

More school funds must come from local sources

The preparation of the Dallas School District budget is a process of gathering information from many sources, reviewing prior information, and projecting the financial status and needs of the district. The financial needs of the district will determine the level of funding and the sources of that funding.

The key issue for the 1992-93 budget will once again focus on the funding at the state level. The 1991-92 district budget was adopted by June 30 but the state funding levels were not determined until August. Governor Casey's budget proposal for 1992-93 reflects no increase in funding for public education for the basic instructional subsidy. At one time, the Equalized Subsidy for Basic Education (ESBE) was the major source of state aid to public schools. This "level funding" of ESBE will cause further transfer of the responsibility for funding the educational programs from the state level to the local level.

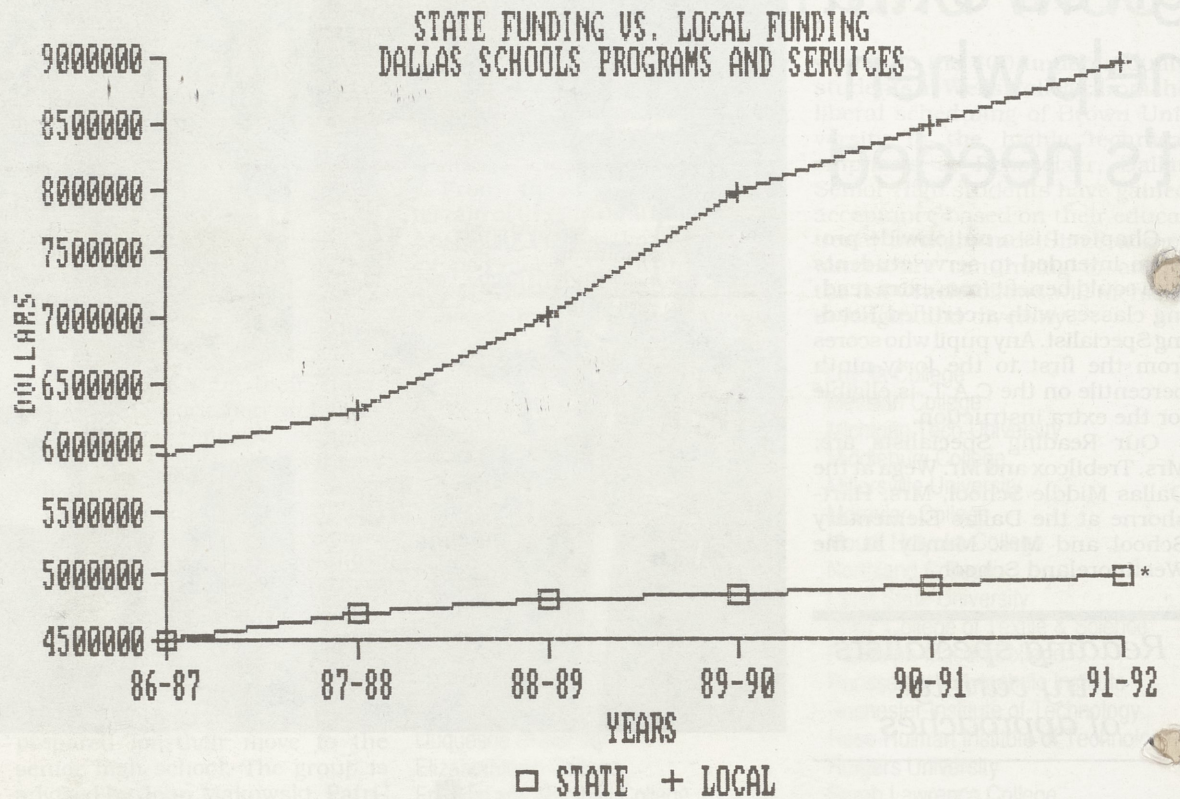
This shifting of the funding burden from state to local levels has prompted many school-related groups to adopt "position papers" regarding state mandates for edu-

cational programs and services which the local taxpayers must now fund. While relief in dealing with the mandates would help in containing costs at the local level, it is not a substitute for adequate state funding for education as mandated by the state constitution.

The cost for the district to provide the services required to carry out a quality education program increase each year but the increased funds needed to pay for these programs and services have not come from the State. The accompanying graph depicts the comparison of state and local funding of Dallas School District programs and services for the past five years.

State Revenue, as a percentage of total expenditures, has decreased from 43.5% in 1987-88 to 37% in 1990-91.

Funding for the 1992-93 Dallas educational programs and services will be largely supported by revenue generated at the local level. The debate of the state funding for public education will continue to be a major issue of concern for school districts for the next several years.



* Adjusted to remove Special Education funding for comparative purposes.

Middle School course aids teens' growth to adulthood

Self-Perception is a course designed to help young people with the difficult process of evolving into adulthood. The course specifically targets middle school age students and deals with physical, emotional and social changes that occur at this age.

Counselors help to build students' self-esteem

Mrs. Raelene Olszewski and Mr. John Wolensky, Counselors at the middle school, are the instructors of Self-Perception. This is a positive aspect of the program, in that it allows the counselors to become familiar with their students in a classroom setting. It also allows the student to have some interaction with the counselors which sometimes leads to individual counseling sessions. Self-Perception is a requirement for all seventh grade students, and meets twice a week for a semester.

Many diverse topics are addressed in this course. Self-esteem building, values clarification, coping skills and decision making are areas of focus that receive a lot of attention. Self-Perception is meant to be an informal class where students are encouraged to express their opinions and ideas. It is through this dialogue with their peers that many students learn some very important lessons about school and life.



Westmoreland Elementary gets a new computer room

As popular as our computer program is in our elementary and middle schools, can you imagine the impact an oversized, air conditioned room would have on students?

This was exactly the scenario that occurred at Westmoreland before the start of the 1991-92 school year. With one less class at the school, a modular classroom, with air conditioning, became the new computer room. This replaced the smaller area at the back of the library that had been the computers' home since the inception of the Jostens' Learning System in

Unused modular classroom — with air conditioning — becomes computer room

1989.

Relocating the computer room to the modular has created a greater incentive for the students. They now feel it is a privilege to go to the new computer room.

Special education helps special students

The Dallas School District and the Luzerne Intermediate Unit provide special education programs for those students who have been identified as having special needs. The state and federal governments have established guidelines and mandates that must be followed in operating these programs and in determining who they will service.

The Dallas School District is solely responsible for operating the gifted program. The district works cooperatively with the L.I.U. in operating programs for students that are partially sighted, deaf, or otherwise physically handicapped. Additional programs in this category include those for children with learning disabilities, speech and

language problems, mental retardation, or social and emotional problems that hinder learning.

These program services are carried out by specially trained teachers in the district's schools and centers in other local districts. Children in special classes often work with their teacher or specialist in a building resource center in those area where they need special help, but are included with regular classes as much as possible.

The process that determines whether a child shall receive special education services is initiated by the school guidance counselor after a referral by a teacher, parent, or principal. Parents and staff are involved in conferencing to

review the evaluation procedure, results, and placement options. Alternative placements are recommended only when in the best interest of the child. An alternative placement is not made without first seeking parent permission.

The federal and state governments are very involved in all special education programs. They establish the philosophy and procedures under which those programs must be administered. Documentation is constantly required as a means of monitoring the system at the local level. Presently these programs are undergoing major changes as mandated by state and federal law. Staff members are being trained to update

themselves on these changes as it affects services to the students they serve.

Presently, the district schools provides services to one hundred gifted students, eighty-seven learning support students, and seven emotional support students. Ninety-five students are served by speech, vision, and hearing specialists. A few students receive occupational and physical therapy. Students with other needs attend schools outside of the district to receive the appropriate learning experiences they need. As this indicates, the Dallas School District provides comprehensive special education programs to meet the individual needs of its students.