Ascension School Board OKs budget

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DONALDSVILLE — The Ascension Parish School Board on Tuesday night adopted a $29.5 million operating budget for 1987.

The general fund budget includes nearly $1 million in accumulated revenues from operations in prior years, according to a budget breakdown distributed to School Board members.

The budget anticipates more than $28.5 million in new revenues next year, including $11.9 million in local tax sources and $16.5 million from the state. The budget forecasts only $49,900 from federal sources.

Nearly $14.4 million will be spent on instructional programs and an additional $15.1 million on support services, including business services and administration.

The largest instructional expense — $12 million — will go toward regular classroom instruction. Another $2.2 million is set aside for special educational programs and $43,000 is budgeted for adult education, according to the budget breakdown.

A $20,000 appropriation from the general fund will be made to the school system's $93,000 vocational fund budget. Federal sources account for $60,000 of the fund with the state providing $33,000.

Most of the fund, $56,100, will be spent on equipment, with another $23,000 for materials and supplies, and $11,000 on salaries, according to the vocational budget.

Another financial matter, the board adopted a recommendation by Superintendent of Schools Ralph Ricardo to dedicate $200,000 from the system’s capital outlay budget for school renovation projects in the upcoming year.

Ricardo said he is making a priority list of proposed renovation programs that will be accomplished with the money. School principals requested "substantially more" renovation money than the school system can afford, he said.

In other action, the board voted 9-1 to uphold a ruling prohibiting an East Ascension High School student from trying out for the school's flag squad. School Board member James A. Wayne cast the dissenting vote, and President William Delaune did not vote.

Bethanie Witke, a 17-year-old senior at the Gonzales high school, was suspended for 10 days last December and automatically removed from the flag squad for the remainder of the school year, school officials said.

She also was prevented from trying out for the school's 1986-87 flag squad when auditions were held last spring.

Her father, Eugene Witke, maintained that refusal to let her try out for this year's squad constituted continuing punishment for an infraction she was punished for last year. He asked the board to let Bethanie try out for the squad.

Witke said he had appealed the ruling to East Ascension Principal Juanita Bacca and Ricardo, but was denied each time.

He asked the board Aug. 19 to overrule its decision. A School Board committee reviewed the case and recommended to the full board that the ruling stand, Ricardo said.

Some School Board members had said the flag team by-laws that led to Witke's dismissal from the team and the other problems probably are unfair. However, board members had no comment when they voted Tuesday night.

The board voted 6-2 to dedicate mineral royalties from oil and natural gas production on School Board property to capital improvements. Wayne and Vice President Willard Bong voted no.

Wayne said windfall revenues like oil royalties should go toward instruction, particularly in the primary grades kindergarten through five.

"The end product is education for the children," Wayne said.

In other action, the board:

- Accepted a $3,605 change order for improvements to the School Board office.
- Advertised for bids for improvements to the weight room at East Ascension High School.