

# Daniel Boone considers cutting teachers to trim budget

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DOUGLASSVILLE — The budget workshop held by the Daniel Boone School Board covered a plethora of topics, including new laptops and activity fees, Wednesday night.

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Before a sparse crowd at Daniel Boone Middle School, the board discussed their deficit of roughly \$1.45 million and the possible ways to internally eliminate it.

Danielle Penza, the district's business manager, detailed several areas where the budget was successfully reduced from \$52.47 million to \$52.18 million. Transportation cost reductions, the retirement of three teachers and their lower cost replacements combined with no longer needing an aid for a special education student that moved out of the district helped reduce the budget.

In addition, extra revenue sources also aided in bringing down the deficit.

Ann Marie Traynor, the assistant to Superintendent Gary Otto, presented the possible staff moves that might take place. According to Traynor, there has been a reduction of approximately 112 students in the district's elementary schools. The district could furlough two teachers, a full-timer and part-timer, she said.

Additionally, the board has discussed dropping eighth-grade foreign language. Traynor said that would eliminate two other teachers, another full-timer and part-timer.

To maximize the amount of positions that could be freed up would involve increasing the total class sizes. Staying within allowable requirements, one more teaching position could be eliminated, Traynor said.

The board would need to decide on those actions soon, as shifting within the district would then become necessary because of seniority issues.

"People need to know where they'll be," she said. "I just really need to know what you're thinking."

Traynor said she'd like to proceed with any changes by the end of the month.

Jeffrey Haas, the director of education technology, also spoke with the board about his department's plans. Haas said the technology department's biggest expense in building supplies is toner. By changing purchasing practices for that, he said he might save some money, though he also held out on the possibility of the costs not changing.

Haas also detailed his plan to purchase laptops for all the teachers at the high school and middle school, an expense that will run over \$50,000, though he admitted that could change because of the nature of the technology market.

"That number fluctuates constantly," he said.

By switching to laptops, Haas said the amount of computer-equipped workstations in both schools would drop.

Haas also said that the elementary school teachers wouldn't be getting laptops immediately because they generally stay in the same room.

"The reason why I want to do it at the secondary level is they move around" more from room to room, he said.

Board member Connor Kurtz expressed that he'd like to look into cost analysis of each sport and look into eliminations. Board member Robert McLaughlin cautioned him about Title IX implications.

When activity fees were brought up, McLaughlin said he believed all fees were not collected for this year. Kurtz, a student in Daniel Boone High School, said he'd heard some students say they'd never paid their fees.

Michael Wolfe, a board member, brought up the activity model the Twin Valley School District uses, having each student pay a fee.

"There's something appealing about that model," board President Andrew Bastile said. "The dollar figure is based on enrollment, so whatever you're enrolling (that's what is paid)."

McCullough and board member Scott Potts both thought it unfair for students who may not be involved to pay the same as others.


Wolfe made it clear that he did not endorse the system but just wanted to bring its existence to the attention of the board.

"I think we need to be thinking long-term as to how we're going to deploy the fund balance," Basile said.

Board Vice President Walter Sheehan discussed Pennsylvania House Bill 1776, which would eliminate property taxes funding school districts.

"We'll see where that goes, but understand, there are issues that go with that," he said. "Big Brother would control a lot of what we do."

At the next budget meeting on April 16, the board will discuss the feasibility of closing Birdsboro Elementary School.

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