



BOARD BRIEFS

Authored by the Davis School District Community Relations Department

District approves tentative budget for 2020-21

Funding includes increase in student enrollment and Weighted Pupil Unit

The Board of Education approved the tentative budget for the 2020-21 school year. The board also signed off on the final legal budget for the 2019-20 school year, which ended with an estimated surplus of \$7.5 million.

District Business Administrator Craig Carter said that surplus will be used to maintain the board stabilization fund, provide for one-time employee compensation of about 2 percent as well as fund board and district priorities or other unanticipated needs brought on by the COVID-19 pandemic, including possible additional cuts from the state.

As a side note, Carter said the District just completed the final bond sale of \$55 million. The last construction projects in the voter-approved 2015 bond include finishing West Bountiful, South Clearfield and Sunburst elementary schools. About \$6 million of ongoing maintenance to district buildings is also included in that bond sale.

The tentative budget for 2020-21 includes a 1.8 percent Weighted Pupil Unit increase. It also accounts for a growth of the student enrollment of about 250 new students. Overall, the tentative budget of \$567 million is an increase of about \$10 million over last year, he said.

In an earlier workshop meeting, Board Member Cheryl Phipps asked how funding for the school year would be impacted with students enrolling in the district's K-12 Davis Connect program.

Students enrolled in Davis Connect will still be counted as students in the district, said Superintendent Reid

Newey. However, home-school students will not remain a part of the district enrollment count.

"We want to have the option to retain all the students by offering parents whichever they desire. It's not going to be what's been normal, but we want to retain as many students as possible to draw the Weighted Pupil Unit in," said Newey.

Preparing the budget for the upcoming year has been a little more challenging than in other years. Carter said the District just recently received the final funding decisions from the state. Back in September, before the economy was impacted by COVID-19, the District began discussions with the Board regarding priorities for potential revenue increases. Those priorities included:

- Increasing teacher compensation;
- Providing separate salary increases for coaches, building administrators and fine arts teachers; and
- Reducing adult to student ratios.

Carter said the budget covers the first two, but cannot cover reducing class sizes.

Two board members said they saw a few issues with the tentative budget as outlined. Julie Tanner said she was disappointed in the lack of funding for class size reduction. Additionally, she said the board should be given more time to give input on the budget.

She acknowledged that \$750,000 has been set aside to respond to hot spots in class sizes throughout the district.

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District outlines plan for fall school opening

Davis School District has a plan for opening schools in the fall, which includes mitigating the spread of COVID-19, the Board of Education learned during its regular meeting.

Superintendent Reid Newey said there is a definite tug-of-war between the state's economic needs and public health needs. The district's plan is to open schools as normal, five days a week with recommendations in place to mitigate COVID-19 impacts. The

District has outlined those as the Big 5, which includes hygiene etiquette, staying home when sick, mandated cloth face masks, physical distancing and cleaning and disinfecting classrooms and common use spaces.

"With our volume of students, with our limitation of buildings, you know, we don't have extra classrooms. We don't have extra large spaces. We're going to do all we can to manage and space out. We're trying to give our principals some specific guidelines

... and ask them to produce those specifics at the school level," Newey said.

If the district reaches a point where it needs to reduce numbers in schools, it will be in consultation with the Davis County Health Department and would most likely include an every-other-day schedule.

The District plan also includes online options for parents who want to keep their students out of traditional

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She asked for at least another \$500,000.

Carter explained that the budget is tentative and can be adapted as the year moves forward. The legal requirement is that budget approval must occur by June 30, which coincided with the board meeting.

Phipps said more money also should be set aside for possible expenditures associated with COVID-19, including remediation for students who may be behind due to the closure of schools in the spring. Phipps said more is being required of teachers, but there is not a line item in the budget targeting that specifically.

Superintendent Reid Newey said it is difficult to fund unknowns. As students return to school, administrators and teachers will have a better idea of where the gaps are. Carter said there is \$2 million in the budget to help with those unknowns.

“There isn’t a line item in the tentative budget because it’s a very tight budget,” Newey said. “I think the massive amount of money it’s going to take to run school as planned is significant.”

CARES money in particular is being eaten up by supply costs — masks, sanitizer, cleaning products, signage and plexiglass dividers — and it’s an ongoing cost, he said.

The Board also heard that negotiations with the Davis Education Association and Davis Education Support Professionals were nearly complete. The agreements both include a 1.75 increase for salaries, one-time payment of 2 percent of each employee’s salary and small percent increase to steps and lanes (1.70 for classified and 1.79 for certified employees).

PLAN, from Pg. 1

classrooms. One option is students would be assigned to an online classroom with teachers meeting with students regularly.

Another option would be a self-paced online offering where a teacher would check on student progress about once a month. That option is basically home-school with a parent or guardian overseeing the student’s progress.

Both options ask for a one-term commitment from the student.

As the district moves closer to the fall opening, there will be more answers to some of the questions the public may have. Assistant Superintendent John Zurbuchen said one question

board members may get is whether they would send their child to school under these conditions.

“What’s important is what that parent is comfortable with,” he said. “Every parent has to make that decision themselves ... and that may not happen until August.”

One answer the district has asked the county health department for is the number of confirmed cases that would close a school.

The health department’s response is that there is no magic number. When providing a viable education is no longer possible, that’s when a school closure would be considered, Zurbuchen said.

Intervention plan created to bridge remote learning gaps

A learning intervention program has been created by the Davis School District to address learning gaps that may have occurred because of the district’s “soft closure” response to COVID-19. The program includes online courses, tutoring sessions and literacy programs.

Davis School District Assistant Superintendent Dr. Logan Toone told board members during an earlier meeting of the Davis School District Board of Education that 2,400 students are currently enrolled in over 8,000 online summer courses through Davis Connect, the District’s online program. Last summer, just under 2,000 online courses were taken by students.

“We’ve quadrupled our courses in one year, largely since we now have students who know they can do this,” said Toone.

“This is the backbone of our answer to the parents, who in the fall, may not feel comfortable sending their kids to school. This is giving us an opportunity to try and test this model so we can say to those parents, ‘We understand, we have an answer for you.’”

Most of the online classes are semester courses delivered through Canvas and taught by certified teachers in the district. The price for online courses has been reduced to \$20, which encompasses as many courses a student would like to take during the semester.

Other intervention programs currently underway include tutoring for small groups of English Language Learner (ELL) students and full-course remediation courses for secondary students.

Additionally, there are nearly 1,200 kindergarten to third-grade aged students participating in a summer school literacy program. Students meet in small groups with their instructor through Zoom and receive targeted instructional objectives.

“This was planned in response to COVID-19 as a joint effort with what used to be our Title 1 summer school — joined with the literacy team — as an all-hands-on-deck approach to take care of this,” said Toone.

The District has also created plans for helping students transition back to school this fall.

“We’ve designed an overlap period from early September through nearly mid-October where there will be significant effort put into review material,” said Superintendent Reid Newey. “It’s hard to bring students back and test right away to see where they are at, so we will have a catch-up period.”