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S. Beloit school district looks at staff cuts

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South Beloit is the latest local school district to discuss potential staff cuts.

The board committee is scheduled to meet Thursday to discuss three or four scenarios and to select one of them as their recommendation to the board of education, according to current Superintendent Mike Duffy and newly appointed Superintendent and Riverview Elementary Principal Scott Fisher.

So far the board and financial committees have met about three times to discuss these scenarios, Fisher said.

Both declined to release details regarding the scenarios, but Duffy said two or three non-tenured positions could potentially be cut. Also, the district will not replace two or three positions of staff who have left.

The board of education will act on a decision at its next meeting on April 12.

For now, however, Duffy and Fisher both agree the cuts and the depth of the district's budget hole will depend on how much funding the district will receive from the state in June.

"We're anticipating certainly looking at reductions of some services," Fisher said. "If we get all of our payments this year it won't be as bad into next year, but we can't look into a crystal ball."

That's why Duffy said it's like making cuts in the dark.

"It's not just us. It's everybody," he said. "Our state hasn't done a good job in legislating what they've legislated. All the legislators want to point at each other, saying it's the Democrats fault or the Republican's fault. It's all your fault the way I see it."

Kinnikinnick Superintendent Robert Lauber also said his district is grappling with the dilemma of how to operate on the reduction in state aid.

"I'd have to eliminate a couple of grade levels to match a \$1.5 million reduction in state aid," Lauber said. "You can cut a few teachers here and there, but the magnitude of what the state is doing to us will call into question if public education in Illinois can survive."

Kinnikinnick School District has already decided it will cut 3 full-time classroom teaching positions and one part-time vocal music teaching position for the 2010-2011 school year, according to Lauber. These positions were non-tenured, and they are estimated to save the district \$175,000-\$200,000.

Four positions were also not filled in the current 2009-2010 school year after retirements.

Together, this means that now each grade level has nine sections instead of 10, Lauber said.

The district would have to eliminate 10 to 20 teachers, however, to make up the district's loss of \$1.5 million in state aid after the per pupil foundation was reduced by over \$500, he said.

"How do you do that and still operate?" he asked, adding that the Kinnikinnick School District already has one of the lowest operating expenses with a budget of \$13 million in its education fund.

"I'm not proposing we eliminate grade levels," Lauber said. "I'm just trying to share with you that we're facing a very difficult situation. We're doing the best we can with the resources we have, but I don't know what we can do to further eliminate."

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