

Fresno Unified board continues budget talks

BY HANNAH FURFARO

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Michael Hanson

Fresno Unified trustees on Wednesday continued discussions over next school year's budget, including a measure to boost operations funding by \$3.6 million and spend an additional \$1.3 million on special education services.

Chief financial officer Ruth Quinto said the operations plan would fund an extra plumber and several campus safety assistants. It would also pay for the planned reorganization of elementary cafeteria workers, many of whom will shift to the district's northwest Fresno Nutrition Center next year. The transition includes a plan to replace most in-house food preparation at the schools with pre-packaged meals cooked at the district's central kitchen.

Trustees Michelle Asadoorian and Carol Mills said they'd also like to see additional dollars for campus maintenance, especially at schools that see a lot of outdoor foot-traffic from students and neighbors during after-school hours.

The board also took up a plan to add more than \$1 million to the special education budget by hiring several new staff members to serve students with autism or mental health issues.

The discussion was part of budget talks that will continue over the next several months. The board will vote on its spending plan on June 4.

District Superintendent Michael Hanson has already unveiled some of his other budget priorities, among them \$3 million to revamp ninth grade electives and \$5 million to expand career technical education classes. He'd also like to chip in \$2 million to expand the district's community day school.

The reporter can be reached at (559) 441-6412, hfurfaro@fresnobee.com or @hannahfurfaro on Twitter.