



**Twin Rivers USD**

**Budget Advisory Committee (BAC)**

**Cost Savings Survey Subcommittee**

## **Preliminary Report of Results and Recommendations – March 2009**

### **Cost Savings Survey Subcommittee Members**

- Jean-Paul Prentice, CCE, LEED AP
- Nancy Baril, Twin Rivers USD Classified Employee
- Sonja Cameron, Heritage Peak Administrator
- Trinette Marquis, Twin Rivers USD Director of Communications

### ***Survey Background***

Due to a variety of economic circumstances at the local, state, and national level, educational organizations throughout the country face unprecedented fiscal challenges. School districts must make adjustments in resources in order to ensure long-term stability. Our Twin Rivers USD Board of Trustees and administrative leaders wanted suggestions from our employees and community about how we can achieve significant savings with minimal impact on students and classrooms.

### ***Survey Design and Implementation***

#### **Step 1 – Category Suggestions**

In early January, we reached out to staff with a variety of perspectives (cafeteria, contracts, custodial, site administration, classroom teachers, secretarial) and solicited their advice and guidance on survey categories that would help spark innovative suggestions.

#### **Step 2 – Survey Design**

Building on our suggestions, we designed a survey to meet our goals of being quick, easily understood and generating a wide variety of savings suggestions. Please see addendum A for the design questions.

#### **Step 3 – Survey Outreach and Participation**

In an effort to reach as many potential participants as possible, the survey was open to our Twin Rivers USD electronic newsletter list (5k+), prominently posted on our Twin Rivers USD website, and paper copies of the survey were distributed to school sites and our Twin Rivers USD Transportation Department.

#### **Step 4 – Survey Analysis**

Reviewed the quantitative data and created graphic representations of the percentages of responses. Due to the high level of qualitative responses, additional steps were needed to organize and combine the data. The qualitative responses were loaded into a database and queried on key words based on number of times the word was used in responses.

#### **Step 5 – Survey Results and Impact Reporting**

Reported the quantitative results of the survey to the BAC on January 26, 2009 and at the January 28, 2009 Special Board of Trustees meeting focused on the budget. Once combined with the qualitative results, this information will be included on our web site, fact sheets for community meetings and in electronic and print newsletter stories. This preliminary report has been distributed to each director in our district with instructions from Superintendent Frank Porter to maximize reductions in each department through the use of the cost-savings suggested.

#### **Cost**

Using our existing electronic outreach software, the cost for the online portion of the survey was minimal – including only the staff time expended by the category generation and survey design process.

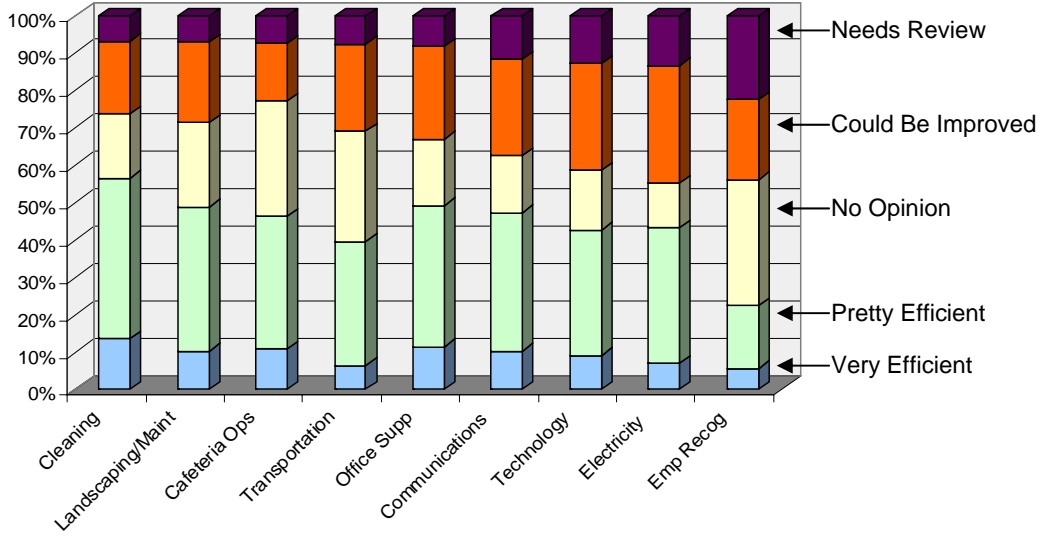
#### **Survey Responses**

- More than 800 total respondents, generating 2,000 suggestions
- Employees 65.6%
- Community Members 11.0%
- Both 18.3%
- Other 3.3%

# Quantitative Survey Data

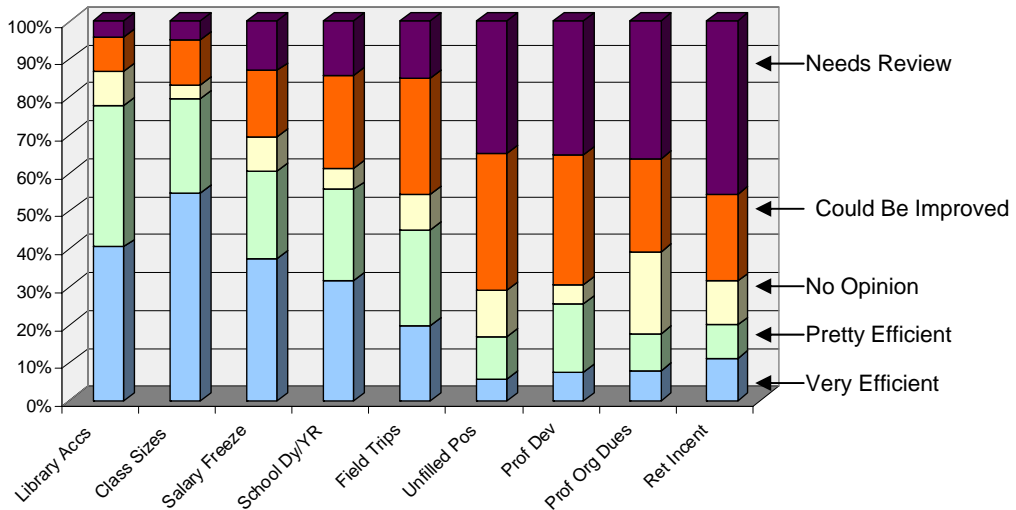
## Question 1

Please review the categories below and tell us how well you think our resources are being allocated in each area.



## Question 2

A number of cost-saving initiatives have been suggested. Please review the list below and rate them according to your preference in cost-cutting measures.



## **Qualitative Data**

While quantitative data is cleaner and easier to read, qualitative data provides invaluable information about the details and perspective on how respondents truly feel about issues.

## **Qualitative Data Sorting Process**

The recommendations have been organized through a database query process. This involved loading all of the suggestions into a database and using key word queries to pull suggestions out by category. A volunteer subcommittee of the Twin Rivers BAC reviewed the sorted suggestions and this report is a consolidation of their individual reports.

The subcommittee met on February 18, 2009 to review the recommendations received from the community and staff cost savings survey. The two goals of the subcommittee work were two-fold:

- a. Viable cost saving ideas to departments**
- b. Areas for additional clarification and communication**

## **Overall Suggestions**

As a longer-term goal, many of the suggestions pointed to a streamlining of TRUSD processes, procedures and forms in order to improve effectiveness and address the myriad of challenges it faces. In addition, the following recommendations did not easily fit into a given category and were mentioned throughout the comments:

- Work toward reducing the costs of professional consultants and legal advice
- Communicate district needs and goals to businesses and families – some may be able to contribute
- Consider freeze on salaries, fewer work days, alternate work schedule (4 days)
- Look at the need and timing for the new high school
- Look at consolidating smaller enrollment schools or having them share a principal.

## **Administration/District Offices**

The size of administration is perceived as a large problem by survey participants. There were 165 comments designated under administration or district office and another 42 comments about excessive administration costs throughout the qualitative responses.

### *Suggestions to departments/district:*

- Downsize administrative positions
- Consolidate departments
- Department heads asked to cut 15%, so cuts affect all equally
- Shut down central offices on holiday breaks
- Cut catering for district events
- Cut days from non-classroom personnel
- Increase transparency – decision making, budget and leadership goals

*Areas for further clarification and communication:*

- Twin Rivers Board of Trustees and leadership is fully aware that administrative cuts are required and will downsize certificated central management positions by 35% this year.
- Educational code restrictions related to unification protect classified management positions through June 30, 2010. That limits the amount of reductions that can legally be made in administration.
- Blackberries – cost versus productivity and emergency preparedness
- Cabinet salaries compared to comparable district salaries
- Status of ownership of McClellan – that we own versus rent and how previous offices are being used, and efficiencies realized with one office
- Description of the purpose of any vehicles going home with staff

**Books**

Categorical budgets have been given new and increased latitude to aid districts in budget reconciliation. Consequently, the issue of books may provide a savings opportunity. Out of 26 comments in this category, the main suggestions depend on funding sources and flexibility.

*Suggestions to departments/district:*

- Delay adoption unless IMF funding reimbursement or required by law
- Revising curriculum to encompass the media and internet technology
- Hold students accountable for damage to books and property
- Explore the possibility of allowing volunteers in library, or at least classified techs to help check books
- If legal, use worksheets instead of \$100 texts

*Areas for further clarification and communication:*

- The sources of funding for text books.
- Future technology plans.

**Instructional and Academic Coaches**

This issue seems to be polarized along beneficiary/non-beneficiary lines, and may require the input of objective unaffected parties. In general, many of the 67 comments suggest reducing many of the certificated academic support positions serving school sites and district office departments.

*Suggestions to departments/district:*

- Reduce reading coaches, curriculum coaches, curriculum support positions, instructional coaches, principal coaches, consultant coaches and curriculum coaches
- Put coordinators back in classroom or split school assignments

*Areas for further clarification and communication:*

- Explain the role of these positions in our schools.

## **Communication**

Survey comments show a strong desire for electronic communication, ending redundant, undesired, or unnecessary mailings, and most of all effective communication. The use of technology seemed to be in all 22 comments. People feel that there is a lot of wasted paper going to families and staff.

### *Suggestions to departments/district:*

- E-mail daily information. Rely on email, don't duplicate with hard copies
- Technology needs to be upgraded so all staff can receive electronic comm
- Use more auto calls and web site communication
- Decrease mass mailings, especially to staff, only send through district mail, not home
- Use web sites (district and school sites) to organize volunteers and donations

### *Areas for further clarification and communication:*

- How newspaper is funded
- Electronic newsletters
- School Loop
- Automated call contract –district not charged for each call, flat rate

## **Custodial Services**

Several comments were made about night custodians leaving sites early or not completing needed work. Some of the survey results indicate there seems to be little confidence in the night time custodial staff.

### *Suggestions to departments/district:*

- Elimination or reduction in facilities used for summer school to save on custodial and energy costs
- Security key stations may be one way to assure that custodians stay on the job at night, because they require the employee to insert the key into the electronic device at periodic intervals

### *Areas for further clarification and communication:*

- Classified ed code protections communicate what is possible, what is not

## **Professional Development**

The majority of the 95 comments referenced wasteful spending in the area of professional development including staff professional development days, staff training and/or conferences. Especially noted was the expense of catering professional development days and other big events and rallies.

*Suggestions to departments/district:*

- Reduce and/or eliminate professional development days
- Eliminate catering for professional development and other meetings
- Suspend the Back-to-School Rally
- Offer on-line staff development
- Use internal resources instead of outside consultants

*Areas for further clarification and communication:*

- Explain professional development funding sources and impact on general fund
- Use data-driven decision making regarding professional development/conference funding
- Communicate the connection between any professional development and the benefit for students.

**Energy, Heating and Cooling**

Of the 26 comments for energy and 25 in heating and cooling, the best recommended reducing energy costs from transportation, maintenance and landscaping as well as allowing classroom thermostat regulation.

*Suggestions to departments/district:*

- If not already done, create a district-wide energy use policy, make energy efficiency a priority and communicate that effectively to all
- Identify areas where making improvements such as light switches with sensors, solar panels, insulated drapes and use of natural lighting would result in immediate and significant cost savings
- Explore a four day school/work week
- Make sure building lights, computers and stadium lights are not left on overnight
- Explore State, Federal and SMUD incentives for district
- Consolidate sites to save energy

*Areas for further clarification and communication:*

- Communicate the real cost of utilities
- Communicate that cable TV is free
- How many schools have light sensors, plans for the rest
- Role of district Resource Conservation Manager
- Explain benefit of the +/- 3degree thermostat

**Event**

The 29 comments were varied. The Back-to-School Rally was mentioned often as an area to eliminate.

*Suggestions to departments/district:*

- Eliminate expensive events
- Use our own facilities rather than rent
- Offer our facilities for rent to generate revenue

*Areas for further clarification and communication:*

- Communicate that the Back-to-School Rally at ARCO was a first-year expense and may have been planned differently if we had a crystal ball
- See prior comment under professional development regarding the catering at the Back-to-School Rally

### **Food**

This issue covered two areas of suggestions: food served to adults and food served to students. There were 53 comments. As stated earlier, many feel that catering staff events is a luxury. Wastefulness of the cafeteria food served to students is mentioned often.

*Suggestions to departments/district:*

- Cut waste where possible
- Review cafeteria policy regarding excess “charges”
- Reduce, reuse, recycle

*Areas for further clarification and communication:*

- Communicate Free and Reduced Food Program regulations regarding sharing of food, taking excess because no seconds are allowed and requiring food to be thrown out if not eaten during lunch rather than saving it to eat later
- Communicate relationship between catering service and cafeteria program
- Communicate if food service encroachment on general fund and importance of schools following up on free and reduced lunch applications for all qualified students
- Communicate if catering helps pay for student meal encroachment
- Communicate current cafeteria recycling efforts

### **Forms**

Of the fifteen comments in this section, multiple copies of forms, multiple locations a form must physically pass through to be approved, and overly-complicated processes were the general themes. W. Edwards Deming’s research indicated that 85% of performance failures are due directly to the process, not personnel. Unnecessary paperwork exacerbates those failures.

*Suggestions to departments/district:*

- Determine the need and purpose of the particular paper trail and weigh against all options. Review every form for necessity.
- Simplification of forms and process (purchasing, substitute teachers, field trips, reimbursement, payment other than salary)
- On-line data, forms, and processes as often as possible-reduces waste, storage, and manpower needed

*Areas for further clarification and communication:*

- Efforts underway to simplify and streamline

## **Furlough**

Overall, people felt this idea should definitely be used, not only for cost savings associated with hiring and training new personnel, but to reduce the human cost to families suffered by the potential complete loss of employment.

*Suggestions to departments/district:*

- Offer the furlough days as a regular monthly three-day weekend possibility for non-classroom staff
- Cabinet should take more days off than the rest of staff to set an example

*Areas for further clarification and communication:*

- Communicate percentage of salary 1-4 days all year would reduce (1-2 %?)

## **Instruction**

This area also includes Instructional Coaches, which is addressed at Coaches above. There were 65 comments. Many felt that instructional, curriculum, and any other type of coaches were not really “impacting” children needed to be eliminated during a budget crisis.

*Suggestions to departments/district:*

- Lower instructional minutes to state mandated levels
- Review all testing for relevance and importance
- Condense summer school programs – more students at each site
- Four 10 hour days at district, four day week at schools
- Online classes offered at HS, they shut down 1-2 days per week and just leave computer lab open those days
- Use internal staff for consulting, coaching and testing when possible

*Areas for further clarification and communication:*

- Any of the suggestions we are already implementing or plan to

## **Maintenance**

This category received 33 comments. Some felt that it is important to maintain our buildings. Others question the productivity of some workers that come out to sites.

*Suggestions to departments/district:*

- Use of vehicles – sharing a vehicle when going to the same site
- All maintenance should be scheduled based on need
- Freeze non-urgent projects
- Geographic assignments to save gas

*Areas for further clarification and communication:*

- State matching funds for renovations
- New geographic region assignments that started January 2009

## **Paper**

Recycling methods were mentioned by many of the 111 respondents, this area contained a variety of suggestions for cutting down paper, file storage, and the manpower needed to manage paper processes.

### *Suggestions to departments/district:*

- Recycle paper by using both sides
- Online communication instead of paper whenever possible
- Too many paper products in cafeterias
- Electronic time sheets and forms/processes
- Less handouts and packets at meetings
- School stamps instead of labels
- In-district mail process should be simpler, not require to and from labels
- Recycling program at every site
- Do not send items in color
- Give teachers an allotment of paper each year to reduce wasteful usage.

### *Areas for further clarification and communication:*

- Communicate where action is taken or where there is a misunderstanding about recycling – for example, is cafeteria paper waste separated and recycled after thrown away?

## **Police**

Some 20 comments were addressing concerns regarding TRUSD police dept. For two-thirds of Twin Rivers employees and communities, having an internal police force is a new experience and the full value of the force may not be understood.

### *Suggestions to departments/district:*

- Review guidelines on vehicle usage
- Review police goals, metrics (truancies, student violence, safety, lawsuits) to measure effectiveness
- Review expenditures to ensure efficiency
- Increase visibility at sites, collaboration

### *Areas for further clarification and communication:*

- Safety is listed as a top concern for out-of-district transfers. How would reducing or eliminating the police help that area?
- Outside contracts that help fund police
- Police is the one area that did not grow with unification. In fact, outside agency help (contracted) was eliminated and the force is now serving three times the number of sites they did prior to unification.
- Average response time comparison with area agencies

## **Recognition**

Even though there were just nine comments, they overwhelmingly agreed that recognition gifts and events are unnecessary expenses at this time.

### *Suggestions to departments/district:*

- Limited or no gifts until better financial shape
- Request donations, funds from outside organizations for any gifts, events, food for adults
- Show recognition in other ways, and communicate openly when forgoing gifts or food that it is for budget reasons

### *Areas for further clarification and communication:*

- Twin Rivers did not pay for the Pacer football rings, only helped with outside fundraising

## **Retirement**

Twin Rivers must look for opportunity in the short run to reduce long term costs, and many suggested retirement or loss through attrition of high paid personnel may be an option. The majority of the 116 comments were in favor of retirement incentives.

### *Suggestions to departments/district:*

- No cash in-lieu if opt-out of benefits. Limit benefit costs to covering those employees who really need coverage
- Freeze salaries until budget outlook is better

### *Areas for further clarification and communication:*

- Communicate percentage of salary 1-4 days all year would reduce (1-2 %?)

## **Supplies**

This category received 69 comments, almost all were concerns about the current supply process. Overall, most felt the current supply process is overly managed. Survey participants felt supplies are limited and hard to get from the warehouse in a timely manner. Many comments state it is more efficient and less expensive to purchase from Office Depot with next day free delivery.

### *Suggestions to departments/district:*

- Process of ordering and receiving supplies should be reviewed and improved immediately because of the effect on morale
- Only buy essential new supplies
- Evaluate costs of delivering supplies to our own sites against having outside vendor deliver
- Develop part of the warehouse for staff to go to get equipment, supplies for their rooms and or offices before they make outside purchases
- A database should be developed to allow staff to go to the supply section to see if we have equipment, supplies that can be acquired to the site in need

*Areas for further clarification and communication:*

- Plans to improve efficiency of supply orders

### **Transportation**

The 42 comments dealt with several issues. Many felt it necessary (sliding scale) to charge for riding the bus.

*Suggestions to departments/district:*

- Look into costs of transportation for charters
- A four day week would cut transportation costs for district
- Tiered start times to help with bussing

*Areas for further clarification and communication:*

- Charge in bussing and effect on attendance

### **Vehicles**

Only 16 comments in this area, but several claimed to know about abuses and expense to the district regarding vehicles being supplied to employees of TRUSD.

*Suggestions to departments/district:*

- Alternative energy vehicles for maintenance and bussing
- Review all use of district vehicles

*Areas for further clarification and communication:*

- Personal vehicle use is no longer allowed, selling of previous district vehicles

## APPENDIX A

### **Introduction to the Twin Rivers USD Staff and Community Survey**

No doubt someone you know has been affected by the current economic conditions facing our country and the world. Unfortunately, Twin Rivers Unified School District is not immune to these conditions. While public education did not cause the current financial challenges, all of the schools in our State will be forced to address them.

#### **How California Compares-**

Over the years, public schools have reduced services and personnel to try to maintain a high quality education with below-average resources. According to independent researchers (Ed Source, Education Week, and the Fordham Foundation), California has academic standards among the top five in the nation and the most challenging student population. Yet, according to a 2006 study by the US Census Bureau, the funding for California's children is at least \$653 per student below the national average, and less than half the amount spent in New York, New Jersey, and Washington D.C.

#### **The History of Educational Funding Reductions-**

To survive in the past decade, districts have had to make reductions such as eliminating or reducing librarians, nurses, counselors, administrators, and support staff, including custodians and school secretaries. Field trips have been virtually eliminated, and career and technical education, music, art, and physical education programs suffered reductions.

#### **The Financial Cushion Unification Provided-**

Just last spring, the mid-year cuts facing California school districts forced most local districts into layoffs and program reductions. The four unifying districts of the Twin Rivers USD were spared those cuts with a bump in State funding that offset the funding reductions.

#### **This Year's Budget-**

Unfortunately, this year's proposed funding reductions go even deeper and will greatly affect Twin Rivers USD. The budget proposals prepared by the governor, the Republican legislators, and the Democratic legislators all call for funding cuts for the current year and next year. We will continue to monitor the budget developments and communicate with our legislative representatives about the impact of the current budget proposals on our schools. We must also begin to prepare for a worst case scenario even as we work and hope for a better outcome. Staff will be preparing options for reductions and analyzing how those reductions impact the core mission of our district.

#### **What We Are Doing Today-**

Some of the actions we have already taken to address this issue include:

- Freezing all but the most critical hiring
- Freezing all but the most critical contracting
- Eliminating unfilled management positions
- Cancelling space rentals for district level events
- Surveying employees to discover the interest in Early Retirement Programs

**What You Can Do:****Complete This Survey-**

We are also asking our parents and community for cost-cutting ideas. No idea is too big or too small. We will all need to think beyond the “usual suspects” when it comes to developing a plan for the coming year(s). Reductions of the magnitude we could be facing cannot be accomplished without considerable sacrifice. We welcome your ideas in the following anonymous survey.

**Maintain Your Optimistic Attitude-**

In addition, please have some patience and understanding. This crisis was not caused by public education and what we are experiencing today is the result of years of under funding. To survive in the past, we have for decades reduced services, especially support services such as counselors, nurses, administrators, librarians, as well as clerical, custodial, maintenance, and grounds staff. With the magnitude of the cuts on the horizon, every program and classroom will likely feel the impact.

**Save Where You Can-**

Every dollar we can save in the present is a dollar we do not have to cut next year.

**Stay Hopeful-**

The budget picture for the next few years is dark and gloomy. However, the talent, commitment and quality of our classified staff, teachers, and administrators are unlimited and we will continue to strive to do our best for our students and community.