

District 20 getting more state funds

Written by Elizabeth Barrett
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Basic increase of \$900,000 surprises superintendent

Superintendent Mike Teahon was as surprised as anyone when he learned District 20 will receive 15.7% more in state aid.

State aid certification figures for public schools, released Thursday, show \$3,240,235 for Gothenburg Public Schools in 2012-13.

Under the current formula, Teahon said state aid is based on a formula of needs, calculated by comparing the spending patterns of 20 districts closest to Gothenburg in enrollment.

State aid is also based on the level in which the formula is funded by state legislators.

Both of those make up basic funding, which increased \$900,000, the largest portion in the needs area of the formula.

“That was a surprise because we have no way of tracking spending patterns of the 20 schools,” he said.

Teahon noted that the state has also returned closer to the funding level used before districts received stimulus money in the form of state aid.

Schools received stimulus money for two years.

Other large increases in allowances for District 20 included such things as the number of students deemed to be living in poverty, elementary class size (20 or fewer students in grades

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K-2 mean more state aid), transportation (route miles only) and instructional time, or teacher-student contact time, compared to the state average.

Also, districts like Gothenburg, are rewarded with state money for having teachers with advanced degrees compared to the state average.

Still, the local effort rate—the ability of a district to fund its school—rose by \$418,000 because of increased valuation in 2011 which means fewer state aid dollars.

“That was expected because of the change in valuation,” Teahon said.

However because calculated needs increased more than resources gained, state aid is more this year and next.

Because it's early in the budget year, Teahon said he and the board have not yet determined where the extra state aid dollars will be spent.

“We attempt to apply a general budgeting philosophy over multiple years so that we do not get caught up in the dramatic swings of the state aid formula,” he said.

For 2011-12, the district received \$2.8 million, which was a drop of \$461,366.

ebarrett@gothenburgtimes.com

308-537-3636