. This includes expanding the Go-To Student Pass program, implementing 21st century learning technology, realizing substantial print cost savings through our centralized document center, funding some services previously included in individual school budgets through a central service delivery model and allocating 12 positions to schools for English as a Second Language teachers.

Our detailed budget proposal is available at [www.mpls.k12.mn.us](http://www.mpls.k12.mn.us) . I encourage you to review the information and submit feedback online. You can also sign up to receive updates by email.

The school board and MPS leaders are eager to engage the community and hear your comments and concerns regarding the proposed budget as we work toward a final budget. We plan numerous engagement opportunities this spring, including conducting in-person presentations, providing online content updates and creating a new citizen budget advisory committee. We value your perspective and seek to ensure that our community understands the

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budget that is eventually approved.

As stewards of public funds, we must make tough choices in the best interests of our students. I would like to thank all of you for the passion and professionalism you demonstrate every day.