

District Employee Advocacy Committee.

The District Employee Advocacy Committee was formed to help disseminate accurate and timely information to all employees. One employee from each school was elected to serve on this committee. The initial meeting was held on Tuesday, August 12, 2008. The following questions were asked to Director of Schools Lynn Seifert.

1. What about the busses? Will the busses stop running?

I certainly hope not! It would be devastating to our students. Many parents do not have the means to get their children to school without bus service. The diesel issue is very unfortunate. Here are the historical facts behind our budget which has lead to this situation:

- *The budget committee of the County Commission provided the amount of funding to the school district*
- *The State provided an additional \$70,000 over last year's funds.*
- *After totaling these amounts, it became apparent that the district would have to cut approximately \$1.2 million dollars from the budget. As the economy was in a downturn, this was done without a whimper. All areas of the budget were impacted by these cuts.*
- *The school board passed the budget and sent it on to the Commission.*
- *Once before the full Commission, an additional \$197,000 was taken from the schools. Part of this money was placed in the county general fund and another smaller part was given to the Highway Department.*
- *No reason was given for this cut. The county had the money.*
- *The school board felt that enough cuts had been made and have refused to make additional cuts. The money cut from the budget was the exact amount needed to fund diesel.*

As the price of diesel is currently dropping, busses should be able to run additional days. I continue to hope that this money will be restored.

2. What about a bonus for teachers?

Yes, the State will be sending down a bonus for all full-time teachers. This should happen in October. An amount in the \$300 - \$400 range is anticipated.

Plus, the Board has set aside \$100,000 to, hopefully, fund an equal bonus for classified personnel. The amount depends on the amount teachers receive.

3. Is it possible to go to a 4-day week to save money?

No, state law will not allow this.

4. Is Cheatham Academy (alternative school) to be closed?

No, the district is committed to helping students, who misbehave, to return to the regular school setting after an appropriate punishment.

5. What about the curriculum AP's? I'm for them but they have received a lot of negative press. When asked about them what can I say to help parents understand?

Frankly, I wish I had called the curriculum assistant principals academic coaches or graduation coaches. I believe this would have made it easier for the public to better understand their jobs. However, I chose to make them assistant principals so that could help the principal with teacher evaluations. In our larger schools, this is an overwhelming task.

Last school year, the State sent down a little over a million dollars that was earmarked for student achievement. It could only be used in that area. As high school teachers had been cut over the last several years, I chose to use most of the money to replace those teachers.

Another large portion was allocated for the curriculum assistant principals. In a nutshell, these positions are to help teachers teach more effectively, help students succeed, and ensure all students graduate on-time. Of course, they do many, many other tasks, as well.

Each middle and high school received one of these positions, along with our largest elementary school. As the State increases our accountability in the form of higher test scores, I believe these fine professionals will help us make the mark.

6. I've heard that the school board and county commission don't get along.

Unfortunately, the way schools are funded in our State does little to help relations between these two elected bodies. Whenever you have a spending body and a funding body, it is difficult to maintain good relations but I

believe it is possible. It occurs to me that both bodies have more in common than they realize.

Personally, I dread the budget season. Letters to the editor's fly through our papers as everyone wants to have their opinion heard. Heated words are spoken on both parts. It seems that everyone is assured that their opinion is the best; that their way of budgeting is more responsible. It strains relations for the rest of the year. Again, even though it has been this way for the last 30 – 40 years, it is unfortunate.

7. I like the new security systems at each school. While the parents initially are having a hard time getting used to not just walking into our schools, I think it is a great idea!

Me, too! I hope the parents understand it is not them we are wanting to keep out. It is all about safety.