



Could millions be headed to schools?

By Angela Weatherford Associate Editor

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— If legislators in Washington can come to an agreement on a \$825 billion economic stimulus package, public schools in the area could end up with a fairly large chunk, according to an Austin-based research firm. Strategic Partnerships, Inc., issued a press release on January 23 explaining — in specific dollar amounts — how much money Texas school districts could receive as part of the package. In some cases, such as in Athens and Brownsboro, those funds could exceed millions of dollars.

The firm, using data it says it has obtained from the U.S. Committee on Labor and Education, estimates Henderson County schools could receive \$7,256,900.

An estimated \$41 billion in funds could be sent to local school districts nationwide.

“This is good news for schools, good news for the economy and good news for companies that sell to government,” said Mary Scott Nabers, president and CEO of Strategic Partnerships, Inc. “Not only will the federal economic stimulus funding provide Texas schools with some much-needed additional funding for facilities, programs and technology, but it will also open up additional contracting opportunities for local businesses to sell their goods and services to school districts — providing a much-needed boost to local economies.”

Brownsboro Independent School District superintendent Elton Caldwell said his district could use the money, but he doesn’t know what strings will be attached to the \$1,608,600 the district could receive.

Caldwell said he is worried the money will be given to each state in the form of grant money. If this happens, a school would have to write a proposal to receive the grants.

“The larger school districts, who can afford grant writers, could end up getting most of the money,” he said. “It just depends on what kind of shape it comes out in.”

Caldwell said BISD could use some of the money for fixing roofs.

The funds would also include \$13 billion each for Title 1 and IDEA (Individuals with Disabilities Education Act) programs, both of which are based on formula funding and address high poverty schools and special needs students respectively. The funding could be aimed at improving public school classrooms, laboratories and libraries as part of the American Recovery and Reinvestment Plan.

Another \$14 billion is estimated to be allocated for school modernization and repairs and an estimated \$1 billion could be allocated for education technology.

Athens Independent School District Superintendent Dr. Fred Hayes said he had not heard anything about Athens receiving an estimated \$2,668,800 — as the Austin firm states.

It is still unclear if any of the stimulus money could go toward facility needs at AISD. The district passed a \$3.75 million bond in November to address some of the issues including flooring, but a larger bond failed both in November and May of 2008.

“If we could get money,” he said, “I would certainly like to know about.”

Other Henderson County Districts are estimated to receive:

- Malakoff Independent School District — \$1,095,900;
- Eustace Independent School District — \$857,700;
- Cross Roads Independent School District — \$371,200;
- LaPoynor Independent School District — \$279,200;
- Trinidad Independent School District — \$195,900; and
- Murchison Independent School District — \$178,000.

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