

To whom it may concern,

If you are reading this letter you are likely concerned with the recent changes to our district's Magnet transportation. The school board has been forced to consider reducing /eliminating secondary Magnet transportation over the next 4 years. We want you to know that these decisions were not made lightly, and we apologize for any inconvenience this may have on your family.

The choice to reduce or eliminate any school transportation was not a decision the school board wanted to make. It was a choice that was unavoidable given the district's budget shortfall stemming from revenue cuts from the State of Florida. Over the last four years, more than \$150 million dollars has been cut from the district's budget. This year, the Board was forced to slash more than \$90 million from an already fiscally-trimmed budget. Every effort was made to minimize the impact to our students, teachers and administrators. However, after years of financial cuts, rising inflation and lack of flexibility on the part of state lawmakers, the unavoidable fact is these cuts have finally burrowed their way down to the place no one wanted--- our classrooms.

Every option the school board faced was a hard one. Staff reductions, cuts to athletic supplements, the elimination of certain textbooks and changes to our employee's retirement plans were made. Each of these things serve to enrich the student's educational experience. Now they have to be removed simply because of one word: Money.

The magnet reductions appeared on the table as another budget reduction strategy. Other forms of non-neighborhood transportation required by law, including Opportunity Scholarships or ESOL must remain. At this point, it would be prudent to advise you which schools Magnet transportation will likely not be available for the coming 2011-12 school year. Here are the schools expected to be impacted:

- James Weldon Johnson
- Julia Landon
- Darnell-Cookman
- Kirby Smith
- Lavilla
- Stanton
- Paxon

This measure will save the district \$3 million for this year, next year's cuts will save another \$2.5 million, and so on until all secondary magnet transportation is eliminated.

The School Board knows each budget reduction strategy is painful for someone, somewhere. While some people will not be affected by the decision to reduce Magnet transportation, that doesn't make it easier on the families of those it does. These cuts were necessary to create a balanced budget, but the board knows these cuts represent more than just dollars. They represent families who now will have the added burden of finding alternate transportation to their Magnet school of choice. We are deeply sorry if this decision has affected your family in any way. We urge you to contact state lawmakers and make them aware that budget cuts in Tallahassee have extended into the classroom. If you have any additional questions you n contact the district's transportation office at 904.858.6200 and 904.390.2082.