

KEEPING UP WITH THE BUDGET: INSTALLMENT #3

Grant Funds versus General Funds

This installment will begin to clarify what sorts of grant funding we receive and what the regulations and restrictions are that govern these funds. When we think of grants, most people think of special funds for new programs that are available on a competitive basis and that a school district can choose whether or not to apply for. These sorts of grants come from various sources and typically take a lot of time, planning, and skillful writing to win. Larger school districts sometimes employ full or part time grant writers just for this purpose and are thus able to provide exciting and beneficial additional services for their students.

Let me begin the discussion by stressing that these are *not* the sorts of grants we are referring to. One source of funding that we use to supplement our offerings comes to us from federal allotments based on formulas that include enrollment and economic indicators. These are known as Title Funds or Consolidated Federal Grants. They include the following:

- **Title I:** enacted by Congress to provide additional funding to help erase the achievement gap between the general population and students in poverty.
- **Title IIA:** funding for school districts to assist them in providing professional development to teachers and school leaders to keep them current in the best research-based practices.
- **Title IID:** technology funding to make sure schools have opportunities to keep up with the rapidly changing digital world.
- **Title IV:** funds to focus on providing a safe and drug-free learning environment in an inclusive and positive school community.
- **ARRA funds:** stimulus funds provided for a one time allocation by the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act by Congress in 2009.

In May of each year, the state releases figures for all districts informing them of their allocations for the next school year. While the amounts fluctuate, in general the level of funding for the St. Johnsbury School has remained relatively constant, as our demographics (student enrollment figures and socio-economic indicators) have not changed. All these monies are accessed in the same way: by applying directly to the Department of Education via an online system. The amounts of money available are pre-set and you enter the personnel, activities, or materials that you would like to utilize the funds for, and submit the forms electronically. What happens next is an in-depth review by the grants team at the Department. When they are done, they send a letter of review outlining which requests are allowable under the rules of the grants, and which ones are not. A reason for denial is always given so that you can re-submit and make another request that will be acceptable. The reasons for denial can be (but are not limited to) any of the following:

- Request is for something that is the basic responsibility of the school district and must be paid for through general funds.
- Request is for something not covered by the intentions of the grant area.
- Request is for something that is in the general fund budget but is being moved out in order to reduce taxes. The idea is that you may *supplement* what you already have, but you may *not supplant* it.

Let's take a look at some of the things that we pay for through the grants, which we would not have available to us through the general fund. This segment will look at the **administrative positions** that we have added. Next week I will outline the other positions that are grant funded. Remember, we can remove any of these from our grant choices, but we cannot replace them with anything that is part of our regular school budget.

1. Half-time Director of Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment – Nicole Saginor

Many districts have this position, but it is not required by law. The person in this position is responsible for **overseeing and supervising** alignment of curriculum with state standards, administering programs aimed at instructional improvement, and developing a comprehensive local assessment plan. This year, the focus of the work has been in the areas of science and programs for positive behavior and climate.

2. Professional Development Coordinator/Data Analyst – Beth Cobb

Working directly below the Principal, this administrator is responsible for organizing and providing on-going professional development for all teachers based on data from state and local testing. The professional development is built into each grade level's regular weekly schedule and also takes place during schoolwide in-service days. She supervises the professional developers/coaches/mentors and the math and literacy lab teachers.

3. Behavior and Data Liaison Specialist– Jodie Elliott

Providing the link between classroom instruction and positive behavior, this administrator works directly below the Associate Principal. She chairs daily meetings of the Behavior Intervention Teams in each house and follows up on plans made for struggling students. She supervises faculty designated by the Associate Principal and conducts investigations of alleged bullying and harassment. She works directly with classroom teachers on teaching strategies designed to maintain discipline in a positive learning community so that all students can learn.

4. Behavior Management Specialist – Steven Mest

Working directly under the Associate Principal, this administrator oversees the Student Support Centers (SSCs) and supervises the paraeducators that run them. He follows through with classroom teachers the plans that students have made in the SSCs and works directly with students, particularly during unstructured times, to prevent negative behaviors. (Note: a small portion of his salary is drawn out of general funds for work done as the Director of Athletic Programs).

5. Technology Director – Rick Mallon

This position is a critical one for our school which has invested heavily in technology as a teaching tool in our digital age. Rick maintains and updates our network, oversees use of technology in the building, and works to track our usage of all technology to take advantage of any rebates or reimbursements that we become eligible for. He provides guidance, assistance, and professional development to teachers as they work to integrate technology into their regular classroom instruction.

Next installment will focus on non-administrative positions funded by the Consolidated Federal Grants, by Medicaid reimbursements, and IDEA-B (the Special Education funding). Please do not hesitate to contact me with your questions.