

Insight on Education

By Superintendent Nick Carter, Ed.D

"Public education is an investment in our future.."–*Matt Blunt*

Public education is an investment in our children, our workforce, and our community's future. As superintendent, I see firsthand how federal funds help our schools provide essential programs and services that benefit every student. Currently, federal dollars make up approximately 23% of our school district's budget. These funds enable us to support student learning, provide critical resources, and ensure that all children, regardless of their background, have the opportunity to succeed.

Unfortunately, proposed federal funding cuts would have a significant impact on our schools. If enacted, these cuts would cost our district an estimated \$459,000. A loss of revenue of this magnitude would force difficult decisions that could affect the quality of education we provide. As we consider what is at stake, it is crucial for our community to understand what federal funding supports and what could be lost if these reductions move forward.

Federal funding is primarily directed toward programs that serve our most vulnerable students. Title I funds, for example, help schools with high numbers of low-income students by providing additional instructional support, interventions, and resources to close achievement gaps. Without these funds, we would struggle to maintain these services, putting our most at-risk students at a disadvantage. Additionally, federal funds support students with disabilities through the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA). These dollars allow us to provide specialized instruction, therapists, assistive technology, and other necessary accommodations. A reduction in funding could lead to larger class sizes, fewer support services, and increased strain on both students and educators. Other critical areas supported by federal funding include career and technical education (CTE) programs that prepare students for the workforce, professional development for educators, school safety initiatives, and mental health services. Each of these programs plays a vital role in supporting students academically, socially, and emotionally.

A loss of \$459,000 would force our district to make difficult choices. We could see reductions in intervention programs that help struggling students, cuts to staff positions that provide direct support to children, and fewer resources for classroom instruction. Fewer federal dollars could also mean scaling back after-school programs, which provide tutoring, enrichment activities, and a safe environment for students beyond the regular school day. We would also have to reassess our ability to fund essential services for students with disabilities. While we are legally required to provide special education services, a funding shortfall would make it more challenging to meet these needs effectively. Schools might have to shift resources from other areas, ultimately affecting all students.

Our schools and students deserve full and fair funding. As a community, we must advocate for the continued investment in public education. Messages from parents/guardians, educators, and community members to our elected United States Representatives and Senators with concerns about the proposed federal funding cuts are very powerful. Letting them know how important these dollars are to our schools and students is critically important to ensuring more of these costs do not shift locally. In our school district, we will continue to work diligently to make the most of our resources and prioritize student success. However, without adequate federal support, the challenges will grow, and the opportunities available to our students could diminish. Public education is a shared responsibility. Federal funds help ensure that every child, regardless of their circumstances, has access to a high-quality education.