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Realities of Budget Cuts

By [Stu Silberman](#) on March 20, 2014 9:36 AM |

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At the beginning of this school year, our school district's superintendent stood in front of our school staff and unleashed the bad news we were afraid was coming. Our district's finances were in dire straits due in part to [SEEK funding](#) reductions. We were told that difficult but necessary decisions would need to be made by the end of the year. A fellow arts and humanities teacher turned to me and said, "So are we out of a job?" Neighboring school districts are already reducing or cutting their arts and humanities programs, therefore all I could think was, "I don't know."

An immediate solution to my district's budget woes was to enact a hiring freeze, which has left our school without a reading intervention teacher, our district with larger class sizes and teachers with less planning time. Some teachers are covering multiple buildings to fill the gaps left when a teacher leaves the district.

As the state continues to reduce funding for education while increasing mandates to help children succeed, districts are forced to get creative to meet the needs of their students and communities. What is often overlooked when glancing at the big picture of school funding is the immediate impact to teachers and, ultimately, their ability to teach. While I worry about whether I will have a job the next year, I am also expected to be an effective teacher and yet I am unable to attend professional development opportunities to grow as an educator in my field due to budget cuts.

As a parent I also feel the pinch on the school's budget and a responsibility to cover the financial gap. I am asked throughout the school year to dig into my pockets to provide money for the school by purchasing ever-larger lists of school supplies, paying substantial activity/class fees and for field trips that used to be free -- not to mention the multiple fundraisers that my children's schools and activities ask me to participate in throughout the year.

Money doesn't fix everything. I could teach children the joys of music even if I didn't have technology, books, and materials. However, would it be the high quality education our students deserve? Would I be preparing students to be critical thinkers, problem solvers and to be college- and career-ready? Could I teach them if I wasn't there because the funding for the arts is cut?

As legislators are considering funding for education, my hope is that they realize that reducing funding affects people like me. How can I be the highly effective, inspirational, teacher leader that I know I can be if I have nowhere to teach?