



Rubik's Cube (R) used by permission
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“Working on All Sides at Once”...

Dr. Christopher Hibner, Superintendent
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East Troy Schools Referendum Paused

One evening, my son Jordan, picked up a Rubik's Cube that had long been scrambled. In a few minutes, he quite proudly declared that he had almost organized one of the colors on one side. However, as he began to work on the next side, he quickly became frustrated. As soon as he began fixing the next side, the first side became scrambled. I tried to explain that in order to solve the whole Rubik's Cube, you would not only need to “mess up” the first side, but you needed to “work on all sides at once.” Needless to say, this didn't sit well with Jordan, who had enjoyed the neatness and solution of the first side and clearly did not want to upset his almost perfect side.

After reflecting on this “teachable moment,” I realized the challenges facing East Troy Schools are similar. Like many other districts in the state, our District is facing an unprecedented level of complexity; from uncertainties to school funding as the state decides how to deal with a 3 billion dollar deficit to defining and teaching the new skills our students will need to learn to be successful in life. Combine these challenges with aging facilities, the need to attract and retain quality staff, an ever changing technology landscape, ensuring at least a year to a year plus of student learning growth for each child each year, ensuring student engagement, and properly communicating with all stakeholders, the problem can feel overwhelming. But failing our children is not an option, and much like solving the Rubik's Cube, we must “work on all sides at once.”

One of the challenging facets for the board is funding our schools. For the last ten years, voters approved a referendum for \$345,000 to help the district deal with costs of transportation, building and grounds, technology, and music. This funding expires June 30, 2011. But given the uncertainty of the state's budget for next year, the board felt it was prudent to postpone the referendum, developing a more comprehensive solution.

The following are several important factors that the board is evaluating as they develop a plan going forward:

- Last fall, the district received one-time federal stimulus funding. Although use of these funds is somewhat limited, it does provide the district with some short-term relief.
- The board realizes that these are very difficult times for many families in our community and any plan must balance the needs of our students with the priorities of our taxpayers.
- Given the significant state budget deficit and new leadership in Madison, there is a lot of uncertainty to how schools will be funded in the next few years.

- Some of our facilities are in need of maintenance, technology, and safety upgrades.
- Although the district has made significant budget cuts, in excess of \$1.5 million over the last three years, we must continue to identify additional reductions and internal efficiencies. At this time shortfalls in the excess of \$1.8 million are projected over the next three years.

As you can see, this is a very challenging time for our District. However, we understand that we will not be defined by the challenges, but rather; by what we accomplish. I continue to be confident that each and every challenge is an opportunity for greater success. We are committed to develop a plan that continues to demonstrate the East Troy Community School District “working on all sides at once,” but reflects the goals and priorities of the community. To accomplish this, I will be providing more detailed monthly updates throughout the spring and summer. Finally, we will be sending out a community survey early next fall toward assisting us in properly moving forward and ensuring we are making the right decisions.

Thank you for your continued support.

Sincerely,

Dr. Christopher Hibner