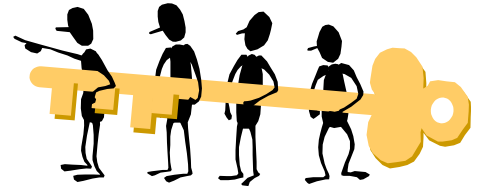


# KEY COMMUNICATORS

South Western School District  
April 2011



Dear South Western Supporter,

Some of you have already been identified as a *Key Communicator* for our networking purposes and some of you are new to our network. I have prepared for you some information that may be helpful in learning about the financial situation of our district.

If you have been reading the local papers or the blogs and forums, you have been learning about the present financial crisis with education in Pennsylvania. We thought it would be appropriate to inform you, our *Key Communicators*, about our current situation.

**First**, I would hope that you are aware that our school board directors and administrators have always strived to provide the best education for our students in the most fiscally responsible way. What exactly does that mean? That means that we have consistently kept our vision on the big picture, so we have an understanding of what is coming our way with regards to demands and restrictions on our financial resources. Our board saw this crisis coming and asked administrators to take a pay freeze last year and they did. They also strongly considered asking the support staff to take a pay freeze, but reconsidered as they thought it was unfair to strive to balance the budget by asking the lowest paid employees to take a pay freeze. Also, for last year's budget we cut the building allocations, which are what the principals get for resources and equipment, by 20%. We only bought one new bus and purchased very little new equipment. We cut our budget down wherever we could.

A **second** example of how we have strived to provide the best education in the most fiscally responsible way is the process that we follow when recommending any new staff, new initiatives, or new equipment. We have to provide extensive evidence as to the need and provide alternative ideas before anything new is recommended. An example of this would be in seeing the need for another teacher at one of our elementary buildings. We had some increasing enrollment at that building and the easy way out would have been to just get another teacher to fulfill that need. Instead, in providing alternative ideas, the one that we followed was not to get another staff member, but to move several students to another school that had space in the classrooms. That was not a popular decision with many parents, but it was the right one fiscally and, educationally, no student suffered. The same quality education was available at the schools where the children were placed.

A **third** example of how we have strived to provide the best education for our students in the most fiscally responsible way is the decision to renovate the Manheim Elementary School. As stipulated by state mandate, we were required to do a feasibility study prior to building/renovating any school. There were several options provided, but the board chose to renovate Manheim to decrease enrollment pressure at the West Manheim area. However, rather than rushing into the project, the board chose to wait an additional year until some debt was paid, so that taxes would not have to be increased to renovate Manheim.

The **proudest** example of how we have strived to provide the best education for our students in the most fiscally responsible way is the changes we have made to have an intervention period in each of our schools. An intervention period is a time in the day when students are regrouped to have the instruction specifically structured to meet their individual needs based on previous assessment data. For example, some of our students who are struggling with reading and are below grade level, are grouped with other struggling readers in a small group and receive reading instruction which is additional to what they receive in their regular classroom. Some students receive up to three opportunities a day for extra help so that they can achieve and be successful. Our principals, teachers, and paraeducators meet regularly in teams to discuss all students so that individual needs can be met.

I am very proud to share with you that our middle school has had an intervention period for three years and has been meeting in teams to assess student needs and to change the instruction accordingly. This has resulted in some fantastic news. Our middle school has been ranked number one in the state with regards to PVAAS (Pennsylvania's value added assessment system). The PVAAS reflects both achievement and growth. It reports what we do with students, regardless of demographic and socioeconomic factors of academic growth in schools. Our middle school has been ranked number 50 in reading for the PVAAS. This is out of 1,393 middle schools in the state. Also, West Manheim Elementary School's reading intervention program has been selected to receive recognition as an exemplary school program by the Shippensburg University School Study Council. We are delighted that what we are doing is working for our students. All of our schools are working diligently to do whatever it takes to help every student experience academic success.

Recently, we invited many businesses and individuals to come and see the work that is being done, and I want to take this opportunity to extend an invitation to you, too. If you would like to visit any of our schools, just give me a call and I will personally take you on a tour. I am very proud of what we are doing and I hope that you are, too.

Some additional budget information that I would like to share will help you understand our budget deficit. Also, all of our meetings, including finance committee meetings, are listed on our web page and are open to the public.

***Did you know.....***

- South Western School District (SWSD) has the lowest equalized millage tax rate in York County. The Equalized Mill is the calculation performed by the state to determine the total taxing effort.
- SWSD must pay tuition to charter schools and cyber charter schools for our students who attend there. The tuition cost for 2010-11 is \$9,042.88 for each regular education student and \$17,228.34 for each special education student. The total impact to our budget is approximately \$850,000 a year. Currently, we have 82 students who attend charter/cyber schools.
- SWSD reduced the budget allocation amounts for buildings and programs by 20% for the 2010-11 budget and by another 5% for the 2011-12 budget.

- SWSD will receive approximately \$15.1 million in state funds for the 2011-12 budget. That is 29.3% of our total revenues. The State is supposed to equally share in the cost of providing education services. In the early 1970’s, the state funding was approximately 50% of our total cost. That figure of support has been declining ever since. Federal revenues are approximately \$454, 000 or less than 1%. The remainder of funds for SWSD education costs must come from local sources.
- SWSD participates in many joint purchasing opportunities with other school districts. SWSD is a part of the LIU Joint Purchasing Board, 25 school districts that bid out supplies, which has provided savings of hundreds of thousands of dollars to local school districts. SWSD also participates in a consortium with other school districts to purchase natural gas and electric. By doing this, the district is able to purchase these utilities at a much lower cost.

These are just a few of the actions that we have taken. If you would like to learn more, Jeff Mummert, business administrator, and I would like to share information with you regarding the governor’s budget and how that has severely impacted our resources. I am inviting you to come to one of the following sessions for coffee and conversation.

**April 18, at 6:30 p.m.** or **April 21, at 9:30 a.m.**, in the district administration offices, 225 Bowman Road. There is no need to call and register, just show up and feel free to bring your friends and neighbors.

I would also appreciate your sharing that Golden Passes are available for senior citizens (age 60+) to attend school activities for free. To obtain a pass, just come to the district office, show proof of age, and a pass will be provided. Some exciting events coming up that you could attend would be the following.

- April 12 - Big Band Night, 6:30 p.m., at the high school
- May 1 - Spring Band Concert, 2:30 p.m., at the high school
- May 22 - High school & middle school spring orchestra concert, 3:00 p.m., at Codorus State Park

If you have questions about anything happening in our schools, please give me a call. We would also be happy to share information with any organization to which you belong. I sincerely appreciate the support that you have given us in the past, and I look forward to your continued support.



**Questions? Rumors? Comments? Concerns?**

Call Barb Rupp at 632-2548, ext. 20000  
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