

Saddle Brook Board of Education will not file complaint after mandate is funded

April 16, 2014

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Community News (Elmwood Park Edition)

The Saddle Brook Board of Education voted at the April 9 board meeting to rescind its action to file a complaint with the New Jersey Council of Local Mandates in an effort to appeal unfunded state education mandates.

The school board talked about filing a complaint in February, along with several districts throughout the state, appealing the new Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers (PARCC) standardized tests, the Common Core Curriculum and Achieve New Jersey because of the high costs associated with implementing the new exams and the lack of funding from the state for mandated programs.

The 2014 to 2015 state budget, however, will provide assistance to school districts statewide to put toward the implementation of new programs.

The PARCC exams will replace the NJASK and HSPA next year and are currently being field tested in several districts, including nearby Wallington.

The computer-based exams require districts to have the required technology, including laptops, tablets and desktop computers, in place, along with the necessary wireless infrastructure. For New Jersey Achieve, the district must provide additional faculty training and software.

Saddle Brook Superintendent Dr. Richard Katz said that the 2014 to 2015 state budget provides some funding to school districts to put toward the new mandatory assessments and Common Core implementation.

Katz said that the school district will receive approximately \$10 per student, or \$17,000 total.

"That now makes it a funded mandate," said Katz, who added that the district never officially filed a complaint, although it was discussed at several meetings. "Seventeen thousand isn't even close to the amount of money we spend to do this, but now it's a funded mandate."

He said that the district would only incur legal fees if it challenged mandates at this point.

"It wouldn't make sense for us to file it," he said.

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