

## ← How Does the Allowable Growth Threshold Affect your School Bud...

### How Does the Allowable Growth Threshold Affect your School Budget?

**Principals: Please write briefly and specifically how the Act 46 Annual Growth Rate has affected your budget this year. What adjustments have you had to make to come under the threshold? What have you cut? How will these cuts affect the quality of education in your school? Would you favor delay, repeal or keeping the current threshold in place? Any comments you could share would be helpful.**

*(go to bottom of doc, place your cursor and type. It saves automatically)*

**Springfield High School, Bob Thibault:** We had to reduce a world language (French) and part of an instructional coach (a component we feel has been integral to our improvement over the past several years.)

**Lamoille Union High School, Brian Schaffer:** We are faced with reducing elective offerings for all students, increasing general class sizes, and limiting direct supports to students. The act 46 threshold discussion is surely warranted and has forced a closer inspection of our spending, but at time when we are moving towards raising post-secondary aspirations and installing PBGR, it is unnerving to think how debilitating these cuts will be. The spending cap will have a detrimental affect on the quality of education in our school. I would strongly encourage our legislature to delay or repeal this seemingly arbitrary structure.

**Ludlow Elementary School, Karen Trimboli:** I had to reduce both art and music FTE to .4 and cut mental health clinician completely, reduced school counselors FTE to .6, cut a .5 custodian, reduced IT FTE to .8, reduces k-6 remedial math teacher's FTE to .5, cut individual classroom budget to \$0.00, cut all dues fees (NCTM, NELM, VPA, NGSS, etc,) cut fuel budget, roof fund, all professional development dollars, all food and refreshments, cut extra curriculum...thespian club and cross country, cut technology equipment to gear to 1:1 and replacement computers, etc. by \$19,000, cut stipend out for assistant principal, and cut \$20,000 for new math curriculum and training to align with CCSS. These reductions and cuts are direct result of Act 46. The faculty and staff are willing to roll-up sleeves to meet this challenge and do our best for our students. With the population (58%) FRL and a high rate of students in need of educational service, these cuts will definitely impact instruction and support accommodations.

**Peacham Elementary School, Judy Ross:** Our board is considering eliminating foreign language and a half-time ELA intervention specialist. My position will most likely become a 50/50 Teaching Principal (from the current 80/20) to pick up the slack left from the lack of interventionist. We will not have enough warm bodies to provide a strong quality, well-rounded instructional program for our PK-6 school.

**Albert D. Lawton School, Laurie Singer:** Reducing a reading specialist, a huge reduction in technology, 5% decrease in all budget areas that are not related to salaries and benefits. As a PreK-8 district, we will come just under the cap, but the level of service to students will definitely be impacted by this legislative mandate. We are fortunate that with the merger pending in 2017-18 we will not have to deal with this cap next budget year, but if we'd had to do so, the programming cuts would be even more severe. We are continually mandated to do more in schools (this year it was personal learning plans) with no thought to the cost to schools. Additionally, mental health continues to be a pervasive issue throughout VT and we are sorely short on resources both in and out of school to support students and families. This cap has done nothing to improve the learning of students nor meet their mounting needs.

## ← How Does the Allowable Growth Threshold Affect your School Bud...

teacher to teach a section of three year olds, which will end our practice of providing EEE services in local child care settings. This will likely lead to fewer students receiving the services we offer at school. From a timing standpoint, my board is adopting the budget on Monday, the 11th. So any changes made will not be helpful in creating our budget.

**Hiawatha Elementary School, Tom Bochanski:** PK8 team cut before school exercise program, teacher leader teams, materials and supplies' budget ranging from 5 to 18% at respective schools, technology hardware upgrades were placed on deck - as well as long term maintenance projects. Spending cap is also mitigating the ability of our educational support system to support our students with intensive needs. The repeal or delay of the spending cap is preferred.

### **Williston School District, Greg Marino (District Principal)**

The cap is requiring a \$709K reduction from next fiscal year's draft baseline budget in order to avoid penalties. The budget process has been dramatically impacted this year as a result. Decision Packets for new programming are not being considered. Cuts are being proposed in many facets of the budget, including: Classroom teachers, related / unified arts teachers, teaching assistants, paraeducators, library assistants, technology lab assistants, custodial staffing, technology equipment and repair, instructional supplies and materials. Program quality will undoubtedly be impacted on some levels, including student access to our libraries, access to reliable tech devices. Teacher demands will increase as support staff are reduced. This component of the legislation has placed significant strains on the process of responsibly crafting a student-centered school budget. I would be in favor of a delay or repeal of this part of the law.

**Mill River UHS, Andy Pomeroy:** We have cut \$426K and are still \$260K over the cap. We have eliminated positions in Math, Social Studies, English, Science. We have reduced positions in TechEd and Family and Consumer Science. We have eliminated our 7/8 summer school program. We cut \$41,000 in departmental supplies. We are able to stay over the cap because we are hoping that our SU merger vote goes through. The merger removes the cap and provides a tax break. At this point, neither a delay nor a repeal will help much as the Board intends to approve a budget tomorrow, 1/6.

**Middlebury Union High School, Bill Lawson:** At UD#3 we could grow by .71 while having an approximate 3% inflation from prior contract settlement. We were ok due to a large number of retirees last year and conservative hiring patterns for this year. We are just under the cap. We are adopting a budget tonight so any action will be too late for this year. However next year will be tougher for us as I will not have that cushion and our count equalized student count will decrease. Once again basing budget growth on per pupil spending is folly - having class size go from 24 to 20 provides minute savings.

### **Hartland Elementary School (K-8), Jeff Moreno**

Due to a significant enrollment increase our per pupil expenditures dropped almost \$1000/student. We could spend hundreds of thousands of dollars and still be below the cap. We are already on the high end for per pupil spending...but because of enrollment increasing we are now out of hot water. The system seems to be based on the wrong thing. Since the equalized pupil numbers don't come out until December we anticipated Armageddon and cut almost \$300,000 from our budget and exhausted a reserve fund to stay under the cap (ours was .93%) only to find out we had plenty of room. My biggest beef with the cap is that our SU assessment went up over .5M and we were faced with gutting the K-8 budget to stay under the cap. We were very lucky that our equalized pupils number came back so favorably otherwise we would have been looking at cutting a total of nearly .75M just to maintain the same budget from one year to the next. I'd rather see the system be responsive to how special education (which is legislated) impacts our budgets.

## ← How Does the Allowable Growth Threshold Affect your School Bud...

reduced 6.0 FTE. State is taking away our ability to work with local boards and communities to develop fiscally responsible yet educationally sound budgets.

**Bellows Free Academy Fairfax, John Tague:** As a pk-12 building, we have had to scale back implementation of our preschool program, cut several part time teachers, eliminate a paraprofessional position as well as reduce many other areas by small amounts. The information seems to change each time we work through our numbers so it feels like we are trying to hit a moving target.

**Benson Village School, Kim Doty.** At this time, our proposed budget will go to the taxpayers with no cuts. Our school board feels strongly that we've cut so much in the past few years - 2 classroom teachers, a half time special educator, planning room assistant, and half of our Art teacher - that we have responded to our drop in enrollment and cannot RIF any further without compromising what our kids need and deserve. Since we are mandated to add UPK as well as master agreement salary increases and health insurance increases, we are well above the cap. We have level-funded all else in our budget. Certainly, taking those mandated items out, we could likely find a way to meet the cap. However, as stated earlier, our board feels the taxpayers should decide. We strongly feel repealing the law is what should happen.

**Orange Center School, Tim Francke:** For the past 3 years Orange Center School has had less than a 2% increase. Last year we had a fund balance of over \$100,000. Our town and school board opted to give that money back to the taxpayers lowering their taxes by \$0.03. This year we have an increase of 0.45% and because we don't have the revenue to offset the \$100,000 we had last year, the town of Orange will be penalized and the tax rate will go up \$0.05. Ridiculous to think that we are being penalized for having an increase at less than one percent!!!

**Thomas Fleming School, Essex Junction, Dan Ryan:** To meet this cap mandate I have needed to cut my school budget for Fleming School by 17% for the FY2017 budget plan. Fortunately our district enrollment is remaining nearly at status quo. Health insurance and new negotiated settlement with staff has added to the bottom line budget challenge certainly and it may require principals to make further cuts to our budgets. I foresee a possible 20% + cut in my school budget . Thanks for asking and for your work on our school's behalf with this cap challenge.

**Rutland Town School, Aaron Boynton:** Here at Rutland Town School we face having to cut teachers. We have a reduction of supplies across the board, para-educators, and a cut of a science coach in our first draft budget. We have 52K to still cut to meet the threshold. Cutting more staff is all that we can really do. It is not a good situation for what we need to increase student outcomes.

### **Vergennes Union HS, Stephanie Taylor (from a letter to her legislators)**

I am writing to lend my voice to the chorus of concern over the Act 46 spending caps. I hope that hearing directly about the impact that the penalties will have on the programs at the high school that serves the students in your districts will influence you to act to temper the impact of this legislation.

Four years ago I was an administrator at another VT high school following the work of VUHS teacher leaders as they led the state in development of Proficiency Based Graduation Requirements. This work was groundbreaking, visionary and transformative. Act 77 and the Educational Quality Standards are directly influenced by the work developed by VUHS teacher leaders. When an opening on the administrative team at VUHS became available, I jumped at the chance to be part of this exciting work. I mention this to demonstrate my commitment to this school community and its efforts towards transforming education for the students in Vergennes, Ferrisburgh, Waltham, Panton and Addison.

## ← How Does the Allowable Growth Threshold Affect your School Bud...

faced with financial difficulties and deficit spending in previous budgets, we have reduced faculty and staff by more than 11 FTEs but worked to maintain the Walden program, extra-curriculars and athletics, the music program and enough staffing to support independent learning opportunities included in our Community Based Learning program. These programs enable VUHS to meet the tenets of flexible pathways and encourage students to engage in personalized learning. This year, even with health care increases of 7.9% and contractually obligated salary increases, the VUHS expenditure budget, which encompasses salaries, benefits, department level supply requests, and day-to-day operating expenses, as well as assessments from ANWSU for transportation, special education and central office services, was well within the spending caps, and represented a reduction over last year's budget. Regardless, because our anticipated revenues are as much as \$800,000.00 lower than last year and our equalized student count is down by slightly more than 30 students, our per pupil expenditure is above the penalty level of Act 46. Ironically, some of our reduced revenue is due to our efforts towards consolidation and controlled special education spending. This perfect storm of reduced revenue and declining enrollment has resulted in proposed necessary reductions totaling 1.2 million dollars, or 11.4% of our 10.2 million dollar expense budget.

After the faculty reductions in the last two budget years, I am left with just enough teachers in the content areas to meet or exceed class size policies. I have already reduced or eliminated class offerings and elective classes with small enrollments and for the first time in recent memory will need to schedule study halls instead of actual classes for students because I won't have enough elective classes or teachers to meet their needs. I have reduced our World Language offerings from three languages to two and don't meet EQS standards in the area of PE for middle school students. Since I still need a school nurse, a library media specialist, someone to manage and operate the school technology network, and the building requires the same level of maintenance, heat and hot water with 500 students or 460, in order to reduce my budget by 1.2 million to avoid the penalty level presented by Act 46, I have been forced to list the Walden program, the entire extra-curricular and athletic program, the choral program in favor of maintaining band, and reducing by half the administrative leadership team by eliminating the assistant principal position. Included in the list are also necessary instructional supplies, building maintenance, curriculum development and other day-to-day expenses to support a 20 million facility that currently serves the needs of 485 students and over 100 adults every day.

Reducing my budget by 1.2 million dollars will directly impact our ability to meet the demands of Act 77 and the Educational Quality Standards. It also serves to distract the entire school community from the ongoing discussions about consolidation. More importantly, it will devastate the communities served by Vergennes Union High School.

We are doing what we can to reduce education spending while maintaining programming and meeting the needs of our students. I urge you to reevaluate the penalty elements of Act 46 so that we can maintain important educational benefits for the students served by VUHS.

**Vergennes Union Elementary School, June Sargent:** Over the vacation I met with Superintendent Canning and the Business Manager to review my budget proposal and to address the direction that the VUES School Board had given to us which was to present 2 proposals: a Level Budget and one designed to address the Act 46 Caps. My initial proposal was over \$33,000 dollars less compared to expenditures in the previous year in areas of supplies, dues & fees, books & periodicals, equipment, and software. Some items also had been moved to be part of the ANWSU assessment line such as the copier lease rate, and both the FAST and SRI assessment costs. As you may remember, special education expenses and transportation also was moved last year, as well as some of our Internet

## ← How Does the Allowable Growth Threshold Affect your School Bud...

presented under the Act 46 Allowable Growth Rate, a.k.a. the Spending Cap. To create a level budget, additional cuts and changes were required. We are suggesting not hiring to replace a teacher who is retiring, but instead using one of the math specialists to return to the classroom and moving the math lab paraeducator back to Special Education. This would decimate the new math lab that has been created this year, leaving only one educator available again for supplemental math instruction. Additional cuts in supplies were also made. Clearly, we will we need to rethink supplemental services for math, and possibly for literacy as well.

To create a budget that met the Allowable Growth Rate, much more severe cuts have been recommended. These include: eliminating both soccer and basketball, and associated expenses related to extracurriculars; eliminating all field trips; eliminating the budget for homeless transportation reimbursement as this is extremely difficult to project from one year to the next (ranging in the last few years from a little over \$500 to a high of nearly \$7,000); cutting all supplies for general instruction to only half the amount which would need to be devoted to only the consumable workbooks required with Foundations and the math programs; eliminating anticipated spending for non-special education evaluations; reducing the amount available for new book purchases and equipment in the library; eliminating travel and conference expenses in the Principal's Office; eliminating expenses related to 2 Crossing Guards; and reducing or eliminating completely the Receptionist position.

**Hyde Park Elementary School, Diane Reilly:** We had to use 100% of our fund balance from last year, these funds would have been used on our urgent facility needs. If a facility emergency occurs (which is likely as our building is in great need of repair), we will have to take out an unplanned loan that could substantially impact any current or future budget. In addition, we have staff that are taking a leave of absence for one year. This will reduce costs now, but these expenses will return next year. Our budget was finalized last night... too late for us.

**Brownington Central School, Elaine Collins:** For the last several years, we have been basically level funding all of our programs. To begin the budgeting season, we were in a position where we were above the spending cap (over 6%) simply by putting in a \$50,000 increase in our SU assessment, without taking into consideration any salary or health insurance increases. We were in a position to have to cut interventionists or classroom teachers. We already have one combined class due to small class size but no other small classes to combine. We could have also thought about cutting specials: we currently have one day a week of art and music and two days a week of PE, no librarian, as well as one day a week of guidance, so not a lot of "fluff." Thankfully, our revenues increased to offset the increase in spending, so we were able to level fund again for a net increase of around 1%. However, if there is no change to the law, there's no guarantee that it won't happen again next year.

**Middletown Springs Elementary School (Pre-K through 6th), Rick Beal:** Our school is one of the higher per pupil cost in the state so we had a very small spending cap. We have done some cost cutting by reducing instructional assistants and replacement of veterans teachers with lower pay scale teachers. The budget will be a negative increase for next year, if approved by the town. However, there is is not a lot of fluff if I have to reduce it next year if health insurance and SU assessments increase.

**Addison Central School, Matthew DeBlois:** Allowable Growth Rates impact significantly the opportunities for students in our building. We have worked hard to establish a high quality assessment system that includes effective supports and interventions. As part of the initial pilot of the state sponsored Integrated Field Review the MTSS work was highlighted as a strength. These systems will be largely extinguished with allowable growth rates. We will lose our math interventionist

## ← How Does the Allowable Growth Threshold Affect your School Bud...

students. It will reduce the extended day and year possibilities, eliminate technology spending, cut dues, curb travel, and reduce significantly building maintenance spending for upkeep. Largely the school will lose flexible and multiple pathways for students. The school is a team effort. We share responsibilities significantly and reductions in staffing mean that there will be less coverage available for wellness, eliminate intervention and enrichment as a part of the school programming in math, eliminate discrete classes for some instructional areas and diminish our capabilities to ensure an equitable educational experience based on arbitrary spending limits.

**Lake Region Union High School, Andre Messier:** We have not had to eliminate or reduce services. Our Board approved budget has a Total Ed spending which will be approximately 3.5% below the cap %. This is largely due to two reasons: an unanticipated surplus of \$330,000 and an increase in student population of 25 students over last year and a projected increase of another 25 for next year. We understand that we are an abnormality in our situation. Without the surplus, we would have had to make reductions in order to stay under the cap. I also would like to continue to advocate for the Ed Committees to look at school choice students and how the receiving school can receive some compensation or at the very least be able to count the students they are educating on their equalized pupil counts when it comes to the spending caps....For the past three years, Lake Region has educated over 20 school choice students annually with no system to recognize that fact.

**Marlboro Elem School (K-8), Francie Marbury:** At last night's board meeting, the board made a preliminary decision to approve a budget that exceeds the cap by 50k. Despite the penalty this will incur, our town tax rate will go down and the board was not prepared to make the severe cuts to our programs that would be required to stay within the cap. If the cuts had been made, they would result in the loss of our Spanish, artist in residence, and after school programs and reductions in staffing of .2 FTE, in custodial time, and in budgets for technology and other instructional materials. These cuts would decimate the program that has repeatedly received high marks from the community. Some might call this enrichment. This community sees them as essential. I would favor a repeal of the AGR to give the legislature time to develop a more equitable and better researched approach to cost containment.

**Marion Cross School, Norwich, Bill Hammond:** At present it appears we'll have to cut another \$100,000 to be under the cap. Half of that amount I've offered to cut from art supplies, elective supplies, general school supplies, textbooks, tech equipment, SDC money for teachers and support staff, mentors, assemblies, administration books and software, and building improvements. The other half comes from cutting one teacher in one grade level (which puts class sizes up to 23 and 24). I'd prefer to make decisions based on what would be best for students' learning.

### **Fayston Elementary School, Fayston, Jean Berthiaume**

We have had to eliminate a .6 FTE Literacy Teacher/Coach to be under the cap. This position has been an integral part of our MTSS system to support all students and to support literacy early on in our school. The loss of this position moves us towards the dependency of special education. Positions like this (seen as luxury) have historically supported students and reduced the pipeline to special education.

**Bellows Falls Union HS, Chris Hodsden:** While I may be in the minority and my input will not support a repeal of the spending cap, we at the Bellows Falls Union High School had no problem doing what we needed to do with our budget to stay below our spending cap.

**Craftsbury Academy, Meri Grennia:** Craftsbury is fine because both equalized pupils and local revenue are up, not down. The cap has created stress for my colleague at Hardwick Elementary. The Vergennes letter makes the case very well. The cap is an example of many unintended consequences that I fear will flow out of Act 46.

## ← How Does the Allowable Growth Threshold Affect your School Bud...

negotiated 3% raise, health care costs and specialized learning programs, we are already way over the cap. My board is thinking of eliminating a teaching position - a very painful decision since I only have 8 teachers and 6 classrooms. This will push one of my multi-age classes up to 25-27 kids - definitely not meeting EQS guidelines. I'm sure there are many small schools in the same boat.

**North Country Union High School, Bill Rivard:** What this means for us (NCUHS), close to \$700,000 in cuts. These are very real numbers, this will mean 7.5 FTE in staff reductions (teachers, para's and administration) not to mention the cuts in program budgets (textbooks, supplies, etc.) For a high school located in NEK (highest unemployment, high poverty, etc.) this will truly impact delivery of educational services.

**Stafford Technical Center, Glenn Olson:** We are indirectly impacted here at Stafford Technical Center. Schools who send to us have had to make cuts, and, since they are impacted at their level, they requested we scale back our technical program as well. As a result, our Music Technology program will be eliminated after this year. It is possible that this program may have been dropped in another year as we currently have low numbers, but, I would have preferred to give it one more year to see if we could build it back up.

**Newton School (K-8), Greg Bagnato:** We are allowed to go up 1.4% per pupil. With 3% salary increases, 7% health insurance increases and more students in High school (where tuition is typically higher than state "average", this means cuts must be made out of K-8 operations and instruction. With so much attention and energy to the importance of early intervention, this seems to make little sense. We will have one less paraprofessional, 10% across the board cuts on supplies, books, technology (which is inadequate), we are also looking to outsource food service and cut transportation to cut additional costs. On the positive side, our ADM was up a little and we have a substantial tuition reserve fund (for large high school numbers) which will probably be completely spent.

**Ferrisburgh Central School (K-6), JoAnn Taft-Blakely:** In order to reach the cap, I was asked to further reduce a budget that was \$64,142 or 1.79% less than last year's by another \$168,000. We are a declining enrollment school. Last year I cut three classroom teaching positions and we are just squeaking by in not exceeding our class size policy. Along with those cuts, were cuts to Unified Arts to make them comparable to the decrease of classrooms. In order to meet the cap, I have a proposed budget that eliminates student supports at all levels. I have eliminated a literacy intervention position who then riffs one of the best and brightest new teachers I have in the building. I have eliminated our enrichment program, a technology teacher position, band as well as all field trip admission and transportation, our morning recess, cafeteria supervision and teacher leader stipends, as well as our meager extracurricular basketball program. Other reductions come from technology equipment, classroom supplies and upgrades to the school for safety concerns, building repairs and not increasing our secretarial support for the school, which was also reduced a few years ago, but there is a new principal coming on board next year and this additional support could be very necessary. .

### **Northfield Middle & High School: Ryan Parkman**

I'll share one way in which the Excess Spending Threshold is not "fair". Two years ago we had a fund balance and put \$100k toward the upcoming budget to help the taxpayers and tax rate. This lowered our per pupil education spending by close to \$200. Now we do not have a fund balance to bring forward, and as a result, our per pupil spending appears to be growing "excessively". We are now faced with spending \$160k in "penalty". If we are already spending too much in the eyes of the state, why on earth would they make us pay more! Just let the voters decide if the budget is too high. I believe 231 of 251 districts (92%) passed their budgets on the first vote last year, so who has the problem with the current level of education spending?

## ← How Does the Allowable Growth Threshold Affect your School Bud...

department material/supply budgets by 10%.

### **Waitsfield Elementary School, Kaiya Korb:**

The Waitsfield School Board has been very attentive to responding to enrollment trends over the past few years. Total staffing has been reduced from 27.29 in FY12 to 21.16 in our proposed budget, with most of those decreases in teaching positions. In that same period of time, our enrollment declined only from 155 to 143, a decrease of only 17 students. (it should be noted that we have a particularly large PK3 class currently, so our ADM is much smaller than it was due to preschool students "counting" as less in ADM). Last year, in anticipation of an enrollment drop, our board eliminated a teaching position. The end result is that we had the 2nd lowest per pupil expense in WWSU and the 2nd lowest overall tax rate.

This year, the proposed budget is a decrease of 5.1% in spending, or a decrease of \$123,967. Even with this decrease, one of the largest we've ever experienced, we will NOT meet the cap. Given that our per pupil costs were relatively low, we have little room for increase and the decreased ADM that we are experiencing this year leaves us approximately \$110K short of the cap. With class sizes already at 18 students, we would have to eliminate programs (and more than one) in order to meet the spending limit. What is most frustrating is that we still have one of the lowest per pupil expenses in our SU -- lower, in fact, than many of our neighboring schools who have not been so frugal in the past and therefore were able to maintain a higher level of spending given the way the cap is calculated. It does not seem right that a school that is spending less than its neighbors with similar populations is being fined! At this time, the Waitsfield board is choosing to move forward even if it will mean experiencing the penalty. Our financial manager for the SU has not yet been able to calculate what that penalty might look like. Challenging times.

**Flood Brook School (Londonderry), Neal McIntyre:** Thanks for sending the minutes, and thanks for representing our schools to the legislature. I apologize for not getting my thoughts to you in time for the testimony, but I clearly read my own concerns echoed in spades. The bottom line is that schools are doing more, initiating new approaches to learning to meet state and federal standards, and supporting kids in ways that schools 10-20 years ago never considered. The points about mental health support and SpEd are substantial. Additionally, spending caps do not have much tolerance for the unexpected. For example, if we suddenly see 10 secondary students move into our district over the summer, which happened two years ago, then our FY18 budget is all but doomed long before we even write the budget. The Allowable Growth Threshold is like using a chainsaw when a scalpel is needed; it will get the job done, but the collateral damage will be debilitating.

In the end, the AGT will serve as a detriment to our students, academically and socially, and leave schools ill equipped to contend with intensifying student needs, unexpected physical plant challenges, and mandated remediations. Again, thanks for lending your voice to ours.

**Stowe High School, Jeff Maher:** Thanks for the information Ken, and the advocacy. As we will be coming in under the cap, I don't have anything to add.

**Brett Blanchard, Fair Haven Union HS:** While my situation here at FHU may continue to be a bit different as I will likely be under the cap without having to overly cut, the cap and penalty has significant issues both over time for me, as well philosophically.

1. As I am one of the few schools, if not the only high school, that has three straight years of reduced per pupil spending, the budget number the state mandated we start with is lower than all but 4 union high schools. The impact of having been fiscally responsible these past many years means I am now locked in with no consideration to the vast and substantial issues that may arise.

## ← How Does the Allowable Growth Threshold Affect your School Bud...

3. The current cap was done after union negotiations that brought me 3.5% increases along with the increased health care. These two figures were not taken into consideration a year ago when that budget was worked (which is the figure the state now uses to set our spending).

4. Many items such as dual enrollment, pregnancy alternative education cost, SPED figures (which may vary considerably year to year) and other state/federal mandates seem not to have been adequately considered.

Personally and professionally I take high exception that the legislature never clearly set out the two most important objectives for consolidation: cutting education cost while improving student opportunities. Without clear objectives this movement has quickly gone astray.

**Northfield Elementary School, Wayne Howe:** [The Northfield Board has delayed adopting a budget in the hopes that during these first few weeks of the session the cap will be delayed or abolished.](#)