Spending went over by $37,409

Knee deep in numbers for the next budget year, Brady school board members were forced to take a step backward and make some changes to last year's budget.

In a special meeting Monday night, the board had a public hearing on amending the 2008-09 budget by $37,409.

After no one spoke, members voted to increase last year's budget.

Superintendent Bill Porter explained that more money was spent on distance learning costs than was anticipated and the board is required to make things add up correctly with the state.

Amending a budget is not uncommon but it's a practice Porter wants to avoid in the future.

He said for the past three years, the district has been required to amend its budget.

In 2006-07 the amount was nearly $400,000. For 2007-08, the amendment was for roughly $180,000 and this year it has dropped to just over $37,000.

The over-expenditures is getting better but it will not be good enough, Porter said, until there is no difference.

"There were some big bills last year that didn't get paid until late in the school year," Porter said. "That doesn't work very well. You need to pay the big stuff early so you know what you've got left for the smaller things."

The $37,409 difference in last year's budget will come out of the school's cash reserve that could have been carried over for the next budget, Porter said.

That drops the district's cash reserve to just about $187,000.

"That scares me," Porter said. "We are in a recession. What if we don't collect the amount of taxes we're supposed to?"

But what's done is done, he said, and now the district has to plan better for the future.

"School financing is a guessing game," Porter said. "You have to really pay attention to how well you are guessing and stick to the numbers. We don't want to be amending this budget next year."

The school board will have a budget workshop on Sept. 1 to begin looking at preliminary numbers for 2009-10.

A public hearing and approval of the budget will be on the agenda for the next regular monthly meeting on Sept. 14.