St. Landry board facing cuts
Four-day school week, salary reductions seen as options

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OPELOUSAS — Superintendent of Schools Hank DeMay cautioned St. Landry School Board members Thursday not to overreact to Gov. Edwin W. Edwards' proposed 5 percent cut in the Minimum Foundation Program.

"Our first reaction should not be to overreact, but to look at all possible solutions to the problem," he said.

DeMay said some possible solutions to consider are a four-day school week and a reduction in salaries.

DeMay stressed, however, that board members have to study all possible avenues carefully.

DeMay also said the parish is facing a "very weird problem" because legislators require boards to hold at least 180 school days, but schools cannot operate at a deficit.

DeMay was one of several public-school officials who met with state Superintendent of Education Tom Clausen earlier this week.

DeMay said Edwards' 5 percent cut, and a 4.5 percent reduction in the Minimum Foundation Program passed during the regular legislative session, will amount to a $2,193,902 cut for St. Landry Parish.

The board adopted a resolution urging the governor and legislators to support education by setting priorities on cuts in state spending so the Minimum Foundation Program will receive no further cuts.

On another issue, DeMay announced that there will be classes on the Nov. 4 Election Day. There had been some question about whether parish schools would be open, since voting sites are located at several schools in the parish.

In addition, 76 employees of the school system, including bus drivers, principals and teachers, will serve as polling commissioners.

DeMay said eight of 13 board members agreed that schools should remain open, based on a telephone poll he conducted.

The superintendent asked board members to consider that allowing students to see the polls and the voting process would give them an educational experience.

In other business, Personnel Director Leon Scruggins presented a new employee orientation program.

The program includes a handbook that will be given to every employee in the parish, and a slide presentation that will be used for orientation of all new personnel.

The handbook includes information on state and federal programs, compensation guides and contracts.

Scruggins also said 16 teachers received tenure for the 1986-87 school year.

On another matter, the Academic, Instructional and Federal Programs Committee presented a report to the board which included a study of drug testing for athletes.

Committee Chairman Jack Ortego said that, while the committee is not considering any drug testing in the near future, it is something to be considered in the wake of the current national concern about drugs.

Ortego said the committee's "major concern would be not to punish, but to help."