



## Franklin County schools get boost from stimulus funds

By KEITH PARADISE Staff writer -----

The federal government may have promoted economic stimulus funds as a way to jumpstart the economy, but of the millions given to school districts in Franklin County, much of the money spent so far went to people, or programs, already in place, backfilling district budgets.

It differs from other stimulus money to the area that has repaired or built bridges and roads, keeping construction crews working and buying materials.

In Chambersburg Area School District, new jobs have been created. Three math coaches and a literacy coach - full time positions - have been brought in through the district's Title I stimulus funding. In Greencastle, two learning support teachers have been brought on for at least a two-year basis while Waynesboro has hired a mathematics coach for elementary school teaching support. Waynesboro also started a morning intervention program.

"We'll work with the teachers to help them to work better with the kids," said Waynesboro Assistant Superintendent Evan Williams.

The money was issued through the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 and

distributed through the Pennsylvania Department of Education. Funding distributed through Title I of the ARRA was designed to help students who come from economically disadvantaged backgrounds. Stimulus funding that was distributed through the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act is to be used to assist students with disabilities.

Many school districts in the area are looking to assist learning support students with computer programs and software designed to track and assist students. Chambersburg and Waynesboro are looking at Aims Web, which is an assessment system that tests students in math as much as three times a year. The software can then identify students who are deficient, especially in kindergarten through second grade where 4Sight testing is not administered to students.

"It's not the only game in town, but it's the best game in town," Williams said.

In addition to Aims Web software, Chambersburg has also purchased a Performance Tracker for learning support students who have Individualized Education Programs IEPs (IEPs). The program, which cost \$47,000, is used to track student performance and also will make it easier to maintain, track and manage the lesson programs for the district's 1,418 students who have IEPs.

The district is also looking into purchasing the Read 180 program which is an intervention program for learning support students who are

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struggling with reading.

Of the \$1.8 million that Chambersburg received in IDEA funding, \$914,000 is being used to offset the district's first year budget with the Lincoln Intermediate Unit, which is administering the funds for all school districts. Programs and services that have not been purchased yet, such as Aims Web and Read 180, along with psychological services, will cost about \$550,000. The district is still looking at possible ways to use the remaining \$367,811.

Of the \$738,000 allocated to the district for Act 1 programs, the district spent \$320,000 on the math and literacy coaches and is looking to improve technology and the library at schools that are considered Act I based on economic guidelines. Chambersburg also awarded \$53,000 to Building Our Pride in Chambersburg Inc. for its summer program and is carrying over \$116,767 for the 2010-2011 fiscal year.

Tuscarora School District Superintendent Rebecca Erb said the district has purchased new computers, printers and furniture to better assist students who fall under Title 1 requirements. She said the district has also hired additional clerical assistance for the summer months and is using the funding to pay the salary and benefits of current support staff. With IDEA funding they also intend to purchase performance tracker software for IEP students.

"We had a wish list ready to go and it wasn't difficult," Erb said.

The stimulus money was designed to promote either the creation of new programs or improvement of current programs. However, with the stimulus funding only available for two years, some districts were hesitant to make decisions that would require the hiring of additional staff.

Greencastle-Antrim Superintendent Greg Hoover said any new hires made with stimulus funding were told in advance that the funding was only available for two years and the position could be eliminated when the money ran out. Waynesboro brought on a coach and is also paying about 12 teachers overtime to implement the Early Bird intervention program for students who are academically at risk.

What happens to the program after the stimulus funding runs out is unknown at this point.

"We're either going to have to find the money or bite the bullet and say 'that's it,'" Williams said.

Dixie Paruch, superintendent of the Fannett-Metal School District, said the biggest issue Fannett-Metal had was with the reporting system involved in spending the stimulus dollars. She said vendors that the district purchases materials from must be contacted and asked if their purchases have resulted in the retention of a position or the creation of a new one. With the district contracting with multiple vendors for materials, the result can mean numerous phone calls.

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"The reporting piece of this has really become burdensome because so many of us wear so many different hats within the district," Paruch said.

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