



## Budget FAQs

*How much did the Governor propose to cut K-12?*

Governor Brian Sandoval proposed a 9.2 percent reduction to K-12 education during his State of the State address in January. Due to loss of local, state and federal funding, the WCSD is facing an approximate \$75 million shortfall for each of the next two fiscal years.

It is likely this number will change as we learn more details about the governor's budget proposal and as state lawmakers begin to make budget decisions. Legislators typically use the governor's proposal as a starting point. They may modify it before voting on the final budget. The final vote likely will not happen until the end of the 2011 legislative session, which is slated for June. It will be several months before we know for certain if we will have to cut our budget and at what level.

We will continue to provide updates on the ["Budget Update and Legislative Session 2011"](#) section of the WCSD website.

*Why is he proposing to cut our budget?*

Nevada's constitution requires the state to pass a budget that does not spend more than the amount of money the state is raising. Because of the current state of Nevada's economy, the amount of taxes collected in the state has decreased, including sales and gaming taxes.

The Nevada Economic Forum projected state revenues for the next two fiscal years to come in at approximately \$5.3 billion. This is the number that Governor Brian Sandoval had to use to build his budget proposal. The projected revenues are significantly less than the projected spending levels of the state, and thus, the budget proposal with cuts.

K-12 and higher education make up approximately 53 percent of Nevada's budget. If the budget was to be balanced entirely with cuts, it would be nearly impossible to avoid cuts to education.

*We always seem to be facing budget cuts. How much have we already have had to cut?*

WCSD has cut \$73 million dollars from its budget during the course of the last four years. This includes a \$37 million reduction WCSD took due to the 2010 special session.

The District responded to the \$37 million reduction in several ways including: working with all employee associations to negotiate \$10.7 million in savings, making the largest cut to central services in WCSD history (\$2.5 million), increasing class sizes in grades 1-3 (\$5.8 million), deferring textbook purchases (\$2 million) and using fund balance reserves (\$8.1 million) and contingency funds (\$4.9 million).

### *How are we funded?*

WCSD receives funding from several sources with the majority of the budget comprised of funding from local and state revenue sources. These revenue streams include money from sales and property taxes. The impact of the economy has reduced the amount of revenue being collected, which, in turn, is impacting the District's budget.

The federal government also provides some funding. However, this amounts to less than one percent of the District's general fund. Additionally, the WCSD seeks funding from alternatives sources through federal, state, local and private sources.

### *What are the next steps in the budget process?*

WCSD will continue to work with state lawmakers and the governor to advocate for no additional cuts or the smallest amount possible and the maximum amount of flexibility to control those resources. At the same time, the District will begin to discuss possible cuts. This is necessary to ensure WCSD is prepared for any outcome that materializes from the legislative session.

WCSD will visit every school and District site to meet with all employees to discuss the budget. Community meetings also will be organized to discuss the options with parents and the broader community. WCSD will be providing a survey for all employees and community members to provide input and recommendations on the budget as well. The District is dedicated to involving its teachers, principals, support staff, associations and the community in the process.

### *What will be cut?*

We are in the very beginning stages of the budget process. No decisions have been made yet. However, WCSD will be looking at every available option to plan for the worst-case scenario. While WCSD wants to hear from all stakeholders, all final budget decisions will be based on the priorities set forth in the District's strategic plan, *Envision WCSD 2015 – Investing In Our Future*. This will be necessary to ensure that the District continues to improve the quality of education for all children.

*Will we lose teachers? If so, how many teachers will be lost?*

Again, we are just beginning the budget process. That said, 89 percent of school district primary operating funds are made up of salaries and benefits, most of which are teachers. School districts by nature are labor intensive, thus, such cuts could impact people.

The WCSD Board of Trustees, Superintendent Morrison and our various employee associations (teachers, support staff, school police, principals and service department administrators) are working together and will do everything possible to protect the student learning environment by minimizing job loss.

*When will I know if I am affected?*

It will be months before the District knows what the final outcome of the legislative session and how that will impact the WCSD. Until those final decisions are made at the state level, we will not know who will be impacted at the District, but we will work closely with all of our employee associations through this process.

*What is the spending freeze and how does it impact schools?*

In January 2011, Superintendent Dr. Heath Morrison determined that a Freeze Committee needed to be formed to impose restrictions on expenditures in the current fiscal year because of the severe economic conditions in Washoe County and Nevada. The freeze immediately was implemented district-wide.

The freeze does impact schools in that we are trying to get everyone to consider each expense to see if it is vital to their operation. However, when the freeze committee looks at exception requests, the first consideration is whether it will have an impact on a student or a school. If it is determined that there is an impact, the committee generally will approve a spending exception request.

Additional information on the spending freeze is available at the following link:

<http://www.washoecountyschools.org/community/budget-information/freeze-committee-authority>

*Do we have someone lobbying for WCSD during the session? How can I help?*

Yes. WCSD's Director of Government Affairs Craig Hulse is lobbying for the District in the 2011 legislative session. We are also working closely with all of our employee associations during the session and they have representatives lobbying in Carson City as well.

The best way for you to help out is to contact your representatives in the Senate, Assembly and the Governor's office. There is also an active parents group called [Parent Leaders for Education](#) that is working with legislators and others to advocate for public K-12 education. You can contact the group at [education.priority1@gmail.com](mailto:education.priority1@gmail.com) if you want to learn more about its efforts and how you can contribute.

*Is there any way I can follow what is going on in the session?*

Yes. You can follow WCSD's [legislative blog](#). Director of Government Affairs Craig Hulse will be providing updates about the budget situation and any other legislative news that may impact WCSD on this blog.

Additionally, more information will be posted as it becomes available on the new ["Budget Update and Legislative Session 2011"](#) section of the District's website.

*I've heard rumors that the District is thinking about closing schools because of budget issues. Did the Board of Trustees recently agree to a policy? Is this true?*

In the next few months, it is likely all of us will hear many rumors about the budget, but it is important that we rely on facts rather than hearsay. Please know that budget issues are not the reason behind the school closure draft policy, which was discussed at a recent board meeting. The District has been looking at creating such a policy for more than a year now in preparation for a possible renewal of the 2002 Rollover Bond for capital construction. Just as the public wants to know the reasons for building new schools, we are also responding to questions as to what factors would cause us to consider closing a school. Current state law allows for the closure of a school in a 30-day process. We wanted a policy that was much more comprehensive unless emergency situations require action within the regulated 30 days. Reasons for possible closure identified in the draft policy include continued declining enrollment, age and/or physical condition, excessive annual operating cost, cost to bring the school up to current educational standards, changing the use of a school and changing the location of a school. At this point, the policy is still in draft form and will go before the Board at least two more times before any decisions are made. There will be ample time for public comment and input as well.