

School district breathes sigh of relief ... again

Written by Deb Egenberger
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Programs won't have to be cut after all

Brady school board members and district administrators are done holding their breath ... for now.

The Nebraska Department of Education certified state aid figures for the 2012-13 school year last week and the Brady district pulled through with more state aid than it received for the current school year.

Increases in the class size allowance, instructional time, poverty funds and option funding push the total state aid package to \$408,786.

Superintendent Bill Porter said last year's state aid to Brady was roughly \$325,000 so the district will be seeing about 26% more funds.

"Thankfully, that means we will be able to keep everybody on staff at the current class load," Porter said.

The school board voted during its April meeting earlier this month to cut one course from each of the physical education, industrial arts, music and family and consumer science areas.

With the state aid certification and anticipated land valuation, Porter said the district will receive what he planned for in the upcoming budget, allowing for all programs to remain intact.

The largest area of increase in the state aid came under poverty funds, Porter said.

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That money is designed to supplement programs, Porter said, and cannot be used for teacher salaries or curriculum additions.

“We can use it to help pay for para-professionals and curriculum enhancers,” he said.

The poverty funds jumped from \$19,000 for this year to \$42,000 next school year.

Porter said the district’s diligence in adding instructional time has also paid off, along with bringing in option enrollment students.

“Unfortunately, the bonus for small class sizes in K-3 is one of the items the state is considering doing away with,” Porter said.

The news is a relief for now but Porter said the district must continue to plan for the future.

The only way to not face similar difficult decisions in the future will be to somehow build cash reserves so the district is not as dependent on uncertain state aid.

“Right now we’re OK and we’ll be OK next school year,” he said. “But who knows what those people in Lincoln will do to us during the next session.”