Superintendent’s column No. 2 for June:

As we move into summer, I realize school issues are on the back burner for most folks. However, I want to emphasize the fact that the budget recently adopted by the Mineral County Board of Education will continue to be a concern come September.

As we have discussed previously, the State Aid to Education Formula is the primary source of funding for the school system, comprising 63 percent of all revenues received.

The funding formula for Mineral County for 2016 consists of the following steps:

1. Professional Salary Allowance - $13,567,363
2. Service Personnel - $4,598,416
3. Fixed Charges (Social Security, etc.) - $1,625,044
4. Transportation - $1,422,060
5. Counselors/Nurses - $730,087
6. Other Current Expenditures/Substitutes - $2,328,675
7. Instructional Programs - $2,035,622
8. TOTAL ALLOWANCE - $25,307,267
9. Local Share $4,398,010
10. State Aid - $20,909,257

This, however, is not what the state provides since local tax collections are subtracted from this formula with the state then providing the difference.

Some allocations are restricted as to how they may be spent. These include monies for bus replacement and the Step No. 7 funds, which reduces the amount of unrestricted state aid available for general fund use.

The State Aid to Education Formula does not provide funding for extracurricular activities such as athletics, supplemental salaries, FFA, professional position beyond 200 days, or any position beyond the personnel (both professional and service) formulas as well as some administrative positions.

Compared to Fiscal 2015 there will be a net loss of $11,697 in tax revenue and a net loss of $356,157 in State Aid.

Local tax collections is the second major source of revenue for the county schools comprising 17 percent of all revenues.

Fortunately for us, the school levy collections benefit the system 100 percent and are not subtracted from the amount of state aid received unlike the regular levy tax collections of which 90 percent are subtracted from state funding. The school levy expires in 2016 and we will lose that 17 percent if it is not renewed.

Personnel overages are a major issue for us, but as Assistant Superintendent/Treasurer Steven Peer pointed out at the budget meeting with the board, “we are a service agency.” As such we want to have all of the qualified personnel we need to provide opportunities for our students.

However, in order for us to continue to do that we are going to have to look at programming and how we can best spend the revenue we know we have.

At present there are 548 employees. Of this total, 331 are professional employees and 217 are service personnel employees. Of the 331 professional employees, 319 are funded through the State Aid Formula. That means that 12 are funded from local or other sources.

Of the 217service personnel employees, only 187 are funded through the State Aid Formula, leaving 29 positions to be funded from local or other sources.

With the revisions to Medicaid funding reducing that source of revenue, we have shifted some of that need to grants when possible or it comes from the General Budget.

Personnel funding in the State Aid Formula is reduced when enrollment declines.

In addition to these issues, there is a seriously increasing cost of substitute personnel that we are monitoring in an effort to reduce costs.

These are not the only concerns in budgeting to provide the best education for our students, but they have gradually come to the top of the list, a list which we must address. That is why programming is so important. Program costs must be brought into line with the budget and personnel that we have available.

It is also why we held our Transformation Summit and why we want to boost discussion and collaboration among our staff and the public.

We want to continue to keep you involved. You are the staff, parents, businesses and community and this is your system, educating our children. It is not just the superintendent or the elected board of education who have a role in expanding opportunities for our students.

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