

**Budget Reduction Comments  
After 2/18/04 Board Presentation**

Note: These comments have been delivered to Don White either via email or written form. Some were sent directly to Board members, some were forwarded from other people, and some were sent directly to Don White. The goal was to remove the names and any identifying information. Please accept this apology if there are any names or other identifying data left in these comments. The ultimate goal was to make sure the Board of Education received these comments.

**Comment**

1 I am wondering why the staff cuts are at the student contact level instead of the administration level? I would think cutting some of the dead wood at the top would benefit the students more. I like losing the 'no child left behind' coordinator at almost \$100g per year. How many more of these 'coordinators' are lurking in the shadows that no one knows about? What a waste of our money that is! Why not cut the sp. ed. learning consultants? I would think the teachers, principals and one special ed coordinator to interpret the law could handle it. The district could certainly function without them, they did before. How about the learning center people? Teachers can teach the children to use computers and the library without them! What about gym, music and art teachers? It used to be that the regular teacher had art, gym and music time in the classroom, which would free up classrooms for more kids so we would not have to build more schools. Which brings me to the point of the ignorance of putting all of the money into Wilson school and then talk of closing down a school, what are you thinking? Take a lesson from the private schools, some contract a music and gym teacher a few days a week and share with other schools so they don't have to pay benefits, others have the classroom teachers do the 'enhancement activities'. How about checking into the price of contracting out the psychologist services? How much would it cost to pay someone to do the required testing? Has that even been looked at? Do we need more than one psychologist on staff? Same with the counselors. How about combining the Jr. High school sports programs instead of eliminating them? One basketball team, one track team, etc.? What about volunteer coaches? Other schools do that. Don't say you won't find anyone unless you have actually asked people, which you have not. How about having parents transport athletes to the games. Again, that is what the parochial schools do at the grade school level. Their coaches are volunteers, and the student have to find their own transportation. The parents have to run concession stands to raise money for uniforms. What is the point of a 'health aide' in every building? When I went to school, the teachers had Band-Aids in their desk drawers and if you were sick, you went to the office and they called home. Again, the private schools do not have a nurse, or aide on staff. Why not talk to them about the ways they 'get by' on less money and still offer great education? Before cutting things out totally, how about trying to make some changes? It is quicker and easier to eliminate than it is to plan and adapt. Please take some time to think about it. We all know there are non teacher employees that our district could survive without. Sure our kids could survive without sports, but at what cost? They could survive much better without the spec. ed. learning consultants and learning center people and coordinators. Step back and see how to offer the best services to the students. I think sometimes we have so many planning committees and people who they answer to who compile the information and add a little more then they report to someone else who gathers it from other people edits it and reports to someone else that there are two or three unnecessary steps between those who see what needs to be done and the person at the top that says do it. Please try to weed out the 'middle man' and keep the teachers and student programs. I think we need to look at the way things were done years ago before it was so important to have all of the administrative staff. Each building had a principal, secretary and teachers. Period. The 'district offices' did not employ scores of people. Perhaps a superintendent and a few secretaries. Special ed was one psychologist, one speech therapist that traveled and one person to coordinate everything plus a secretary. Everything else was contracted out. That may be cheaper than the salaries, benefits, retirements, for full time employees. Perhaps look into the cost of special ed. maybe the co-op was not such a bad idea. A few more things I just thought of that need to be looked at. Having a permanent sub in each building is an extreme cost that again we can live without. Having teachers meetings during the school day and paying subs is another waste. If you need to have grade level or planning meetings then have a half day of school so you get the state funds and credit and then send the kids home. Don't pay for subs to come in and baby sit. One problem is you are trying to parent these children. Make their parents accountable. If there is no school, they have to pay a babysitter. Too bad. It is their child and they both choose to work. The school district is not a babysitter and I think too often we worry about who will be taking care of these kids. The parents need to worry about that. Your job is to educate them, not raise them. This is sounding unorganized. But I wanted to tell you from an unencumbered viewpoint of what it looks like. I don't have to worry about firing a friends wife, or making someone mad. This is what I see from the outside looking in and I am sure you know much more but have to play the 'political game'. Try to step out of that box. So what if the principals and others have to do a little more work to pick up the slack. I know teachers that work until 7 at night trying to do things to make their class better and keep up with all of the stupid paper work like SAI scoring and IEP writing and lesson planning. When are they supposed to do that? During class? During recess? Their planning period (no wait, they have to meet with someone during that). The good teachers do their work at home or after 'paid' hours. Some of the other people should try it. I know a teacher that just a few weeks ago had a meeting scheduled for 7:30 am. then had another meeting scheduled for after school, then stayed to do some paperwork. This teacher was not paid any extra for working a 12 hour day. How many of the dead wood do that? Thank you for taking the time to read

	all the way through this and considering some of the suggestions.
2	<p>I read in the newspaper and heard on the radio about the proposed cuts of all extracurricular activities in District 108. As an outsider looking in, I'm sure I don't understand all of the issues and reasons behind these cuts. I Know I would not want to be in your position. As a person who has seen the benefit of extracurricular activities year after year, I am putting in my "2 cents" to try to get you to reconsider. I am not writing you because of wins and losses-I am trying to make you see the benefit of being part of a positive program. For many of our students, these extracurricular activities are the only positive influence that they have. They go home to situations where it is almost predetermined that they will make bad decisions. The coaches and sponsors of all of the 108 activities(band, Suzuki, track, basketball, etc.) offer them a chance to be around positive, successful role models so they learn that they do have choices. I teach in the alternative school at Pekin High School. The students I teach, for the most part, are great kids who have made bad decisions. One common thread is that almost 100% of them had no ownership in the school. They didn't get involved in extracurricular activities and as a result they felt no importance in many parts of the education process. I'd be afraid we would have a much larger number of these types of students in our community if they don't have any options. I know that some of you might think that other options are available for kids-private lessons, Boys and Girls Club, Mission, etc., but they still will have no true allegiance to their school. Extra-curricular activities emphasize the importance of following rules, working together and having pride in people. It is important for these students to have Broadmoor, Washington, Wilson and Edison supporting their activities. This way, students understand that schoolwork and teamwork go hand in hand. Again, I am not writing on behalf of basketball or wins and losses-I'm writing on the environment and atmosphere that having extracurricular activities brings to our schools and community. The students that participate in any extracurricular activity gain immeasurable lessons from being a part of a group. I have never heard anyone 20 years after participating in an extracurricular activity say-"I wish I wouldn't have done that activity." But I do hear people say," I wish I would have done sports, band, cheerleading, etc." These programs benefit children by helping them to feel good about themselves. Our kids need extra-curricular activities to help provide the invaluable experience of teamwork, dedication and success on their journey in life. Thank you for your time.</p>
3	<p>Sometimes I feel that people that do not work in a building everyday lose site of just how busy we are. I am always being told that we must be service orientated. I am very concerned that if my clerk is cut I will not be able to keep up as many many nights I take work home and come in evenings and weekends on my own. I work almost all of the home games as we can not get parents or staff to help. I have never left my desk for lunch even though I know I can, because we are just to busy. I hardly ever take sick time as I know what a burden it puts on the rest of the office staff. I know that I could not handle the month of August on my own. We just have too many parents register when ever it fits their schedule and this past year we had approximately 30 new students. I can not schedule students, make bank deposits, help upset parents etc. and be sure that I am giving all these very important jobs my undivided attention.</p> <p>Here are my suggestions,</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Why when cuts are being discussed is there never any mention of 6 of the district secretaries being let go?</li> <li>2. Why do we need to have 4 special education consultants? Can't the social worker, special education teacher, or psychologist be in charge of staffings.</li> <li>3. Do you feel that us having a learning center aide is more important than keeping a clerk in the office?</li> <li>4. If we are getting rid of the industrial tech class - has the sale of the large power tools been discussed?</li> <li>5. We need to stop the practice of letting 4 to 5 staff members from the same building go to the same conference. Why can't one or 2 go and then share the information?</li> </ol> <p>Thank you for taking these few things that have come to my mind into consideration. I realize you may think well other buildings get by with just a secretary, but I feel that our age group is very needy. Our students are trying to become young adults but are still children trying to find their way.</p>
4	<p>Hi my name is [student name goes here] and I heard that activities are being shut down. I'm not happy because my violin school might shut down. I have been trying to raise money to give to Suzuki Strings so we can keep it going. It is my third year playing violin so please do not shut down Suzuki. Thank You so much. P.S. This portion of the message is from [student's] father. While I understand the realities of budgets and have explained the basic concept to my 8 year-old, he was insistent upon sharing his view with you. The Suzuki program is outstanding and will certainly be missed in its current format. I know that my children (my 6 year-old also plays) will continue to play regardless of the outcome of the decision. However, my concern lies with those individuals who will likely not even consider pursuing violin as the cost inevitably rise. I know that you value the Suzuki program and understand what it adds to our community, but I wanted to share my thoughts. Thanks for your time and no response is necessary.</p>
5	<p>I am sure that you have received many emails and letters with regards to all the publicity of the budget cuts so let me add another to your list. I am a proud parent of both, a student who went through Dist. 108 and is now doing very well in Pekin High and 2 students still currently in Dist 108. I realize that budget cuts are a</p>

	<p>must but please reconsider cutting extra curricular activities. I feel that students and families have not been given enough notice or been considered in the plan. I don't feel that extra curricular activities should be for the rich but I do feel that the parents and students should be given the opportunity to raise money to keep them going when the District can't. I firmly believe that my High School student is doing so well today because of the opportunities that she was given at Dist. 108. I think if you take a few minutes to look over the grade school records from most of the kids enrolled in the high school alternative teaching program you will find that most of those students weren't involved at the grade school level in any extra curricular activities. These activities give the students a sense of belonging and purpose while keeping them interested in school. I would also like to point out that Mr. Bacon was wrong when he said that if these activities were cut that the students could get these experiences elsewhere. I assume he was talking about sports and being involved with the Union Mission and The Boys and Girls Club, however neither one of these facilities offer anything past the 6th grade. I would definitely like to see what restructuring the school grading system could do to help. Do we actually need 5 K-3 schools, surely we could redistrict these kids and close 1. What about the feasibility of breaking up CB Smith and Dirksen and moving those kids to fit in the other schools and then moving Edison up to Broadmoor. Also programs to be cut even though my children have been both involved in the past and are currently involved in would be the Connections program. I have felt now as in the past that this specific program does not either hurt or benefit the students and there for could be cut. Accelerated students can still be taught together but this would eliminate several teaching positions that actually don't have a class room and are considered support staff. I am sure that you have had many people speak about how they think things should be done and although I know this doesn't take care of all of the budget I think it is reasonable to let the parents try to save the extra curricular activities, cutting some support staff and the possibility of restructuring the schools and closing those not needed. I would like to thank you for taking the time you have given to this matter. I know that no decision will be made lightly and that every consideration will be given to save what we can while cutting the excess with as little impact as possible.</p>
6	<p>I am, as a parent concerned about the book learning side of my children's education, but I am also concerned about the extra-curricular aspect of learning. Education is not all about books, it is about feeding the soul. And I strongly believe music does that. I myself am not a musical person, but I have a daughter in the Suzuki program. She has asthma so is not very athletic, so music is her outlet. She interacts with other kids while at the same time getting a feeling of self-worth. I would truly hate to see this program cut without being offered any choice to explore options to keep it going. I also have a son big in to sports at the Jr. High level, but there are other options available to the sports minded. The Union Mission and Boys and Girls clubs offer athletic programs for all ages. But there are no affordable music programs. If you cut all music programs at this level, there will eventually be no music at any grade levels as the younger kids will have no place to learn. Thank you for you time.</p>
7	<p>I have to admit that I am not real tax smart so my question may seem somewhat inane. With all the new higher-priced houses going up in areas like Sunset Hills, Marigold Estates, and Country Club, how come our property tax income isn't going up? Are we capped at a certain dollar amount or a percentage? Thank you for your honesty with the staff and your gentle yet blunt way of saying things. I know the whole process was difficult. I only hope we can get the community behind us to make changes asap.</p>
8	<p>I am writing in response to the proposed budget cuts for next year in District 108, specifically in the areas of extra-curricular activities and counselors. Being a part of extra-curricular activities - music, sports, etc. - can sometimes be the only thing that keeps a student motivated to maintain grades and attendance. These activities teach students commitment and loyalty, not only to the activity, but to their fellow students. Working in the high school, I see the results of too many 'bad' decisions that are made by kids who don't seem to have any motivation to succeed or belong at school. The cost and transportation involved with finding alternatives to the school programs will make it impossible for some students to be able to participate in these activities. I have worked in one of the K-3 buildings and have seen firsthand the positive impact that the counselors have made on several students. Students need someone trained to help them deal with their emotional and family issues. Again, if not provided by the school district, I feel that the cost/transportation issue will prevent some students from receiving the help that they need. I realize that classroom instruction is - and should be - your main concern, but please re-consider the importance of extra-curricular activities and counselors when making your decisions. Thank you for your time.</p>
9	<p>I am writing not only as a concerned parent, but as a board member myself of the Suzuki School of Music. My family and I have been involved with the Suzuki group for more than 12 years now and we cannot even imagine not being able to provide this wonderful program to our youngest child who now is 9 years of age. We have made the commitment to send each of our 3 children to this program even though we are not within your district. This program, as I am sure many others feel, are well worth what we have contributed throughout those many years. We alone have paid well over \$10,000.00 towards this investment in our children's future. I believe that the fees that you now charge for in district children are far, far below that. Just by raising their fees alone it would keep this</p>

	<p>program afloat. Please do not underestimate not only the value of these programs as these children enter into their high school years and adulthood; but the willingness of the families to pay what is necessary to continue not only this program, but the many others that you are looking to dismiss so easily. Remember the children grow and develop all so differently and by removing these programs you are very well removing a much needed lifeline for many children and their families to grow and to remain not only connected to their families, to their schools, but also to their communities. It takes strong citizens and strong families to continue to see the town of Pekin grow. If we do not build strong citizens through our school systems and the programs that they provide we will surely see the town of Pekin suffer greatly! Hoping for the best.</p>
<p>10</p>	<p>I just finished reading the proposed budget cuts for district 108 schools and I am very appalled at the suggestion of eliminating all extracurricular activities. The top six benefits of extracurricular activities include the following:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Time away from watching TV</li> <li>2. Alternative to hanging out after school and getting into trouble / drugs</li> <li>3. Exercise / prevents overweight children</li> <li>4. Exploration of creativity</li> <li>5. Opportunities to do something constructive</li> <li>6. Good Grades</li> </ol> <p>My oldest daughter will not be affected by this decision for budget cuts, but I have two other children who will be directly affected. I apologize that I cannot speak on behalf of the Music/Art Programs at Pekin, but I feel that these are also necessary programs to develop future musicians/artists. Let's look at the problems that already exist in Pekin today - Obesity problems with teenagers - do you want to add to this problem by taking away structured exercise programs? Drug problems with teenagers - do you want to add to this problem by giving the kids more free time to get into trouble? There is a graduating process to extracurricular programs - the Union Mission and Boy's and Girl's Club are able to introduce the kids to sports and to introduce the fundamentals, so they have a decent background for their activities. The Junior High strengthens these fundamentals and continues to teach them team work, so that when the kids are in High School, the elite of the athletes are competitive and not an embarrassment to their community. Teamwork is prevalent in every day situations throughout the community. Do you see it Mr. Bacon? Yes there are programs out there that might help keep the kids busy, but at a cost. Putting this pressure on the Boys and Girls Club and Union Mission to maintain these programs for junior high kids is not a fair thing to do. Their gym space and budgets are stretched just like District 108s, if not more-so for the younger kids. They supervise more than their share of kids. As far as the athlete's potential in high school - do you not see what happens when there is no feeder program into the high school's program? Let's talk about the Girl's Swim Team for example that produced many good athletes. The high school did not support the feeder team from Pekin which had swimmers from the age of 5-14. I was at the Board Meeting when the decision was made. Parents took their children to Peoria to swim. Through the determination of the parents, their children were able to continue to swim. And who reaped the rewards from this - the high school did -- look at the girl's swim team record. Do you see it Mr. Bacon? Is it fair to put more of the burden on the parents, financially - paying for the programs, paying for the transportation, and paying in time away from family activities. Parents have enough to worry about - both parents have to work nowadays to stay afloat, couples have to work different shifts so the care of the children is maintained within the family, reliance on other people for transportation when work schedules don't work with practice or game schedules. So much for strengthening our family system. Let me close with this: At my daughter's awards night last year, the principal asked all the athletes to stand up if they were on the honor roll during the year and 75% plus of the student/athletes stood up. He asked again how many athletes were on the honor roll more than once and 100% of the 75% plus athletes remained standing. Maybe there is a correlation between grades and extracurricular activities. Do you see it Mr. Bacon? The benefits of extracurricular activities outweigh the cost of the programs!!!! Obviously Mr. White and Mr. Bacon - you don't see it. Sherry Whitmore: YOU DO SEE IT!!</p>
<p>11</p>	<p>I received the following email from the [source of email]. I don't know if you've received this but I thought I would forward it as an FYI. I would just like to take this opportunity to thank you for your open and honest approach to this very difficult time in the District's history. I find your openness and honesty a breath of fresh air. I was at the two budget meetings and was very impressed with your thoroughness and your honest approach to a very difficult situation. I think you're right...we have to have a positive attitude going into this.</p> <p>----- Original Message -----Subject: Proposed district 108 cuts</p> <p>Dear Parents,</p> <p>I am sure many of you have heard the news about district cuts for 108. Monday evening there is a board meeting at the Elementary School on Washington St. at 6:30 PM to discuss options. We need to make a stand for our music programs and let the board members know how important our music programs are to this</p>

	community. Please attend this meeting to show your support so our music programs don't disappear. If you are unable to attend, please e-mail the board members to voice your opinion. For more information on the benefits of music for our students check out websites like Music Educators National Conference, Illinois Music Educators Association, and VH1 Save the Music. Thank you for your ear.
12	District 108 needs to utilize the advantages of local public funded projects already in place. The Pekin public library is an example of an under utilized facility for Reading Recovery program. A lot of the parents would be helpful in the computer software upkeep if asked. I believe that all parents should be mandated by the federal government to attend a full day of school every grading period. The only way this would be possible is for the federal government to reimburse working parents for the day lost at work. If this were scheduled properly we would essentially have a many parents in the school on any given day. A new sports complex that will introduce several leagues for all types of sports is coming to Pekin. Is it possible for District 108 to capitalize on the sports facilities in the schools. For example, Broadmoor could rent the gymnasium to leagues. We must think of the district as a business and capitalize on what the facilities have to offer during non-classroom times. Could some of the other state or federal government departments pay for use of the offices? Why not make a profit using what we have to minimize the cuts.
13	This letter is in regards to the recent proposed budget cuts. While I'm sure you're receiving many emails, I hope that you will take the time to read each and every one. I should begin by saying that I am a parent of a 6th grade band student and a PCHS Freshman band student. I fully understand the reasons why our budget must be cut back. I don't believe anyone will disagree with being fiscally responsible. I know that Mr. White and his administration tried to be fair and cut all, not just some extracurricular activities. This is also understandable. After reading a few comments in the newspaper, I am concerned that the board may not have a full understanding of how important music can be to a child's life and how difficult it could be for us to search for this outside the school district. There is much more involved in band than just learning to play a song on an instrument. The band program teaches discipline, responsibility and dedication. Studies have shown that music students have improved performance in school. Isn't this what we're all looking for? With No Child Left Behind staring us in the face, shouldn't we be looking for any and all ways to improve our children's learning? Ask school officials and they will tell you that music students generally stay out of trouble, have better grades, and are not drop-out material. Children begin playing musical instruments in 5th grade. What will happen next year when there are no 5th graders learning to play musical instruments? One board member thinks that this will have very little impact on the children when they reach high school and these skills can be learned elsewhere. Speaking from my circumstances, I will tell you that I had a tough time finding a trumpet teacher for my son. There was no one I could find in Pekin who gave lessons. I am now traveling to Peoria once a week so that he can get the lessons he needs. While many like myself would push forward and try to keep our kids in music, many can't or won't do this. Have you ever attended a PCHS football game? Did you enjoy the half-time show? Those kids didn't learn to play those instruments when they reached Pekin HS. The majority of them were a product of District 108's wonderful band program. Everyone within the district should be proud when they see these kids play. Their discipline and dedication began many years ago in 5th grade @ Washington or Wilson school. In 4 years or less, PCHS will no longer have a band program. That will indeed be a sad day. I am afraid that even if District 108 drops the band program for even 1 or 2 years, it will have started a downward spiral that will take years to heal. While I know it is important to be fiscally responsible, I am pleading with you to not accept the budget cuts as proposed and search for a way to keep music in District 108. Is there a way to modify the program.....take a bare-bones approach and keep a band program going....especially for the 5th graders next year? I do not believe that music is a frivolous expense. It is absolutely necessary to keep our children well-rounded and well-grounded. Thank you for taking the time to hear my concerns. I will be at the Feb. 23rd meeting to listen to other's concerns and hear the responses. Thanks!
14	My husband and I would like to encourage you and the rest of the District #108 Board to find a way to continue the funding for the orchestra and band activities. I was extremely concerned to read in the Daily Times that these very important activities are being considered for the chopping block. Although we no longer have children in District 108, we have two students in the band and music programs at District #103. They would not be excelling in their academic courses and musical activities if they had not experienced the groundwork provided through District #108. It is well known that music students have higher academic scores overall as compared to non-music students. Music is something that students can use for life, contrary to athletics. Although I do not want to see any of the athletic opportunities on the chopping block, it is important to consider how learning can be utilized for a lifetime. If the band and orchestra programs at District #108 are eliminated, it will be very detrimental to the programs at the high school level. We are all well aware of what wonderful music programs are available for students at PCHS and how those programs help to keep students focused, motivated, busy (as in staying out of trouble), plus provide a safe group for students to join to help make the adjustment to high school. There is a long tradition of great music programs at both districts and it would be a shame to lose all that those who have gone before us have worked so hard to build. Thank you for your serious consideration of my request.

15	<p>I am forwarding this email from [source of email], She is also [student's] private teacher, through the Suzuki program. [Student name] also attends a weekly repertory class, at Washington school. I thought the cost breakdown would be informative. What would cost us \$895.00 at the Sun Foundation in Peoria (not including transportation), we are able to have here for \$70.00. [Name] also commented that as the high school orchestra director is Lowell Koons, from the Suzuki program, "many of our parents probably do not realize that there will be no orchestra next year at the high school, either, since that position was filled by our staff". Thanks.</p> <p>----- Original Message ----- Subject: Re: budget cuts</p> <p>Perhaps you would know where to forward this information...there is nothing available in Pekin as far as private string lessons, outside of the public schools. Here is a typical privately-run Suzuki program, in this case, the Sun Foundation in Peoria: A core 30-week instrumental program, including 30 private lessons, 30 group lessons, and parent group meetings is offered. Fee schedule: core program with 30-minute private lessons \$655; 45-minute private lessons \$884; 60-minute private lessons \$1114; Summer school (eight lessons) is \$175; Intermediate and advanced orchestra--\$155 each; Orchestra music books \$8-\$10; Annual registration fee (non-refundable) \$75. Here is in Pekin, a Suzuki program has been in the schools at the cost of \$70 dollars per year to in-district students.</p>
16	<p>I would like to thank you for presenting us such forthright information during such a confusing and disheartening time for district 108. I was at the meeting Thursday and learned alot. However, I do have a couple of things that I would like to say. I am the general music teacher at [school name goes here] as well as the mother of a sixth grade child at Wilson and a taxpayer in this community. I understand the need to cut money to match a budget, my husband and I do it every day. I would like to express my concern for a few of the cuts. Please understand that I am not attacking you or your decisions. I know that you are a supporter of the arts and that you encourage your children to participate in them, so I know that this was a hard decision for you to make. Why lump General music and Band together with extra-curricular sports? You kept saying on Thursday, "People before things." I understand that, and I totally agree, however, The directors of the Orchestra are a "people" as well as the directors of the band. We are not just activities or programs. We are teachers and what we do is important to every child that we teach. Music takes up a large part of our lives. It motivates the affective part of our humanity and stimulates emotional growth. Because of this, I have children coming to me daily with problems that they are having. "Real" problems that they need help with. We expect our Junior high children to be adults. They look like adults, act like, and talk like adults, but when it comes down to it, they are just children. They are not able to cope with adult concepts such as pregnancy, rape, death and depression. Just yesterday I had a child come to me to talk. Her mother was diagnosed with cancer and given less than six weeks to live. I was in the middle of class and sent her to talk to the counselor. What a relief to know that there is someone here that I can send her to. I have had similar instances several times here at [school name goes here]. These are not moments when I can just tell a child "You will have to wait a couple of days until it is our day for the counselor." Please reconsider taking the counselors out of the Junior highs. They are invaluable. One last thing, I can give you the names of students that come to school only because of things like choir, band, and sports. These are children that will not come to school or that will not care about their grades if we are not there to constantly ask them how they are doing, or how they did on that Math test, or if they need anyone to help them in Science. These are children that will be lost in the system if someone doesn't care about and for them. I could quote you numerous amounts of studies that point to test scores and IQ testing related to music but I think that you are aware of those. Please take another look at the budget and please ask yourself what is the best for ALL of the children.</p>
17	<p>I am a Pekin High student in my junior year at PCHS. Hearing about this budget cut has upset me quite a bit. I know your hearing this from a lot of people but I feel personally involved as I went through the music, basketball, and baseball programs only a few years ago. Cuts in the Jr. High extra-curricular programs will lead directly to cuts in the PCHS programs as well. Music is what has gotten me through high school. I'm not great at sports and I'm not particularly great at music either but being able to be so involved in the music program has kept my grades as well as my attitude up in my three years at PCHS. I am in Marching Band, Symphonic Band, Concert Choir, Jazz Choir, and Noteables as well as tennis. All of the music programs at PCHS will be devastated by this cut if it affects the Jr. High music program. Without Jr. High to teach musical instruments, any competition Pekin High has with other schools (Marching Band, Noteables, organizational contest, Jazz competitions, etc.) will be eliminated. This competition has kept me going. I love to play music and compete and without that I would not have gotten through these three years. I have also been exposed to many different cultures through these programs. The Pekin Community will be devastated as well. The first musical in years at PCHS took place this year and was a great success but without Jr. High music it will not be possible. The community is so involved with the music programs at Pekin and vise-versa. Seeing how many people come out to see the bands, and the choirs has really made an impact on my life. Without Jr. High music students will have no motivation in school. Music kept me and my grades up and it will continue to do so throughout college but with that gap in Jr. High it won't happen. The scholarships from music will be what makes it possible for me to go to college and get a degree. Please consider some other way so that the music program will be spared from this cut. Thank you for your time.</p>

18	<p>Dear Members of the Board:</p> <p>We are writing to express our concern about the proposed cuts affecting the core and extracurricular programming. We share your desire to help the district regain a sound fiscal position, but we feel there are alternatives to the approach you are recommending. We believe these programs are too valuable to student learning to cut without all stakeholders having time to consider other options.</p> <p>We have been proud of the technology and quality educational opportunities District 108 has a reputation for offering. Even the Pekin Area Chamber of Commerce promotes the "award winning school system" as a reason to "make Pekin your home". We believe the proposed cuts to the core and extracurricular programs are counter-productive to the Chamber's current marketing campaign, which is trying to attract families to Pekin. This type of negative approach can drive current Pekin families to other school districts and will surely discourage new families from choosing Pekin as their home.</p> <p>After completing some financial research, we have found what seems to be conflicting information between the District 108 website and the State Board of Education website. From our financial research of the State Board of Education, it appears reasonable to expect that District 108 will receive an increase of \$658,574 in general state and categorical aid for fiscal year 2004-2005. Tax caps will permit a 2.4% increase in tax collections over the prior year, yielding upward of \$287,000 in new money. We note that \$365,000 in corporate tax dollars have been allocated to the site and construction fund, money which typically might be found in one of the operating funds. Combined, we believe the district may see as much as \$1.3 million in new or reallocated operating fund revenues in fiscal 2005. While we recognize that state aid has fluctuated dramatically from year to year, we believe in fiscal year 2005 monies from the state will be sufficient to buy us an additional year. To the extent these monies are not realized, implement your "things" reductions, not the "people" reductions.</p> <p>Finally, we feel that "Financial Watch" is not imminent. The District has or should soon receive an additional \$219,000 in unanticipated CPPRT Tax Amnesty dollars in fiscal year 2004. The 2004 budget shows an operating surplus. We believe that the district could maintain the core and extracurricular programs for another year while other plans for alleviating financial concerns are considered.</p> <p>Historically, the Board has done a good job fiscally. You've kept your promise on abating tax dollars even when it wasn't in your best interest. You have lived within tax caps even though it was difficult. You've maintained comprehensive core and extracurricular programs in spite of ever worsening budgets. You have continued to align FTE's with enrollment to cut costs. Despite demographics and finances, student test scores have increased, outpacing the state and even the district's own prior year. We believe the board needs to market this information to the community and needs to seek a positive approach to alleviating its financial difficulties. This is especially true if you are considering a referendum. Cutting programs in the proposed manner asks the current students to make too great a sacrifice for what is, in reality, a short-term fix with long-lasting ramifications. Although shocking the public can be effective, we believe it alienates some of your strongest supporters. If a referendum is the best solution for the district's financial challenges, we believe this would best be accomplished by promoting the need for a referendum in a positive way.</p> <p>Now is the time to engage in a dialogue with the community. Over the next year we can focus on the necessary savings to align expenditures with revenues. In this dialogue, we should consider such things as 1) efficiency steps freeing up money and maintaining "people" priority, 2) further optimizing class sizes, number of sections, and building square footage in light of enrollment decline, 3) consolidating support overhead at selected buildings, 4) achieving the above through such things as the reconfiguration of buildings and/or grade levels, and 5) leasing excess capacity to achieve 24/7/365 usage of buildings. In addition, we can develop a more positive approach to a referendum.</p> <p>Pekin School of Music (Suzuki) Parent Board</p>
19	<p>I wanted to share a few of my thoughts with you regarding the proposed cuts in our budget. The Destination ImagiNation program currently in the district is near and dear to my heart. I truly appreciate all you have put into your decision making process and recommendations to the Board of Education. I know time, energy, and fact-gathering activities were utilized to the fullest. I support your indication and decision to put the people back into the core curriculum first. I will not be at any meeting to share this, but did want you to know my feelings personally. Does that mean that I feel any less for this program than others.....no? But we are all here...for the benefit of the children. I do feel that Destination ImagiNation supports individuals in many key areas... critical thinking, reasoning, real life skills, teamwork, and ability to " think-outside-of-the-box" to name a few. It is closely tied into multiple intelligences. DI allows ALL children to shine....I believe that every child is 'gifted' in some area and DI gives those students an opportunity to showcase their individual specialty. Thank you for allowing me to share my thoughts and feelings.</p>
20	<p>This a second letter - the first addressed the extracurricular activities and this one will address educational program. The State mandated No Child Left Behind Program is a scam for more money. The reason I say this, is because my children (3) are all A students, never a discipline problem, dependable and responsible - this is coming from their teachers. Currently at conferences, I am told with all three of them, they are given direction and are set to do the work on their own. Questions sometimes go unanswered because the teacher is spending time with the at risk children, who are protected by the No Child Left Behind Program.</p>

	<p>What about my children -- not all of their needs are being met - are they considered under the No Child Left Behind Program. The answer is NO. Is this fair. By you cutting teacher aides and teaching positions, you further endanger my children of being left behind by increase class sizes. You are asking a lot of the teachers as it is - my children's classroom size ranges from 22-26 children. They don't have time to address many of the needs of the children as it is. I have seen that bullying is let go, since this may turn into a big situation that the teachers don't have to deal with. Their advice to the other kids - just stay out of their (the bully's) way. Bullying does go on and I have seen bruises, as well as the mental abuse that occurs from it. Pekin Schools are not really that safe because of factors: Classroom size, fewer teachers, fewer aides, less supervision - teachers can't be every. You have to remember that we are not in the June Cleaver age, where only one parent works. Volunteerism is virtually impossible due to work schedules, children's schedules, etc. For those stay at home mom and dads, this is awesome when volunteering can be done on their parts.</p> <p>Where did the budget get out of whack at (just a couple of suggestions):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Perry Soldwedel's increased salary / then early retirement package</li> <li>\$125,000 Salary for Mr. White</li> <li>No Child Left Behind Program (State Mandated)</li> <li>State Testing - for what - more money?</li> <li>Illinois Report Card - Testing all the time for what - to see if we qualify for more money</li> <li>Restoration of the Auditorium at Washington / \$10,000 invitations</li> <li>Wilson renovations - did it have to be as elaborate as it is?</li> <li>Redistricting every year or so to get more money from the state.</li> <li>Chicago Convention for Board Members - I understand that the job is done freely, but it was their choice to run for office</li> </ul> <p>Where is all this money going? Maybe a management team should be created to oversee the Board's spending. Where is the Lottery money that was supposed to be used for education? I feel that an audit should be done to find out more about these expenses and for any discrepancies, you and the Board should be held accountable. We have a family tradition here in Pekin, both my husband and I were born, raised and continued to live in Pekin because of the resources and education that are offered here. My husband and I both went to Edison, competed on Basketball and Volleyball for the school. My first daughter has received this opportunity to participate at Edison; however my son, who will go to Edison next year may not. My other daughter is only in 4<sup>th</sup> grade. We chose to stay in Pekin because of its familiarity as well as being a safe place to live; and as education / extracurricular activities that was available in the school district.</p>
21	<p>It is my opinion, we need counselors NOW more than ever. In my classroom, I have several children from an abusive/neglectful situation or family turmoil. Their learning is being impaired and stagnating because of their emotional problems from an abusive, negligent, or tumultuous situation. In the last 5 years, I have seen a greater need for EVERY school in our community and Tazewell County to have a counselor due to the decay, decline, and demise of the nuclear families in our community. Children need an advocate. Our counselor/ child advocate has equipped some of my former students with necessary coping skills to enable these children to survive and to, eventually, thrive. The counselors have daily contact with the children. The Learning Consultants have minimal contact with the children. Since we are in the "business" of educating and training children, I would like to encourage the Board of Education to examine the actual contact time with the most children providing the most benefits on a daily basis for these children before determining if a position should be eliminated. In my opinion, it seems the Learning Consultants position would be eliminated BEFORE eliminating counselors. Thank you for your time and considerations.</p>
22	<p>I filled out the budget survey on the district web site, but I did not feel that I had enough room for comments. I feel very strongly against cutting music, tech ed and connections programs. These programs are vital to providing a well-rounded and "appropriate" education to a variety of students who may not otherwise have their needs met. Many families are unable to provide these enrichment experiences on their own. I also feel strongly that early childhood programs are of value in identifying at risk children, and providing early intervention services that help ensure school success. Much educational and life success is determined by early childhood experiences. I do think that some changes and some streamlining, may be appropriate. I think that perhaps the best solution for the moment would be to close one of the smaller schools, redistricting students and teachers to existing schools with available room. While we would still have the expense of maintaining the building until it could be sold or repurposed, we would not have the day to day expenses of operating the building. We would also save the expenses of the building administration and support staff. While I hate the thought of cutting any jobs, this has the benefit of maintaining instructional staff and class ratios. Thank you for considering my opinion.</p>
23	<p>Have a children in district 108 that want to keep band and choir i grew up in a small town about 35 miles west of Pekin and i did not have the opportunity that my</p>

	<p>children have and you plan on taking that away from them my wife and i moved here to make a better education for our children don't they say that music makes children do better in school and you want to take that away from them please respond to this e-mail and i would love to sit down with you and talk about this face to face Thank you.</p>
24	<p>Greetings Mr. White. I came to the board meeting last night because my daughter's love for music is being jeopardized by something she can't help. She is 12 years old and attends Wilson School and is in the 6th grade. It seems that what was talked about last night was only a short term answer and with a referendum looking us in the face in the near future, I offer you another avenue to take a look at. A lot of people who live in Pekin wonder why we have not combined both school districts (being 108 and 303) into one and cut out a level of administration. This is something that most grade school administrators don't care to discuss because it would mean possibly putting their positions in jeopardy. I realize you are new to our school system and you seem to have a hold on what condition our district is in. If our district, and I believe what you are telling us true because we have been looking at these same problems for years now, is in such bad shape, all avenues need to be looked at including the one I have stated. Even if this means scrapping District 108 administration and going to one district which all this would have to be worked out down the road, I believe you are obligated along with the board to look at this alternative. Most school administrators I have talked to in the past seem to have truly a love for caring what is best for the children that go to school here. If this alternative would help our system at the cost of a few administrators losing their jobs, then so be it. It's the kids that come first here and I think you would agree with me. People of Pekin feel like they are being taxed twice for education and are tired of taxes going up and up with no end in sight. You seem to be a pretty decent guy and I feel bad for you having to walk into the state of our district the way it is. Have the guts that all the other administrators failed to have and look at this option. It's our kids that count !!!!!</p>
25	<p>I'm writing in support of keeping district music programs - Suzuki Strings and 5th &amp; 6th grade band. Since Pat Hackler managed to persuade District 108 to embrace this famous string program over 20 years ago, it has produced excellent, disciplined players that have led to award-winning orchestras year after year and contributed to the quality of the Encore orchestra at PCHS. It's rare that a program with such international acclaim is made available through public education! Suzuki is a feather in District 108's cap and an attractive selling point for Pekin schools. Don't lose it! Fifth &amp; sixth grade band is the foundation that provides talent for more intense high school music programs and often the first exposure to a musical instrument. The positives are well documented: better grades, reinforcement of cognitive skills, improved self-esteem, appreciation of the arts, apprenticeship of budding careers, etc. These programs prevent some children from being "...left behind". Like Suzuki Strings, lessons learned from the gradual development of musical skills contribute to the success of the whole child in ways that can't be measured by standardized tests. The school system and the community are the better for it. Unlike sports programs that are available locally through the Union Mission, Boys &amp; Girls Club, Metro Soccer, local hockey, etc, music programs are not offered in the community outside of school. Please make every effort to retain these wonderful opportunities for our school children. As coordinator and caseworker for Project Stay, a truancy prevention/intervention program for Tazewell County schools, I have never had a chronic truant on my caseload who was actively involved in either of these school sponsored music programs!</p>
26	<p>After attending Monday's District 108 School Board meeting, I feel I must address the issue of the partnership between Illinois State University and our district. To suggest eliminating this program would drastically reduce the amount of quality teacher time we offer 108 students. The Professional Development School affords us the opportunity to have another adult in many classrooms. These adults have three years of college under their belts as well as having their math and language methods classes completed. The Interns we receive from Illinois State University are of the best caliber. Having taught for ISU in the PDS program for two years and serving as a mentor for four years, I can attest to the hard work, focus, and determination of the Interns. ISU's teacher preparation program is ranked in the top ten teacher education programs in the country. We need to carefully look at the impact that this program has on our students. In a time when we have more children with learning difficulties, it is necessary to have those extra hands. Teachers and Interns are skilled at co-teaching and then separating groups of children for small group and individual instruction. The amount of contact time afforded to our students is greatly increased. Personally, my husband and I appreciate this because we have a child in Kindergarten. His class started the year with 27 students. Although his teacher is an phenomenal educator, I am certain both she and my son have benefited from the Intern that is placed with her. The Interns also spend the entire year in our district starting at the beginning of the year. This gives our students a continuity that they would not have with a student teacher from a traditional program. Finally, our partnership with ISU brings with it many benefits for our staff and in turn our students. We receive many professional development opportunities through Illinois State professors. Interns bring with them their learning about best educational practices, and they bring an enthusiasm for learning, teaching, and our children that is unparalleled. Seeing the Interns interact with our students is an amazing experience and will re-energize the most exhausted veteran teacher. I understand the decisions you face are daunting and the implications are far reaching. I appreciate your consideration on this matter.</p>

27	<p>As a parent of 2 District 108 students, I want to encourage the Board to not cut the extracurricular activities. There is an abundance of research that supports the positive correlation of music programs and good grades. Programs such as choir, band, orchestra and Suzuki are all vitally important to the success of our children. Children who participate in music programs have a better understanding of math, science and reading, and score better on testing. Their ability to think abstractly and to visualize physical forms and possible variations are improved. Students from low socio-economic status with music lessons score higher than their peers without music lessons. With the District's percentage of low-socio economic students, this would do the student population a huge disservice if the music programs were discontinued. Students who participate in music have improved behaviors and attitudes, are less likely to use drugs and alcohol, and less likely to drop out of school. A strong program in the elementary grades through high school enhances our students' abilities when they are ready for college. There are a higher percentage of college students who have studied music than have not. In addition, 70% of universities have indicated they look at arts involvement when reviewing admission applications. I challenge the District to be creative and look for ways to keep the extracurricular activities, and in particular the music programs, in the budget. The District owes it to our children, and to our community, to provide them with the resources to help them succeed.</p>
28	<p>I attended the school board meeting last month. I was VERY disappointed to hear Mr. Bacon's comments on cutting extra-curricular activities. I realize that times are tight, but if we start cutting EVERYTHING that gives our kids an alternative to just "hanging out" were will it lead this community in the future? We already have a nation that is overweight. Kids nowadays don't have outlets or opportunities when I was growing up. Parent are busy working and trying to support their families. The Boys &amp; Girls Club and the Union Mission do a tremendous service to this community. But it's not enough. Band and choir are also subject to these cuts. It has been proven that kids in sports and band/or choir do better academically. We want our children to have these opportunities to strive to be better citizens. If you agree, please do not let them get cut. Thanks you for your time.</p>
29	<p>I teach third grade at a District 108 school and have a daughter in sixth grade at a district school. My concerns are mainly as a parent, rather than a teacher. My daughter is in the connections program, on a DI team, in choir, and she is very athletic. What will be left for her? Quite frankly, I'm becoming more and more resentful of money being allocated for the slower learners in our educational system. Who is looking out for our future leaders? What can I do as a parent to ensure my child and others will receive the academic and extracurricular opportunities which will provide them a well-rounded education? I'm sending an article to you from the Canton newspaper concerning user fees. Could this be an option?</p>
30	<p>We bought a home here in Pekin last August, so we are relative newcomers to the community. We are more than pleased to be here. I would like to share just a few quick thoughts with you this morning as the budget process moves forward for district 108. I obviously have a vested interest in that process. Beyond that local interest there is a much larger issue, so far as I am concerned. With your indulgence I would like to use just two quotes from the writings of two gentlemen who have been very important to the arts and the humanities, Elliot Eisner and James Croft. Writing about the arts in general and music in particular, Eisner said; "For those who work in the arts either as creators of an art or as teachers who try to foster the benefits of art to those in schools, the trip has always been uphill. The arts have suffered from a stereotype that regards them as more ornamental than essential, more emotional than reflective, closer to the rim of educational purposes than to its core. Those concerned with the arts and who assign them an important value in education are more often than not looking in from outside the window. Insofar as music makes such demands on those who experience it, music is a vehicle for developing the mind. But it is a way of developing the mind musically, not necessarily generally. There may be transfer involved in some aspects of musical thought but that is not the hook on which I would hang my hat. Intelligence in music is expressed musically. Music education is a way to foster such intelligence. With respect to matters of meaning, the role of music in enabling humans to express what cannot be said is, and has been, exemplified throughout the ages. One has only to think about the uses of music in the ceremonies that followed 9/11 to recognize that humans have a profoundly deep need to embrace the arts, all of them, when they need to express what cannot be articulated in language. Music is a way of sharing and indeed experiencing the deepest aspects of our interior landscape. They give us access to forms of life that express what has been compressed into musical thought. Such thinking shapes feeling and gives feeling a presence in the public world. If music did not achieve such an outcome, I do not think its place in human history would have been so enduring. The irony, of course, is that although music has been essential in our most important moments - - when we bury and when we marry - - in the context of schools, it is taken for granted, very often as a kind of divertimento. It is much more than that. [One of the prime functions] of music pertains to the quality of life that music makes possible. Music, at rock bottom, is a source of intrinsically valued experience. We go to the concert hall to be moved, to be touched, to undergo forms of life that have their own, non-instrumental rewards. A life without such experience is one which is flat, dry as toast, emotionally drained. Music, in short, is a way of reminding us what it is to be alive. The contributions, therefore, of music in the context of education is at once cognitive, meaningful, and experiential. Music develops ways of thinking, it provides forms of significance that will</p>

	<p>take no other form, and it yields forms of experience that are, at their best, deeply treasured. I believe that such contributions represent profoundly significant justifications for the place of music in schools. Indeed, such justifications when they are realized often pale what many other fields given more attention, more time, and more significance have to offer. Perhaps one day not only music but all of the arts will be recognized for their potentially important contributions for helping our children realize their humanity.” And Dr. James Croft wrote: “If the fine arts and the humanities don’t make a difference, much of what we have called civilization has been a mistake.” In my view, Croft’s statement sums up everything the arts and the humanities add to the humanizing and civilizing process. I sincerely hope you and the board will consider just how important the arts are to the shaping of the whole child. Thank for your time. I would welcome the opportunity to sit and discuss this issue with you.</p>
31	<p>As the parents of three children in District 108, we are very distressed by the proposal to cut extracurriculars, the Connections program and two counseling positions. By cutting extracurriculars, I believe we would be failing our children. School is so much more than textbooks and tests. Our seventh-grader's self-esteem has risen dramatically this year, and I think a lot of that has to do with her participation in band and Scholastic Bowl. Many of her friends are benefiting in the same way by participating in sports and Suzuki. Our children NEED these activities. The statement that they can "get them somewhere else" is unrealistic. The Boys and Girls Club, the Union Mission and the YWCA cannot possibly take up the slack that will be left by eliminating these school-sponsored activities. Furthermore, we are very upset that you are considering cutting the Connections program. Our sixth-grade and seventh-grade daughters have learned so much more in this program than they would have in the regular classroom. They are learning to be high-level thinkers. We would be greatly disappointed if our second-grader didn't have the same opportunities. These gifted children are our future! We must offer them higher learning and challenges. Finally, we think it is a big mistake to cut two counseling positions. The counselors are stretched thin enough as it is. With the stresses being placed on our children in this world today, how can we not have counseling available to them at a young age when they are still reachable? I strongly believe society will suffer if troubled children--and there are many--are left to fall through the cracks without early intervention. We will certainly be leaving a lot of children behind if you proceed in making these cuts. We understand that money is tight, but we urge you to find another way. We love living in Pekin, but if these cuts go through, we will seriously consider leaving the district because my children deserve more. Thank you for your consideration,</p>
32	<p>Thank you for the very informative presentation that you made to the Board and public regarding the proposed budget cuts at the Feb. 23 meeting. I have taken the online survey and contacted each of the board members. I would like to personally encourage you to find a way to save the extra-curricular activities at District # 108. Although my husband and I no longer have children in District 108, we have two students in the band and music programs at District #303. They would not be excelling in their academic courses and musical activities if they had not experienced the groundwork provided through District #108. It is well known that music students have higher academic scores overall as compared to non-music students. Music is something that students can use for life, contrary to athletics. Although I do not want to see any of the athletic opportunities on the chopping block, it is important to consider how learning can be utilized for a lifetime. If the band and orchestra programs at District #108 are eliminated, it will be very detrimental to the programs at the high school level. We are all well aware of what wonderful music programs are available for students at PCHS and how those programs help to keep students focused, motivated, busy (as in staying out of trouble), plus provide a safe group for students to join to help make the adjustment to high school. There is a long tradition of great music programs at both districts and it would be a shame to lose all that those who have gone before us have worked so hard to build. I am also concerned about the effect that the loss of extra-curricular activities at District #108 will have on our community. A well-rounded education for students is a major draw for new families to our area. It was a powerful influence in our decision to relocate here. In addition, the loss of these programs as a feeder to the high school will influence community events such as the Marigold Parade, Derby Days, Christmas Parade, Marching Band Classic, Show Choir/ Jazzfest Invitational, Holiday Tournament, any sports events,etc... This means a community loss in dollars from visitors who buy food, gas, and hotel rooms. I am praying for wisdom as you and the Board consider your decisions about the budget. Thank you for reading my comments</p>
33	<p>I am the parent of two children that attended the District Preschool program. I would just like you to know how much the program helped my children. Tyler is now a third grader in the District, but at the age of three when he entered the program, he had never been around any other children besides his younger sister. We did have some problems at the beginning with separation anxiety. His teacher was so patient and helpful; he eventually got to the point where he was glad to leave me. He was a very shy and quiet child and didn't try to make friends, but after a few weeks he blossomed. He would run out excited to tell me about all his friends and what he was learning. The second year Tyler was in the program his teacher told me how scientific and smart he was. This was something I had not noticed at home. (Playing with his sister was not scientific.) The teacher gave me activities to do at home with him that helped me to learn what he was really interested in. He is now a third grader that has attended the Bradley University Worlds of Wonder Summer Program. He has had perfect spelling tests since first</p>

	<p>grade. And last week he passed a timed multiplication test – even though it hasn’t been taught in class yet. I truly believe that the preschool program helped him establish a strong foundation for learning and socializing at a young age that has put him at the top of his class. I wouldn’t have been able to teach him that at home. He was much more prepared for kindergarten than he would have been without the program. My daughter also attended the program and made tremendous progress. Like her brother, she was not around other children much. But the biggest hurdle for her was at the age of 3, she didn’t talk. And I don’t mean that she was quiet and didn’t say much, <u>she didn’t talk</u>. I was very worried about her entering preschool. Her teacher was absolutely wonderful! She made my daughter start doing things that up to that point her brother had always done for her. If she had to go to the bathroom, she had to speak up and say so. If she wanted a toy, she had to ask for it. Since she was extremely hard to understand, she received speech therapy from Mrs. Xanos the two years she was enrolled in the program. By the time she was ready for kindergarten she didn’t need the speech therapy anymore and now at the age of seven she won’t stop talking!! (I guess you should be careful what you wish for.) She is now in first grade and also at the top of her class. I guess what I am trying to say is that I am afraid of what will happen to these children that need this program and the services it provides if you decide that is not “cost-efficient”. My children were not in EC, they were in the PEP program and I believe that in the long run the program saves the district money because they can help the “at-risk” children at an earlier age therefore limiting or eliminating the need later. Please, think seriously about this. These children can’t speak up and say that they need help; <u>you</u> have to do it for them. In closing I would like you to know that due to a strange series of circumstances when I decided to go back to work after my youngest started kindergarten, My position has allowed me to see exactly how much this program is needed in this town. Hundreds of children a year are given the opportunity to excel and at times move beyond their personal circumstances to see how important they are and that people really do care about them. Don’t let them down.</p>
<p>34</p>	<p>I want to take this opportunity to tell you how much I appreciate all of the time and talent that you are putting into our budget cuts. I read the sentences last night, and it helped me understand what others are thinking. I thank-you for this communication! I totally disagree with the statement that our administrators should take cuts. People, who feel that way, aren't well informed about the hours that all of you give for District 108. I know the cuts MUST come from somewhere, but we need good administrators! Of course, I disagree with many personal statements, but we are all entitled to our opinions. I just wanted you to know that I highly regard our administration. I, personally, feel that we are forgetting an important asset--James Field. I am a Pekinite from birth. James Field was utilized during the West Campus era for PE, but now it is not being utilized at all. This could be sold and our next generation would get some benefit out of its taxes from a business being located there. Thanks again!</p>
<p>35</p>	<p>We are writing to you, the District 108 School Board, as parents who are very concerned about the proposed financial reductions and their effect on elementary and junior high age children in our community. It is our understanding that it has been proposed to eliminate all extracurricular programs that are currently available for our kindergarten through 8th grade students. We would ask that you, as elected officials, consider every option available before enacting these severe reductions in funding. The serious consideration of these reductions should not serve as the starting point in the dialogue with the community, but rather as a last ditch effort to save a bankrupt school district. Clearly, District 108, with over \$1 million in reserve, does not fit the model of a school in desperation. The short term and long-term impact of funding cuts that would effectively eliminate all extracurricular activities in a school district that has prided itself for many years in offering a comprehensive education package for all students, regardless of family income level, would be devastating. Admittedly, District 108 is not in an enviable position and as school board members you are being forced to make extremely difficult decisions. But we live in an era where continuous improvement is paramount to success and it seems ironic, indeed repulsive, that as a community we would be content to offer our leaders of tomorrow an education comparable to that of a century ago; simply reading, writing, and arithmetic. Surely this Board and this community can develop real solutions to the difficult issues that confront us. Please know that many in this community are concerned about the present plight of District 108 and are willing to support ways to provide additional funding for primary education. We implore you to act deliberately, keep the best interests of our education system as a top priority, base your decisions on facts and find a better way to solve the economic woes of our district without sacrificing the important.</p>