

## HILLSIDE PARENTS' GUIDE TO FULTON COUNTY SCHOOLS' BUDGET CUTS

With the Georgia Legislature a few weeks into its current session, you will be hearing about state and local budget cuts. Budgets are tight everywhere, and these cuts will impact our schools and students.

### WHAT DO WE KNOW?

We know that the state of Georgia has seen a drop in revenue from \$22 billion to under \$17 billion. We know that the Governor has made a 6% cut to Quality Based Education, has mandated an additional 3 furlough days for the 2009-2010 school year, has increased the employee contribution to medical benefits, and is looking for other ways to cut educational spending.

We know that the Fulton County School System has to cut a large amount from its budget. Most of these cuts will have to come from programs funded with local (not state or federal) tax dollars. We know that the Fulton County Tax Assessor has not yet released the tax digest (how much money has been collected), thus the Board of Education does not know exactly how much money will have to be cut from the budget.

### WHAT DOES THIS MEAN?

Public schools are funded from three sources - federal, state, and local tax revenues. Money from federal and state sources is often for specific programs or purposes (examples: special education, free and reduced lunches, teacher salaries, some benefits for employees). Lack of state funding is what increased class sizes for the 2009-2010 school year (to reduce the number of teachers state wide). Local funds (from property taxes and special sales taxes) are for programs or incentives that communities wish to offer in their schools. Some examples in Fulton County are instructional support teachers, assistants in 1st through 3<sup>rd</sup> grades, elementary band, orchestra, and chorus, shortfalls in Georgia Pre-K, graduation coaches, transportation (including to and from athletic events), and magnet programs. It is these and other programs funded with local dollars that are most likely to lose some or all of their funding.

### WHAT CAN YOU DO?

Become involved. Keep up with local news through newspapers, television and the internet. Attend your Board of Education member's monthly community meetings and the Fulton County Board of Education meetings for news at the local level (schedules and video of full Board meetings can be found at [fultonschools.org](http://fultonschools.org)). Write, call, and/or email the Board if you feel strongly about a particular program ([board@fultonschools.org](mailto:board@fultonschools.org)). Read the Georgia Legislative Capitol Watch newsletter at the Georgia PTA webpage ([www.georgiapta.org](http://www.georgiapta.org) and click on "Capitol Watch") for news at the state level. Write, call and/or email your state representatives (listed below or found at <http://www.legis.state.ga.us>) and ask what they are doing to maintain educational funding.

The PTA Executive Board is sending an open letter to the Fulton County Board of Education (which can be found at [hillsidepta.com/legislative-news](http://hillsidepta.com/legislative-news)) with suggested budget cuts that will not greatly impact our core K-12 education. If you have any additional ideas, let the PTA know. We will get your ideas to the Board.

Your voice can make a difference. Last year, members of the Georgia PTA were able to save our school nurses by mailing in thousands of tongue depressors. At the PTA advocacy day, Ed Lindsey (Chair of House Appropriations Subcommittee on Education) said, "... 10-12 well versed constituents can change the world."

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