



DIVISION OF ELEMENTARY & SECONDARY EDUCATION

Helena-West Helena School District

Legislative Quarterly Report

October - December 2022

Submitted by

Office of Coordinated Support & Service

Stacy Smith, Deputy Commissioner

January 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.

Current DESE Quarterly Support

Submitted: Sheila Whitlow, Assistant State Superintendent

Overview

During the first semester of the 2022-23 school year, Dr. Keith McGee spent a significant amount of time meeting with community stakeholders, leaders in the district and in the schools, conducting Listen and Learn meetings, creating student and teacher advisory groups all in an effort to get the pulse of the stakeholder groups and better understand the perception of the district. He has included a summary of the information gained through these meetings in the Superintendent's 100 Day Summary that was presented to the Helena-West Helena School Board on December 12, 2022 and is [linked here](#). Dr. McGee's theme for the 2022-23 School Year is to "Create conditions districtwide where the systems in HWHSD will provide the opportunity for ALL scholars to become independent thinkers and successful in their future endeavors." The focus goals for this school year are visited during each district level meeting as well as board meetings:

Goal 1: To implement a school improvement process (PL that will increase student achievement on an ongoing basis—PLC Process Model.

Goal 2: To improve reading and literacy scores by 5% for ALL subgroups of students.

Goal 3: To strengthen community and parental engagement district wide.

Sheila Whitlow, OCSS Lead Support, is on site approximately three days per week providing direct support to district leaders. Additional on-site direct support is being provided by Julie Amstutz, OCSS Special Education Leadership Development Coach; Terri McCann, OCSS Building Leadership Coach; Dr. Michael Watson, OCSS Behavior Leadership Coach; Jamie Reed, OCSS Fiscal Service Coordinator; Renee Holland, OCSS Executive Assistant; Sandy Shepard and Andress Scott DESE R.I.S.E. Specialists; Vicki King, DESE Dyslexia Specialist; and Patty Ellis, APSCN Support. Andrea Fortner, DESE Guidance Counselor Coordinator, facilitates a standing virtual meeting to review the Critical Task Calendar created for the counselors and building principal of CHS. Remote support is also provided as needed from the DESE and Great Rivers Education Service Cooperative.

Human Capital

Dr. McGee has formed a Teacher Council composed of staff from both schools who volunteered to serve and represent their respective buildings. This promotes teacher agency and gives the superintendent insight into the wants and needs of the staff. He has reported that the meetings have been very helpful as he attempts to learn more about the district. Furthermore, he meets monthly with the Classified and Certified Personnel Policy Committees with each committee given the opportunity to address the school board at the regular monthly meetings of the board.

Professional development is provided regularly by GRESC specialists, DESE, Administrators, Lead Teachers and representatives of various external organizations. A coach from the National Institute of Excellence in Teaching (NIET) has conducted a needs assessment and will be providing training and individualized support based on the results of assessment. In

addition, Solution Tree will be on site during the second semester to begin the PLC process work that is needed at both schools.

A staffing analysis has been conducted and the information will be used to project staffing needs for the upcoming school year. The data will also be used when counselors and principals attend master schedule training provided by the DESE.

The District School Improvement Specialist (DSIS) is tracking the progress toward licensure for all staff working under the Act 1240 Waiver and Dr. Merlina McCullough continues to provide support to the International teachers. A meeting with Melissa Jacks, DESE Licensure Director, has been scheduled for the second semester to ensure all teachers are on a path to licensure and to provided technical support to Ms. Britton, DSIS.

Academics

The DESE RISE specialists assigned to HWH have been instrumental in planning for the elementary intervention time through development of skills-based lessons, assisting with assessments to ensure there is data for grouping students and reviewing said data for the purpose of placing students in appropriate groups for interventions. Through a walk-in approach, students travel to the teacher teaching the skill identified as a deficit regardless of grade level. District staff were on site during the first week to assist with a smooth transition. DESE is continuing to support through professional learning opportunities and zooming with Lead Teachers. The OCSS Building Leadership Coach is providing assistance as needed as well as monitoring to ensure the time is used effectively.

The purchase of 95% Group high quality instructional material and site-based coaching have been approved by the school board. 95% Group HQIM will be implemented during intervention time. Also, OCSS and the District School Improvement Specialist attended a one day training of 95% Group Multisyllabic Routine Cards at Lee County SD. The plan is to order enough kits to implement this program in all Strategic Reading classes in addition to Lexia which is currently being used. The DSIS will be arranging for appropriate secondary staff to attend MSRCs training when 95% Group is training in the district.

District Focus Walks are required by the Superintendent to occur weekly followed by debriefs and next steps based on data collected during the walks. Four areas of focus have been identified: Learning Targets visible with students able to articulate the learning expectations; evidence of the gradual release model implemented with integrity; high levels of student engagement and questioning/activities that are at DOK levels beyond DOK 1. All four areas have been topics during District Academic Team Meetings with an expectation that they are also addressed during Curriculum Thursday after-school professional learning opportunities.

The district goal for ALL students to improve reading achievement scores by no less than 5% is at the forefront of all conversations around teaching and learning. The superintendent continually reminds leadership teams and board members that this is the goal for the work that is happening in each building. To restore Cougar Pride, he believes it has to start with high levels of learning for all students.

Since the ELA Department consists of several new teachers to the district, the PD

Coordinator has arranged for training for the implementation of My Perspectives. The OCSS Building Leadership Coach, the DESE RISE Specialist and Literacy Specialists from Great Rivers Coop are supporting teachers as well.

Supt McGee secured the opportunity for HWHSD to participate in the *Pathways Academy*, a statewide K-12 STEM educational and community engagement program with the objective of diversifying the healthcare workforce. This division is under the UAMS Division of Diversity, Equity and Inclusion, whose goal is to improve the health, health care and well-being of Arkansans while promoting and supporting all cultures. The UAMS Pathways Academy is funded by the Division of Workforce Services. By leveraging internal and external partnerships, Pathways Academy has the ability to provide holistic and impactful programs for scholars and advocates. This first cohort will include 50 students from JF Wahl and 10 from Central High School. There are plans to expand the program next school year.

The Superintendent and District School Improvement Specialist are part of the Leading PLC @ Work Districtwide cohort led by Dr. Janel Keating. They are collaborating with the Lee County School District District Leadership Team during the meetings to plan for ways the districts can support each other. Recently, the HWHSD Academic Leadership Team visited LCSD to observe the high school's Rtl collaborative team meeting and a grade level collaborative team meeting at the elementary. The districts are planning additional site visits as well as sharing resources. Dr. McGee has had experience with the PLC process at LRSD and he brings that knowledge to HWHSD. He has reached out to Solution Tree and will be contracting with ST to provide onsite coaching and support as the district moves to initial work of becoming a true Professional Learning Community. Moreover, Dr. McGee and Mr. Stone, LCSD Superintendent, will join a group of Arkansans visiting White River School District in Seattle to observe the Districtwide PLC Process in action.

Student Support

The district' Special Education Department continues to be a concern and has required weekly, and in most instances daily, direct support from OCSS's Special Education Leadership Coach. The superintendent is aware of the many challenges and is working closely with OCSS to address the needs. The amount of direct support will be increased during second semester to ensure the district provides effective services to all special needs students and is in compliance with all IDEA regulations.

Superintendent McGee has created Student Leadership Councils at each campus with members that are representative of the student body at both schools. During the meeting with the superintendent, the students are given an opportunity to share concerns and celebrations regarding the learning environment at their respective schools. He is utilizing the information to plan for next steps and to identify pressing needs. It should be noted that students in both groups have voiced a need for better security and mental health support. In collaboration with a variety of stakeholders including the aforementioned student councils, a Safety and Security Plan has been developed that includes additional security staff to be employed at each campus. This has been approved by Secretary Key and the HWHSD School Board also acknowledged support for the plan. Currently, the district is advertising for these positions and a committee has interviewed Commissioned Security Officer applicants with a recommendation to be made in early January. Supt McGee and the District School

Improvement Specialist visited Lee High School and observed the Lee High School RTI Student Support Team collaborative meeting. There are future plans for similar teams to be formed at each school when the new Safety and Security staff is hired. OCSS will provide support when the teams are formed.

Fiscal Governance and District Operations

The DESE Fiscal Services and Support Unit in coordination with OCSS provides ongoing support to the district through onsite visits and remote assistance. In preparation for the 2022-2023 school year, the DESE Fiscal Services and Support Unit in coordination with OCSS met with the district staff to provide proactive support in the budgeting process. Items addressed included, but not limited to: historical balance trends in operating and building funds, enrollment, staffing, millage, tax collections, debt payments, revenue sources, revenue amounts, future enrollment projections district wide and by cohort, certified and classified staffing by position trends for the last 12 years, audit results, expenditure requirements, fund balance carryover amounts, detailed budgeting projections, and analysis for revenue and expenditure line items.

The district has contracted with Arkansas Public School Resource Center (APSRC) to provide weekly on-site and daily remote direct support. Consistent direct support will begin regularly during the second semester. Dr. McGee and OCSS are working with APSRC staff to review and revise the current salary schedule and personnel policies. Several inconsistencies, contradictions and vague language have been identified warranting a complete overhaul of the current policies. The HWHSD School Board authorized the superintendent to review and make needed revisions which will be brought back to the board for comments in January.

Superintendent McGee has charged each department in the Central Office to identify current operating practices (the current reality) which will then be reviewed and revised to create a Standard Operating Procedure Manual for all Financial and Human Resources transactions in the district. It has become apparent through this process that there are no standard procedures and many positions at the district level are lacking clearly defined roles and responsibilities. The next step in the process is the development of an organizational plan for district level operations including revised job descriptions that will create a system to better serve schools and students in the district.

Family and Community Engagement

The superintendent recognizes the importance of a strong alliance between community stakeholders and the district. That said, he has facilitated meetings with various groups in the community to discuss safety and security, and support for the district. He attends Rotary and Chamber meetings and has collaborated with local banks to provide financial literacy for Central High School students as well as all of the leaders of the first responders (e.g. Fire Chief, Sheriff, Police Chief, etc.). Additionally, OCSS arranged a meeting between the superintendent and DESE's Freddie Scott and Jessica Hickman, McKinney Vento PSA

Program Advisor, to learn more about external support that could be accessed to address student and family needs with the community. Ms. Hickman is making arrangements for the district team to meet with Dr. C.J. Huff to learn more about Bright Futures and how the district could partner with the organization to provide support for the district's students and families.