



February 16, 2007

Dear Principals, Building Leadership Teams, Staff and Parents

Thank you for beginning the task of building your school budgets for the 2007-08 school year. It is one of the most important tasks for you and your school community to develop collaboratively in preparation for next school year. I cannot stress enough how critical it is that resources, both fiscal and staff, be directed at accomplishing the goals contained in your School Transformation Plan.

Developing a school-based budget can be complex and challenging, but I know Building Leadership Teams have the knowledge, experience and commitment to make the right decisions that focus on student learning and achievement. Having **flexibility** to make budget decisions is a significant **responsibility** that comes with **accountability**. (Flexibility + Responsibility = Accountability). While many of our schools have seen a wide-range of academic improvement, all students must achieve at an accelerated rate. Our students, parents and community deserve no less.

Education Directors will serve as resources to your school communities as you review your student improvement plans, study student achievement data and make fiscal decisions based on best practices and research. With technical support from Budget, Enrollment Planning, Grants, Human Resources, and central categorical program staff, Education Directors will provide oversight and approval for schools' budget and staffing plans.

The Weighted Student Formula continues in 2007-08 without significant change from 2006-07. Overall funding is inflated to cover growth in staff compensation, maintaining your current buying power for the in both the Foundation and Weighted Student components of the allocation. In addition, the non-staff dollar allocation will increase from \$56 to \$60 for next year to fund items negotiated in the District's contract with PASS members.

We believe by maintaining the schools' continuity of funding and purchasing power at an additional cost of \$17 million being allocated to schools, student achievement will increase. The district faces a serious financial challenge with an estimated budget gap for next year of \$14.5 million based on Governor Christine Gregoire's proposed education budget. However, the financial gap will be addressed by reducing district operations and using district reserves. While this is a one-time solution, it is least harmful to the classroom and students.

I also want to let you know that work regarding a new, sustainable funding process based on a Weighted Staffing Standard model is still moving forward. Over the next eight months, the District will refine, gather input and educate stakeholders on this budget model to be implemented for the 2008-09 school year. The School Board has made it very clear that our new model cannot add to the District's financial gap and must be equitable and sustainable.

In closing, I realize the school budgeting process is a substantial task thrust on your shoulders with increasing pressure to demonstrate results. In Seattle Public Schools, our practice is to give schools autonomy without enough support and accountability. I want to be clear - you have my full commitment as well the Learning and Teaching staff's - to provide support. However, I expect schools' and their communities to have full accountability for achieving results.

I look forward to working with you as we plan for next school year and the success of each and every one of our students.

Sincerely,

Carla Santorno
Chief Academic Officer