Derek Grimm has taught eighth grade science at Zionsville Middle School for a decade. Tonight he was named the district’s teacher of the year in the Board of School Trustees regular monthly meeting. The Board also voted on school calendars for fall 2014 through spring of 2016 and heard a variety of reports including a school funding update, the demographic study report, and the Superintendent’s listing of unfinished and in-process projects for Board decisions in the near term. Retiring teachers were celebrated, each school’s Teacher of the Year was announced, and several business items were approved by the Board of School Trustees.

Superintendent Dr. Scott Robison introduced each of the teachers of the year from ZCS’ seven schools. About district-wide Teacher of the Year winner Derek Grimm, Robison said:

• “He is at once a scientist, an entertainer, an academic, a role model, a nurturer, and a student advocate. He collaborates frequently with his colleagues to plan dynamic learning experiences. One colleague calls Derek ‘infectiously positive’. Mr. Derek Grimm is a difference-maker in his school and an excellent candidate for Teacher of the Year.”

REPORTS TO THE BOARD:

• Zionsville Education Foundation teacher grants were announced and celebrated.

• Superintendent Robison announced the release of a district-wide survey for parents, staff, and community members. The survey will be live from May 14 – May 28, and will assist the district in improving communications. The web address for the survey is: https://www.surveymonkey.com/s/JZY62F2.

• CFO Mike Shafer, C.P.A., presented the results of the recently completed demographic study predicting continued growth for ZCS including student capacity issues at ZCHS beginning in 2017 or 2018 unless action is taken to add space.

• Mr. Shafer also reported on the loss of additional General Fund support as a result of legislative action that will result in lower per pupil funding in ZCS for the coming two years. Information from this report is appended at the end of this document below.

• Superintendent Robison presented a list of projects approved for the 2005 series of construction bonds but not yet begun (HS expansion, maintenance facility, tennis center, and refurbishment of Pleasant View Elementary School). Several dozen supporters of the middle and high school tennis programs spoke passionately about the Zionsville Middle School’s Derek Grimm was named the district’s Teacher of the Year for 2013. Mr. Grimm has taught eighth grade science at ZMS since 2003.
four years during which they have been homeless as a program—having to use, and thereby reduce, both middle level and high school level players’ opportunities. Uses for the remaining bond proceeds, some $20.5M, that are underway or to which the district is obligated (Dow property purchase, construction of maintenance facility, fire system and security system upgrades, and Boone Meadow Elementary technology and furniture purchases) were discussed. Miscellaneous other needs that may or may not fit into the Board’s priorities for actions with the bond proceeds were signaled as well (ZMS track and tennis maintenance, ZWMS tennis and other outdoor facility maintenance needs, demolition of the current ZCHS tennis center, and equipment items). Robison and his team are gathering cost information for all possible projects to facilitate Board consideration in the May-June time frame.

**BOARD ACTION ITEMS**

- Textbook Rental and fees were approved for the 2013-2014 school year.
- School lunch prices were elevated by $0.10 at all levels as per Department of Education guidelines.
- ZCS Chief Technology Officer Patti Bostwick presented the results of bidding for Boone Meadow Elementary and related core technology infrastructure needs. The Board unanimously approved the items and commended Mrs. Bostwick for the effective bidding process and the thorough due diligence.
- A required phone system upgrade was approved with the offer of some potential cost savings through an intended donation of phone handsets from a Board member’s employer when the firm’s phone system is changed in the coming weeks.
- In the fourth public hearing on the matter after a survey yielded more than 3,000 responses from parents, students, and staff members, the Board acted to slightly alter the school calendar for 2014-2015 and 2015-2016. These calendars provide for a one-week Fall Break and add the Friday before Spring Break to help reduce attendance issues. The approved school calendars are shown on the following pages.
- The Board approved the creation of the Developmental and Universal Preschool offerings at Union Elementary starting with the 2013-2014 school year. This will duplicate the Boone Meadow program and serve Developmental Preschool students living in the Pleasant View and Union Elementary attendance areas.

**ZIONSVILLE SCHOOL FUNDING FOR STUDENTS CONTINUES TO SHRINK**

The recently-concluded Indiana legislative session did not provide the changes that the Zionsville Community Schools sought to the state’s school funding formula. In fact, changes made during the session will reduce the district’s per student funding for each of the next two years and will continue to exacerbate the disparity in funding among Indiana’s school districts.

A key component of the school funding formula continues to be the “complexity index,” now called the “complexity grant,” which is a factor based on the number of students qualifying for free or reduced lunch. Used to compute school funding since 1992, the intent of the complexity grant is to provide additional funding for districts that have high rates of poverty, such as IPS, Gary, and East Chicago, based upon the assumption that the high failure and drop-out rates in these districts will be alleviated by this extra money.

Zionsville Community Schools historically ranks at or near the bottom of poverty rates in Indiana school districts, and therefore receives among the lowest amount of tuition support in the state. Projections show that Zionsville’s per pupil funding will drop by more than $152 per student during the next two years when all state tuition support funds are included.
Despite multiple face-to-face conversations advocating for changes to the current system, Zionsville Community Schools representatives reported at Monday’s School Board meeting that they were unable to persuade a majority of state legislators to apply performance-based reform to the formula. Each year approximately 20% of all basic state funding for public schools, more than $ 2.2 billion dollars in the newly passed biennial budget, is allocated through the complexity grant with no specific accountability required to ensure these funds are used to serve socio-economically disadvantaged students as the legislature intended. “In the last 20 years, the state has poured billions of dollars into this model with no measurable results in improving academic achievement for students in high poverty districts,” said Mike Shafer, CPA, Chief Financial Officer for ZCS.

“We urge the legislature to target these funds to programs and age groups that research shows to have the most impact on educational outcomes and to implement sufficient regulations and reporting requirements to ensure that this occurs. We believe this change would benefit all students, would save taxpayers millions of dollars per year, and would allow for more equitable funding throughout all districts,” he concluded.

By fiscal year 2015, the Indiana Legislative Service Agency projections show that Zionsville’s funding will drop to $4,965.15 per student. By comparison the 2015 state average is expected to be $5,793.45 and several districts will receive more than $7,000.00 per student.

Interestingly, if Zionsville’s projected 6,724 students in the 2015-2016 school year (per the latest enrollment projection by the Indiana Business Research Center) were to receive the average tuition support per pupil, the district would receive an additional $5.3 million, an amount exceeding the referendum funds currently being collected from Zionsville property taxes.

Unfortunately, the legislature will not examine the funding formula again until the next biennial budget year in 2015.

The district did receive one piece of good news during the legislative session. The Legislature did approve a new “performance grant” to recognize high achieving school corporations. It appears that ZCS will be eligible to receive approximately $440,000 from this grant. However, according to the legislation, the grants funds “may be used only to pay cash awards to teachers who are rated as effective or as highly effective.” It appears that these funds cannot be used for normal obligations for teachers’ salaries, or in other ways that would benefit the school’s General Fund for class size reduction or program restoration.

While the outcome of the general assembly session was disappointing in many ways, Zionsville Community Schools was pleased by the excellent advocacy provided by the local senators and house members. Dr. Scott Robison, Superintendent, noted “A particular bright spot for us was freshman Representative Steve Braun, who worked very hard in his first term representing the Zionsville area. Rep. Braun made a strong effort to educate his colleagues about our situation and the realities of the complexity index, and we certainly appreciate his efforts in our behalf.”

Minutes and podcasts from all School Board meetings can be found on the school’s website at [www.zcs.k12.in.us](http://www.zcs.k12.in.us). The next School Board of Trustees meeting is Tuesday, May 28, 2013 at 6 p.m. at the Educational Services Center.