

More aid in school district's pocket

Written by Elizabeth Barrett

Wednesday, 17 March 2010 21:52 -

SWC STATE AID		
School	2010-11	2009-10
Altenwerth	\$1,572,252	\$2,138,374
Broken Bow	\$2,250,755	\$2,230,262
Cozad	\$3,899,429	\$3,989,939
Garfield	\$2,294,497	\$1,155,410
Opelika	\$1,908,804	\$2,087,425
Valentine	\$553,066	\$1,529,779

DAWSON COUNTY STATE AID		
School	2010-11	2009-10
Lexington	\$19,848,339	\$18,815,052
Overton	\$1,193,940	\$1,292,390
S-E-M	\$574,284	\$754,601

Source: Nebraska Department of Education at www.nde.state.nv.us

Dist. 20 to see 4.4% boost, largest increase in county.

District 20 will receive the largest state aid increase of all schools in the county.

The district will have \$139,087 more during 2010-11 than it did in 2009-10 with an allocation of \$3,294,497, according to the Nebraska Department of Education which released state aid amounts last Thursday.

Superintendent Mike Teahon described the increase as neutral and not a big swing compared to what many districts experienced such as Valentine.

State aid for the fellow Southwest Conference school dropped \$972,770 from last year.

Schools receive state aid based on the needs of a district and the resources available to support those needs.

In Dawson County, Lexington gets \$33,288 more with \$19,848,339 this year and next.

Aid to Cozad, Overton and Sumner-Eddyville-Miller schools will decrease.

About 15% of the \$950 million Nebraska schools will get in state aid is from federal stimulus money that was given in 2009-10 and also in 2010-11.

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Federal stimulus money disappears after that, creating a cliff effect or state aid shortfall unless state revenue picks up and closes the gap.

Of the \$3.1 million Gothenburg received in 2009-10, Teahon said the state provided \$2.8 million with an additional \$341,000 in federal stimulus money.

The federal amount is what state legislators would have to make up.

That doesn't seem likely with state tax receipts less than expected.

"We will continue to be conservative in the budget process which gives us the ability to minimize the impact from outside sources," he said, noting that what the state gives can easily disappear. "We haven't added programs or bought a lot of stuff."

Teahon said the district incorporated the stimulus funds into the budget.

Like last year, adjusting the district's organizational structure is what he said helped increase state aid amounts in several areas.

The biggest amount, in elementary class size allowance, will be \$515,055 because of the expansion of first grade from three to four sections and the addition of a teacher.

Reducing class sizes in the elementary has helped increase state aid. Last year, the district received \$422,407.

Other sizeable amounts in the 2010-11 allocation include:

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- \$152,235 in poverty allowance based on the number of students who receive free and reduced-price lunches. In 2009-10, the district received \$166,943.
- \$105,868 in transportation allowance compared to \$121,000 last year.

Big swings in state aid don't happen to the district, Teahon said, because of its low per-pupil costs and tax requests.

This year's per pupil cost is \$6,839 which Teahon said is No. 231 in the 253 districts in the state.

In addition, the district's general fund levy—at 94.5 cents per \$100 valuation—is lower than most school districts in Nebraska.

Teahon said he's concerned about what will happen when stimulus funds dry up.

"It will have an impact statewide," he explained. "When there's a shortage of resources, everyone wants to change the state aid pie."

The superintendent said the budgeting process will be interesting but "we'll keep forging forward, look far enough out and remain conservative."

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