Impact of the Continuing Financial Crisis on Academics, Technology, and School Security

This week’s Focus on Finance will review the impact of District 7’s continuing financial crisis on academics, technology, and school security.

The impact of decreasing revenues for the past eight years on the District’s ability to upgrade and replace instructional materials and textbooks, as well as technology and security components necessary for the operation of the school district, has been significant.

ACADEMIC IMPACT
The District suspended the full curriculum review cycle in 2007, a process that has been used for decades to develop high quality K-12 curricula. The only curriculum updates completed after 2007 were the K-12 English/Language Arts and K-12 Mathematics curricula in response to the state’s adoption of the New Illinois Learning Standards in preparation for the PARCC assessments. Instructional materials and new textbooks were not purchased for these subject areas due to a lack of funds.

The cost of a full K-12 curriculum study for one of the core academic subjects – Language Arts, Mathematics, Science, and Social Science – ranges in cost from approximately $800,000 to $1,000,000 to fully implement.

For example, math is taught to 7,500 students by over 190 teachers in 15 school locations each year.

- Committee study cost to develop and implement a K-12 subject area = $160,000
- Professional development for teachers = $40,000
- Purchase of textbooks and instructional materials, such as electronic library subscriptions and licenses, manipulatives, and consumable supplies for 7,500 students in over 500 classrooms = approximately $600,000

Curricular areas that have been placed on hold pending availability of the financial resources are:

- K-12 Language Arts – revised in 2014 (materials not purchased)
- K-12 Mathematics – revised in 2014 (materials not purchased)
- K-12 Science – last reviewed in 2006 (materials not purchased)
- K-10 Health Education – last revised in 2006
- K-12 Fine and Performing Arts – music, visual arts, band, orchestra – last revised in 2006
- 9-12 Business Education/Family & Consumer Sciences - last revised in 2002
- K-12 Social Science – last revised in 2000
- K-12 Physical Education – last revised in 1998
- 9-12 Foreign Languages (French, Spanish, German) – last revised in 1998
How has the District navigated through these years without the purchase of new textbooks?
The emergence of quality digital content has provided much-needed, updated resources that when paired with older textbooks allowed teachers to deliver curriculum that is current with information that is up-to-date. This hybrid approach helps schools transition to using more digital content and is occurring across the country.

PTOs, in partnership with the District, have generously funded subscriptions to *Discovery Education*, an electronic database of academic resources that can be accessed through the interactive white boards located in each classroom.

**Why can’t the District continue this practice?**
The average textbook used in District 7 is 12 years old. Replacement textbooks are no longer available in Elementary Science and certain high school science and English courses.

**PROPOSED PLAN TO ADDRESS AGING/OBSOLETE INSTRUCTIONAL MATERIALS**
A common misconception is that quality digital content is free. Neither the content nor the technological infrastructure required to support it is free.

The administration has developed a plan to restore the curriculum study cycle and regular replacement of instructional materials and textbooks once funds become available.

- K-12 English/Language Arts (Year 1)
- K-12 Mathematics (Year 2)
- K-12 Science (Year 3)
- K-12 Social Studies (Year 4)
- K-12 Physical Education & Health
- 3-12 Foreign Language
- 6-12 Business and Applied Technology
- K-12 Fine and Performing Arts

**IMPACT ON UPDATING TECHNOLOGY**
The District relies on technology for its:

- Instructional program – *Technology in the 21st Century Classroom Initiative*
- Communication system – Email, School Messenger, phone system, internet, websites
- Financial & Student Information Systems

**Instructional Program**
In 2012, through donations to the District’s *Technology in the 21st Century Classroom Initiative*, interactive whiteboards and projection systems were installed in each of the District’s 500+ classrooms.

Since then, the District has provided ongoing professional development for all of its teachers on the integration of technology into instruction. However, due to the lack of sufficient funding, the District has been unable to implement the next phases of its technology plan:

- Implementation of technology infrastructure needed to support the next phases of the plan
- Implementation of a Learning Management System (LMS)
- Implementation of student-owned mobile devices
A learning management system (LMS) serves as an electronic hub that allows teachers to organize class content and digital information. An LMS provides a central online location for students to access digital textbooks and course activities includes quizzes, links to online articles and resources, and teachers’ presentations.

In order to move forward, the District must have funds to address technology infrastructure at Edwardsville High School and Lincoln and Liberty Middle Schools:

- Installation of WIFI (Lincoln and Liberty)
- Increase bandwidth
- Installation of wireless and network security
- Installation of device management software to ensure safe student access to the internet

When Phases 2 and 3 of the Technology in the 21st Century Classroom Initiative are implemented, high school and middle school students will be able to bring their own devices to access the District’s learning management system.

At the elementary level, the District would provide student devices at a ratio of 5 students per device for use in small groups and research projects.

**Restore Technology Replacement Cycle**

The District needs to restore its technology replacement cycle to support its communication, financial, and security systems, including major components such as servers, routers, switches, and computers. All should be replaced or upgraded on a regular basis.

A regular replacement cycle ensures that the District can budget for needed purchases while ensuring that equipment is in place to support its operations.

**School Security Updates**

District 7 schools currently have 557 interior and exterior security cameras installed on school property. As with all technology, cameras need to be updated and/or replaced regularly so the District is providing a safe and secure learning environment for students, employees, and parents.

**COST TO UPDATE INSTRUCTIONAL MATERIALS AND TECHNOLOGY**

The District has developed a plan to:

- Replace all textbooks in core academic areas
- Restore the curriculum review cycle
- Implement the next phases of the Technology in the 21st Century Classroom Initiative
- Restore the technology replacement cycle
- Update and increase the number of school security cameras

**Total Annual Allocation Required to Implement the Plan: $1,000,000**

The next Focus on Finance communication will be emailed to parents and employees and posted online on Tuesday, August 9. The remaining components of the plan to address District 7’s financial needs will be presented.

Thank you for your support of the Edwardsville School District.