

***By Jan Rahn***

***Managing Editor***

Knowing well ahead of time that a big decline in state aid was coming doesn't necessarily make it easier to deal with.

State aid to schools was announced the first week in March, with both Perkins County Schools and Wallace Public School taking a hit.

Perkins County Schools will receive \$194,129 in state aid for the coming school year—a decrease of \$590,260 from 2009-2010 school term when the district received almost \$785,000 in state aid.

“We have been anticipating this decline in state aid and feel relatively well prepared to weather the storm for the next few years,” said Superintendent Tobin Buchanan.

Wallace Public School will receive \$18,000 less than they did at the beginning of this school year. In 2009-10 the district received \$288,174 compared to \$270,083 scheduled for 2010-11.

“Ours doesn't look near as bad as other schools,” said Wallace Superintendent Todd Porter. “Some others nearby really got hit hard.”

State aid for all Nebraska schools totals \$950,221,735 for the upcoming 2010-11 school year.

A big shift has taken place in state aid. Buchanan said the shift has gone from rural schools

with increasing valuations (such as Perkins County) to the Learning Community Schools (such as those in the Omaha metro area) and to schools with high poverty rates and large numbers of limited English proficient students.

State aid is based on a complex formula, assessing the needs of a district that includes poverty allowance, class size, transportation, distance education and English proficiency, along with what is called the local effort rate (valuation, taxes) which are the resources of a district.

“Our local effort due to increased valuations is more than our formula needs calculation—this greatly reduces or eliminates equalization aid for our district,” said Buchanan.

The stimulus funds are gone, and now the district will have to deal with what Buchanan said is being called the cliff effect, the sudden fall of state aid.

He said the district will now have to decide what to do about scheduled upgrades in building sites and how it will factor into next year’s budget.

“We hope to continue to invest in our educational programs and the facilities,” said Buchanan.

He added assuredly, “We don’t anticipate any major personnel cuts at this time.”

Wallace School did not receive any stimulus funding, so the school hasn’t had to anticipate the huge drop off, said Porter, even though the school will see a cut in aid for the coming year.

“It’s concerning,” he said, “but we’ll continue to monitor our expenses and funds and will deal with it accordingly.”

### Comparison of aid to schools

At this end of the state, most schools are seeing a large drop in state aid. In the local area, Hershey will see a jump, as will Hitchcock County and Paxton.

2009/10 2010/11

District Name State Aid State Aid Dollar Difference

Perkins County \$785,000 \$194,129 \$(590,260)

Wallace 288,174 270,083 (18,000)

Ogallala 2,067,425 1,806,804 (260,622)

Chase County 511,077 295,459 (215,618)

Hershey 2,113,432 2,201,696 88,264

Sutherland 1,451,375 1,407,367 (44,008)

**Schools face 2010-11 term without much assistance from state**

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North Platte 13,016,400 10,536,353 (2,480,047)

Hitchcock Co. 248,400 599,000 350,600

Paxton 281,585 359,862 78,277