

\$2.8 million federal grant to help with D161 high-impact tutoring

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Administrators and board members of Flossmoor School District 161 are reviewing plans for a \$2.8-million infusion of federal money it is receiving as part of the COVID-19 relief package for schools.

With this third round of funding from the American Rescue Plan Elementary and Secondary Emergency Relief Grant (ES-SER), the district must use at least 20% of the money to address learning loss caused by the pandemic.

The District Leadership Team proposed

to the board on April 11 that allocations be used for high-impact tutoring and emphasis on culturally relevant teaching and learning standards.

The largest suggested budget items include funds for math specialists, social emotional learning specialists, before- and after-school programming, and extracurriculars. The funds are to be spent over the next two academic years.

Veterans Day change

One Vietnam veteran spoke at the board's public hearing on a change in the observation of the Veterans Day holiday

for the 2022-2023 academic year. He wanted to make certain there would be an observance.

Flossmoor schools will be closed on Tuesday, Nov. 8, when buildings convert to polling places for the general election. Veterans Day is celebrated on Friday, Nov. 11.

In order to prevent two non-consecutive days off in one week, the board approved moving the district's observance of Veterans Day to the following Monday, Nov. 14.

Full-time music and PE teachers

With the hiring of a music teacher at

Flossmoor Hills School for next academic year, each school within the district will have its own dedicated full-time music and physical education teachers.

Superintendent Dana Smith said having these positions at each school is a "teacher quality of life issue," now that staff members won't have to travel between schools for these special subjects.

"It's a big investment by the board and certainly needed," Smith said. "The people that have been identified by the principals are awesome. They have a passion for their particular areas, and it's really exciting to hire additional specials teachers."

Computer protection program halts H-F High network attack

BY MARILYN THOMAS
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A computer protection program from CrowdStrike that District 233 purchased in February paid for itself on March 11, when one of the servers at Homewood-Flossmoor High School was attacked.

Steve Richardson, director of information technology, told the District 233 school board at its April 19 meeting that a malicious attempt to take over a server at

2:35 a.m. was halted through CrowdStrike which immediately took the server off-line and launched an investigation on how the attacker was trying to gain access.

"This is just a perfect example of how valuable this service is," he said. "At 2:35 a.m. our reaction time would have been much longer. We wouldn't see a lot of these alerts until that following morning, giving the attacker time to try different methods and gain access to the system."

"We're seeing value in the solution al-

ready. We've be able to stop a lot of virus infections on our work stations already within the school" and blocked access through the district's filtering methods, Richardson said.

Although the attack was on a server that was for non-critical uses, such as emails, "it still was an active attack" against the district's computer system, Richardson said, noting that over time the hacker could have found ways to develop false email addresses to gain access and do serious

damage through spam, phishing attacks and use of exploratory methods.

The district signed a one-year, \$76,637 contract with CrowdStrike for 24/7 services. Richardson said without the service, the district's costs would have been much greater as it attempted to stop the attack and recover from it.

"So, it's been an invaluable tool to see what's going on inside, to see what's going on with our network," he told school board members.



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