

Increase in state funding brightens school budget

Written by Carol Pomeday

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No-interest construction bond will save CG-B almost \$900,000 in interest costs

The Cedar Grove-Belgium School District will receive \$6.1 million in state aid, about \$300,000 more than projected when the budget was approved in September.

The almost 4% increase in aid is due to the district's average increase of 45 students per year for the past three years.

"I am really pleased with that," Supt. Steve Shaw said. "I don't know of any other area school district around here getting that much of an increase in state aids this year."

The complicated aid formula is also based on the district's per pupil expenditures, which will increase this year due to the \$6.1 million building project that was approved in April, Shaw said.

The district saved almost \$900,000 in interest by approving the building referendum in time to qualify for \$2.7 million in no-interest school construction bonds. Those bonds will be paid off last.

The construction of two new classrooms at both the elementary and middle schools, handicapped-accessible restrooms and a new middle-school office area is underway. Work has also started on technical education and art workshops that will be connected to the current tech-ed area.

Middle School Principal Jeanne Courneene recently told the School Board the construction workers have been very patient and courteous with students, answering their many questions.

"The students are seeing that math is used in determining how deep the foundation has to be made and how much concrete is needed," Courneene said. "Our teachers are being very creative in using the construction for classroom projects from math to art."

At the Oct. 13 School Board meeting, construction supervisor Keith Isken of Jos. Schmitt Construction said bids for many items are coming in under listed costs and a grease interceptor that had to be installed at the middle school cost \$36,000, which is \$4,000 less than projected. The school's kitchen system was hooked directly into the village's wastewater line.

The district also received several donations for the new building. Jos. Schmitt donated a table saw, dust collector, drill press and panel saw to the technical education program.

Lakeshore Technical College plans to install equipment in the tech-ed center and hold more classes in the school district for adults and students, Shaw said. If the program develops as planned, students in some fields may be able to take introductory classes in Cedar Grove and attend LTC as advanced students.

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“LTC wants to make our district its location for the southern part,” Shaw said. “What they’re looking at are courses that they’re hearing from employers are needed for jobs in the field. Our goals are to help our students be prepared for the marketplace and also help our community. It’s exciting.”

LTC is offering 15 evening classes this semester at Cedar Grove-Belgium, including solar energy, wind energy, web page design and state certification for food handlers and nursing assistants.

Kohler Co. has donated restroom and locker room fixtures, Shaw said.

In addition to the building donations, Exxon Mobile donated \$750, which was used to purchase Kindles for English teachers who plan to use electronic reading devices for fiction and non-fiction literature classes.

The new classes will be offered to seniors in 2011-12 school year.

While students and teachers are off Thursday and Friday for the Wisconsin Teachers Association Convention, power to the high school will be shut off to allow We Energies to move the power line. It currently runs where the addition is being built.