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REGION

Southern Tioga School District receives half million more to fund Pre-K Counts

By CHERYL R. CLARKE cclarke@sungazette.com

BLOSSBURG — The Southern Tioga School District found out it will be getting a big influx of cash from the state to help fund its Pre-K Counts program, business manager Jim Rakoski announced at Monday's board work session.

"The budget will receive about \$510,000 in Pre-K money, which means we should look into a budget review," Rakoski said. "So, I will try to come to you Monday evening with an updated budget."

Program director Sam Rotella was instrumental in obtaining the state grant, along with a second grant of about \$50,000, which will pay for his salary and benefits, district Superintendent Joseph Kalata said.

"Last year, he was able to get \$72,000, plus a \$7,000 grant to look at the programs and see how we can make it work with current staff," he said.

Kalata also announced that the district has partnered with several pre-school and day care centers including Joyful Happenings, Scott's Family Daycare, Stepping Stones Pre-School, and the Mansfield Nursery School, as well as the Covington Day Care, Covington and Toddler University, Blossburg, to be part of the Pre-K Counts program.

Some of the half-million dollar grant will be used to fund scholarships for needy families.

"There will be a scholarship program based on need, which will allow students to attend and have it be paid for by the grant if they qualify," Kalata added.

The district is looking forward to seeing how the program works this year, Kalata said, and could "possibly expand" to include more providers in the future.

The board also heard from Vonda Reed, a parent and teacher who has formed an activist group for parents called ROAR — Raise Our Academic Rigor.

Reed told the board the district needs to offer "advanced placement," or AP, courses to juniors and seniors in order to better prepare them for the rigors of college.

According to Reed, Northern Potter and Wellsboro Area school districts are the only districts in the county to offer the program.

"Apparently Northern Tioga used to but doesn't anymore," she said.

She said that if her daughter Brittany, now 22 and a student at New York Chiropractic College, had been offered the program, she would have not



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been at a disadvantage when she encountered math and science tests in college.

“She found out that she was the only one in her class who was surprised by this test,” she said.

Reed said students who take AP courses get extra points or credits when they apply to colleges, something she was told by Mansfield University Admissions Director Brian Barden.

She said several students have been surveyed in the district and many are “ready and willing to sign up and try it.”

Kalata said the district would “look into it for next year.”

Reed and her husband, Alan, have another daughter entering her senior year at Mansfield High School.

In other business, the board,

* Heard from Rakoski that bus schedules for Mansfield likely will change this year due to a decline in enrollment.

* Heard a second reading of the revised “co-curriculum activities policy,” a two-year policy that allows private school students to participate in extracurricular activities such as cheerleading, if they meet certain criteria.

* Heard an update from Curriculum Director Sharon Miller on the newly implemented “academy” teacher in-service days to be held Aug. 22 to 24.

* Learned that Miller will request permission from the board to use insurance money from the W.L. Miller Elementary School fire to purchase new second- and fourth-grade reading books from Harcourt. Those books, which were 10 years old, were destroyed in the April 13 fire at the school.

* Heard from Liberty and Blossburg Elementary School principal Al Lindner, who said he will do a dissertation on how the physical proximity between the high school and elementary school at Blossburg, which are housed in the same building, has created a “warm, positive, receptive place” for learning.

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252 W. Fourth Street
Williamsport, PA 17701
570-326-1551

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