

FUNDING

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"We're not going to have the money to fund some other programs."

The announcement didn't shock Steve Wasko, spokesman for the West Bloomfield School District. He said area schools have been adjusting budgets in recent years anticipating such financial struggles.

"While we anticipated no increase, it still creates a hardship because our costs continue to climb," Wasko said. "The flat funding really represents a cut in our revenues toward the expenses for instructional services."

With less state sales and state income taxes collected in 2002, state officials are anticipating more than a \$1 billion shortfall for Michigan government services, including public education.

"We're all going to have to tighten our belts," Granholm said. "We will try to pass bond issues to help districts borrow money for technology and buildings. Then hopefully down the line, we can help more with operations."

In Oakland County, school districts have already been struggling in recent years since the annual increase in school funding was well below the rate of inflation; however, employee health insurance and transportation costs continue to rise faster than the rate of inflation.

"Don't forget new state and federal guidelines costs us more money too," Wasko added.

This forced districts to layoff faculty, cut programs, welcome more out-of-district students and dip into fund balances to cover all the bills in recent years.

In Southfield, budget cuts by administrators turned around a projected \$5 million deficit, creating a \$1.9 million surplus during the 2001-02 school year. The board was ecstatic, but Michael Dixon, the district's associate superintendent for administrative services, wasn't celebrating.

"We had to do that to prepare for the future," Dixon said. "We know this is going to continue to be a struggle for us."

Many local school districts are looking for new sources of revenue so they don't have to gut too many programs. Schools



(ELIZABETH CAMPBELL) STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

Aldo Vagnozzi gets a laugh out of Governor Jennifer Granholm during a pre-inaugural meet and greet at the Southfield Civic Center December 29.

are searching for more grants and donations. Like their counterparts at the college and university level, public schools will lean more on corporate and alumni contributions.

"We've established a foundation here in West Bloomfield because revenue-enhancements are key," said Wasko, who added he hopes his community can generate \$1 million for artificial turf at their football stadium which would reduce grounds maintenance costs for the school district.

While the massive budget cuts hurt schools, it will make life difficult for ambitious new lawmakers, such as incoming state Reps. Paul Condino (D-Southfield) and Aldo Vagnozzi (D-Farmington).

"School districts will have to spend their surpluses these next couple years," Condino said. "I know this may impact their credit rating, but it's going to be very difficult for all of us."

"There isn't much improvement expected for the next couple years."

To help cut costs, Vagnozzi said he's going to support a pay cut for lawmakers and encourage the state to sell some of its property holdings, especially a building in Pontiac the state was holding for a charter school.

"If everyone is cutting," Vagnozzi said. "Then the lawmakers should take a cut too."

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YMCA

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groups," Davis said.

Depending on the day of the week, the group had up to 45 kids signed up during the two holiday weeks.

"We went roller skating and to the movies and go swimming every day," said camp counselor Sara Harting, who also helps with the Y's summer camp.

The kids also get to enjoy all the fun activities at the Y, including the newly opened Teen Center as well as arts and crafts projects.

Buses transport the campers

"We went roller skating and to the movies and go swimming every day."

Sara Harting
camp counselor

for field trips.

Rayven Crockett, 11, a sixth grader, said she attended the Holiday Camp in previous years and looks forward to them.

"There's lots of activities, and I get to be with people I know. There's movies and games."

Mary Lee, 7, a second grad-

er, likes the field trips, the games and making friends. "We do special things," she said.

Sixth grader Shaun Gallagher, 11, said he likes playing video and board games and being with friends.

The upcoming winter and spring school breaks are actually the busiest times for the YMCA camps where up to 150 children are signed up, Davis said.

She suggested parents book their kids for the winter and spring breaks as soon as possible.

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