



The Consultant

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Preparation critical

Winning the budget battle



**Tom Grabill, ESC
Executive Director**

Even though many of our consultants remain busy with SEA 199 work, for many of us, it's a return to business-as-usual and that means budget work.

This has been the toughest budget year that we've ever experienced. The actual amount of state support schools will

receive is as questionable as ever with the state reporting a \$88 million deficit in projected revenue in July and August combined, on top of all the reassessment snafus. In preparation for budget year 2004, school

officials are forced to use uncertain figures for 2003 - in essence, using estimates to determine estimates.

With so much uncertainty and change, there are lots of opportunities to make significant errors, especially in regard to the various fund transfers allowed to cover the state's funding shortfall.

Schools also need to do all they can to protect themselves, such as cutting back on all expenditures, implementing a rainy day fund, and taking advantage of SEA 199, while being mindful of its limitations. We're still in for three or four years of difficult budgets and preparation is critical.

Our people are aware of the nuances, what to look for in terms of the appropriate laws and how to tie it all together. Let us know if we can help.

'Teachers are happy and we're happy'

Harrison-Washington Superintendent Steve McColley is breathing a sigh of relief as his school approaches the SEA 199 finish line. "We've gotten an agreement for the buyout," said McColley. "The next step is to go to the state to get permission to sell the bonds."

Harrison-Washington is one of six schools that ESC has assisted with SEA 199 from beginning to end, including Greensburg Community School Corp., Prairie Heights Community School Corp., Danville Community School Corp., Franklin Township Community Schools, Triton School Corp. and Perry Township School Corp. The company has also put together an actuarial study for more than 100 other schools.

"We have been working with ESC since January and they have really aided us in the process," said McColley. "SEA 199 has been a difficult concept to understand. I deal with numbers all of the time and there were things I didn't know when (school) people would ask me questions. We couldn't have done it without ESC. They've done

a tremendous job." McColley said he worked closely with ESC's Doug Cassman - the company lead man on benefits. "Doug has done a tremendous job. He helped us come up with ways to change benefits so that they fit into our budget," McColley said. "The teachers are happy and we're happy." McColley, said working with ESC "was like one-stop shopping." He said he's glad the school corp. took an aggressive approach to handling the issue.

"ESC was recommended to me by several superintendents who were working with the company," McColley said. "And we completed our work ahead of many of them."

Grabill said that ESC is also skilled at selling other types of bonds, including general obligation, construction and lease-rental bonds.

This summer, ESC served as financial advisors for a \$50 million bond for Evansville-Vanderburgh, and a \$31 million bond for Franklin Township.

Educational Services Company

**3535 E. 96th Street, Suite
126 Indianapolis, IN 46240**

**Phone: (317) 818-3535 or
(888) 351-3535**

Fax: (317) 818-3533

**Business hours: 7:30 a.m. to
4 p.m., Monday-Friday**

SEA 199 BONDING TIMETABLES

- 1. Allow 2-3 months to work out details of conversion.**
- 2. Allow 2-3 months to find a 401a/403b vendor.**
- 3. Allow 4 months from the time your board approves the bond issue to get bond proceeds.**

SEA 199 Bonding tally

74 school corporations out of 293 have received approval for \$283 million in pension bonds, as of Sept. 10

ISBA Conference May 22-23 Indiana Convention Center

Stop by and visit the ESC team at Hall F, Booth #307

Across the board

School happenings

Scher brings experience

When Penn-Harris Madison Schools officials found themselves with a vacancy in the business office, they once again turned to ESC consultant Joe Scher for help.

"He's a wonderful man and brought a real stabilizing force to our department," said Superintendent Vicki Markavitch. "The business manager had been here for quite awhile and everyone was uneasy about him leaving. Joe was able to calm their fears."

One such fear was the uncertainty surrounding property tax reassessment.

"We were in trouble because we were not receiving money on time," Markavitch said. "His expertise helped us at one of the most chaotic times because of under funding from governmental units."

Scher had assisted Penn-Harris seven years ago when the school was going through a similar transition.

ESC's other interim managers have also been busy across the state. Dick Cook has been working as the interim business manager at School Town of Highland and as interim superintendent at New Durham Township. George Dickison recently finished his stint as Cowan Community School Corp.'s interim superintendent.

"Often, a school corporation will bring in a local to fill in," said Grabill "But we bring a team of experience to the job. Our consultants are all up-to-speed on the latest regulations and DOE interpretations. We're a good resource for the school's administration and the school board."

Franklin Township charts course for growth

As one of the fastest growing school corporations in the state, Franklin Township Community School Corp. is once again planning for the future and once again, ESC is assisting. "We've got the whole team down here again," said Franklin's Superintendent Elmo Carver.

ESC consultants Jerry Moore, Pete Rump and George Dickison are working on a feasibility study with the school and four community committees. The work will culminate in a blue print for the school's next round of construction projects. A few years ago, ESC helped with a feasibility study, which resulted in an \$82 million construction project.

"ESC did a tremendous job," Carver said.

Consultant Pete Apple has spent a lot of time at the school helping to equip it. Most recently, we worked on equipment specifications for the new elementary school. He has also been finishing up work for Franklin Central High School and working on a new elementary school in Wayne Township.

ESC's second equipment specifications expert, Larry Renihan, has been working with the Evansville-Vanderburgh School Corp.'s new vocational center.

Budget work picks up steam

With budgets more complicated than ever, ESC budget consultants have remained active. Bill Roberson has been working with Franklin Township Community School Corp., the Martinsville School District and North West Hendricks School Corp. Jerry Moore has been assisting Bartholomew Consolidated School Corp., Community School Corp. of Eastern Hancock Co., and Brown County Schools. Pearson Miller continues to work with Nettle Creek School Corp. and Mount Pleasant Township School Corp.

Other news

Beverly Walters, who assists school business offices during transition, and budget expert Ralph Egloff recently conducted a seminar on "How to Prepare for Financial Audit" for the Indiana Charter School Association.

ESC's Doug Cassman and Bose McKinney and Evans' Susan Traynor are working with IASBO on a seminar on VEBA. The Oct. 9 program will feature a panel of vendors and a Q&A session. Contact ESC for details.

ESC strengthens team

Four pros lend expertise

ESC has added four professionals to its team of consultants to better serve Indiana schools as they grapple with SEA 199, budgets and general school management. They include: Oren Skinner, former Steuben Co. Superintendent, Jim Burrell, former assistant superintendent of human resources at Carmel Clay Schools, Nate Day, financial consultant, Jeannie Zurawski, actuarial consultant. Welcome aboard!

Former Steuben Co. Superintendent **Oren Skinner** has worn many hats during his 33 years in education - teacher, coach, principal, assistant principal, secondary education director and adjunct professor. Now he's donning the role of ESC consultant and is looking forward to it.



Oren Skinner

"I'm too young not to do something," said Skinner, who retired from Steuben County schools in 2001. "This gives me the opportunity to be involved with school corporations."

During his tenure as superintendent, Skinner developed educational programs for all school levels, including programs for gifted and talented and special education. He modernized the school's facilities so that "we had one of the nicest physical plants in the state," said Skinner. Professional development has always been important to Skinner and under his leadership, about 30 teachers pursued administrative positions.

Skinner earned his doctorate degree from Indiana University and, in 1998, was awarded the Indiana Administrator of the Year by IAEOP. In 1997 the Indiana Association of Public School Superintendents named him District II Superintendent of the Year. He also serves as vice chairman of the Steuben County Community Foundation.

"I think one of my strengths is strategic planning and acting as a problem solver," Steuben said.

ESC plans to use his problem-solving strengths to help schools with interim management in

north east Indiana.

"Oren is a solid veteran administrator and will be an excellent interim superintendent," said Tom Grabill.

Skinner said in addition to "ESC's quality reputation," he was motivated to join the company because of his wife, Joyce, a second grade teacher.

"She's still working and wanted me to be working too," Skinner said with a laugh. The couple has two grown sons.

In his 26 years with Carmel Clay Schools, ESC consultant **Jim Burrell** witnessed rapid growth and many changes.

"When I left, we had an excess of 1,700 employees," Burrell said.

When Burrell retired from Carmel Clay, he was assistant superintendent of human resources and handled contract negotiations.

"One of the things I am most proud of is that we were able to settle all of our contracts," Burrell said.

Burrell joined ESC in August and will assist schools with bargaining and with interim management.

"Jim has vast experience in personnel and benefits," said Tom Grabill. "We get more calls every year for assistance with these areas and we know we'll be using Jim's expertise pretty extensively."

Burrell has been married to Joyce, a former Carmel High School teacher, for 36 years and the couple have two daughters, both teachers.

"My wife calls it the family business," Burrell said.

ESC's Services

- **Personnel studies**
- **Treasurer support and training**
- **Interim superintendents & business managers**
- **Construction management**
- **Curriculum consulting**
- **SEA 199 planning**
- **Retirement planning & actuarial service**
- **Bargaining**
- **Accountability planning**
- **Equipment specs**
- **Benefits assistance (Group insurance)**
- **Personnel studies**



Jim Burrell

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ESC strengthens team with addition of four pros

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As a graduate of agricultural finance at Purdue University, **Nate Day** brings a solid business background to ESC. Since joining the company in August, he's been assisting Executive Director Tom Grabill with 23 bond issues - primarily SEA 199 bonds.

Although this is the first time Day has worked in school management, he's no stranger to it. His father, David Day, local counsel to four Indianapolis area school corporations, was responsible for handling school desegregation for Marion Co.



Nate Day

"I've learned a lot about schools from my father and from ESC," Day said. "It's been interesting to see the various ways schools have been impacted by budget cuts and to learn the ins and outs of bonds." Grabill said Day has jumped right in to help schools in a financial advisory role. At

North Montgomery Community School Corp., he is seeking approval from the bond bank and at Danville Community Schools, he's working on the preliminary official statement so that it can sell bonds. Day is also working with RISE Special Services on the preparation of the hearing information sheet and other materials for its appearance before the school projects tax control board. Along with Grabill, he's advising Greenwood Community School Corp. and Greensburg Community Schools.

Grabill said that Day brings many strengths to the company. "He's strong in technology, intelligent and a great addition to our staff," said Grabill. Day is married to Erin, a Warren Township preschool teacher, and has a nine-month old son.

Months before SEA 199 bond work makes its way to Day's desk, actuarial assistant **Jeannie Zurawski** helps schools determine what the amount of the bond should be.

"I get information from schools and help put together the actuarial reports," said Zurawski, an accountant. "Then, I put together the entire package."

Zurawski said she's enjoyed the challenge of putting her business background to work for schools.



Jeannie Zurawski

ESC Executive Director Tom Grabill said Zurawski's skills "have helped to round out the services of our actuarial group, led by Denny Deeter."

Prior to joining ESC, Zurawski used her financial analysis and problem-solving skills as an accountant with Standard Management Corporation, and prior to that, Conseco.

She's a Chicago native and moved here with her husband, Brian, a Purdue graduate. The couple have a two-year old son..