

Dundy County Stratton Public Schools
September 2008, "State of the Schools" Report
Dr. Dallas Watkins, Superintendent

Watermelon Feed – Once again, BWTelcom has found the best tasting watermelon for the students. We thank BWTelcom for the annual Watermelon Feed!

Sod Donation – We would like to thank and recognize Kendal Glidden and Scott Rotherham for the sod project they did for Eagle Scout requirements, especially for the sod they gave to the school. Thanks guys and keep up the good work!

Board Accomplishments – Recognition is in order for John Metzger and Bruce Woods for receiving awards from the Nebraska Association of School Boards last week. Bruce has attained Level II status for service and John has been awarded Level V. Congratulations!

No Child Left Behind Recognition – The No Child Left Behind federal office has recognized Dundy County Stratton Schools for being 100% teacher qualified (for subjects taught).

AmFirst BBQ – The AmFirst Bank is again sponsoring a BBQ for the public (last Friday). We would like to thank them for a fun afternoon and for the meal.

Donation – Jim and Cathy Martin have donated a keyboard to the music department. Thanks!

Hal Tecker Memorial - The family of Hal Tecker is donating memorials to the Band. We are appreciative and thankful for their generosity. When I came to Benkelman in 1984 Hal was School Board President. He was also President in 1990 when the Board offered me the Superintendent position. Being able to work with Hal was a blessing, he provided guidance and support, his experience having served on the Board of Education for over 20 years and as a representative on Nebraska Association of School Boards governing body was invaluable. Hal was a generous man, he cared about a quality education for all children and he was an advocate for the public. I will always remember him for a dry and entertaining sense of humor, for being a man of integrity and a person who made a difference for our community, school and state. His friendship was special.

September Board of Education Meeting Highlights

Bus Routes – The Board of Education approved routes for 2008-09. The routes are similar to last year, except for new stops and not having a need for some stops.

School Budget – The Board of Education conducted hearings for the budget (s) and levy request on September 8, 2008. Our historical data is somewhat limited to provide comparisons because of the merger last year. We have been awarded \$760,500 in incentive funds for the merger from the state during 2007-08 and 2008-09. The incentive funds will not be reflected in the general fund next year (end this year) and the budget will likely decrease. We have not used the incentive funds for fixed expenditures, the funds have been used for transition costs (approximately \$160,000) and the Stratton Elementary Construction Project (approximately \$600,000). Some other factors that have made historical comparisons difficult is the transition of funds from the Stratton District that were deposited in the Hitchcock County Unified Schools, that have been paid to us in 2007-08, that have become additional funds for 2008-09. We have also seen a very large increase in valuation for the district (determined by counties), from \$345,357,264 to \$390,754,857. This is an increase of \$45,397,593 (13.1%). We still have a state established “minimum rate” for levies in the amount of .95. If a district does not have this rate their state aid will be reduced proportionately. All of these factors have made for a larger budget in 2008-09 because of revenue, but expenditures have been kept at historical increases. The additional revenue has been put into reserves and cash flow. The general fund cash reserves changed from \$690,000 to \$975,000. The Board intends for the revenue to be available for future budgets rather than a line item expenditure in the general fund. This should be helpful with an anticipated state aid reduction in future years, which should help keep the levy near the minimum level. Other highlights of the budgets include:

- No levy or tax request in the Special Building Fund (.009358 levy in 2007-08, from \$32,000 in 2007-08 to \$0 in 2008-09)
- A general fund levy of .950637 (state minimum of .95)
- A levy of .006158 in the Qualified Capital Purpose Undertaking Fund (for the construction costs, ie asbestos, ventilation, air quality), \$24,064
- Expenditures for the general fund increased about 4.5% when additional cash flow from the merger is deducted
- The general fund budget is \$7,239,198, reserves are \$975,000
- An increase in state aid from \$1,559,355 to \$1,761,006 (incentive aid is included in this as required by the state)

In 2007-08 total levy requests for area schools were Alma (1.20), Arapahoe (1.08), Cambridge (1.27), Chase County (1.10), Hayes Center (1.22), Hitchcock County (1.08), McCook (1.22), Southern Valley (1.21), Southwest (1.27) and Wauneta-Palisade (.98). Levies for 2008-09 are not available yet. Dundy County Stratton in 2007-08 was .956, it is requested to be .956 again in 2008-09.

We will be printing additional reports throughout the year for the budget by category/object. The budgets have been sent to the county and state for review.

Personnel – We would like to welcome Joya Neville to the staff. Joya has been hired as a Special Education aide at Benkelman Elementary.