MUNCIE, Ind. — The Muncie Community School Board heard good news about enrollment, adopted a $59.8 million budget for calendar year 2019 and continued progress on Fieldhouse repairs Tuesday night.

Enrollment for 2018-19, officially counted on Sept. 14 statewide, stood at 5,068, down just 0.9 percent from last year's enrollment of 5,114.

School board member Mark Ervin called that "hugely positive," "really significant and worth noting" before thanking "hundreds if not thousands of parents for giving Muncie Community Schools a chance."

Enrollment is down just 46 students from a year ago, despite the uncertainty, controversy and turmoil over the past year as the financially distressed district was taken over first by a state-appointed emergency manager and then by Ball State University.

The loss of less than 1 percent of the student body is significant compared to annual losses in the previous five years of between 3.2 percent and 8.3 percent for a total decline of 20.8 percent.

School board President Jim Williams applauded the emergency-management team led by Steve Edwards, who spread the appreciation to Ball State and to the teachers who stayed on board "during turbulent times."

► FUNDS: BSU takeover raised $3 million for Muncie Community Schools (/story/news/local/2018/05/16/bsu-takeover-raises-nearly-3-million-muncie-community-schools/616611002/)

► ENROLLMENT: MCS not only East Central Indiana school district losing students (/story/news/local/2017/12/12/mcs-not-only-eci-school-declining-enrollment/943931001/)

The Indiana Department of Education won't release official enrollment numbers for all school districts until mid-October when audits are complete. Enrollment is used to calculate state tuition support funding for the 2018-19 school year. The more students that are enrolled at a district, the more state funding it receives.

There is also an official statewide enrollment count in February, but that one is for information purposes only.

Edwards called it "remarkable, very good news that we are down only two students from February. We're very excited about that."

The state had projected enrollment at MCS this fall at 4,850 students.

While this fall's enrollment numbers released at the meeting on Tuesday night are not yet official, Edwards told The Star Press they were "pretty solid."
Students work in the library at North View Elementary on Wednesday. Muncie Community Schools released that the enrollment for this school year was only down 46 students from a year ago. (Photo: Corey Ohlenkamp/Star Press)

Fixing the Fieldhouse

Meanwhile, the board hired Schmidt Associates, an Indianapolis architectural/engineering firm, to prepare construction documents to allow competitive bidding for installation of a new hardwood basketball court at the Muncie Fieldhouse.

The historic structure, one of the largest high school gymnasiums in the country, was damaged by a storm last November that tore a hole in the roof and flooded the building.

Two weeks ago, the board awarded a $580,197 contract to Commercial Team Construction, Indianapolis, to repair the roof and parapet (low wall on the perimeter of the roof). Schmidt will determine the most appropriate sub-base, including vapor barrier, for the gym floor; present floor design options to the board; prepare drawings and specifications for competitive bidding and administer the bidding process.

The roof must be completed before the floor, which is estimated to cost around $200,000.

Insurance is paying for the repairs.

The board also approved a $59.8 million budget for calendar year 2019, $25.3 of which would be funded by local property taxes. However, the amount of the budget will change after being reviewed by the state.

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