

School District To Receive \$2.4 Million in Stimulus Funds

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Of the \$1 billion released to California, Berkeley will receive \$1,732,000 for the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) program and \$697,596 in Title I funds, which target students performing poorly in elementary and middle schools.

Together the amounts make up the first 50 percent of Berkeley's share of the IDEA and Title I funds, which the district will have to spend over the next two years. The district will receive the remainder in the fall.

The State Department of Education called the funds a one-time increase for the IDEA and Title I programs, explaining that "the Obama administration had made it clear that the funding should be used for short-term investments that have the potential for long-term benefits rather than for expenditures that cannot be sustained once the recovery funds are expended."

"The IDEA money will be used to offset increasing costs," Berkeley Unified Superintendent Bill Huyett said. "Even if we get it next month, we can't spend it all right away. The government has been very clear about that."

Huyett said special education expenses were rising at a much faster pace than the cost of living.

Oakland Unified will receive an estimated \$13 million, Fremont will receive \$6 million and Albany Unified \$446,000. IDEA funds were allocated to districts on the basis of their enrollment numbers, Huyett said.

State educators indicated that the money could be used to purchase state-of-the-art assistive technology devices, find jobs for disabled youth, and provide intensive district-wide professional development for special education and regular education teachers to improve student performance.

Special education expenses for Berkeley Unified reach \$13 million annually, the superintendent said, most of which comes from the general fund.

He said that although the federal funds could be used to thwart increasing expenditure, they would not eliminate the district's \$8 million budget deficit or prevent layoffs.

The district issued more than 130 preliminary layoff notices to teachers last month because of state budget cuts, but has been able to rescind half of them, Huyett said.

Huyett said that he was hopeful that the

State Stabilization Fund—which makes up a big chunk of the recently released stimulus money—would offset the budget cuts and layoffs.

States will have to apply to the federal government for their share of the \$32.6 billion of the stabilization fund, which represents two-thirds of the stimulus money handed out.

This includes \$27 billion to save jobs and improve K-12 and higher education and a separate \$6 billion in a Government Services Fund to pay for education, public safety or other government services.

"We have been told that that states will get the money within two weeks of applying for it," Huyett said. "But we don't know how much it is or how it's going to be allocated to the schools. We will find out more about that in May. Until then we will still have budget problems."

Two-thirds of the stabilization money will be released in May and one-third between July and October, he said.

At a April 1 meeting organized by Alameda County Superintendent of Schools Sheila Jordan, superintendents from several Alameda County school districts discussed implementation of the stim-

ulus money with state department officials.

"The stimulus money is supposed to be a bridge," Jordan said. "Some of this money is for maintenance and effort and some of it can be used for the budget cuts. A certain amount has to be set aside for creating new projects and jobs. The goals are somewhat conflicting since one way of creating jobs is to keep the old ones, which is hard to do at this time. So there are a lot of confusing messages."

As for U.S. Secretary of Education Arne Duncan's announcement to state governors that school districts would have to release new information about student performance to the federal government in exchange of stimulus money, Jordan said that would not be a problem in California.

"We are already working on those issues," she said. "One of our goals as educators is to broaden the way we look at accountability. It's imperative that students have reading and writing skills and an idea of the world around them—civic engagement, history and arts and music. We are actively working on increasing our limited assessment model now, but until that happens, an assessment model is already in place."

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By RIVA BHATTACHARJEE

Berkeley Unified School District is set to receive a healthy chunk of change next month.

The district is going to get its share of \$44 million in federal stimulus funds that the Obama administration made available April 1 to states and schools for education reform, district officials said.

The funds will go mainly to special education and toward helping socioeconomically disadvantaged students.

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Berkeley, CA
(Alameda Co.)
Berkeley Daily Planet
(Cir. D. 15,000)

APR - 9 2009

Allen's P. C. B. Est. 1888

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