

Alton interim superintendent examines attendance centers

by Cory Davenport, Contributing Writer
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ALTON - As August ends, the **Alton School District** has a little less than a month to adjust to the newly-introduced paired schools program.

The layout, designed under the administration of former **Alton Superintendent Dr. Kenneth Spells**, pairs elementary schools together. Instead of attending schools based

solely on location as in the **Southwestern School District** model, students in the district go to attendance centers based on their grade level as well as location. The initiative was put in place to save the district as much as \$500,000, with the reduction in force of 10 teachers. **Interim Alton Superintendent Mark Cappel** said the projected savings have become a reality, and added the district was able to invite the teachers let go through the reduction in force back through recall.

"With those staff members were involved in reduction in force, we were able to give them recall rates with late resignations over the summer," he said. "All of them had the opportunity to return, but some found positions in other districts unfortunately."

Cappel said the **State of Illinois** and the public school funding model was ultimately to blame for the need for the attendance centers. He said the district was looking for any ability to cut costs without sacrificing the quality of education given to students. He said the state currently owes the district as much as \$1.7 million. The introduction of a stop-gap budget in Springfield, however, was necessary, Cappel said. Without it, he said the district may only have been able to operate through November. He said some districts may not have been able to start school this year without it.

"However, we are very pleased our Illinois legislators, especially **Bill Haine** (D-Alton) and **Dan Beiser** (D-Alton) worked to have the stop-gap budget in place before the school year started."

With that stop-gap budget in place, Cappel said he is "very confident" the district will be able to cover the year's expenses. He said measures such as the paired school platform may be an "unfortunate" reality in the near future as long as school funding remains as it is.

While it may be an unfortunate reality, Cappel said students and staff are adjusting quite well to the paired school platform.

"Overall we think our transition has gone extremely well," he said. "Students and staff have been absolutely amazing. We prepared for it over the summer. We give full credit to the teachers staff and administrators."

A few minor refinements were required to ensure the transition to the paired school platform went well. Cappel said many factors were included in the planning phase. He said all stakeholders were given a chance to discuss it and suggest improvements before it was implemented for the 2016-17 school year.