

Snyder's proposed K-12 funding not enough for Chippewa Valley

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Proposed increases of funding for K-12 education in Gov. Rick Snyder's budget would help, but won't make districts like Chippewa Valley whole for what they have lost in recent years, according to Chippewa Valley Superintendent Ron Roberts.

Roberts said even with the increases, the district would still be below 2010-11 levels.

Snyder recently proposed spending about 3 percent more on K-12 public education next school year, a step he said would increase state-based funding of schools by more than \$1 billion since he took office three years ago. Snyder recently said the school aid budget would include an average \$100 increase in Michigan's per-pupil grant, with the lowest-funded districts receiving \$111 more and better-funded districts getting an extra \$83.

"The per pupil \$83 to \$111 per student represents a percent and a half to us," Roberts said. "We are happy that our per pupil funding is being increased. It is necessary and represents a percentage. It is a low percentage, considering the lack of increases in funding in the past year in operational dollars. To us, as happy as we are with the fact that it is something more, it still does not begin to cover some of the costs we have had to cover in the last two years... But it is positive and a step in the right direction."

Roberts said he anticipated if the potential budget was accepted, Chippewa Valley would receive the maximum \$111, as it is currently at the minimum per pupil funding level.

"We are at the minimum... You can't go lower than us," Roberts said.

The additional money would allow the district some flexibility, but would not represent a substantial enough increase that to the average person, the district would look much different, Roberts said.

"It is a matter of meeting current needs, which is something we continue to need to do. At least we would not have to reduce," Roberts said.

Roberts said Chippewa Valley has been better off financially in part because of employee sacrifices, which it would be nice to move beyond.

"One reason our district has managed to do so well and survive this financially is because of our employee groups," Roberts said. "Many people are paying more in costs."

The state will continue covering more retirement costs instead of including the money in districts' traditional per-student aid, according to Snyder's plan.

"Covering retirement costs is important and that is a good thing," Roberts said.

Districts could also continue qualifying for additional funding of technology upgrades or if they meet "best practices" in Snyder's proposed budget.

“When that part of the budget is developed it is developed as one-time money. It does help but again, it is not long term and it is hard to make plans,” Roberts said.

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