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County eyes reorganizing school districts

Possible consolidation could generate income for schools

By Penne Usher Telegraph Correspondent

Reorganizing El Dorado County elementary school districts could generate much needed funding.

A forum focusing on the school district organization was held Monday as an informational workshop for the community.

Vicki L. Barber, Ed.D., El Dorado County superintendent of schools, said the Forum was conducted in response to constituency interest and requests for more information.

The forum discussion focused on a report of the income potential for various consolidation scenarios of elementary school districts.

Twenty-three district configurations are being considered, ranging from consolidations involving two elementary districts to consolidations that encompass all but three of the districts.

The analysis was designed to examine and determine the potential for increased state funding.

"I always hear questions of why in El Dorado County do we have 15 school districts? And should we be consolidating our districts?" Barber said. "With budget issues, I thought it would be a good time to look this over from the income side only. Not the expenditure side."

The analysis identifies the size of the new district, as measured by average daily attendance, the "cost neutral" revenue limit, the increase in state aid and the new revenue limit.

"We are not looking at unification, only at the potential of the consolidation of some of our Elementary School Districts," Barber said. "The forum walked people through the process of what will happen and how the consolidation will look."

The forum brought interest from throughout the El Dorado County.

"We had real interest from parents in the Serrano area of El Dorado Hills on this issue, so we are looking into this upon their request," Barber said.

Sarah Pollock, 22, of Placerville had thoughts on the issue that directly affects her county.

"I think bringing an issue up in public forum is always a good idea," Pollock said. "Bringing the issue aware to the people who will most be affected by it is always a positive thing. People have to be understanding at the fact that ideas need to be discussed regarding the budget."

According to officials the largest percentage of an increase in state funding occurs with the combination of Gold Trail Union and Mother Lode Union.

It would provide more than \$1 million in additional state aid, an increase of 9.74 percent, to serve 1,800 students.

"We are only looking at how much money will be generated on the income side," Barber said. "We are never interested in doing something that would lose money."

Three large district combinations, with more than 8,000 average daily attendance, could provide about 5.5 percent additional state revenue, according to the report.

Buckeye and Rescue are the two largest districts in the county.

"This is not something that we are telling districts to do, this is just something that we would like to see explored," Barber said. "I believe this is an issue that should be discussed and explored."

For more information on the issue or to express interest, contact Vicki L. Barber at (530) 295-2229.

Telegraph reporter Laura Newell contributed to this article.