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## Significant Deficit Spending Slated for High Schools

By Cathy Tyson

"The Local Control Funding Formula was not kind to the Acalanes Union High School District," said Chris Learned, associate superintendent of business services for the AUHSD.

The district, which oversees Acalanes, Campolindo, Miramonte and Las Lomas high schools, finished the 2013-14 school year with a deficit of \$1.7 million; for the current school year, 2014-15, it is projected to be \$5.4 million in the red, tapering to \$3.8 million for 2016-17, if nothing changes.

At a recent school board meeting that went late into the night, Learned gave an in-depth presentation on revenue, expenses and projections into the future; his conclusion: "Doing nothing is not an option."

What caused this? Mainly the Local Control Funding Formula, LCFF, along with the loss of one-time funds to implement the Common Core and a significant increase in CalSTRS and CalPERS seven-year phase-in of employer contributions. CalSTRS is the California State Teachers Retirement System and CalPERS is the California Public Employees Retirement System which manages pension and health benefits for non-teaching school employees.

LCFF replaced the convoluted 40-year-old school funding methodology from the state; changing the way it distributes \$41 billion dollars per year for public education. While that sounds significant, California is 49th in school funding levels compared to other states. The new system gives more local control and endeavors to equalize base funding amounts, providing additional money on top of base amounts in several categories. Once LCFF is fully implemented it will only bring schools back to 2007 funding levels, due to years of deep and significant cuts.

The LCFF funding formula provides a base amount of dollars for all students, recognizing the difference in the cost to educate kindergarten students versus high school students. Then there are add-on funds for class size reduction, and more add-ons for certain students who need more resources, English language learners, students from low income families and foster kids. Beyond that, the state also recognizes that in addition to these supplemental dollars, students who live in districts that have a higher concentration, over 55 percent, of disadvantaged youth get further additional funding.

While clarifying funding, establishing equity and providing more resources to students who need them makes sense, the problem is that in Lamorinda the base funding level is low and the district doesn't qualify for much additional funding. Based on enrollment in the 2013-14 school year there are 5,307 students in the high school district; only 5.1 percent are socio-economically disadvantaged and 2.2 percent have limited English proficiency.

Superintendent John Nickerson explained in the 2014-15 Final Adoption Budget, "the base-funding level of the LCFF remains absolutely inadequate and the formula will place extreme fiscal pressures on the District going forward."

The board voted to create a finance committee that will meet monthly, starting before the winter break and including teachers, parents, students and administrators, to look at all possible options to find a solution. "We can fix this problem, but we need to be aggressive," stated Learned.

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