



BOARD BRIEFS

Authored by the Davis School District Community Relations Department

District considers options for federal relief funding Stakeholder input factors into how one-time funds will be dispersed

Davis School District continues to determine the best plan for the allocation of \$42.5 million in federal funding to support student education following the pandemic.

The monies come from the American Rescue Plan Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief (ARP ESSER).

Assistant Superintendent John Zurbuchen informed the Board of Education the plan is a one-time funding opportunity to address student learning loss.

“We have to be very cognizant as we are building the plan that we are looking at short-term fixes in terms of the dollars,” Zurbuchen said. “The funds have to be used beyond what we are already doing during the pandemic ... towards anything that goes to enhance education.”

At least 20 percent of the funds need to address learning loss through the implementation of evidence-based interventions such as summer learning programs, comprehensive afterschool programs or extended school year programs. The interventions need to respond to students’ academic, social and emotional needs while addressing the disproportionate impact of COVID-19 on underrepresented student subgroups, he said.

Funding options could include Title I, special education, Perkins Grants, adult education, students at risk,

emergency preparedness plans and educational technology, Zurbuchen said. A significant difference with the ARP ESSER funds includes the option to upgrade infrastructure to improve air handlers and look at air filtration systems in buildings.

Before the funding can be dispersed, legislation mandates the plan include stakeholder input. Zurbuchen said the district issued a survey to staff and parents and received just over 700 staff responses and 6,000 parent responses.

Additionally, the district created a district advisory committee consisting of parents and standing district committee representatives who will review the survey results and design a plan to be presented at the next Board of Education meeting on Aug. 3. Once the board approves the plan, the district will submit the funding allocation plans to the Utah State Board of Education.

“As that committee meets and brings back recommendations to the board, I hope that there will be some kind of guiding principles,” said Board Member Liz Mumford. “Since we have a really robust strategic plan and processes in place, I hope the expenditures really mirror those models that we you have established and support the work we are already engaged in.”

Secondary schools move to a late start schedule on Wednesdays

All secondary schools will follow a late-start schedule on Wednesdays during the upcoming year, the Board of Education learned during its regular meeting. Assistant Superintendent Dr. Logan Toone and Secondary School Director David Tanner presented the plan which includes junior high and high school students starting their Wednesday at 9:55 a.m. and 9:25 a.m. respectively.

“In the last year, we learned a

lot about ourselves,” said Toone. “We learned what makes a difference, what

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— Superintendent Reid Newey

we need as professional educators and a lot of interest from our teachers for increased time ... for teacher collaboration, preparation work and individ-

ual student instruction.”

As a result of the interest from teachers, the district instituted further discussions with schools and community councils.

Tanner said the change means junior high schools would shift from a Friday early out to the Wednesday late start. Elementary school schedules would remain the same, including early-out Fridays. The Wednesday late start replaces the Tuesday late start in high schools.

See SCHEDULE, Pg. 2

Despite pandemic, district continues to make gains

While data shows lingering effects of academic challenges from the recent school year, students in the district are continuing to make education gains, Assistant Superintendent Dr. Logan Toone told the Board of Education.

“Our trend this year is very similar to our trends in prior years in terms of student growth over the year, and even slightly more growth this year than we’ve seen in prior years, which is encouraging in terms of the catch-up mentality from where we need to go,” Toone said.

The district looked at several key indicators to determine student growth — Acadience testing, ACT scores, concurrent enrollment and class pass/fail rates.

Toone said the latest K-3 Acadience reading testing shows that student growth is above the state average. However, he said, while students are seeing growth, the district is still focused on helping students who are achieving at lower levels than prior years.

The ACT test taken by juniors in February 2020 — just before schools closed statewide — saw the highest ACT scores in the history of the district. During the most recent school year, ACT scores dropped. Consequently, the district plans to focus on additional resources to help students increase their scores.

The pass rate for students in secondary schools decreased in 2021 and the district saw a lower number of concurrent enrollment credits taken by students.

“As we look at all of this data, in my view, we need to be very cautious how we speak about gap,” said Toone. “The notion of being behind where they are supposed to be is a challenging notion because where they are supposed to be is usually based on some other comparison. If you look at where we are as a state compared to nationally, we are actually doing very well.

“We were able to ... open schools and get back to learning quickly last year,” he continued. “So as we speak

about where our students are at, we ... accept them where they come with their current learning perspectives. We are intent on understanding where they are and providing personalized approaches to our instruction so we can meet the needs that they have,” he said.

In other business, the Board of Education:

- Heard plans for a 2.5 acre parcel in West Point. Accounting Director Tim Leffel said a developer approached the district about purchasing the property for a road. The Board approved defining the parcel and looking at an offer.

- Learned the district is encouraging qualified students to apply for the Seal of Biliteracy, a digital stamp on their transcripts indicative of being bilingual on one or more languages.

- Approved policy changes to the Instructional Materials Adoption policy. An amendment submitted by Board Member Julie Tanner to indicate a parent representation from east, west, north, south and central did not receive enough votes. Board President John Robison said parent participation is critical, is already addressed in the policy and already takes place.

- Approved the 2021-2022 Early Learning Program Plan, which includes the goals and actions to be taken for district wide K-3 literacy instruction

- Gave preliminary approval to a policy change which outlines board meeting procedures during public comment. The change follows Robert’s Rules of Order.

- Updated a policy regarding registration and student accounting which follows Utah State Board Rule R277-419. Changes also allow an out-of-state child of a military family to enroll and attend before relocating to the state and remain enrolled after the student’s parent relocates out of state.

- Approved the continuation of the agreement with Layton City regarding shared properties.

RESPECT, from Pg. 1

“We feel like moving this direction will support that request from schools and address some other needs that our teachers might have, the challenges some of our students have with early outs,” said Toone.

After consulting with community councils from secondary schools across the district, Tanner told the board the vast majority of the secondary schools supported the schedule

change. Reasons cited for support from the community councils, he said, were the benefits they experienced last year from increased collaboration, personalization of learning with students and increased time for teacher professional learning.

“We tried to learn as much as possible during this past year. One of things we have learned is the value of teachers and the increased amount of

time we need for training and the ability for teachers to work together,” said Superintendent Reid Newey.

“There is some sacrifice in terms of what the schedule looks like, but we have found that this is one of the keys that we can point to for increased effectiveness of staff and teachers and ultimately the achievement and happiness of students,” Newey said.