

Subject: Kuykendall Cuts Salaries--Starting with his Own

Feb. 3, 2010

Budget Cuts Affect School Salaries "Proactive Planning Causes Kuykendall to Cut Salaries--Starting With His Own"

To plan for a \$10.1 million cut in state funding this year, and to anticipate major cuts next year, DeSoto County School Superintendent announced he has gotten School Board approval to cut salaries, starting with his own at a 10% cut.

"There is no way the school district can take these cuts and not affect salaries," Superintendent Milton Kuykendall said. Similar cuts are planned for district employees, with their cuts around 8%.

Principals were called to the County Office for their bi-monthly meeting on Wednesday. Kuykendall explained the severity of the situation, and asked each principal to sign a new contract to lower their salaries. Their new contracts reflect a 4.2 percent cut. Changes in their contracts had to be signed before March 1st.

Kuykendall also announced year-round (240 day) employees work schedule will be lowered from 240 days to 230 days per year and their salaries will be cut.

"Employees won't be working, and they won't be paid for these 10 days," Kuykendall said.

Schools are obligated by law to honor their existing contracts, including salaries for personnel, which make up 85% of DeSoto County Schools' budget.

"Unless we reduce salaries, we cannot come up with the \$25 million we have to make up. We have a freeze on hiring, are not replacing employees when they leave the district, and have already had to lay off support staff," Kuykendall said. "This is the first round of cuts, and others will, in all likelihood, follow. If we know the money is not coming from the state, we are going to

take all necessary steps now to anticipate this shortfall. Proactive planning is absolutely necessary."

Kuykendall said these changes will go into effect July 1.

"Sixty percent of our funding comes from the state. Our state legislature is making decisions right now that will determine what actions we have to take. These cuts will affect the integrity of our classrooms and increase the teacher/pupil ratio," Kuykendall said.

"The state's deep cuts may require our district to raise our operational millage just to keep the doors open at our 40 schools,"

Kuykendall explained. "The Mississippi Legislature is adamant that they are not going to raise sales tax or generate any new revenue.

This will cause 80% of our school districts across the state to increase local taxes. My hope is that by cutting all of our administrators' salaries, jobs will be saved. If this does not work, we will have to have layoffs, and the layoffs could be massive."

"It appears that next year DeSoto County Schools will have to teach 500 to 1,000 more students with approximately \$25 million less money to operate," Kuykendall concluded.