

March 2020

Hello CCSD Families!

There is so much great energy and momentum in our district, thanks to our dedicated educators and supportive community. Recently we hosted a social event for local business, civic, and community leaders at Clear Creek Cidery. The event was designed to together re-imagine learning experiences for students in Clear Creek School District, CCSD. We'd like to extend a HUGE thank you to the owners and staff at Clear Creek Cidery. In addition to being the most gracious hosts with amazing food, the Cidery generously donated to the event! The conversations throughout the evening were filled with inspiring ideas and offers to further collaborate. We now have a list of willing guests for career talks, internships, and learning experiences for CCSD students. We will host another event this spring to continue the conversations.

We would like to also extend our appreciation to Tommyknocker Brewery, who recently offered to provide a discount to CCSD educators, and Big B's Soup & Grilled Cheese as they are providing a discount as well! This sends the important message that our local school district employees are valued in our community, thank you for taking care of those who take care of kids! Along similar lines, CCSD and the Clear Creek Metropolitan Recreation District solidified a partnership agreement this past week that allows each organization to share facilities with one another at no cost. This is a wonderful benefit to our employees as well as the Clear Creek community at large! It's another example of our local community working together for the ultimate benefit of everyone.



Budget Thank you for participating in the Budget Priorities Survey! This information will be shared with the Board of Education by our accountability committee. This will help the Board make informed decisions with stakeholder input as they work on the budget for 20-21. Trends from the survey will be presented to the Board of Education at the March 17 business meeting.

Some fantastic questions arose in the budget survey that I thought might be helpful to share, along with answers.

If we renovate the former middle school into an elementary school, why would we use recently approved tax increases? Why aren't we spending these dollars on playgrounds as promised?

Mill and bond dollars, which were approved in the form of a tax increase in November 2018 (thank you voters!), are being spent on playgrounds, new buses, improvements for schools such as boilers and new roofs, athletic facility improvements, in addition to a salary increase for staff as we headed into this past school year. Carlson specifically has received a new boiler and will receive a new playground (designs already completed). Should the community like the idea of renovating the former middle school into an elementary school, the funding for this will not come from mill or bond dollars. When our voters approved the mill & bond, they approved specific

improvements and we are committed to those improvements. Any renovations would need to be paid for from property sales proceeds, existing capital funds (although limited as these funds are earmarked for specific projects) and grants.

Why would we have district dollars in something called CSAFE? Why are we putting district dollars into investments? CSAFE is not an investment fund, it is a bank that we (along with most other school districts) use to keep large cash balances. We cannot keep this money in a regular bank account as it exceeds FDIC insurance limits. Additionally, CSAFE has restrictions in place to safeguard the dollars, especially important as this money is how we pay our employees and pay the bills associated with running school. Our operating budget the past few years is over \$12 million, which includes \$9 million for general fund and the rest for food services, preschool, grants, and more.

Why do we have large cash balances in CSAFE? School districts are funded primarily from property taxes. We receive the bulk of these tax dollars in May (property taxes get paid twice per year, February and April). Stated simply, the county collects property taxes in February and May, then sends those tax dollars to CSAFE the next month, with the larger amount coming in May. State funding for schools is calculated annually, then divided into twelve equal payments and sent to CSAFE each month. The CSAFE dollars reduce each month by the amount it takes to run the district for that month, including paying employees each month. So what looks like a nice large balance of dollars in May is slowly reduced over the course of the year.

How is our budget looking for 20-21?

The short answer: smaller. We continue to experience declining enrollment, which we look forward to changing over the next few years, but it takes time. Currently we anticipate a reduction to our state funding of \$122,000. We also continue to lose just over \$650,000 each year due to the budget stabilization factor (BS factor), which is because we are no longer solely funded using property taxes. State funding is subject to the BS factor.

While that all sounds dreary as a financial forecast for our district, we are incredibly positive and hopeful as we aggressively go after grants, welcome local partnerships, and look for ways to be creative within our constraints. We will craft a budget that is efficient and aligned with our CCSD priorities, and with input shared from our community via the survey.

What can you do to help us increase enrollment or increase funding?

- **Word of mouth works!** Tell friends and neighbors about the gifts of CCSD. We are a well-kept secret, a hidden gem in the mountains.
- **Post celebrations & information about CCSD on social media!** There are many things we take for granted in CCSD that don't always exist in other districts: the gift of a small mountain community, no fees for busses, all schools start after 8:00am, small class sizes, free activity bus after school, lower athletic fees, a "no cut" policy for sports, and so much more. Your voice can make a difference!

- **Advocate for changes in school funding at the state level!** There is proposed legislation that could change how school districts are funded. The BS factor is painful, we need a different solution.



Real Estate!

We continue to consider options for the former middle school. After our community meeting on February 5th, we hosted a meeting just for Carlson families & educators on February 26th. The feedback and FAQ's will be updated and re-posted shortly. In general, there seems to be support for doing a facility assessment; this would provide us with costs and feasibility information.

Golddigger Field is still for sale, along with our bus barn and former middle school. As a school district, we need to be good stewards of taxpayer dollars as well as a good community partner. Currently we have more property than we need. It's a bit like living in a large, beautiful mansion yet we don't have enough money to feed our children. While that's a bit dramatic, it highlights the fact that we are not spending our dollars wisely should we retain ownership of all properties. Further, there is not a lot of buildable land in Idaho Springs; we currently are "sitting" on some of it that could be used in other ways to benefit the community.

Lastly, you may have questions regarding the coronavirus and what it could mean for schools. We are posting the message below on our website. Additionally, we will be working with school leadership and our technology department to consider strategies for learning happening at home should there ever be a prolonged closure. Please don't hesitate to reach out with questions regarding any of this information!

We are monitoring information available regarding the coronavirus, also referred to as CoVid-19. The Colorado Department of Health and the Center for Disease Control have published information that are posted here for your reference. Specific to Clear Creek, our Clear Creek County Emergency Preparedness Team will be meeting this week to discuss relevant protocols. Further, CCSD is in close communication with the Colorado Department of Education to develop plans should there ever be prolonged school closure. Our top priority is the health and safety of our students, staff, and community. In the meantime, wash your hands, cover your coughs, and get plenty of rest & fluids!

As always, thank you for entrusting us to educate and care for your children!

Warmly,
Karen Quanbeck
Superintendent & Chief Learner