



DIVISION OF ELEMENTARY & SECONDARY EDUCATION

Pine Bluff School District

Legislative Quarterly Report

April - June 2023

Submitted by

Office of Coordinated Support & Service

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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.

PINE BLUFF BACKGROUND

On September 13, 2018, the Pine Bluff School District (PBSD) was classified as in Fiscal Distress. The State Board of Education voted to remove the school board and superintendent and the district was placed under state authority. Five of the six schools in Pine Bluff had a letter grade of an F. The district also had four schools identified in need of Comprehensive Support and Improvement (CSI). On November 8, 2018, the Pine Bluff School District was classified in need of Level 5 Support and state authority was reaffirmed by the SBE.

The Dollarway School District was officially annexed on July 1, 2021 into the Pine Bluff School District. All schools within the previous Dollarway School District remained open and now operate as part of the Pine Bluff school district and policies.

Current DESE Quarterly Report

The Division of Elementary and Secondary Education's Office of Coordinated Support and Service provides direct support to Pine Bluff School District. Assistant State Superintendent, Jennifer Barbaree and Leadership Development Coach, Ryan Burgess are on site 3-4 days per week providing support to leadership and coordinating various services. Behavior Specialist, Dr. Michael Watson, and Leadership Development Coach, Julie Amstutz are on campus 2-3 days a week to provide district support regarding student services. Crystal Green-Braswell, Leadership Development Coach, is on-site at least one day a week providing principal support. Jamie Reid, OCSS Fiscal Support, is on-site at least one day a week directly supporting the business manager and business office. Alicia Whiteside, DESE RISE specialist directly assists building level school improvement specialists on-site weekly. Pine Bluff has implemented the Professional Learning Communities model and invested in PLC coaches who work with faculty to implement proven practices. At this time, the coordination of various supports has been pivotal in everyone working together for positive academic outcomes. The district is committed to a guaranteed and viable curriculum. All four elementary schools are in the process of implementing consistent professional learning and curriculum materials, as well as, the two middle schools, and the two high schools.

The priorities for Pine Bluff School District are implementing a multi-tiered system of support for students, improving students reading on grade level, school safety, and building the capacity of the building administrators.

Student Support

There has been a concerted effort by the district in the planning of the transition of students to Pine Bluff High School. Students from Dollarway High School will transition to Pine Bluff High School next year due to the building reassignments proposed to reduce the cost of utilizing two buildings, and to prepare the district for the building of the new high school.

Meetings were held with students from both schools to discuss the transition and concerns. There was also support provided by the Mcadoo's to coordinate events and opportunities for students' voices to be heard. Lastly, there are specific dates planned throughout the summer that will provide students with opportunities to socialize and learn effective communication skills. The district will also be providing credit recovery, intensive interventions, dyslexia intervention camp, and kindergarten camp.

The superintendent and assistant superintendent Carlock met with the current principal at the JDC regarding teacher and student support. The district is working in collaboration with the JDC to create a plan ensuring the students that are housed at the facility are receiving all educational and mental health support. Mr. Carlock also traveled to Philadelphia along with several other Group Violence Intervention team members to observe the implementation of the program and to bring ideas back for the district.

District student support coordinator held student handbook meetings soliciting input. Building principals have been working on master schedules. The secondary will continue to function on a block schedule, however, next year the

Human Capital

Assistant Superintendents and Building level principals reviewed the staffing audit done by the superintendent and made recommendations for staff placement based on the building needs.

New district level positions were created to provide more support to building level principals and staff. The assistant LEA supervisor position will support the LEA and building level principals. The Director of School Performance will be the building level coach for professional learning and plan for PD. The Assessment and Accountability Coordinator will ensure all assessments are conducted throughout the district. The District-Level Dyslexia Specialists will coordinate all dyslexia services across the district. There will also be a new business manager and 7 instructional specialists hired.

Academics

Graduation ceremonies were held for both high schools (Dollarway High School - May 18, Pine Bluff High School - May 19).

All-In inclusive practices for students with disabilities training is scheduled in July to provide students receiving special education services more opportunities to receive instruction in the general education setting.

The fall secondary schedules will include interventions Monday through Thursday. On Fridays all 8 courses will be offered (Fast Friday's). Virtual Arkansas will be utilized for credit recovery.

Family and Community Engagement

Pine Bluff High School students created a hip-hop commercial to encourage the community to stop the violence.

Mayor Washington has agreed to sponsor a banquet for students to celebrate scholars and athletes. Relyance Bank agreed to pay for the state championship basketball rings. The rings will be presented in a separate ceremony in the fall.

Representative Flowers will be utilizing the high school to discuss the Mileage for the new school with the community.

Facilities and Transportation

HVAC renovations will start June 6 and will be completed by December. There have been 10 buses purchased, 5 will be ready in August, the other 5 will arrive in January.

Fiscal Governance and District Operations

Board is continuing to meet and updating policies. Working on decreasing spending to balance the budget. CCEIS funding was discussed with the Office of Special Education. A new LEA was filed for Pine Bluff Junior High. STAR curriculum from the NOLA group will be utilized for the 9th grade academy.

Additional internal contract audits were completed and it was discovered that there was \$57,000 of overpaid wages and \$64,000 underpaid in salaries based on all staff contracts. The business office continues to be an area of concern and intensive direct support is needed to correct errors moving forward. The Office of Fiscal Support and Services continues to provide direct support.

Intensive support and comprehensive review was provided by OCSS staff to audit classified staff contracts to ensure their delivery on or before June 23, 2023.