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Updated: Jul 13, 2004 - 11:25:24 am CDT

DeKalb School Board a step closer to finalizing budget

By John Kelleher - Managing Editor

DeKALB - The DeKalb School Board has chopped about \$2.6 million from its proposed budget and is getting close to giving the spending plan the final OK.

The board hopes to finalize the budget at its Aug. 2 meeting.

Six teaching positions have been cut, fees for many extracurricular activities have been increased and the supplies budget has been slashed by \$300,000, or roughly one-half.

Each building principal will have to decide what supplies he or she will have to do without, MeriAnn Besonen, the district's assistant superintendent for business, said during Monday night's board meeting.

Usually the district buys new instruments for the music program, but that will go by the wayside this year, she said. Several other activities will face similar reductions.

Class size will be affected very little, said school board President Tom Teresinski, but outside the classroom, there will be an impact.

Some of the money could be restored to the budget, Besonen said, but most of the cuts are set in stone.

The General Assembly is late passing the state budget because of a bitter dispute between Gov. Rod Blagojevich and legislative leaders.

Initially Blagojevich had proposed a \$250-per-student increase in state aid. Even if that had been adopted, the district would have faced a substantial shortfall, Besonen said.

But the district is counting now on only a \$100-per-student increase, Besonen said. If the state approves more, the school board may be able to restore a small portion of the cuts, she said.

The board also approved 3 percent salary hikes for administrators.

Salaries for top administrators include:

Besonen, \$93,784; Lincoln Elementary School principal Tom Burski, \$73,376; Cortland Elementary School principal Larry Fullerton, \$81,239; Gwendolyn Brooks Elementary School principal Mary Haddad, \$78,767; assistant high school principal Mary Hawley, \$74,263; Huntley Middle School principal Kathryn Kapchinski, \$74,263; Wright Elementary School principal Scott Kubelka, \$71,419; assistant superintendent for curriculum Linell Lasswell, \$93,784; district literacy coordinator Sue Orem, \$58,350; assistant high school principal John Rodriguez, \$75,958; high school athletic director Art Rohlman, \$76,931; director of student services Greg Romaneck, \$73,291; Littlejohn

Elementary School principal Kellie Sanders, \$66,000; Jefferson Elementary School principal Merri Lynne Seaburg, \$71,431; Huntley Middle School assistant principal Jeff Smith, \$57,680; high school principal Larry Stinson, \$88,267; and high school dean of students Gail Wronski, \$60,617.

In other business Monday, the district declined to take action on an anti-discrimination policy aimed at ensuring that students obtain a quality education regardless of "race, religion, national origin, marital status, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity or disability where a person is otherwise qualified or could be with reasonable accommodation."

The board had planned to adopt the policy, which is very similar to the policy that has been in effect in the district for eight years. But interim Schools Superintendent Jim Hicks suggested that the board consider adopting a policy similar to one espoused by the state school boards association that bars bias based on pregnancy, homelessness and several other factors.

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