

'it's ALL ABOUT THE HAVE AND HAVE NOTS. THE GAP HAS WIDENED BETWEEN THOSE WHO CAN AFFORD OR HAVE TIME TO SCHEDULE TUTORS AND THOSE WHO CAN'T.' — LYNETTE WILLIAMS

lead to tension and neglect in the classroom, so more and more students are falling through the cracks.

"I can tell that individual needs are not always being met," says Pash-Bell, who tutors mostly elementary school students. "There are big holes in the information being taught. I just want to help."

Pash-Bell often contacts teachers directly to offer her assistance. Recently, the teachers have become less and less resistant to her help and are open to any aid she can provide.

For now, though, Pash-Bell says it's too early to tell whether schools will lean heavily on tutors to balance out the weakened budget.

GRADE DEFLATION

Other tutoring programs have already seen a definite change in business that contradicts Pash-Bell's thoughts on the issue, but still bodes well for the state of K-12 education.

Josh Hirschstein, director of Lane Tutoring Service (LTS), says that the recent budget cuts have had a negative influence on his business.

"The pattern is opposite than you would expect: When schools decline, tutoring declines," Hirschstein says. "People come to tutoring when grades are poor, and they aren't right now."

He explains that since teachers' expectations have lowered, due to the inability to provide for a packed classroom, the standard of education has simultaneously dropped. Students don't need extra help when they are expected to perform at lower standards.

Hirschstein, who's been tutoring in Eugene for 25 years, sees this as a local problem, rather than a state issue.

"We expect the government to support schools, but they can't. Our community has to step up and help end this detrimental cycle of short-term thinking and replace it with long-term investment in our education system" Hirschstein says. "We have such potential in this town. It frustrates me a great deal."

Hirschstein, who also has children in high school, says he worries that Eugene's pride is on the line, as SAT scores and school ratings may drop.

At LTS, Hirschstein's customers, ranging from 6th to 12th grades, are mostly those in the Talented and Gifted Program, a sector of the public school system that he says has been "put on the shelf."

"These kids are screwed," Hirschstein says. "I can tell that the education that they are receiving is below them, and we try our best to make up for it, but it's

tough. The gap between what they're learning and what they need to know is growing too quickly."

Hirschstein says that students who are served at LTS are struggling the most with math and science, the two subjects known for large class sizes.

While he is dedicated to helping supplement public schools, Hirschstein says that tutoring will never replace classroom education. Contrary to Williams, he is certain that private schools will be the education of the future if budget cuts continue to threaten the quality of public schools.

"The bottom line is that when you cut back school funding, you cut back the opportunity to learn," Hirschstein says. "We're all watching public education diminish and waiting for some kind of leadership, but it's just not there."

WHAT'S TO COME

Despite the dreary outlook, SEHS Principal Randy Bernstein says he feels the school is prepared for what the future holds.

"We're already doing what we can in a lot of ways now," Bernstein says. "We'll need to do more next year, once the larger cuts are made, but we've been planning for this for a while."

Aside from the volunteer student tutors, Bernstein says that many parents have been offering their time this year and in the future. While this is a vital source of help, Bernstein says that there are some tasks parents legally wouldn't be able to do, especially if their child is in the class. He says they'd like to follow the path of North Eugene High, which recruits retired teachers to volunteer their time.

"With cuts, the one resource we'll have to look at more seriously is volunteering," Bernstein says. "But for now, it's all preliminary discussion."

Teacher Lynette Williams, who's expecting scores of teachers to be cut from the 4J District by next school year, is looking for a more long-term response.

While Bernstein hopes for in-class involvement at SEHS, Williams ultimately turns to the community for support.

One such community effort is the discussion of implementing a tax (See EW cover story Sept. 16, and several stories since).

"The public has to put its money where its mouth is when it comes to what they want out of the education system, and has to be willing to pay the cost of it," Williams says. "While tutors will help, we need a bigger change at a larger level. We're leaving a generation behind. Is that what our community wants?" **EW**



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