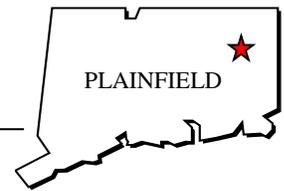




# PLAINFIELD PUBLIC SCHOOLS



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## **The Adverse Effects on Teaching & Learning Without an Assurance of School Funding**

The advent of the 2017/2018 school year without the assurance of sustainable or predictable funding has had compound negative effects on teaching and learning in Plainfield schools which we believe is representative of many if not most of the school districts throughout the state of Connecticut. Provided below is a snapshot of the impact of no CT State Budget, a Governor's Executive Order and a reported new cost assumed by districts of contribution to the State teacher pension fund.

- May, 2017 The districts learn that the proposed Governor's budget significantly reduces State Aid (ECS) revenue to Plainfield (and other districts). Included in the proposed budget is a new cost of approximately \$1.6 million in contribution to the State teacher pension fund.
- Impact: Plainfield Board of Finance and ultimately the taxpayers/voters demand reductions to the School FY2018 Proposes Budget of \$1 million. As a result:
- The CNA (nursing assistance) course at PHS is cancelled
  - The inclusion of French instruction at PCS is cancelled
  - The final purchase to achieve 1:1 student access to technology at PHS is cancelled
  - The Family Resource Center is placed on hold pending State Funding
  - Class sizes for All-Day Kindergarten are elevated to 20-24 students/class
  - Grades 4 & 5 class enrollments are increased to reduce two (2) full-time teachers
  - Special Education case-loads are elevated to reduce staffing
  - Para-educators' hours are reduced to save \$150,000 (as opposed to reducing staff)
  - The instructional school year is adjusted by one day to save \$30,000.
- July, 2017 No State Budget is passed and as a result, a Governor's Executive Order is enacted which is modified projecting a more significant loss of revenue but less pension contribution and the new projected loss to Plainfield is \$5.4 million.
- Impact: Plainfield Board of Finance calls special meetings to address the potential impact on the Town funds both as cash flow and as a fiscal year short fall. The BOF requests that the Board of Education develop a plan to reduce costs by \$1 million of the FY2018 school appropriation. As a result:
- The Board of Education (BOE) proposes a 'regressive hard freeze on spending'.
  - The hard freeze projects only purchase order dually authorized by both the Business manager and Superintendent would be allowed projecting a cost containment of \$200,000 per month.
  - The regressive plan would limit the annual allocation for selected object codes to FY2017 or earlier expenses reducing the annual expenditures by \$500,000.
  - All non-essential spending is curtailed and costs are monitored weekly.
  - Vendors & agencies are contacted to allow installments rather than full payment.
- Sept., 2017 A State Budget passes the legislature with bi-partisan support (limited) but is ultimately vetoed by the Governor maintaining the Governor's Executive Order as State Aid.

Impact: Plainfield Board of Finance (BOF) determines that more aggressive financial constraints are necessary to avoid a projected \$4 million cash flow shortfall by December, 2017. The Board of Education (BOE) is directed to increase its plan to include staff reductions to assure cost reductions as early as November, 2017 (in addition to delayed costs due to a spending freeze). The Board of Selectmen decide to join an injunction to question if the State is not obligated without a legislatively approved budget to reduce ECS support to districts. The BOE meets to consider both immediate short term staff reductions put into effect by November, 2017 and potential long term cost reductions to address the \$5.4 million projected shortfall. As a result:

- The Town issues a notice to taxpayers asking for voluntary advanced payments of a portion of the January tax payment due. (Seeking December payments.)
- The BOE meets to consider staff and program cuts to achieve \$400,000 in new cost savings to project a \$1 million reduction to the annual appropriation.
- All union leaders are brought together to discuss the financial crisis.
- Custodial union contract includes a salary freeze through December, 2017 to support the cash flow concern.
- BOE authorizes two phases of staff reductions beginning on November 3<sup>rd</sup> and extending to November 17<sup>th</sup> with some small hope that a State Budget may allow for rescinding these valued services.
- The first round of staff reductions (layoffs and eliminations) are enacted affecting custodians, para-educators, educators, support staff, nurses and school year to achieve \$150,000 in cuts.
- Companion letters of notifications are needed for the staff whose schedules must be altered to make up for the time and services lost.
- A second round of cuts are in process for November 17<sup>th</sup> to enact \$250,000 in additional cuts to achieve the \$400,000 of sustainable cuts by November.

While there are more evidences of the negative, sustainable cuts and irreparable harm that the lack of revenue assurance is causing to teaching and learning in Plainfield the example below is provided to explain the significance of just one aspect of the cuts.

To eliminate one teaching position by increasing class size, to eliminate a class in a grade level with 18 students, the students would need to be divided six (6) into each of three other classes in the school raising the class size in these classes to 24-26 students per class. The parents must be contacted of the 80 students affected either for leaving their present teacher, coming to a new class mid-year or now having a much larger class size. Additionally:

- The teacher of the class eliminated is not the least senior teacher. The teacher may not have the same certification of the least senior teacher. As a result, the eliminate class teacher may ‘bump’ a teacher in the same certification who may also have dual certification of the ‘least senior teacher’.
- The families of the classroom ‘bumped’ classroom must be contacted of the change in teachers. (Another 18-24 families).
- Finally the ‘least senior teacher’s’ class of students must also be notified of the change in teachers.
- In all this constitutes contacting more than 100 families and disrupting the teaching and learning for these students mid-year – all for less than \$50,000 – the cost for a first year, least senior teacher from November to June. And then the district will pay unemployment for another loss of savings.

To achieve even a \$2 million reduction, this would have to be replicated 40 times for 40 teachers.