

Posted Online: Dec 18, 2008 06:02PM

Orion School Board says yes to Arsenal guidelines

Comment on this story

By Lisa Hammer, rlhammer@qconline.com

ORION -- A 1995 Orion High School graduate told the school board Wednesday night the Rock Island Arsenal can be a resource to help children of parents in the military.

Shane McDonough works as school liaison officer for child, youth and school services for the Arsenal. He said research has shown children of military parents are more likely to have social, emotional and academic problems making transitions to new schools. He said academic problems include getting academic credits to transfer.

He offered guidelines for the district, noting Orion is probably already following many of them.

Mr. McDonough suggested adding a question on registration forms about whether parents are in the military.

The board subsequently approved the Arsenal's guidelines for addressing needs of children of military parents.

The board also approved the district's response to intervention (RTI) program following a brief verbal presentation by middle school principal Gary Heard.

Plans include spending an estimated \$30,000 for assessment testing in late 2009. Districts have until 2010-11 to put a plan into action. Board members are to get a copy of the plan with a formal recommendation to adopt the plan in January.

The federal government has pushed RTI to give academic assistance to students before they get to the point where they are identified as candidates for special education. Mr. Heard noted only Illinois and California have created state mandates for RTI.

In other business, the board adopted a tax levy of \$5,266,763, up 6.36 percent from last year's \$4,951,605. Due to higher equalized assessed valuation, the tax rate will drop from \$4.74 to \$4.70, meaning the owner of a \$100,000 home correctly assessed at \$33,333 before exemptions will see the school portion of his taxes drop \$13.

In his financial report, Superintendent David Deets noted the state is raising the amount that districts will put toward the Illinois Municipal Retirement Fund over the next five years and may prorate "categorical" payments -- transportation, special education and lunch program -- or even defer them altogether. He also said this probably the last year the state will make

"hold harmless" payments to schools with declining enrollments. He said schools' retirement plans are "among the richest in our society" and had been a big draw for job applicants.

"It's no wonder we get 50 or 60 applicants for maintenance supervisor," he noted. "These are pieces we have to keep in mind, and this was disappointing to say the least.

Mr. Nelson asked board members to recruit anyone who might have an interest in serving on the school board. Four seats are up and only two people have taken out petitions. One of the seats is a two-year term.

"The qualifications are very simple: you care about kids," he said. "That's the only thing you really need."