

# School Board Action Report

*“Every student achieving, everyone accountable”*



**DATE:** July 2, 2010

**FROM:** Dr. Maria L. Goodloe-Johnson, Superintendent

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**STRATEGIC THEME/  
FOCUS AREA:** Business & Operational Effectiveness

## **TITLE AND BRIEF DESCRIPTION**

This Resolution would allow the district to place a supplemental operations levy on the November 2, 2010 general election ballot	For Introduction:	June 16, 2010
	For Action:	July 7, 2010

## **TIMELINE FOR IMPLEMENTATION/EVALUATION**

This action is slated for Introduction on June 16, 2010, and Action on July 7, 2010. The Resolution is due to King County Elections no later than August 10, 2010, for inclusion on the November 2, 2010 general election ballot. If approved by the voters the district would receive additional levy funds in the 2011, 2012, and 2013 calendar years.

## **BOARD COMMITTEE PROCESS**

This item was reviewed by the Audit & Finance Committee on May 13, 2010 and June 10, 2010, and by the Executive Committee on June 9, 2010.

## **RECOMMENDED MOTION**

I move that the Seattle School Board accept the Supplemental Operations levy and adopt Resolution 2009/10-15 which places a three-year program and collection totaling \$48,200,000 million dollars on the November 2, 2010 ballot.

## **ISSUE**

Operations levies are developed using a formula devised by the State Legislature. The formula includes a cap—the “levy lid” on the percentage of funds that can be raised through a local levy. Seattle’s levy lid was previously at 32.97%

Seattle Public Schools received approval from the Seattle voters for the February 9, 2010, Operations levy. That levy was based on the 32.97% levy lid. Traditionally the district could not approach voters again for an operations levy until February 2013, as the Operations levy was run as a 3-year levy.

However, during the 2010 legislative session, the legislature lifted the “levy lid” by 4%, which allows districts to seek additional funding from their voters. Seattle Public Schools can now seek a levy up to 36.97% of allowable expenses.

The Operations levy traditionally provides partial funding for many District programs such as full day kindergarten (the state funds half-day, with some exceptions for very high poverty schools), sixth period at high school (the state funds only five periods), Special Education, and English Language Learners. Given the state’s dramatic reductions in K-12 funding over the past two years—a cut of approximately \$32 million dollars over the 2008-09 and 2009-10 school years, and an estimated funding gap of \$27 million for 2011-2012—the opportunity to run a supplemental operations levy offers us the opportunity to fill some of the funding gaps created by the State.

A key strategy of the district’s five-year strategic plan, *Excellence for All*, is to align curriculum across the system, which includes selecting and purchasing new textbooks and other instructional materials and providing teachers with the training and support to successfully use these materials to support student academic success. This work has been funded over the past two years for, language arts, World Languages (Japanese and French), math, and Washington State History for 4<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> grades.

Due to the severe funding shortfall for 2010-2011, the difficult decision was made to delay this work for 9<sup>th</sup> grade Physical Science, 11<sup>th</sup> grade Chemistry, 12<sup>th</sup> grade Physics, Social Studies for grades 9-12, Language Arts for grades 6-8, and Music for grades K-5, pending approval of a supplemental levy.

The district intends to use approximately \$5.9 million of the supplemental levy funds received in the first year to fund textbooks and other instructional materials those subjects in the 2010-2011 year in order that the new materials can be in students’ hands in the fall of 2011 and to allow teachers to receive professional development that will allow them to fully implement the new materials.

Funds received in the subsequent years of the supplemental levy would be used to create or enhance programs across the district and to provide instructional services to our students that would otherwise be cut due to reduced State and Federal funding.

The supplemental levy may also include additional components designed to further the district’s progress on the strategic plan *Excellence for All*. Excellent instruction in every classroom and strong leadership at every school are key to improving achievement for all students, as are creating or enhancing programs such as elementary art and music. Because the district is currently negotiating contracts with both our Teacher and Principal unions, we are unable to offer specifics of what that might mean at this time. However, we hope that as negotiations move forward and come to a successful close, we will be able to add specific elements.

All of these items will be geared towards succeeding in the commitment made in *Excellence for All*: ensuring a high quality school for every student — a school where all students meet or exceed grade-level expectations and graduate from high school prepared for college, career, and life.

With this action the School Board is being asked to approve a Resolution in support of the Supplemental Operations Levy. The Resolution is attached. Also attached is a draft explanatory statement, which is used to explain the purpose of the levy. The draft explanatory statement is attached for reference only, and may be revised or amended prior to the filing deadline.

## **BEST PRACTICES**

The state legislature has provided Seattle Public Schools with the opportunity to reduce the impact of state budget cuts and chronic funding gaps by requesting approval of a supplemental operations levy from our voters. Our interest is in ensuring that cuts we do have to make are as far from core instruction as possible and in ensuring that our work to improve all schools for all students moves forward. Therefore, moving forward with the supplemental levy request is the most appropriate action at this time.

## **RESEARCH AND DATA SOURCES**

Not applicable.

## **POLICY IMPLICATION**

This supplemental operating levy will assist us to partially compensate for the approximately \$32 million in state budget cuts that we have sustained since 2008. These funds will continue our ability to provide high quality instructional materials in our classrooms, including adding materials in the subjects and grades listed above, and to provide programs such as full day kindergarten, Special Education and English Language Learners.

## **FISCAL IMPACT/REVENUE SOURCE**

The proposed Operations Levy would have a total revenue estimate of \$48,200,000 million in voter-approved tax levy collections and requires taxpayers to provide funding at approximately 0.12 per \$1,000 of assessed value.

The district has allocated \$525,000 in the 2010-2011 general fund budget to fund this supplemental levy election. This amount is based on current King County estimates. We expect that the costs of the election will be lower in the end, because costs are reduced as more items are placed on the ballot.

**Expenditure:**  **One-time**  **Annual**

## **COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT PROCESS**

We typically begin planning for levies 18 to 24 months in advance of the scheduled election date. The urgent need for funding and the opportunity provided by the legislature mean that it is in the best interests of students to time the supplemental levy request with the general election scheduled for November 2010. This means that additional funds—over and above those approved by the voters in February 2010— would begin flowing to the district in 2011.

Current communication plans include:

- Informing the community and gathering initial feedback from two community engagement meetings held in April.
- Engage union partners, parent group leaders (such as SCPTSA board) and civic organizations in discussion of levy content and communications. Inform families, staff and community through an array of communications methods including the website, e-newsletters, SchoolMessenger, school newsletters, brochures and fact sheets.
- Inform community and civic groups through presentations from board members and district leaders
- Hold a public hearing for public comment on June 23, 2010 from 6:00-7:00 pm

## **CONCLUSION/RECOMMENDATION**

It is recommended that Resolution 2009/1015 be approved.

## **ATTACHMENTS**

- **Resolution 2009/10-15** (for approval)
- **Explanatory Statement** (for information)