

Dunlap Board of Education approves earlier school start

Tentative budget set for next school year

Dunlap, Ill. —

When the 2011-12 school year starts in August, Dunlap students will be getting to school six minutes early.

This was the resolution passed at the May 18 board of education meeting. The earlier start will allow the district to implement Professional Learning Communities for the teachers to use.

“We’ve been studying ways to implement the PLC research based strategy for a year now,” Superintendent Dr. Jay Marino said. “We’ve involved stakeholders (teachers, administrators, parents, community members, board members and the Dunlap Education Association) in creating the proposal which was ultimately approved by the board of education.

“Our students will be the real winners in this initiative as we continue to further develop our teaching practices to meet the needs of every student.”

Community members submitted 16 total proposals of how to implement PLCs and change the school day around. Out of the 16, this was the one the PLC committee felt was the best for the district.

The six extra minutes each day will allow the schools to release a half-hour early on Wednesday. The early release will let teachers meet in PLCs.

Marino said during the meeting that homeroom may be cut on Wednesday at the high school and middle schools to keep class times the same, but that schedules were still being discussed.

This change will also allow high school students to keep zero hour, about which many of the comments on the original proposition were concerned.

To help the community become more aware of the change, Marino plans to post a question and answer list on the district blog, along with mailing members of the community about the change during the summer.

Also at the meeting, the board approved the tentative budget for the 2011-12 school year.

The budget, which will be made final in September, is currently a deficit budget, the first the district has seen since the ‘90s.

“We will run our educational program as planned for next year, knowing that we have a small deficit,” Marino said. “We don’t want to disrupt our educational program or stall our continuous improvement efforts as we are gaining momentum. We will use some ‘rainy day’ funds out of district reserves to cover the shortfall. We will keep a close eye on finances as we move forward into next year and will make the necessary adjustments over time if the financial outlook doesn’t look more favorable.”

Some changes to the budget could come in projected revenue from the state, or expenditures due to unforeseen staffing needs and maintenance issues that may arise.

In other board news:

- The board recognized students and staff from the high school and middle schools who have had accomplishments outside the district.

Fifty-nine students were recognized in all, along with two teachers that have retired from the district.

- Eight staff members were hired for the district.

Karen Conlon and Ellen Duffin were hired as school psychologists for the district, while Alyssa Cabrera and Teresa VonRohr were hired as school social workers.

Also hired for the district was Christopher Adams-Wenger as the orchestra teacher.

At Dunlap High School, Amy Stefanski was hired as a family and consumer science teacher, Michelle Unser as the secretary and Cresta O’Bryant as a cook.

- Handbook changes were approved for both middle schools.

The changes included making the excused absence policy similar to the high school, adding a policy for e-book readers and changes to the wording of electronic devices and field trips.

- A memorandum of understanding and adoption of board policy were approved.

The memorandum of understanding is between the Dunlap Education Association and Dunlap School Board of Education to allow school psychologists to work a few days before and after the school year.

The board policy that was adopted was the Identity Protection Act, which protects the personal information, such as Social Security numbers, of board members from becoming public.

The next board meeting is at 7 p.m. June 8.