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WHAT'S INSIDE

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SCHOOLS
Two Homer area schools take
first place in Battle of the Books, will advance to state competition.
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SPORTS
Homer ski teams head to state

School district faces $3.4 million deficit

BY MEGAN PACER
HOMER NEWS

The Kenai Peninsula Borough School District is facing a roughly $3.4 million deficit this year, but has a few options to close that gap.

The projected Fiscal Year 2019 revenue for the district's general fund is $140 million, according to a presentation by Assistant Superintendent Dave Jones Tuesday night at Homer High School. The projected expenditures are roughly $143.5 million.

A deficit of more than $3.4 million remains, but the district has the ability to bring that down to just over $2 million, Jones said, if it uses one third of its unassigned fund balance, or $1,318,109. The issue of how to deal with that remaining $2 million was discussed among the handful of parents, district representatives and school administrators who attended the meeting. Jones prefaced the conversation about potential cuts in different areas of the district with a chart detailing the cuts that have been made over the last four fiscal years, which totaled $7.9 million. Those cuts over the last four years included reductions to custodial staff, pool costs and district office positions. There are 13 fewer staff members in the school district's main office than there were four years ago, Jones said.

See **DISTRICT,** Page 5

"It could be us"

Homer students stage walkout after Florida school shooting

Editorial

Enough

These are the names of children and adults killed in mass shootings and stabbings at schools and universities in the United States going back to the Bethel Regional School shooting, Feb. 19, 1997:

Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School, Parkland, Florida, Feb. 14, 2018: Alyssa Alhadeff, Scott Beige, Martin Duque Anguiano, Nicholas Dworet, Aaron Feis, Jaime Guttenberg, Christopher Hixon, Luke Hoyer, Cara Loughran, Gina Montalto, Joaquin Oliver, Alaina Petty, Meadow Pollack, Helena Ramsay, Alexander Schachter, Car-

... District budget

FROM PAGE 1

"Before we say, 'What should we do?' we want to review what we've done," he said.

Jones then detailed a few of the options the district is looking at in order to close the gap between revenue and expenditures. They include increasing the pupil to teacher ratio (PTR) in high schools across the district, reducing funding for supplies or looking at the ways the district can "re-do" curriculum in ways that would save money.

Additionally, two district staff will retire this year, a member of administration and a support staff member, and Jones said the district will likely not replace those positions.

Increasing the PTR decreases the number of paid teacher positions in a school. The current PTR for high schools in the district is 1:25, though Jones said that the number of students in a given classroom is often lower. This is due to students taking courses at their local colleges and participating in internships, he said. Senior students also generally have fewer required classes by their final year, he said.

"Each fall when we do our class size report, we look at the actual number of students in classes across all of our schools," Jones said. "When we look at our high schools, we're staffed currently at 1:25, but you look at our classes in our high schools and most of them are under that."

This is the justification behind the idea of raising the PTR at high schools across the district, Jones said. High schools will be looked at for the PTR increase first, followed by middle schools. The suggestion currently on the table is to increase the district's high school PTR by two, which Jones said would result in a reduction of six and a half teaching positions.

Locally, increasing the PTR by two could result in the loss of one position at Homer High School, said Principal Douglas Waclawski during the meeting. This would likely result in the loss of a few elective classes since the school would have to make sure it was still providing, for example, enough sections of English for students. Zen Kelly and Mike Illg, the Homer area's representatives on the School Board, were both present at the budget meeting. They echoed sentiments made by Jones that it's not likely the state Legislature will increase funding to schools. A better strategy for parents who want to get involved, they said, is to lobby the Borough Assembly to fund the school district to the cap, or the maximum amount allowed.

It is common for the assembly to select a minimum funding amount they will pledge to the district by the assembly's deadline, with the caveat that it might give more funding once it's clear what kind of funding will come out of Juneau. Jones presented that, should the assembly vote to fund the district to the cap this year, that would cover the roughly $2 million needed to close the rest of the district's deficit after using one third of the unassigned fund. The school board needs to pass a budget at their April meeting and forward it to the assembly.

Reach Megan Pacer at megan.pacer@homernews.com.

... Homer News editorial continued

FROM PAGE 1

tia, Doris Chibuko, Sonam Chodon, Grace Eunhae Kim, Katleen Ping, Judith Seymour, Lydia Sim,

Northern Illinois University, Dekalb, Illinois, Feb. 14, 2008: Ryanne Mace, Gayle Dubowski, Catalina Garcia, Julianna Gehant, Daniel Parmenter,

Virginia Polytechnical University, Blacksburg, Virginia, April 16, 2007: Ross Abdallah Alameddine, Christopher James "Jamie" Bishop, Brian Bluhm, Ryan Clark, Austin Cloyd, Jocelyne Couture-Nowak, Kevin Granata, Matthew G. Gwaltney, Caitlin Hammaren, Jeremy Herbstritt, Rachael Elizabeth Hill, Emily Hilscher, Jarrett Lane, Matthew J. La Porte, Henry Lee, Liviu Librescu, G.V. Loganathan, Partahi Lumbantoruan, Lauren

West Nickel Mines Amish School, Nickel Mines, Lancaster County, Pennsylvania, Oct. 2, 2006: Naomi Rose Ebersol, Marian Stoltzfus Fisher, Anna Mae Stoltzfus, Lena Zook Miller, Mary Liz Miller.

Red Lake Middle School, Red Lake, Minnesota, March 21, 2005: Daryl Allen Lussier, Michelle Leigh Sigana, Derrick Brian Brun, Neva Jane Wynkoop-Rogers, Alicia Alberta White, Thurlene Marie Stillday, Chanelle Star Rosebear, Chase Albert Lussier, Dewayne Michael Lewis.

Columbine High School, Littleton, Colorado, April 20, 1999: Cassie Bernall, Steve Curnow, Corey DePooter, Kelly Fleming, Matt Kechter, Daniel Mauser, Daniel Rohrbough, Rachel Scott, Isaiah Shoels, Isa-

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Synopsis:

In a coastal Alaskan town, the pressures of tourism vs. community, indigenous people vs. the government, independence vs. everything, and the "Old Ways" vs. the "New Ways" pop up in a small cafe.

Two of the main characters are Alaska Natives who portray from time to time several of the possible roles for them in contemporary society, from lawyer and city planner to homeless street people to young lovers proud of their complex tribal heritage.

The "Old Ways" may be only 30 years old, or 3,000 years old (or, in the case of Chief Raven, older than time itself), but Alaskans know there is a profound split between those who strive to push Alaska to join the modern world and those who hope Alaska can find its own identity and learn to be fiercely, uniquely Alaskan.

Facing More Budget Crunches, Nome Public Schools Considers Staff Cuts

By Gabe Colombo (http://www.knom.org/wp/blog/author/gcolombo/) | February 7, 2018 | 0 (http://www.knom.org/wp/blog/2018/02/07/facing-more-budget-crunches-nome-public-schools-considers-staff-cuts/#respond)

THE NOME PUBLIC SCHOOLS BOARD OF EDUCATION’S regular meeting lasted late into the night Tuesday, dominated by a discussion of severe budget cuts.

00:00 00:00

Faced with expected flat funding from both the state and city, the fiscal year 2019 draft reduces expenditures by nearly $250,000 from this year's $15.4 million budget.

The draft reduces supply and textbook budgets across the board and removes funds for staff development travel and after-school activity busing, among other things. It also eliminates several support positions, including four elementary school teacher aides and the elementary school social worker, librarian and music teacher.

When council member Sandy Martinson asked if there was any "fluff" that could be cut elsewhere, Superintendent Shawn Arnold was blunt:

> "That's what this is. Four years ago, we had 115 staff. Right now, we have 102. And this reduces us to about 95. And we have the same number of students that we serve. To compare another city school district, Valdez has 684 students, and they have 124 staff members."

In his written superintendent's report, Arnold calls this "the most challenging economic period Nome Public Schools has ever experienced." He says it's hard to number the cuts that have already been made: things from color copies and staff lunches at in-service days to switching to more energy-efficient light bulbs.

At this point, he says, the priority should be on maintaining primary classroom instruction and not cutting class sizes, even if that means hard choices elsewhere.

Even so, Martinson expressed concern about cutting the librarian.

> "I just can't imagine having libraries without librarians. And I feel like with the emphasis we have on reading at our schools that this is a really difficult thing to propose."

In this case, Arnold says, there would still be funding for a part-time library aide, but the burden of checking out books and other duties would likely fall on teachers and community volunteers.

The burden on students to fund their own travel for things like sports would also increase, with the student travel budget cut from around $150,000 to about $125,000. But Business Manager Genevieve Hollins surprised the board when she read out the amount students raised last year, through things like bake sales and car washes: $360,000.

A chorus of "wow"s and "OMG"s rang from the board: Nancy Mendenhall called it "incredible." Jennifer Reader remarked, "Isn't that interesting," and suggested the student travel budget be cut further to fund supplies for the Youth Facility. It's just one of the many trade-offs the board will consider over the next few months.

They'll also consider the adoption of a subsistence school calendar, which would move the start date back by two weeks, to after Labor Day. That would allow students to spend all of August participating in subsistence activities with their families. After several years of debate, the Alaska state commissioner of education is now allowing some leeway for school districts, Arnold says.

Board President Barb Amarok says she sees this as a positive step towards more local control.

> "It's always been hard to take the month of August, because that does affect the activities of the families in our community. It's not just berry-picking and green-picking, it's moose season."

Other board members say they're concerned that cutting in-service days, in order to fit 900 instruction hours into a shorter school year, would make it harder for teachers to collaborate.

In other business, Nome-Beltz High School Assistant Principal Lucas Frost announced his resignation, effective at the end of the school year. And the board offered Shawn Arnold another three-year contract. He's been superintendent for four years.

The Board of Education will meet for a joint session with the Nome City Council to discuss the budget next Monday, February 12th, at 6:30 p.m. at City Hall. The board will hold a work session on Tuesday, February 27th at 5:30 p.m., and its next regular meeting Tuesday, March 6th at 5:30 p.m., both in the Nome Elementary School library.

Image at top: file photo: Board member Nancy Mendenhall and Board President Barb Amarok review a draft budget. (Photo: Laura Kraegel, KNOM).

(http://www.knom.org/wp/blog/2018/02/07/facing-more-budget-crunches-nome-public-schools-considers-staff-cuts/?share=facebook&nb=1)
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(http://www.knom.org/wp/blog/2018/02/07/facing-more-budget-crunches-nome-public-schools-considers-staff-cuts/?share=twitter&nb=1)
(http://www.knom.org/wp/blog/2018/02/07/facing-more-budget-crunches-nome-public-schools-considers-staff-cuts/?share=email&nb=1)

2/25/2018 | Nathaniel Herz

Here's what flat funding has meant for Alaska schools.

In Sitka, students are writing on plain paper instead of composition books. In Nome, administrators are considering a shorter school year, which would give families more time for hunting and berry-picking while also saving money.

In Anchorage, the school district has opened its own clinic to try to slow its spiraling health costs. In the Mat-Su, district officials are exploring whether to build new facilities with borrowed money to help reduce the cost of a busing contract and building leases.

Around Alaska, school districts have approached the state's fiscal crisis creatively, taking new steps to make each scarce dollar go farther and to keep from having to lay off teachers.

But even after those steps, they still face dwindling savings accounts and escalating health insurance costs that are making it more difficult to sustain existing class sizes and programs, administrators said. And they're warning that a second straight year of flat state spending — without a boost for inflation — will force their cost-saving measures to increasingly target classroom teachers.

"We're down to bare-bones operations and we're looking at a $2.3 million deficit for next year," said Sitka's superintendent, Mary Wegner. "All we have left to cut is teachers."

The Alaska Legislature budgets for public schools using a per-student formula called the base student allocation.

[Anchorage School Board cuts dozens of teaching positions, and the situation could get even worse]

In the three years since 2015, lawmakers have raised it a total of 1.7 percent, to $5,930 from $5,830. There was no increase between last year's state budget and the current one, and there's also no increase in Alaska Gov. Bill Walker's proposed spending plan for next year.

One House Democrat, Anchorage Rep. Les Gara, has introduced legislation to increase the formula by $100 next year, or another 1.7 percent.

"Flat funding is better than a stick in the eye," he said in a phone interview. "But you have to recognize that we've lost teachers and you're going to lose a lot more teachers if you continue pretending inflation doesn't exist, and pretending health cost increases don't exist."

Anchorage Democratic Rep. Les Gara.(Marc Lester / ADN)

Anchorage Democratic Rep. Les Gara.(Marc Lester / ADN)

Gara's proposal has six co-sponsors. But his own largely-Democratic House majority this year has focused less on boosting spending and more on the timing of the state's schools budget. That's because lawmakers' delays in passing their annual spending plans have forced districts to issue, then revoke layoff notices in recent years.

The House is pushing the mostly-Republican Senate majority for early passage of a bill that aims to separate schools spending from the much-larger budget for state operations, while keeping the per-student formula at the same level as last year.

Senate majority leaders, citing Alaska's massive deficit, say they don't support an increase this year and that schools administrators aren't expecting one.

Eagle River Republican Sen. Anna MacKinnon, in an interview, said she thinks the state currently lacks the money to keep schools budgets on pace with inflation. Instead, she said she wants to see schools spending the money they're getting more efficiently.

Eagle River Republican Sen. Anna MacKinnon (Nathaniel Herz / ADN)

Eagle River Republican Sen. Anna MacKinnon (Nathaniel Herz / ADN)

MacKinnon praised teachers for working hard and "doing the right thing for students every day." But she said she'd support increased spending on education "when I see better outcomes for students, or a plan that is realistic to improve student outcomes."

"We always see districts asking for more money to do exactly what they're

said.

Alaska school district officials, meanwhile, say that they're being asked to sustain their programs with the same amount of money even as their costs are rising.

If the per-student formula is left the same next year, it will have increased a total of 0.9 percent in the three years since 2016. The Sitka school district's health insurance costs over have gone up by 30 percent in the same time span — to a projected $3.6 million next year from $2.7 million in 2016, said Wegner, the superintendent.

Between health care and utilities, Sitka's schools have had to absorb an extra $1 million in expenses in their $19 million budget, she said.

In response, the district has cut administrative staff and spending on supplies. It saved $500,000 by cutting extra cash in budgets beyond what was actually spent the year before. It's privatized the management of gyms for public recreation programs, instead of having those programs run by district employees.

Those measures have allowed the district to cut just one teaching job, out of roughly 115 total, in response to budget pressure, though it's also eliminated some positions amid declining student enrollment.

Now, Wegner said, "we no longer have any fluff."

Officials at other districts say they've taken similar basic steps to cut costs.

In the Mat-Su Borough, where enrollment has been steadily increasing amid a population boom, the district saved $800,000 by changing the schedules of its custodians. Nome's school district has cut physical education and shop teachers, installed new, efficient lighting and eliminated summer school.

But administrators also said they're trying new things to save money.

The Anchorage School District has opened its own health clinic for some of its staff, which it says could reduce its costs — which had risen to some

*[**Related:** Faced with increasing health-care costs, Anchorage School District is contracting for a clinic]*

It's also trying to shift kids into smaller, specialized schools, which, because of the way Alaska's per-student formula is calculated, bring in more state cash for each student, said Jim Anderson, the district's chief financial officer.

In the Mat-Su Borough, district officials have proposed major changes to some of its building leases and a busing contract in an effort to save money.

They're considering borrowing money — using a financial instrument called certificates of participation — to build new buildings to house several schools that are currently in leased space, the Mat-Su Valley Frontiersman reported.

The proposal wouldn't save money initially. "But when we retire the debt, the borough owns the facility," Luke Fulp, assistant superintendent of business and operations, said in a phone interview.

The borrowed money could also go toward building a new, district-owned bus terminal.

The district pays a private contractor, First Student, for busing, which cost $18 million last year. That contract includes the cost of bus storage. If the district owned its own terminal, it could remove storage costs — plus any associated profit margin for the contractor — from its next busing contract, said Fulp.

In rural school districts, meanwhile, one cost-saving option is moving to a "subsistence calendar" — one that reduces the number of school days to leave more time for hunting and fishing.

The Lake and Peninsula School District, in Southwest Alaska, made the switch this year and cut 20 days from its calendar. Nome's school district is now looking at a similar change, according to KNOM, the local public radio station.

Superintendent Shawn Arnold described the shift as a good idea that's taken on added urgency amid tight budgets, which have already resulted in the district's workforce shrinking to 102 from 115 three years ago.

"That's part of a benefit of a funding crisis: It's forcing us to look at different, innovative ways to deliver instruction that we never would have done before," Arnold said in a phone interview.

But district officials around the state are nonetheless supporting Gara's proposal to boost per-student spending because, they said, their cost-saving measures haven't been enough to entirely insulate teachers from cuts.

In Anchorage, under a preliminary budget, the student-teacher ratio at high schools is projected to increase to 31 next year, up from 29 this year. For seventh- and eighth-graders, the ratio would climb to 28 from 27.

The Mat-Su School District faces a $7 million deficit in its $230 million budget; it increased class sizes this year and has already drained more than half of its savings accounts since 2015.

In Sitka, administrators haven't yet formalized a plan to close their $2.3 million deficit for next year. But just to cut the deficit in half could produce some class sizes nearly 30 percent larger than this year's, said Wegner, the superintendent.

"We will be advocating from Sitka for an increase," she said. "I am not going to sit back and take this lying down."

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ANCHORAGE DAILY NEWS

Education

Anchorage School Board cuts dozens of teaching positions, and the situation could get even worse

Author: **Tegan Hanlon** Updated: February 22, 2017 Published February 21, 2017

The Anchorage School Board on Tuesday unanimously passed a budget for next school year that cuts dozens of classroom teaching positions to partially close a $15.3 million budget gap.

The seven-member board voted on the budget after about 30 minutes of discussion at its evening meeting, leaving the document crafted by the district administration largely unchanged.

Assuming the state Legislature doesn't decrease or increase per-pupil state funding, the $563.6 million general fund budget for the 2017-18 school year results in the net loss of about 123 "full-time equivalent" positions, including 99 teachers, to save about $7.2 million total.

"This budget document is not as rosy as I would like it to be, but it's the circumstances that we are in — when you have flat revenue and increasing expenditures," said Anchorage School Board member Kathleen Plunkett. "We're not going to be able to do everything that I know we would all love to do."

Several school board members said during Tuesday's meeting that they anticipated returning to the budget in coming months once the Legislature agreed on a state budget.

The district created the budget passed Tuesday around the assumptions of enrolling 270 fewer students next school year and state funding remaining flat, as suggested in Gov. Bill Walker's budget proposal.

However, Sen. Lyman Hoffman, D-Bethel, said in an interview Tuesday that public schools should brace for a 5 percent cut to the $1.3 billion the state spends in unrestricted general funds on education.

Anchorage School Board President Tam Agosti-Gisler said in an interview after the board meeting she was hopeful the flat per-pupil funding would remain in next year's state budget, paired with additional transportation funding.

About the 5 percent reduction, she said, "there will be consequences for those cuts that will be felt by our students for many years to come and there needs to be some deep reflection on what our values are and what our responsibilities are for our children."

Other positions cut in district budget include the equivalent of about 16 full-time classroom and special education teacher assistants, three full-time counselors, 14 full-time safety and security specialists and four full-time assistant principals.

Positions added include about 17 full-time elementary secretaries as well as about 48 full-time elementary school instructional coaches, funded by federal grant money.

The district also plans to close the budget gap by using $4 million in savings to keep 40 additional teaching jobs.

Michael Graham, district chief academic officer, said in an email Tuesday that principals will work with their directors to determine what specific teaching positions to cut. Changes could impact class sizes at the elementary level. In middle and high schools, some classes could increase in size and the number of class offerings could decrease, he said.

Only two people testified at Tuesday's board meeting about the budget.

Sharon Baker, president of Totem Association Educational Support Personnel board of directors, said she had concerns about reducing the number of secretaries at the middle schools and high schools, while Michael Bronson with the Anchorage branch of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People asked the board to create a plan in the budget to raise the academics of students behind when it comes to state education standards.

Tom Klaameyer, vice president of the Anchorage Education Association, said in an email Tuesday that the teachers union was "definitely concerned about the potential impacts of reducing school staff, both inside and out of the classroom."

"We are all keenly aware that the ASD budget deficit is a byproduct of the state's fiscal crisis," he said. "Years of flat educational funding, in a world of rising costs, equates to reduced educational funding in real terms."

Klaameyer said most of the union's members were taking a "'wait-and-see approach" to the budget given the unknowns about state funding.

The board passed a single budget amendment Tuesday pulling $195,745 from expenses that are no longer expected to occur and putting that money toward teachers to address changes in fall enrollment.

The Anchorage Assembly will have its first reading of the district budget on March 7 and vote on the budget on March 21.

Alaska Dispatch News reporter Nathaniel Herz contributed to this story.

About this Author

Tegan Hanlon

Alaska Dispatch News

Education

Anchorage School District plans to cut 219 positions, including 159 teachers, to balance budget

Author: **Jerzy Shedlock** Updated: September 28, 2016 Published January 21, 2014

The Anchorage School District will cut 219 positions -- including administrators, support staff and classroom teachers -- next school year, Superintendent Ed Graff announced Tuesday. District administrators are working with a $566 million operating budget for the 2014-2015 school year, $23 million shy of the funds the district says it needs.

And the funding gap is expected to widen considerably, with an estimated budget gap of $49 million in the 2015-2016 school year. The budget recommendation is the "best we can offer our students with limited resources," Graff said.

Cutting classroom teachers by 159 positions means an increase in the student-teacher ratio. The loss of 44 teacher positions is due to a decline in student enrollment, a trend that's projected to continue another year.

Graff said the district and the Anchorage School Board are still working through which schools will lose teachers. Before they start determining who will lose their jobs and what schools will lose instructors, the budget needs to be approved by the school board. The school board will deal with the budget twice in February, consider public feedback, and then work through staffing particulars.

The staffing process happens in April. Teachers on the chopping block should be informed of their termination in May, Graff said.

Balancing the budget is a challenge, he said, and the district's top priority is limiting the impact to students. Teachers have calmly weathered the storm over the past year or so, but worries bubble below the surface.

Graff said he went from classroom to classroom at the beginning of the school year and thanked teachers for sticking with it through some rough transitions, which included the swift departure of the previous superintendent. As Graff handed a letter of thanks to one teacher, she began crying. She thought it was a notice of termination.

School Board President Tam Agosti-Gisler chimed in, adding that the budget woes are "a distraction for teachers."

Unprecedented reductions

While the conversation tends to focus on teachers and the potential impact to students, the district's central administration faces the largest reduction.

Twenty percent of those jobs will disappear this year and next. Administrators manage the overall operations of schools, including cafeteria staff and building maintenance employees. They also oversee academic standards and try to ensure schools have the resources to meet those standards.

Ten specialty counseling positions will be cut of the budget proposal passes. Secondary counsellors will be pooled together and assigned based on student enrollment numbers and individual needs of schools. The recommendation came through during last year's budget process but was avoided.

Over the past four years, the district has reduced its budget by eliminating the equivalent of 491 full-time positions, or roughly 718 employees. That total doesn't include the more than 200 full-time equivalent positions slated for elimination during the coming school year.

The staff reductions are unlike anything Graff has seen in his 23 years with the district, he said.

"I believe any further reductions will jeopardize our momentum," he said.

Goodbye to swimming

To offset the loss of teachers and attempt to balance classroom sizes, the district is proposing shifting high schools from a six-period to seven-period schedule.

And the public has made it clear it wants the district to keep as many opportunities for students in place as possible. Graff dubbed the new approach as "Core plus more," a play on the district's implementation of Alaska Common Core Standards, a guideline of sorts of what students are expected to learn. The standards are similar to the nationwide Common Core Standards.

The addition of a seventh period will align middle and high school schedules. Middle school teachers currently teach for five of seven periods per day. Now they'll teach six periods. The district is also proposing getting rid of one of two daily planning periods.

Graff said he believes teachers and support staff will do "everything in their ability to continue to provide learning experiences that meet the needs of every student."

The only extracurricular classes Graff is proposing to cut next year, for now, are high school swimming classes.

"Swimming is not a required course, nor is there a swim test requirement for graduation," he said. The cut shouldn't impact after-school swimming and diving team activities and rentals.

Sustainable funding

The district's money troubles are the result of flat funding and rising health care costs.

The state's Base Student Allocation (BSA), the number of dollars school districts receive per student, has remained steady at $5,680 the last three years.

Funding shortfalls have been the new norm the past five years. A $25 million budget deficit for the current school year was closed by spending some of the district's budget reserves and making cuts to support staff and classroom supplies. Teaching positions were not included in the cuts for the 2012-2013 school year.

Agosti-Gisler said the board is calling all public education supporters to tell the state's legislators about what they value in Anchorage's public education system and urge them to increase the base allocation.

Graff said the district needs consistent, sustainable funding to keep the district afloat. "We're a people-intensive business," he said, a business that requires human resources to provide quality education. Still, in meetings with lawmakers, Graff said he hasn't heard "comments as to what we need to do to secure funding."

Soaring health care costs

Rising health care costs dry up district dollars far more than salaries, and classroom supplies are a mere fraction of the funding total.

"There's active medical and retiree medical," said Mark Foster, the district's chief financial officer. "Those are the two dominant factors in cost growth" over the past two decades. It's not uncommon for employees' health care costs to see increases in the double-digit percentages on an annual basis, he said.

Outside states have healthier, competitive prices when compared to Alaska. Foster said that 10 percent of Alaskans' income went toward staying healthy around 1990. Now, 20 percent of their wealth is going into health care, he said.

"It's not just that health care costs are rising everywhere; they're rising in Alaska much faster," Foster said.

The district is working with employee unions, trying to get them to pay a higher portion of the cost. Its teacher-compensation package is an ongoing point of contention for some educators, especially given the new demands and standards they are facing. Officials say their plans moving forward focus on improving performance in the classroom, a balancing act that means doing more with less.

A recent three-year agreement between the teachers' union and district have helped contain some of the rising health care costs, Graff said.

Contact Jerzy Shedlock at jerzy(at)alaskadispatch.com. Follow him on Twitter @jerzyms

Eagle River High School students stage sit-in to protest budget cuts

By Alexis Fernandez | Posted: Fri 6:17 PM, Mar 02, 2018 | Updated: Fri 8:36 PM, Mar 02, 2018

EAGLE RIVER, Alaska (KTUU) - A group of Eagle River High School students took part in a school sit-in at their school on Friday to protest budget cuts in the Anchorage School District.

Gabriella Schilling, an Eagle River High School student says her school is losing two of its teachers as part of district-wide budget cuts. The current budget would cut 60 teachers.

"This change would adversely impact my school," said Schilling.

Schilling says there are teachers at their school who are worried about their jobs and many students who are also worried about their education.

"When you are cutting the programs that kids come to school for, you're showing how highly you prioritize us," said Kali Spencer, a junior at Eagle River High.

Spencer says students are constantly threatened with rumors that their school is going to be shut down.

"When I'm constantly threatened with having my favorite teacher leave this building, I don't feel safe. I don't feel like I'm getting the best education that I can." she said.

Luke Mouracade, a senior at Eagle River High says he believes students can have a voice in the budget conversations.

"With everything going on nationally right now I think that it's being shown that students our age can have an impact on politics. That we can have our voices be heard and that we can actually influence education." said Mouracade.

He says one of the greatest resources in Alaska is students and developing that resource through education is incredibly important.

The students are calling on the Alaska Legislature to make a change to the budget and to increase funding for education.

JuneauEmpire.com

(/)

15

Posted March 6, 2018 07:09 am

By JAMES BROOKS (/james-brooks)

Juneau Empire

In public testimony, Juneau residents ask lawmakers for more education help

Two dozen testify Friday in front of House Finance Committee

People fill the chairs in the gallery of the House Finance Committee on Friday, March 2, 2018. (James Brooks | Juneau Empire)

Some Juneau residents are urging the Alaska Legislature to boost funding for education and programs helping Alaskans released from prison.

In public testimony given Friday afternoon, two dozen locals told members of the House Finance Committee that they want to see increased spending on a variety of public projects. None advocated additional cuts to the state budget, which is **operating with a de cit of more than $2.5 billion per year**.

A handful urged lawmakers to pass **a state income tax**. No income tax bill is being seriously considered this year.

“We need a state income tax by the end of this regular session. Without it, we are simply perpetuating greater uncertainty,” said Juneau resident Sean Strauss.

Much of the testimony focused on state support for education.

Juneau-Douglas High School student Stella Tallmon urged lawmakers to boost per-student funding to school districts across the state.

“Increasing the (base student allocation) is the greatest thing you can do as lawmakers to make the way for a stable future,” she said.

Jeff Short, a member of the Juneau School Board, told lawmakers that their currently proposed flat-funded schools budget will mean cuts of about $3 million to $5 million because **rising costs are squeezing the district**.

“Covering (those costs) will require larger classrooms and elimination of programs, including those that support our neediest students,” he said.

Erin Laughlin, editor of the University of Alaska Southeast student newspaper, said the Legislature should fund the University of Alaska budget at **levels requested by the university system’s board of regents**, rather than at the somewhat lower level being considered by the House Finance Committee. Laughlin brought comment postcards from fellow UAS students and was supported by others who offered similar testimony.

“Having a fully funded university guarantees that we’re going to continue to have a skilled workforce,” said UAS student Briana Walker, who also urged the board of regents’ figure.

http://www.frontiersman.com/news/mat-su-teachers-vote-to-accept-new-contract-with-district/article_6b396af4-1e67-11e8-a213-1b4ecefodd12.html

Mat-Su teachers vote to accept new contract with district

by K.T. MCKEE Frontiersman.com Mar 2, 2018

Mat-Su Borough School District superintendent Monica Goyette.

Frontiersman file photo

PALMER — The majority of Mat-Su Borough School District teachers recently voted to accept the negotiated contract with the district, despite a less-than-hoped-for salary increase and the lack of a guarantee from the district on future class sizes.

"This tentative agreement was literally signed in the 11th hour of our last day of mediation," Mat-Su Education Association President Tim Walters said before teachers voted on the agreement last week. "It reflects the best deal we were going to get out of the mediation process."

The contract includes no increase in salaries for FY18 and a 1 percent increase for FY19; a two-year contract for 185 working days each year; a cap on the district's insurance contribution for FY18 at $1,706 per member per month, and a $38-per-month increase in contribution for FY19; an increase in accrual of personal leave from seven days to eight; and a cap on working hours per day at 7.5.

Just getting the district to the bargaining table was the most frustrating aspect of this contract, Walters said.

More than 300 teachers squeezed into the Dec. 6, 2017 school board meeting to protest the district's request for general health claims data from the Public Education Health Trust as the district was investigating the idea of becoming self-insured to save money.

MSBSD Superintendent Monica Goyette reported that insurance costs for certified employees of $38 million are now higher than the entire payroll for all non-certified employees.

"One of our concerns with the Health Trust is their lack of transparency so we don't know what the costs are," Goyette reiterated during the district's Facebook Live event during the Budget Open Houses with the community earlier this month.

“We’re just trying to get the aggregate data such as how much we’re spending per year on prescriptions. We already deal with medical records for workman’s comp. We’re already self insured for that. So we already deal with sensitive information.”

The district had filed an Unfair Labor Practices complaint against the union with the Alaska Labor Relations Agency for not supplying the health claims information and this complaint still stands as the district continues to look into ways to cut insurance costs.

Walters said this sticking point was not part of the mediation process, however. He had said he felt the district was holding up the bargaining process in the hopes the Health Trust would release the health data.

Several teachers spoke during that January board meeting and carried yellow signs that said “HANDS OFF MY HEALTH CARE.”

Tuesday Walters was busy rounding up MSEA members again for the Feb. 27th Mat-Su Borough Assembly meeting to advocate for increased funding for schools.

Faced with an $11.2 million shortfall last spring for the 2018 school year because of a lack of government funding at all levels, the district made the tough choice to cut 87 full-time classified, certified, and administrative positions, driving up class sizes at the secondary level from 28 students per middle school teacher to 30 and from 30 students per high school teacher to 32.

Additional cost-saving measures included decreases in nursing, the loss of foreign language courses, an increase in meal costs and activity fees, and the reduction or elimination of staff travel out of state.

The school board and district staff are encouraging teachers, parents and other community members to talk to borough and state decision-makers about the importance of increasing funding levels that have fallen flat over the last couple of years. Flat funding has contributed to the district's current $7 million deficit.

Goyette said she is encouraged by Borough Mayor Vern Halter's push for an Education Funding Committee that would look into solutions going forward.

"Education in the Mat-Su Borough should be worth as much as in other districts," Goyette said, adding the district's No. 1 priority is keeping class sizes down. "The status quo in funding really impacts us because of the increased costs of salaries and utilities. Our district grows every year and yet we're not receiving the funds to cover that. We're funded about $2,900 per pupil and Fairbanks gets $7,500."

Mat-Su Valley Frontiersman

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Budget woes reach school district

by TIM ROCKEY Frontiersman.com Feb 21, 2018 0

PALMER — Superintendent Monica Goyette delivered her presentation of the FY 2019 preliminary budget for MSBSD on Thursday, Feb 15 at the district office. The presentation was seen live by 31

viewers at its peak and has since been viewed more than 2,000 times. Dr. Goyette detailed the expenses and revenues of the district, and answered some previously submitted questions.

The Facebook Live event was the last of a string of budget open houses designed to create more involvement in our budget process, according to Goyette. Because the district must present a balanced budget to the Borough, they still have to make $7 million in cuts to the currently proposed $234.1 million budget. Goyette detailed the revenues of the district that come almost entirely from the State and Borough. Three quarters of the revenues comes from State funding and one quarter from the Borough. The district also credits 1% of the incomes to Federal funding.

MSBSD is allotted about $2,900 for each of the 18,968 students. MSBSD is funded at about 77% of the maximum allowable funding from the State, compared to 99% to Anchorage and 98% to Juneau. Goyette says she would like to reach the 84% mark that the Fairbanks School District is at.

“An education in the Mat Su Borough should be worth as much to our community as an education in the other districts,” said Goyette.

The MSBSD spends 83% of it’s expenses on personnel paying it’s employees. Teachers have made a statement by showing up to MSBSD School Board meetings holding signs that say “Hands Off My Healthcare,” but Goyette says that healthcare is the 2nd largest cost driver for the district at $36.2 million. MSBSD pays about $22,000 per member for health care, which is above the average. Teachers had taken issue with the School District bargaining for greater access to insurance information. Goyette claimed it was a misunderstanding, and that the district already deals with sensitive health care information, but that the district wanted to see the costs of cumulative care and prescriptions in an effort to see what costs could be cut.

“What we are really looking for is global aggregate data, how much does the district spend on prescriptions as a lump some, not individually,” said Goyette.

Goyette said the district is currently looking at a number of options including self insurance and pooling.

“One of the things we are really working hard on is being able to find out if there are other methods of making sure that we have high value plans for our employees but that could be at a savings rate to both our employees and the school district,” said Goyette.

Goyette repeatedly stressed her excitement for the Independent Financial Review, hoping it would “find efficiencies as we continue to have declining revenue.”

Goyette also repeatedly stressed the involvement of parents in communicating with their legislators the importance of education funding. Both the House and Senate have bills designed to fund education early so that teachers do not get pink slipped at the end of the year due to lack of funding. The Borough offers flat funding to the District where the State uses a different formula. Goyette stressed the difficulty in retaining teachers when there is uncertainty on what funding will be from the borough and state. The borough’s funding comes out in May and the State legislature is supposed to offer funding in June, but has run long with special sessions in recent years.

Of the $234.1 Million in expenses the District spends, only 1% of that, or $3.4 Million is spent on student activities, which covers sports, music, and all before and after school programs that are not qualified as instruction. MSBSD spends 76% on instruction. The state requires 70. MSBSD had over $4 million allocated for student activities last year, but cut costs and shifted those to the parents. Discussions on what programs to cut quickly became divisive.

“Kids are going to be busy. Whether or or they are busy in meaningful activities that our community helps structure and are important to them, or whether or not they are making their own activities, we think it’s better for them to be involved in positive structured activities,” said Goyette.

MSBSD features 47 schools to go along with the District office, warehouse, and nutrition services. Goyette reiterated the importance of the diversity of the District as one of the reasons for high expense.

Goyette’s long term forecast saw a rise of expenses far over revenues. With a 7 million dollar deficit in FY2019 that will grow to 13 million in 2020, 18 in 2021, and 23 million in 2022, according to projections. Goyette said that the deficit will likely result in more students per classroom.

“We are very concerned about this fiscal forecast,” said Goyette.

Jan 31st 2018 | KINY JUNEAU CHUCK GEIGER

Everything on table in school budget cuts

Wednesday, January 31st, 2018 6:16am

Juneau, Alaska (KINY) The Juneau School Board began discussions on the 2019 school budget and will face more declines in student population, state aid, and a $3 million budget shortfall.

The workshop was designed to set priorities for the budget this year. The original plan called for basic expenditures of over $61 million. The board said it might be better to start with a basic spending plan of between $55 and $58 million and then put things back into the spending plan.

"Maybe we can't afford to be basic anymore," School Superintendent Mark Miller said.

President Brian Holst said the district should start with the bare minimum funds to operate the district. He suggested the district look at having the CBJ take over more responsibility over facility maintenance, an item which cost the schools $1.9 million this year.

School Board member Josh Keaton agreed there would be painful cuts this year, "It is going to be tough. We when say everything is on the table...give us something to start with."

At a combined site council meeting earlier this month suggestions for ways to cut costs in elementary schools included elimination of optional programs, maximize facility efficiencies, cut out of town professional development trips, a temporary moratorium on new technology, a reduction in standardized testing, an evaluation to combine more sports teams, reduction of instructional coaches, and using city buses where school bus routes overlap.

The high school group suggested ideas like drug testing, reduction of graduation requirements, fewer textbooks, and potential consolidation of programs.

The board suggested they could ask the CBJ to increase funding for school activities by about $400,000 this year. In a normal year the district loses about 35 teachers to retirement and resignations and those positions could remain open to save funds.

A consultant's report found student enrollment could drop by another 54 students to 4,547 students next fall.

The board also discussed school consolidation but no consensus has been reached.

The budget schedule includes public forums on February 6th at Thunder Mountain High School and February 7th at Juneau Douglas High School. Both meetings will be held in the library. Another budget workshop is planned on February 20th at JDHS. The district would like to approve the budget on March 27 and present it to the Assembly on March 30.

Viewed using Just Read

March 14, 2016 | Anne Hillman, Alaska Public Media

Recent headlines

Protesters led by Great Alaska Schools speak out about potential last minute education funding cuts on Wednesday. (Photo by Anne Hillman/KSKA)

State lawmakers cut education funding in the proposed budgets by nearly $13 million Tuesday night. They moved the money into the oil and gas tax credit fund.

Previously, the House and the Senate both allocated full funding for education, which included a $50 increase to the per pupil state funding formula guaranteed by House Bill 278 in 2014.

Legislative Finance Division Director David Teal said in the House budget, the government was going to use $145 million leftover money from fiscal year 2016 to pay for education. But during the conference committee meeting, they decided not to.

“They put it into the oil and gas tax credit fund instead,” Teal said during a phone interview. He couldn’t say why because he’s not a legislator.

Senate Majority spokesperson Michaela Goertzen wrote in an email that the conference committee chose not to fund the increase because it “was approved under vastly different budget conditions. … Given the current state budget deficit, we are not in a position to continue the increase for FY17.”

Teal said the exact impacts on each school will depend on student counts in the fall.

Anchorage School Board member Tam Agosti-Gissler said the district estimates they will have to trim $4.6 million from the Anchorage School District budget if the legislature keeps these cuts. She said she doesn’t know how they would make up for the loss. Friday is the cutoff for issuing pink slips to non-tenured teachers, and the deadline for tenured teachers already passed.

“And so that puts us in a really big bind in terms of how we’re going to balance this budget,” she said.

Fourteen-year-old Anchorage student Galen Schmidt attended a protest in downtown Anchorage with about 25 other community members. He said the cuts to education will have impacts beyond just this year.

“I think more funding can open new doorways for a lot of students,” he said. “And I feel that states that invest the most in education see the most benefits in the long run, and states that invest the least in education have (negative) consequences.”

Both houses must vote on whether or not to accept the conference committee’s budget.

School board weighs $8 million cut in next year's budget

By Julia Laude | Posted: Wed 10:22 PM, Feb 07, 2018

FAIRBANKS, Alaska - The Fairbanks North Star Borough School Board began the long journey of reviewing the proposed budget for the next school year at last night's board meeting.
The suggested amount totals just over $232 million dollars, which is 3.3% less than the district's budget last year.
Julia Laude brings us the board's discussion.
The 2018-2019 proposed budget includes reductions to the general operating fund totaling almost $8.2 million.
According to the District's Proposed Budget Summary, which can be found online, nearly 86% of the district's budget is being used to pay for salaries and benefits for employees.
But for some, they will never see these benefits.
Tana Martin; Librarian - Tanana Middle School>>"My name is Tana Martin and I am proud to be the librarian at Tanana Middle. When the phone rings and a teacher calls for help with a projector or a substitute needs assistance pulling up a URL or opening a Chrome book cart, with no library assistant, the librarian can't drop everything and provide immediate help."
Cindy Apodaca; Librarian - West Valley High School>>"I love, love, love, love my job. The problem is my program is going to be gutted. The budget right now cuts out every library assistant on the secondary level and what is not reflected there is that last year you took out one assistant so this

year we've had two people doing the work of three."
In Cindy Apodaca's library students utilized library services more than 111,000 times.
In 2016 the district had roughly 50 library assistants in elementary and secondary schools and in the newly proposed budget, that number could be decreased to 20.
And if these library aides are lost, Superintendent Karen Gaborik says there may not be someone there to pick up the load.
Karen Gaborik; Superintendent of Schools>>"Again you have a reduced number of people to be in the library and they need lunch breaks and things so some of that would just be a reduction of services in terms of student access to the library and then schools would just have to look at what services they still can provide and what services they can't."
But it's not just library assistants who are in a position to be worried.
Teachers, custodians, after-school activities coordinators, and a variety of other support staff are at risk of losing their jobs.
Board President Heidi Haas says deciding on cuts is not an easy job.
Heidi Haas; School Board President>>"Every reduction that we make is going to impact students. We're at this point now where there is no fat, there are no low hanging fruits. Where we're at now is scary."
The state is expected to give roughly a million dollars less to local schools than last year.
The board will hold a more in-depth work session on February 19th to talk about the budget.
By March 22nd, the board needs to approve its budget and send it to the borough in April.

Michelle Sydeman

From: Michelle Sydeman <msydeman@gmail.com>
Sent: Friday, February 9, 2018 5:53 AM
To: Michelle Sydeman; Tristan Walsh
Subject: Kodiak schools budget cut

School district defends proposed budget increase
Updated: 9:00 am, Thu Feb 8, 2018.
Gabe Stutman, gabe@kodiakdailymirror.com – **Kodiak**

School district administrators defended their request for a $1.58 million funding increase during two school board meetings over the past week.
In a presentation Friday, Superintendent Larry LeDoux said that if the school district did not receive the additional funding, nine certified teaching positions and seven professional staff positions would be cut.
Extracurricular programs, supplies, equipment and maintenance would also have to be scaled back, LeDoux said.
According to a 2012 Harvard study, the most important in-school determinant of student success is quality teachers.
At both sessions, the superintendent and other school administrators advocated for the school district, which absorbed a $2.1 million budget reduction this year. Eighteen teaching positions were eliminated, according to schools CFO Sandra Daws.
The reduction included $800,000 from the borough's educational support fund.
"A quality education for every child has always been part of our community vision," LeDoux said Friday. "When times get really tough, it's one of the things that parents have hung onto."
The school district serves 2,445 students across the island of Kodiak.
With state funding tied to enrollment, the district has seen a decline in revenue over the last 10 years as enrollment declined 9 percent.
Borough funding accounts for approximately 30 percent of the school district budget, while 65 percent is paid through the state. About 5 percent is paid via federal funding and other sources.
Revenue for borough school district support is tied to the mill rate, which the borough is expected to increase by approximately 0.9 mills, or .09 percent, in the coming year.

Michelle Sydeman

From: Michelle Sydeman <msydeman@gmail.com>
Sent: Sunday, March 4, 2018 4:18 AM
To: Michelle Sydeman
Cc: Rep. Les Gara
Subject: Kodiak BSA Support article

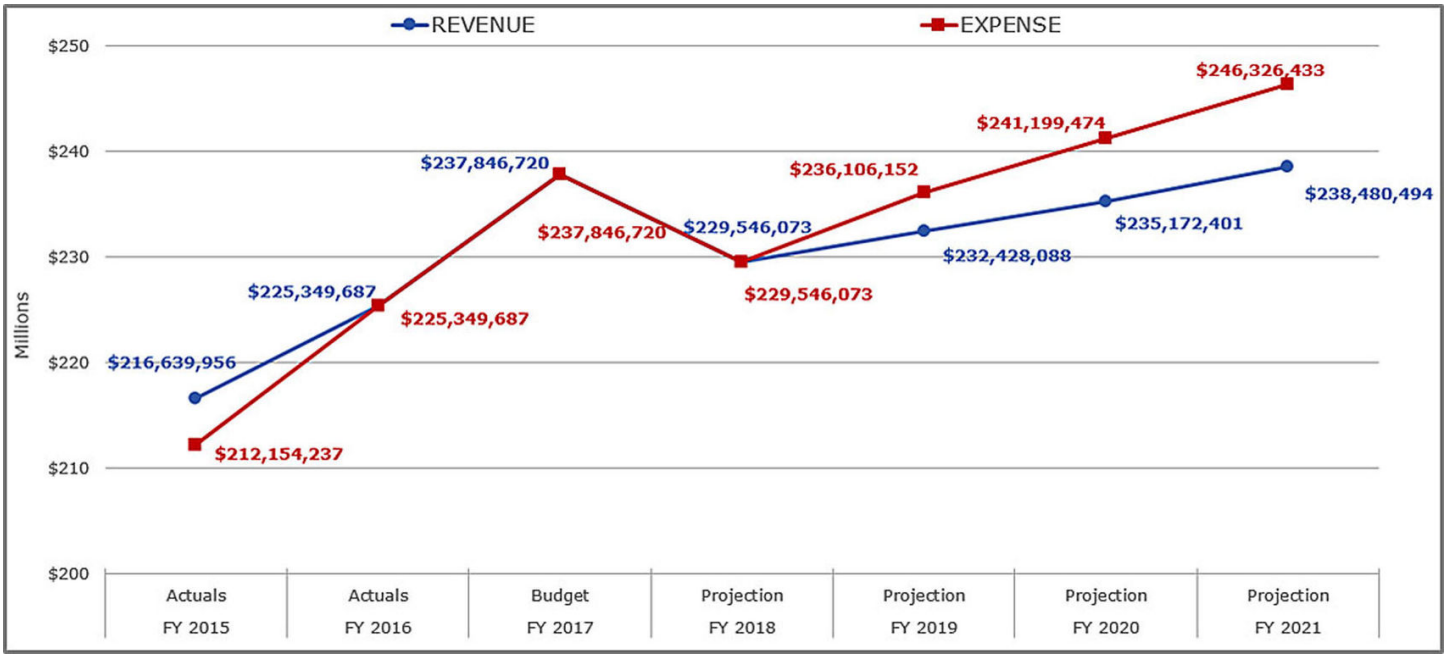
School district outlines need for more money
Updated: 9:00 am, Thu Mar 1, 2018.
Gabe Stutman, gabe@**kodiak**dailymirror.com
The school district presented its budget to the public Tuesday and solicited community feedback.
School board chair Robert Foy and superintendent Larry LeDoux made presentations in support of the district's request for **a funding increase** of **$1,579,458**.
With state funding levels set for the upcoming fiscal year, local funding is the only variable available to fill in funding gaps.
The district has found itself playing catch-up following prior budget cuts.
Between 2017 and 2018, it cut $2,130,944, including $537,318 in salaries and benefits, $1,364,482 in supplies, facilities and travel, and $229,144 in other cuts.
Eighteen teaching positions were lost due to static state contributions – which do not match rising operating costs – and a decline in borough funding.
Foy said the bulk of the requested funding will be applied to teacher salaries.
He said the proposed budget only accounts for what's needed to operate the school district and was constructed after meeting with school principals.
"We're not saying, 'Hey, tell us what you want,'" he said. "We went into this and said, 'We all know we're going to need to cut. What do you need to properly run this school, properly educate our kids, knowing the fiscal times that we're in right now?'"
Some Kodiak residents have expressed opposition to the request, particularly as the borough plans a property tax increase in association with it.
According to the assembly, **a mill rate increase of around one mill** will be used to fill in the education support fund.
The increase will follow seven years of a steady mill rate of 10.75.
During the public comment portion of the meeting Kodiak, resident Judi Kidder expressed concern about the proposed property tax increase.
"I don't think anybody in this community doesn't value education; it's really, really important," she said.
"I totally support fundraising out in the community, finding creative ways of doing stuff. It's a real tough thing.
"There are families out there that are making minimum wage, and for various reasons they cannot take on three jobs to make ends meet. And if there's a mill rate increase to fund the budget increase, my concern is those families are giving up food," she said.
"Something's got to give."
But Foy said the funding request is essential to the school district.
After receiving a list of necessities from principals, he said he cut more than $2 million before presenting the current budget draft. Six certified teaching positions, five staff positions, technology renewal, language arts curriculum renewals and other items deemed necessary by staff will remain unfunded even if the funding request is met, Foy said.
"The administration and the board has said no, we're not making those increases. That's what our principals think we need to adequately teach our kids, and we're not even going there. We can't go there right now," he said.
The school board will accept public comments until March or early April, when the budget will be presented to the assembly for approval.

http://www.frontiersman.com/news/superintendent-discusses-state-of-schools/article_f6bofe9a-68b3-11e7-a869-b73c52b678b3.html

Superintendent discusses state of schools

Goyette believes vote for a sales tax would 'be tight'

By CHRIS FORD Frontiersman.com Jul 14, 2017



The Mat-Su Borough School District shed $13 million off its 2017-2018 school year spending in order to meet the state-mandated balanced budget. However, based on expected costs versus revenues, it will be forced to make further cuts. The district is seeking a 2 percent boroughwide sales tax to help cover the anticipated deficit.

Courtesy Mat-Su Borough School District

PALMER — If approved by the borough assembly, voters throughout the Mat-Su will be asked to decide whether to cover an anticipated $13 million Mat-Su Borough School District deficit through a sales tax proposal. MSBSD Superintendent Monica Goyette said she remains confident all parties involved will come through.

Now that legislators in Juneau have hammered out a final budget for fiscal year 2017-2018, and the borough has done the same, the district needs to make up the difference. Bottom line, Goyette noted, is that both government units "flat-funded" education for the 2017-2018 school year.

That means the state kept its base student allowance (BSA) unchanged for at $5,930 from last year's budget. The borough assembly approved a $3.2 million funding increase for the upcoming school year, which was vetoed by borough Mayor Vern Halter. Goyette said the district was actually penalized financially by the state for a projected 300 student enrollment increase for 2017-2018. Based on MSBSD data, the district spent a total of $12,645 per student this past school year and will reduce that to $12,016 for the upcoming school year.

"Because of the state foundation formula, $1.9 million was shifted from the state to the required local contribution," Goyette said adding flat funding from the borough doesn't account for the cost shift.

Earlier this year, the MSBSD Board of Education passed a resolution asking the borough to consider a sales tax on all non-residential goods sold in the Mat-Su. The assembly upped that a percentage point and is expected to hold the first public hearing at its Tuesday, Aug. 1 regular meeting. Goyette said the school board is scheduled to finalize a resolution for a 2-percent request at a special July 26 session.

The request would cap the borough's annual district contribution at $50 million. In its most recent budget, the borough's total allotment came in at approximately $57.5 million. Goyette said based on the most current data, the district would realize about $9 million in additional revenues for each one percent sales tax increase.

Goyette said the board and administration has worked hard to prioritize where the additional revenues would go. First is to reduce the pupil to teacher ratio (PTR) which it increased by up to two students—depending on grade level—to eat up some of the expected shortfall. The second is to reduce the increased student activities fee which was also hiked. Student activities include extracurricular items such as sports, clubs, and trips. The third goal is to increase the district's personalized learning opportunities.

"We did a survey with the public," Goyette said in explaining the three main goals. "One area where we said 'no' to a decrease was in school safety."

To come up with the balanced budget by June 30, which is required by state law, the board approved reductions in the following areas and includes the anticipated savings: PTR increase, $2.8 million; non-certified staffing reductions, $2.8 million; certified staffing reductions, $2.3 million, department and school-based budget reductions, $1.9 million; student activity reductions, 0.8 million; salary contingency reduction, 0.4 million, substitute allocation reduction, $0.3 million; and executive salary reductions, $0.1 million.

The reductions include more than 76 fewer teaching posts—more than 15.5 in special education; more than a dozen positions in student and instruction support services; almost 11 posts in administration support; almost 19 operation and maintenance employees; one full-time curriculum specialist, an administrative secretary; and a 15 percent cut to department budgets, a 20 percent cut to district coaching posts and a 13 percent reduction to travel and ice rink rentals.

In addition, the district has been able to save $1.2 million in health insurance renewals, and another $0.4 million in transportation and food service subsidies. Goyette agreed to a four-percent salary cut and other executive staff will see a two-percent pay reduction.

School administrators have noted at past meetings that the MSBSD is at the bottom of the state's "Big Five" per pupil funding list at $2,924. Fairbanks comes in fourth at $4,035 followed by Anchorage at $4,393, Juneau at $5,418 and Kenai tops the list at just under $5,500, per student. Of the state's 19 officially recognized boroughs, eight implement a sales tax. Some of those utilized derived funds to augment school district budgets.

Goyette said if approved by the borough assembly, the district is hoping to get the question on the Oct. 3 borough election.

"It's going to be tight," Goyette said.

She said if the proposal doesn't make it on the ballot, there is a chance that voters could decide the outcome in a special election. Goyette said the district estimates it will take two to three months from the time of approval before the district could begin collecting taxes.

"Regardless, we will be starting the school year with current budget reductions (in place) and we'll look to try and solve class sizes," said Goyette.

Goyette said the district is prohibited from spending taxpayer money on the initiative.

"We can only do information-based presentations," Goyette said. "I will go to the public. If folks want to invite us for a presentation, I'll be there. I'm starting to attend city council and community council meetings. I'm excited to go out and explain things."

The superintendent said any scheduled informational meeting dates will be posted on the school's website at www.matsuk12.us .

Although the district has "sucked up" the 2017-2018 school year budget with the above implemented changes, Goyette said if its funding sources and levels remain unchanged, board members and the administration will have to chop a projected $3.5 million from the budget in 2018-19 school year and six million the year after that.

"The foundation of a great community is great schools," said Goyette. "We believe one of the reasons the Mat-Su continues to grow is the quality of its educational opportunities."

Any community group wishing to have Goyette make a presentation can call the administrative offices at 907-746-9200.

Contact reporter Chris Ford at 352-2270 or chris.ford@frontiersman.com

At Bayshore, teachers say the cuts mean already cramped classrooms will be strained.

Jennifer Derks, who teaches fourth grade, said, "I don't mind the big classrooms, if I can still keep teaching. I want to be with the students, and they're what makes the job."

Derks is one of the four educators being let go from the school.

"We were busting at the seems this year, so I can't imagine," she said. "We had positions that didn't get filled this year, because of the freeze. I can't imagine how this school is going to run, without more teachers."

Other educators say life outside the classroom could also get tight over the next few months.

"Being the last day of school, it's kinda hard especially knowing that I don't know my faith as a teacher next year," said Kim Resheske, the school's physical education teacher. "So I don't know how to prepare."

Resheske said she's concerned if lawmakers don't pass a budget soon, she's going to lose her health insurance.

The district says it handed out the layoff notices to first and second-year employees; however, those in special education and other areas considered hard to fill were not part of the cuts.

Resheske and Derks are both experienced teachers.

Derks, a second year educator with ASD, said she spent six years teaching in California. A trip to Alaska in her early twenties, prompted her to move to the state eventually.

Resheske said she was once tenured with ASD. Having left for a job out of state last year, she was rehired by the district to replace the former Bayshore P.E. instructor after retirement.

Some parents say they're concerned about what the cuts may mean for students.

"Once you have your school running smoothly, you kinda just shake it up like an earthquake," Kutscheid said. "And you can't do that to kids."

Bayshore is a nationally recognized school for high performance. Teachers admit, even before the cuts they were spread thin.

"We have superheroes among us, but I think we're asking them to do too much with too little," said parent, Stephanie Bird.

Conference committee cuts Alaska schools funding $13 million

By Anne Hillman, Alaska Public Media | *May 18, 2016* | Education , Politics , State Government

Protesters led by Great Alaska Schools speak out about potential last minute education funding cuts on Wednesday. (Photo by Anne Hillman/KSKA)

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from Pete Hoepfner Cordova SB

The Ever Increasing Burden on America's Public Schools

BY JAMIE ROBERT VOLLMER

America's public schools can be traced back to the year 1640. The Massachusetts Puritans established schools to: 1) Teach basic reading, some writing and arithmetic skills, and 2) Cultivate values that serve a democratic society (some history and civics implied).

The founders of these schools assumed that families and churches bore the major responsibility for raising a child. Gradually, science and geography were added, but the curriculum was limited and remained focused for 260 years.

At the beginning of the twentieth century, however, politicians, academics, members of the clergy, and business leaders saw public schools as a logical site for the assimilation of immigrants and the social engineering of the citizens—and workers—of the new industrial age. They began to expand the curriculum and assign additional duties. That trend has accelerated ever since.

From 1900 to 1910, we shifted to our public schools responsibilities related to

- Nutrition
- Immunization
- Health (Activities in the health arena multiply every year.)

From 1910 to 1930, we added

- Physical education (including organized athletics)
- The Practical Arts/Domestic Science/Home economics (including sewing and cooking)
- Vocational education (including industrial and agricultural education)
- Mandated school transportation

In the 1940s, we added

- Business education (including typing, shorthand, and bookkeeping)
- Art and music
- Speech and drama
- Half-day kindergarten
- School lunch programs (We take this for granted today, but it was a huge step to shift to the schools the job of feeding America's children one third of their daily meals.)

In the 1950s, we added

- Expanded science and math education
- Safety education
- Driver's education
- Expanded music and art education
- Stronger foreign language requirements
- Sex education (Topics continue to escalate.)

In the 1960s, we added

- Advanced Placement programs
- Head Start
- Title I
- Adult education
- Consumer education (purchasing resources, rights and responsibilities)
- Career education (occupational options, entry level skill requirements)
- Peace, leisure, and recreation education [Loved those sixties.]

In the 1970s, the breakup of the American family accelerated, and we added

- Drug and alcohol abuse education
- Parenting education (techniques and tools for healthy parenting)
- Behavior adjustment classes (including classroom and communication skills)
- Character education
- Special education (mandated by federal government)
- Title IX programs (greatly expanded athletic programs for girls)
- Environmental education
- Women's studies
- African-American heritage education
- School breakfast programs (Now some schools feed America's children two-thirds of their daily meals throughout the school year and all summer. Sadly, these are the only decent meals some children receive.)

In the 1980s, the floodgates opened, and we added

- Keyboarding and computer education
- Global education
- Multicultural/Ethnic education
- Nonsexist education
- English-as-a-second-language and bilingual education
- Teen pregnancy awareness
- Hispanic heritage education
- Early childhood education
- Jump Start, Early Start, Even Start, and Prime Start
- Full-day kindergarten
- Preschool programs for children at risk
- After-school programs for children of working parents
- Alternative education in all its forms
- Stranger/danger education
- Antismoking education
- Sexual abuse prevention education
- Expanded health and psychological services
- Child abuse monitoring (a legal requirement for all teachers)

In the 1990s, we added

- Conflict resolution and peer mediation
- HIV/AIDS education
- CPR training
- Death education
- America 2000 initiatives (Republican)
- Inclusion
- Expanded computer and internet education
- Distance learning
- Tech Prep and School to Work programs
- Technical Adequacy
- Assessment
- Post-secondary enrollment options
- Concurrent enrollment options
- Goals 2000 initiatives (Democrat)
- Expanded Talented and Gifted opportunities
- At risk and dropout prevention
- Homeless education (including causes and effects on children)
- Gang education (urban centers)
- Service learning
- Bus safety, bicycle safety, gun safety, and water safety education

In the first decade of the twenty-first century, we have added

- No Child Left Behind (Republican)
- Bully prevention
- Anti-harassment policies (gender, race, religion, or national origin)
- Expanded early childcare and wrap around programs
- Elevator and escalator safety instruction
- Body Mass Index evaluation (obesity monitoring)
- Organ donor education and awareness programs
- Personal financial literacy
- Entrepreneurial and innovation skills development
- Media literacy development
- Contextual learning skill development
- Health and wellness programs
- Race to the Top (Democrat)

This list does not include the addition of multiple, specialized topics within each of the traditional subjects. It also does not include the explosion of standardized testing and test prep activities, or any of the onerous reporting requirements imposed by the federal government, such as four-year adjusted cohort graduation rates, parental notification of optional supplemental services, comprehensive restructuring plans, and reports of Adequate Yearly Progress.

It's a ponderous list.

Each item has merit, and all have their ardent supporters, but the truth is that we have added these responsibilities without adding a single minute to the school calendar in six decades. No generation of teachers and administrators in the history of the world has been told to fulfill this mandate: not just teach children, but raise them!

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