Dear Skinner Parents,

We've had a great start at Skinner this year and are looking forward to the continued success of our Superstars. Skinner is blessed with a talented and dedicated faculty and staff, supportive parents/caregivers, and motivated students. We need your help to address a dangerous budget crisis unfolding now that if not addressed and resolved, will jeopardize Skinner West and all CPS schools.

The Context: I'm sure you are aware that the budget CPS passed in August was $480 million short of expenditures. CPS leadership has consistently stated in recent months that if the Governor and General Assembly in Springfield do not act by the end of November, CPS will cut 5,000 teacher positions by the start of the 2nd semester. Let me put some context around this:

- Illinois ranks 49th out of 50 states in its spending on public education
- Over the last 7 years, CPS per pupil state funding has declined by 7% ($459 per student) and increased by 40% ($1,572) for all other districts, yet CPS share of state enrollment has remained flat while every other districts enrollment has declined.
- CPS receives state funding of $31/student to cover CPS pension costs while providing $2,266 per student for all other districts’ pension costs. Consequently, CPS has been forced to cut classroom funding while other school districts have kept funds squarely focused on matters of teaching and learning.

The Impact: There are approximately 23,000 CPS teachers. Losing 5,000 of those teachers translates to a 22% cut in the district and would equate to losing at least 3 teachers at Skinner West. Looking beyond Skinner, every CPS school is in a similar situation. If the decision makers in Springfield don't act now, CPS will work with schools to identify positions to cut. The positions will vacate at the beginning of the 2nd semester and will result in mid-year course cuts. Aside from changing schedules, class sizes will balloon and several of our exceptional faculty will lose their jobs.

The Action: Your voice is critical for our elected leaders to hear, whether as a taxpayer, a voter or as parents and caregivers. Illinois is still without a budget, and there appears to be little urgency on the part of our elected officials to effectively address this crisis. Now is the time to call upon our elected officials on the matter of creating equitable and adequate education funding in Illinois:

- Bruce Rauner, Governor (http://www.illinois.gov/gov/contactus/Pages/default.aspx)
- Michael Madigan, Speaker of the House (mmadigan@housedem.state.il.us)
You are not only welcome and encouraged to reach out to other elected officials who can influence a change in CPS budgets, but also talk to your peers at other CPS schools and have them ask decision makers to tend to this budget crisis now. We need our elected representatives to understand that as a result of their inaction, there will be serious and inequitable consequences to CPS students.

Social media (Twitter, Facebook, etc.) can be a great way to spread the word or request a meeting with your elected officials. You can also visit http://www.cps.edu/takeaction to find more resources to help you speak up for the Skinner community. The crisis is real - read more from recent Chicago Tribune commentary here.

Thank you to all parents, students, faculty and staff for your dedication and support of our Skinner Superstars. As always, feel free to contact me at principalclark20@gmail.com.

Sincerely,

Deborah M Clark

Principal

(Full disclosure: portions of this letter were sourced from Principal Beyer at Ogden, Principal Powers at Jones, and Principal Devine at Payton)