



**DIVISION OF ELEMENTARY
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Lee County School District

Legislative Quarterly Report

April - June 2023

Submitted by

Office of Coordinated Support & Service

Sheila Whitlow, Associate Deputy Commissioner

July 2023

Pursuant to Ark. Code Ann. § 6-13-112, a quarterly status report is provided for each school district currently under state authority. The following report is submitted to the State Board of Education, the Chairs of both the House and Senate Education Committees, and others prescribed by law.

LEE COUNTY BACKGROUND

On March 25, 2019, the State Board of Education found that the Lee County School District and Lee High School to be in probationary violation of the Rules Governing the Standards for Accreditation (Sections 1-C.2.1 and 1-C.2.2 respectively). The DESE recommended to the State Board that the Board place the District and Lee High School on probationary status for these violations. The District appealed the Department's determination; however, the State Board of Education did not approve the appeal. Under Ark. Code Ann. § 6-15-207(c), the superintendent and school board were removed and the district was placed under state authority.

Pursuant to Ark. Code Ann. § 6-20-1905, on May 9, 2019, the Arkansas Department of Education identified the Lee County School District as a school district in fiscal distress. The Arkansas Department of Education made this identification because the Lee County School District met the following fiscal distress indicator(s) as set forth in Ark. Code Ann. § 6-20-1904. The school district requested continuation of level 5 support from the SBE on May 13, 2021.

Current DESE Quarterly Support

Submitted: Sheila Whitlow, Assistant State Superintendent

The Division of Elementary and Secondary Education's Office of Coordinated Support and Service (OCSS) provides direct support to Lee County School District. Sheila Whitlow is on site approximately 2 days per week providing direct support to the district and building leadership coordinating various external resources to maintain consistency in efforts. Additional ongoing OCSS support is provided by Julie Amstutz and Dr. Michael Watson that are on site assisting and coaching the student support staff at both schools. Lee County is continuing the implementation of the Professional Learning Communities model and is working closely with Solution Tree coaches. This school year, members of the district leadership team are part of a cohort of teams from around the state participating in monthly meetings providing professional learning regarding leading the PLC process districtwide. Ensuring capacity building supports are aligned with an end-goal of gradually releasing responsibility for effectiveness and efficiency in all systems to the district and school leadership and staff was the cornerstone of the support provided during the 2022-23 school year.

Academics

DESE Specialists from Learning Services, OCSS, District and School Leadership met to review individual school data and identify students that should be provided additional intervention time, be enrolled in Strategic or Critical Reading during the 23-24 SY or are in need of Level II assessments. Additionally, specific PD needs were identified: administering ORF, DSA, and MAZE; teaching opportunities to build stamina; data interpretation, implementation of high quality instructional material, etc. The School Improvement Leadership Team (SILT) along with Dr. Karen Power from Solution Tree met monthly to review student data as well as participate in discussions led by Dr. Stone around the book *A Time for Change* by Dr. Anthony Muhammad. Both schools have developed a data tracking system to streamline access to individual student data. The data are used to assess program effectiveness, assign students to appropriate interventions and to plan for the upcoming school year. Each school's instructional support specialist shared data from both schools and plans for how the data will be used to group students for tiers of intervention. The data from the interim assessments was shared and several areas were celebrated for substantial growth. Likewise, areas/grade levels not demonstrating expected growth were discussed with a plan for improving in those areas. Direct support was provided to the district by DESE, OCSS and Solution Tree coaches to analyze the data and plan for intervention groups beginning in the 23-24 school year. During one of the SILT meetings, Dr. Stone reported 100% of students in grades 3-6 participated in ACT Aspire testing. He shared that student assemblies were held to speak to the students in grades 7-10 about attendance, participation and effort during the high school's assembly prior to the testing. This year there have been several planning sessions regarding ways to improve test scores through testing environment, testing administration, and at the high school an emphasis on the importance of doing their best on the test.

The district has continued its work with Solution Tree to ensure the collaborative team meetings are productive and are consistently driven by student data conversations. Although OCSS has not been on site to facilitate focus walks as much as in previous years, district leadership reports indicate FWs are being conducted consistently at both schools and data collected are shared with the building leaders. This month, the work of one of the building instructional support specialists was highlighted during a Solution Tree consultant meeting. The aforementioned ISS created a template for uploading and working with the new ELA state standards. This work was shared with other S/T consultants working in Arkansas. The district hosted a 3-day Leadership Institute led by Dr. Karen Power. The team established the "district tights" for Learning Services for the 2023-24 school year: *1. Teachers in LCSD are well planned for daily instructions, both individually and collaboratively with others; 2. Teachers in LCSD answer the four PLC questions through deepening their understanding of essential grade level standards, aligning assessment questions to the level of rigor of the standard and using the data to inform instruction, interventions and extensions; 3. Teachers*

in LCSD are focused on improving core (Tier 1) grade level instruction using effective, engaging strategies and having good management skills to involve students in their learning; 4. Teachers in LCSD will develop proficiency scales to ensure equitable grading practices (will be ongoing this upcoming year); 5. Teachers will participate in collaborative teams that are focused on the learning cycle. It's important to note that during the meetings, it became evident more work needs to be done around the learning cycle facilitating a deeper understanding within the district and building teams so they can effectively train and support the teachers. The team also agreed that a data protocol should be created so that working with the data will be meaningful and lead to actions that will have a positive impact on student learning. Two guiding questions the SILT will work on: 1) How do we increase follow through on training, expectations? 2) What will be the communication plan between district and schools when work is needed?

Continuing efforts to improve the high school's CTE program, the principal has located a person that is willing to obtain a Technical Permit for Auto Mechanics. Dr. Stone and Dr. Farr are working with the Great Rivers Education Service Cooperative CTE Specialist to determine what would be needed to update the facilities to begin this CTE program.

The district has selected CKLA as the top-of-the -rope HQIM for grades K-5 and My Perspectives for grade 6 at ASLA. Work with the new standards and the new reading program are part of the summer PD plans and a curriculum audit is being conducted to determine consumable needs for the upcoming school year. Dr. Stone is following up with the leadership at both schools to ensure all needed materials are ordered soon to make certain they are on site well in advance of the first day of school, July 24, 2023. Schools having all needed materials prior to school starting has been proven to be a challenge in the past so Supt. Stone has made this a priority for the upcoming school year. In addition to the DESE RISE Specialist that will be supporting the district, Dr. Stone has added a K-12 Literacy Instructional Support Specialist that will support the implementation of CKLA, My Perspectives, 95% Group (Tier 2 interventions) and Take Flight (dyslexia intervention program). To support the math department, a K-12 Math Instructional Support Specialist has also been added to the team.

Lee High School has worked with an external consultant to provide ACT preparation training throughout the school year. This month eight students were recognized at Philander Smith College for their score of 19 or better on the ACT. Additionally, they were treated to dinner at a local restaurant to celebrate this accomplishment.

Student Support

The initiatives and resources listed below demonstrate the district's commitment to maintaining a safe learning environment and addressing the specific needs of students, particularly those demonstrating characteristics of dyslexia.

Security measures include:

- The district has installed security vestibules at the entrances of both buildings. This measure ensures that visitors cannot enter the building without checking in at the front desk, enhancing overall security.
- Each school site now has a resource officer present, contributing to maintaining a safe environment and addressing any security concerns.
- The district has acquired radios for all buses and campuses. This enables seamless communication without relying on Internet connectivity or cell phone coverage, ensuring effective coordination and quick response in case of emergencies.
- The district is in the process of reviewing and revising its current crisis management plan. This initiative aims to enhance preparedness and response strategies for potential crisis situations.
- Metal detectors have been ordered for the entrances of the high school. This additional security measure can help prevent and/or deter individuals from bringing weapons or dangerous objects onto the premises.

Dyslexia Program:

- The district's K-12 Literacy Instruction Support Specialist (ISS) will lead an analysis of the data obtained from Level II screeners to determine which students require dyslexia interventions. This ensures that appropriate support is provided to students with dyslexia.
- In preparation for the upcoming year, the district has placed an order for Take Flight materials. Take Flight is a structured literacy intervention program used to support students that are provided dyslexia interventions.
- To provide ongoing support to the district's new Dyslexia Coordinator, Ms. King and Ms. Reed will share a Google document to facilitate communication and address any questions or concerns (Q&A).

Human Capital

The district has been closely examining staffing with a focus on decreasing Full-Time Equivalent (FTEs) while maintaining instructional support integrity. The goal is to find ways to optimize resources without compromising the effective support provided to students. This analysis involves evaluating current staffing levels, student needs, and considering alternative strategies to allocate resources efficiently. The elementary celebrated the fact that the classroom teacher vacancies were filled with fully certified teachers for the 23-24 school year. The district continues its efforts to recruit highly qualified teaching staff. In order to enhance

its recruitment and retention plan, the district has contracted with an external consultant who provides ongoing support in this area as well as supporting the newly hired teachers. Additionally, the district is eager to break ground and begin construction of the teacher housing project. Affordable housing for teachers can serve as an effective recruitment tool, as it addresses one of the significant challenges facing the district, adequate housing availability in the Lee County community. By offering teacher housing, the district can create an attractive incentive for prospective teachers, making it easier for them to live and work in the area. The teacher housing project demonstrates the district's commitment to supporting its teachers and creating a positive work environment. It not only helps attract new teachers to the district but also contributes to teacher retention by providing a desirable and affordable housing option. This initiative aligns with the district's goal of recruiting and retaining highly qualified staff and ensuring their overall well-being.

Classroom Teacher Licensure Status for the 23-24 School Year as of June 22, 2023				
Grade	Teachers		Courses	Teachers
K	3 (2 AWT, 1 licensed)		ELA 7-12	(1 licensed, 1 AWT)
1	3 (1 licensed, 2 AWT)		Math 7-12	(2 AWT)
2	3 (1 AWT, 1 licensed, 1 ATC)		Science 7-12	(1 AWT*, 1 licensed)
3	3 (2 licensed, 1 AWT*)		Social Studies 7-12	(2 licensed)
4	3 (2 licensed, 1 AWT *)		CTE	(2 licensed, 2 AWT)
5	3 (3 licensed)			
6	2 (2 licensed)			
	*International			*International

Note: One of the AWTs is not on a path to licensure. The district is continuing the efforts to fill the position with a licensed teacher.

Family and Community Engagement

Dr. Stone is continuing to focus on improving the school and community relationship through a variety of efforts including presenting information about the work at the district during Rotary meetings, meeting with the director of the local private school to discuss ways the two organizations can partner with an end goal of bridging the gap between the stakeholders of the public and private schools; hosting evening events for students and parents; and regularly using the Trojan App to keep parents informed. During the last nine weeks of school, the high school hosted a community play with students from both Lee High School and Lee Academy in attendance. These efforts demonstrate Dr. Stone's desire to unite the Marianna community.

Fiscal Governance and District Operations

A staffing spreadsheet was submitted to Fiscal Services (FS) for review and feedback prior to submitting the salary schedule for Board approval. FS reviews to ensure accuracy and alignment with the budgetary considerations of the district. Feedback from Fiscal Services helps refine the staffing plan and make any necessary adjustments. During the ongoing work on the 2023-24 salary schedule, several examples of plans from other districts were reviewed and considered to ensure competitiveness and fairness. Dr. Stone made the decision to postpone a criteria based pay schedule until he has time to determine the fiscal impact of the required teacher salary pay. This will also give time for the personnel policy committee and district leadership team to collaborate; by taking this approach, the district can ensure that any proposed incentive pay plan can be supported and sustained by the district's operating budget. In addition, through collaboration, the committee and leadership team can thoroughly analyze different criteria options, consider their feasibility and potential impact on teacher motivation and performance, and most importantly, student achievement. Hopefully, a plan will be ready to submit to the board for the 2024-25 school year.

The DESE Fiscal Support and Services Unit in coordination with OCSS provides ongoing support to the district through onsite visits and remote assistance. The gradual release of fiscal transactions from Arkansas Public School Resource Center (APSRC) is continuing as well as the implementation of the standard operation procedures developed during the previous fiscal year. Dr. Stone is in daily contact with the district's business office staff and APSRC to ensure day-to-day operations are continually improving including paying invoices in a timely manner and following policy as it relates to financial transactions. An Internal Control Risk Assessment meeting was led by APSRC; included all staff involved in financial transactions. The written standard operating procedures were reviewed and revised as needed to ensure they are up-to-date and that all personnel are aware of the expectations.