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Angelina schools getting \$7 million from stimulus plan

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An estimated \$7 million from the federal economic stimulus bill will be sent to Angelina County Schools, according to a press release from an Austin consulting firm on Friday.

The \$7 million is part of approximately \$4 billion for education and public schools in Texas, the release stated.

A breakdown of the estimated amounts for Angelina County public school districts follows:

- * Lufkin ISD — \$3,919,000
- * Diboll ISD — \$1,003,000
- * Hudson ISD — \$793,000
- * Huntington ISD — \$581,000
- * Central ISD — \$470,000
- * Zavalla ISD — \$256,000

Hudson superintendent Mary Ann Whitaker says the money, which would come over a two-year period, would most likely include several categories in which it would have to be spent.

"It should include some special education funding and other categories, but we have not seen any clarifications, guidelines or estimations of amounts," Whitaker said. "I know that most times federal funds are used to supplement and not supplant. It's usually not used for paying teachers, but more to do something extra for your school. The concern is that if you start a program and the funds are only for two years, what do you do after that."

Diboll superintendent Gary Martel said that although the school would definitely accept any funds given, he does have concerns over how the money would be distributed.

"Usually with federal money it's earmarked for certain uses," Martel said. "It would be nice if each district could use the money in a way that would benefit them the most, but that's not usually how it works. We have some specific needs such as work on roofs, buses and a new chiller.

"I hate to see schools get their hands tied because the places where one school may need it is different than

another."

Lufkin ISD business manager Larry Parsons said he's not sure yet how the money will be funneled to the districts.

"All those dollar amounts look great until you see the details and you see what the restrictions are," Parsons said. "We'll have to wait until all the paperwork is done and then we'll see how we can infuse the money into our programs."

Zavalla superintendent David Flowers said his district could definitely use any funds that would come to it.

"We'll have to look at how it's distributed and we'll do our best to use it to the best interest of our students," Flowers said. "The \$256,000 would go a long way in Zavalla ISD."

Whitaker said funds would most likely be distributed in two ways, the first being directly for use in special education programs, for example. The second, she said, would be from a state plan that would include such things as preschools, technology and Pell grants.

"We just don't know what kind of requirements are going to come with this," Whitaker said.

Friday's press release came from Strategic Partnerships, Inc., an Austin-based research and procurement consulting firm that is tracking the funding flows into Texas. More information and a look at all school districts in Texas can be found at www.sparternships.com.

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