

New ELA programs key item in school budget

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(Photo by Thomas Franz)

CLINTON TOWNSHIP— A new program for Chippewa Valley Schools' English Language Arts curriculum for grades K-8 will be the big-ticket item in the upcoming fiscal year's budget.

The 2016-17 budget was approved during a Board of Education meeting June 20. Approximately \$1.75 million will be spent on the new ELA programs for elementary and middle school students.

"We've budgeted the amount that we know will cover both selections for elementary and middle school so that we can purchase it right away," said Assistant Superintendent of Educational Services Ed Skiba.

Several classrooms will pilot two publishers for middle school and elementary levels this fall. At the end of the first semester, the district's curriculum council will select which publisher will be purchased in February for full implementation the following fall.

"We want something that's up to date and that matches the Michigan curriculum," Skiba said. It's not just books; it's online resources and supplemental materials."

In total, the budget shows that districtwide expenditures are increasing 3.51 percent to \$153,886,846. Revenues are projected to increase by \$983,445 to a total of \$151,897,556.

The shortfall of \$1,989,290 will be drawn out of the general fund balance, which currently sits at \$24.24 million.

"In essence, what we have is a break-even budget, not including purchasing the textbooks," Assistant Superintendent for Business and Operations Scott Sederlund said. "The textbooks were planned. We knew that was going to happen, so it's a one-time expenditure, which is the best thing to have."

Sederlund added that the new books will help improve the district's ELA program.

"It's something we definitely need in the district and we're confident it will help move forward our English language arts K-8 program," Sederlund said.

In other areas of the budget, more than \$2 million is projected to be spent on net staffing wage changes as compared to last year. Sederlund said that is primarily due to raises in staff salaries.

Sederlund also said there have been staffing changes to reflect higher student populations at the high school level compared to elementary sections. Staffing has been reduced at elementary levels, while staffing has been added at the high schools.

“Our bubble is moving through. Right now, we have roughly 1,300-1,400 kids per secondary grade level, and the elementaries are between 1,000 and 1,200 kids,” Sederlund said.

Overall, the district’s budget projects a decrease of pupil population in the district by 185 students.

“We have budgeted for that. Obviously, that’s just a projection, so our hope is we come in better than that,” Sederlund said.

To make up for student population loss and increase spending in this year’s budget, the district projected an increased of \$120 in funding per student from the state’s school aid fund. Sederlund said that will bring the district’s funding from \$7,391 per student to \$7,511.