

PROPOSED SCHOOL FUNDING LEGISLATION COULD NEGATIVELY IMPACT KALIDA SCHOOLS

On January 31, Governor Kasich unveiled his new school funding formula. Some of the possible negative side effects of this plan were discussed in the January Paw Print, and unfortunately many of those issues have been proposed in the current school funding formula through House Bill 59 (HB59).

One of the biggest proposed changes will be a move from the current per pupil funding formula to an Equal Yield formula, similar to what the state used in the 1970's and early 1980's in Ohio. As a result, if you use the new system and compare it to the current per pupil funding system, the state of Ohio is moving from funding education at approximately \$5,700 per student under the current system to \$5,000 per student under the funding system proposed in HB 59.

While Governor Kasich touts the fact that no one will receive less money under his plan, and the poorest will receive increases, the reality is districts will be hit with higher costs as a result of HB 59 proposals. If HB 59 is passed as it is currently written, 75% of urban school districts and 50% of suburban districts will receive increases, while only 20% of rural districts will receive increases. Kalida Local Schools will also see higher costs as a result of the reductions in areas such as funding to the Putnam County Educational Service Center (ESC). Our local ESC works to help coordinate local consortiums in a number of areas such as curriculum planning, special education services, assessments, and evaluation procedures just to name a few. ESC's have faced 10% funding cuts each year from 2008-2012, and this year they received a 15% cut in funding. HB 59 also proposes cuts to all ESC's of approximately 27% next year and 22% the following year. While these cuts are not made to local districts state funding, these cuts directly affect the ESC's ability to provide needed services to the local school districts. This is a part of the continuing shell game often played with school funding. While Kalida Local Schools will not see special education funding cut in our budget, we will end up paying more for services provided by the ESC or we will see a reduction in services for our students. The funding per pupil for ESC's has dropped from \$37 per student to \$25.91 per student and HB 59 will further reduce the funding to \$14.20 per student. The drop to \$14.20 per student will result in the lowest per pupil funding for ESC's in twenty years. This will be another unfunded mandate in the school funding shell game.

Another very troubling part of the new school funding plan is the increase in school voucher programs. The proposal to expand school voucher programs is a mechanism which will allow local tax dollars to flow to private and parochial schools. Governor Kasich's plan will expand the current voucher system, in which students in failing schools are eligible for vouchers, to make it available for all kindergarten and first grade students in Ohio. This expansion of the voucher program is especially troubling when you look at the amount of money which the state of Ohio has sent to non-public, parochial and charter/community schools. This school year more than \$824 million will be deducted from Ohio public school districts to fund charter schools, and HB 59 proposes an additional \$34.8 million to be sent to charter schools next year.

The lack of additional funding is especially concerning when looking at the large number of proposed changes and additional unfunded mandates the state of Ohio is adding to the plates of public education. Public schools are facing changes to the state assessments through Ohio's decision to join the Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers (PARCC), curriculum changes with a move to the Common Core Curriculum, and the additional mandates associated with evaluations through the new Ohio Teacher Evaluation System (OTES) and the Ohio Principal Evaluation System (OPES). Districts are also going to be required to spend additional money in areas such as gifted education, regardless of whether the local district and the locally elected Board of Education feel this is the best use of the money.

I would encourage district residents to follow the following links for information about a number of areas related to school funding including how increased transportation costs are hurting districts at a time when the state of Ohio has continued to cut transportation reimbursements. The links will take you to the websites of the Education Tax Policy Institute of Ohio, the Ohio Coalition of Equity and Adequacy of School Funding, and the Akron Beacon Journal.

<http://www.etpi-ohio.org/>

<http://www.ohiocoalition.org/>

<http://www.ohio.com/editorial/bus-stop-1.384485>

As was stated in the January Paw Print, the negative effect of these proposals are particularly troubling after the concessions made by the staff, the increases in some student fees, and the budget cuts put in place two years ago. All of the stakeholders involved with the district have made sacrifices to ensure we did not have to cut programs which directly benefit the students. It would be disappointing to say the least, if the Governor's budget forced reductions we were previously able to avoid.

As more information is released with the budget, I will continue to let the community know how it will affect Kalida Local Schools. Please watch future editions of the Paw Print for additional state and district budget information. I would encourage everyone to do their own research into the subject of school finance, and to contact your elected representatives to let them know where you stand on HB 59.

If you have any questions about the five-year forecast, district funding, or the district budget please contact Don Horstman, Cindy Webken or a member of the Kalida Board of Education. If you feel you have a question which needs to be addressed let us know, and we will also put this information on the school website and Facebook page in order to better inform the Kalida Local School residents about the district operations.