

August 17, 2023

## Blog – Why Weren't Athletics Cut?

I am not a huge follower of Facebook, but since I have come to Parkview I have found myself checking out the District's Facebook page. Since I have asked for my blog to be posted on our District's website and Facebook page each week, I have been reading the comments and concerns associated with the posts. First, I am very glad that people are reading my blogs. This is one way I try to get information out to the staff and public about what is happening in the school district. Second, your comments let me know what questions you have and what additional information you might like to know about particular topics. Please continue to add your comments and questions because it is my intent to try to answer all of your questions as we go through this school year.

One question that seemed to come up frequently during my last two blogs was – “Why weren't athletics cut?” The answer is that athletics were cut. When Patrick Abrahamson, our Junior/Senior High School Assistant Principal and Athletic Director, submitted his athletic budget for the 2023-2024 school year he was directed to cut his total budget by 5%, which is \$3,781 out of a total athletic budget of \$75,624. Our total Fund 10 (checkbox) District Budget is \$12,388,775. Therefore, the total athletic budget is less than 1% of the District's budget.

In addition, to an overall budget cut, the coaches also had their co-curricular pay frozen for the upcoming school year so that none of them received an increase in pay for their work with our students. Not only did Mr. Abrahamson have to cut from his existing budget, but the cost of hiring officials for our home games increased by more than 5%. This means that more of the athletic budget had to go to paying for officials, thus leaving even less to spend on our supplies, materials and equipment.

Budget cuts are never easy and they are never done lightly. For about fifteen (15) years of my life, I taught school finance at the University of Wisconsin – Madison. The class I taught most often was to new building administrators and superintendents about how to create and manage school budgets. During my first lesson, I would tell each of my students that when they were constructing budgets they needed to see a face behind every dollar. Every budget decision that they would make would have a positive or negative impact upon people. So their budget decisions should be based on the impact they would have on the students, staff and community.

When the Board made the decision to cut Pizazz, our District's show choir, it did so because this was a program that had declining enrollment and the staff member who had been in charge of Pizazz was resigning. It was not an easy decision, because the District wants to provide as many athletic and co-curricular offerings as possible for our students. Knowing that this opportunity was important to some of our students and parents, Mr. Abrahamson was able to work with Brodhead High School to give our students the opportunity to be in show choir this year by joining Brodhead's show choir. These options help the District keep and attract students, which has a huge impact on our overall school budget. As I mentioned in an earlier blog, school budgets are based heavily on the number of students that are enrolled in a school district. If the number of students goes up, the District is allowed to spend more money. If the student enrollment goes down then the District has less money to spend.

Many students stay in school and stay in our District because of their ability to participate in athletic and co-curricular activities. If these programs are eliminated then many of these students may choose to leave our District, either by physically moving out of our District or taking advantage of the State's Open Enrollment option to attend a neighboring school. Every student that leaves our District, reduces our overall budget by approximately \$13,687. So a District that eliminates too many athletic and/or co-curricular offerings can often lose more money from the reduction of students than they would have saved through the budget cuts.

I hope this helps explain some of the thoughts that go into the budget process. Our School Board wants to offer more opportunities for our students. They want to keep class sizes lower, they want to offer more curricular options to our students and they want to support healthy and vibrant athletic and co-curricular programs. However, this past year they were forced to cut over \$1,200,000 because the operational referendums failed on November 2022 and April 2023. These types of cuts will not be sustainable for the District going forward.

I will be working with the Board, administration, staff, students and community to determine what our needs are going forward. I welcome your suggestions, so please continue to reach out to me with your comments, questions and concerns. Working together solutions can be found and implemented.