

Merced River School District

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Hopeton Elementary (K-3) Helio Brasil, Superintendent/Principal Washington Elementary (4-8)

March 2, 2010

Dear Governor Schwarzenegger and Members of the State Legislature,

As a result of the severe budget cuts to education funding, the state of the schools in my district and county is absolutely shameful! The reason I write this letter is out of duty to my students and out of frustration for the current political maneuvers being conducted with education funding.

Despite vowing to protect education, the Governor's office has, once again, proposed a budget that manipulates the numbers to reduce education funding by \$900 million in the current year alone and an additional \$2.4 billion in 2010-11. Both the Governor's office and the legislature propose to do this now after eliminating \$17 billion from education funding over the past two years. For these reasons, I plead with you and with the legislature to spare our students and schools the additional cuts. Any further cuts to education, will only add to the dire fiscal crisis schools currently face.

I am well aware that California's Government faces incredibly daunting challenges in creating a balanced budget this year. I am well aware of the challenges and I have read the nonpartisan Legislative Analyst's Office opinion and recent analysis of the proposed 2010-11 budget. The analysis reinforces the education community's assertion and most certainly mine that the budget does not, in fact, "protect" education spending, as had originally been pledged. In fact, the Legislative Analyst's Office estimates the complicated accounting maneuvers the Governor's office has proposed would reduce the minimum funding guaranteed under Proposition 98 by a total of \$2.4 billion over 2009-11. This also happens to be the same amount an earlier analysis by CSBA's Governmental Relations Department cited. I would like to suggest a possible solution. Increasing revenue is the only way to address this and the crisis we face in California. I propose that a temporary one cent sales tax hike be implemented for a fixed two year period only and all of the revenue from this one cent tax hike be designated specifically for education. I know that I am but only, a mere small school district administrator but I offer a proposed solution. I urge that politics be put aside and there is a realization that raising taxes, although not popular, is the only way to generate revenue. I urge you all to do what is right to save the State and our future. Our future is the children in our financially strapped schools and districts.

The educational program my small, rural school district is being forced to implement is absolutely shameful for a public school in operation in a State like California. The system, form, and quality of education the State of California is forcing the local levels to provide our most valuable State resource (our Children) can only be compared to that of a third world nation. As an administrator of a small, rural school district with an enrollment of about two hundred students I am faced with wearing a multitude of hats. These past cuts and current proposed cuts only bring us closer to the breaking points of not only human capacity, but of a moral obligation and fundamental basis of our free and public educational system. I know that my small district is not alone but represents what almost every district in our State is facing. I want to speak to how decisions impact even the smallest of districts. I feel compelled to plead with you as a fellow immigrant to this State and to this Nation. I am a product of the free and public education which this State and this Nation so graciously have allowed me to obtain since my arrival here in June of 1978. Education funding has never been what it should be but it also has never reached the dismal precipice it faces today. We are embarking on a new decade where education should be adequately funded to prepare the students of today for a future economy and future jobs in industry yet to be created. Instead I find myself thinking that I would be happy with the ability to just provide what was provided to me back in 1978 as I entered public school.

As Superintendent/Principal of two schools, I also have to and happily substitute to save budget dollars. I deal with all discipline, conduct all evaluations, supervise students, serve lunches, conduct lice checks, clean rooms, conduct student activities, and often times am my own secretary. My staff and I do these things and give of our time, money, and provide service to the kids of our district because we see their eager eyes, their torn clothing, and their

hungry and sad faces on a daily basis. We are at the front lines of what you are so mistakenly only making worse by your irresponsible budget decisions. At the school level we see what the effects of parents losing jobs, families losing homes, not having food on a table, not having access to medical care and what homelessness does to children and communities on a daily basis. We do not have the heart to turn away and thus we return every morning with the hope that we are making a difference and providing the only stability some children may have in their lives. I could give countless examples of what we face daily, but I trust you will find that these examples are genuine and most certainly real in every school district and community across this State.

I would love for any member of the legislature to come and walk in my shoes for just one day and see what damage your decisions have contributed to in terms of providing our most important resource with the poorest public school educational conditions in an industrialized Nation and State. Exhaustion is what we face as we spend 10-12 hour days providing what we can for each and every student. One personal impact budget cuts have had on my family is that in the past four years I have not been able to make even one of my niece's high school events or sports games. This is in part because some of these activities were cut by declining budgets and also I simply do not have the time as a result of the duties I must complete on a daily basis to assure that students in my small district are given an opportunity to achieve an education with virtually no funding support.

I went into education to teach and mold the future of our Nation and State and to give back to a system that made me successful. I no longer feel that I am able to do that. Most politicians in Sacramento and in our National Government have no idea what a public education is like and even if they think they do, what they hold in their head as the image of their classroom as they went through public school is no longer historically valid, relevant nor feasible. Education and the expectations as well as its implications and demands have changed and our funding model has only been cut rather than changed to support it.

I urge you to save our public education funding and our free public education by supporting the funding required to do so. I fear that if you choose not to do so society as we envision it will not be possible. A society of ignorance and despair will be the future, if there are continued cuts to education funding.

The specific programs, services and staff cut from my district/county at this time include:

Transportation Routes (cut)	Bus Drivers (cut)
Staff Development (cut)	Cafeteria Assistant (eliminated/cut)
Supplies (cut)	Our Summer School Program (eliminated)
Art/Music (eliminated)	Classified Instructional Aides (eliminated)
Field Trips (eliminated)	School Site Secretaries (eliminated/cut)
Sports (eliminated/cut)	Library hours and part time clerk (eliminated/cut)
Technology Access (cut)	Contracted hours for Psychologist via MCOE (cut)
Maintenance (cut)	Speech and Language contracted hours via MCOE (cut)
Repairs (cut)	Contracted hours for Nursing/Health Clerk (cut)
Certificated Teachers (cut)	The only custodian we had for two school sites (eliminated cut)
After School Tutorial (eliminated)	
Counseling Services (eliminated/cut)	

Sincerely,

Helio Brasil
Superintendent/Principal