



KCUSD budget for '16 is \$107.6m

By Felicia Cousart Matlosz / The Exponent

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With a 2015-16 budget of \$107.6 million, the Kings Canyon Unified School District will increase its focus on students who need more support while boosting its technology to enhance education.

The KCUSD fiscal plan reflects a more robust state budget, as California continues to emerge from the 2008 recession.

John Quinto, assistant superintendent for business services, said the state isn't yet completely meeting the funding requirements of Proposition 98, which guarantees an annual minimum funding level for kindergarten-through-12th grade schools and community colleges. But, it's getting there.

"I think it [the KCUSD budget] is a reflection of our state economy and the resources that are being allocated to fully fund Proposition 98," he said.

The district – which has built a reputation for fiscal responsibility through hard times and good ones – has in its budget a reserve of nearly \$18.9 million. That amount includes nearly \$10.8 million for "economic uncertainties," which is in line with the governing board's directive that this particular figure be at least 10 percent of the entire budget.

The trustees adopted the budget on June 8.

The majority of the 2015-16 funds — about \$89.1 million — come through the Local Control Funding Formula (LCFF), the state's major change in school financing established in 2013. Public school districts in California receive a basic amount per student, based on average daily attendance.

Additional funds go to districts that have 55 percent or more students who come from poor families, are English learners or are foster children. KCUSD qualifies on those fronts.

Within the \$89.1 million are funds targeted to specifically help those students — nearly \$17.5 million.

Quinto said the funds allows the district to provide “our underserved students more resources so that we can increase our programs and activities that benefit them.”

To do that, school districts each year must hold meetings with parents, school staffs and community members to hear what programs and services they would want prioritized. This process is called putting together a Local Control Accountability Plan.

In Kings Canyon Unified, three areas “rose to the top to be the most important things,” according to Sheila Wiebe, administrator for educational programs.

First, parents wanted more parent education programs. There already are such efforts in KCUSD, with each school undertaking an approach. Now, the district will establish comprehensive, standardized programs at all its campuses under a Parent Academy.

For example, Wiebe said two programs — Parenting Partners and the Latino Family Literacy Project — will help expand parent education in schools with kindergarten through fifth grades. “These are two outstanding programs,” Wiebe said.

For grades six through 12, the Parent Institute for Quality Education will be used to help parents understand college preparation and what students need to do to achieve a college education, Wiebe said.

Second, people at the LCAP meetings wanted more social workers at schools. Some had a social worker five days a week, some two or three. Some had none. Wiebe said KCUSD officials have reassigned social workers so that each site has one at least one day a week.

Third, there will be increased focus on English language learners. Wiebe said a new position has been added – English language development program specialist. This person will work with principals in analyzing data to determine the best way to educate these

students.

In addition, The English Learner Group, as a consultant, will take an in-depth look at the district's needs in this area.

Kings Canyon Unified will have a projected enrollment of 9,774 in 2015-16. That figure includes the charter schools of Reedley Middle College High School and the Dunlap Leadership Academy.

The district's efforts will include bolstering technology, through more computers and improved infrastructure to accommodate more usage. The goal is to eventually have a 1-to-1 ratio of students to computers.

KCUSD maintains its commitment to its preschool program, which has five in full operation at five elementary schools in Reedley, Orange Cove and Dunlap.

The district also has approximately 1,000 employees.

The 2015-16 budget doesn't include any potential new salary increases. Negotiations are taking place this school year with the district's employee groups.

District officials also are keeping an eye on the costs for employee health care and retirement. "That's happening across the state for everybody," Quinto said.

Meanwhile, the district this year also continues its work to make physical improvements at its campuses. "The board is moving forward and investing heavily in facilities for students," Quinto said.

Most of these projects chiefly are funded through a separate budget of Measure K school bond funds from 2012. A number of these projects are underway or in process. They include installing play fields and shade structures at campuses, repairing roofs, improving student drop-off points and placing security cameras at schools.

KCUSD also has embarked on two major construction projects.

One is a new district administration building to be located on the site of the now-demolished Granger Building, on 10th Street between the Rails to Trails Parkway and the railroad tracks.

Funds for the \$6 million project are coming from the district's general

fund, and district officials hope to have the new headquarters finished by next summer. The district has outgrown its current offices on Manning Avenue, north of Reedley High School.

The other major project is the \$5 million Central Valley Transportation Center, which is a collaboration with the city of Reedley. The center will be built on a 40-acre site at 1600 Apple Ave., near Huntsman and Buttonwillow avenues, just south of the Sports Park. KCUSD is paying for its share of the project from its general fund and with some 2006 Measure K bond funds.