



**DIVISION OF ELEMENTARY
& SECONDARY EDUCATION**



**DIVISION OF ELEMENTARY
& SECONDARY EDUCATION**

Helena-West Helena 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.

Submitted: Sheila Whitlow, Office of Coordinated Support and Service (OCSS)

Overview

During the fourth quarter of the 2022-23 school year, the support has been focused on preparation for the ACT Aspire summative assessment, updating policies including a salary schedule aligned with current legislation, recruiting district level and building level leadership and filling teacher vacancies with fully certified teachers. On June 21, 2023, Superintendent McGee and Sheila Whitlow, reviewed the initial systems analysis conducted by various departments within the agency and included updates to a majority of the recommendations provided by unit/division leadership. The original presentation including update notes is [linked here](#).

Academics

ACT Aspire preparation material was provided by RISE Specialist, Address Scott. This material was aimed at preparing students for the ACT Aspire summative assessment. Implementation of said material was the focus of district level classroom visits (Focus Walks). The team was disappointed to find that the data collected revealed the ACT Aspire material was not being implemented consistently in all ELA classrooms. The building leadership was made aware of the concerns and was given the task of ensuring the materials were used. Conversely, during focus walks in math classrooms, leadership observed the use of the ACT preparation materials provided by the math specialists from Great Rivers Education Service Cooperative.

There has been a significant focus on optimizing core instruction time in the high school master schedule. The goal is to ensure that the number of Full-Time Equivalents (FTEs) aligns with the projected Average Daily Membership (ADM). Additionally, time has been allocated for Tier II and Tier III interventions to support students who require additional assistance. This 30-minute session called Cougar Connections (CC) has been introduced for all students. This session aims to connect students with the resources they need to succeed academically. Twelve teachers have been selected to attend 95% Group Multisyllabic Routine Cards (MSRC) training and will provide skills-based intervention to over 150 students in grades 7-11 during CC. Continued direct support was provided throughout the master schedule development process which was not completed until late June. Job assignments are being aligned with teachers' degrees, certifications, experience, and competencies. This ensures that teachers are assigned to appropriate positions where they can utilize their expertise effectively.

This has been done at both schools with teachers reassigned by the superintendent as needed to ensure alignment.

An inclusion phase-in plan has been developed for the summer of 2023 and the subsequent school year (2023-2024). This plan involves inclusive practices training for the building leader and team, as well as Executive Directors attending a training presented by Robin Stripling. Staff training on inclusive practices will be conducted throughout the school year. J.F. Wahl applied for and was awarded the Inclusive Practices PLC Project Grant for the 2023-24 school year. This will promote the implementation of inclusive practices while providing teachers with the support needed to ensure all students are learning at high levels and practices align with individual student needs.

The district team, OCSS, and the incoming Solution Tree District Coach, Dr. Karen Power, have reviewed the district's Professional Learning Community (PLC) process journey. A plan has been finalized for a three-day work session with teachers to align the new state standards with the district's HQIM and develop units based on these standards. Also, DESE RISE Specialists have collaborated with OCSS and the district to identify PD needs based on new job assignments and High-Quality Instructional Materials (HQIM). Staff from both schools have been identified as needing training in trauma-informed practices. Plans were made to provide training on the Trauma Resource Initiative Resource (TRIS) and self-care strategies for staff members.

During the Leading PLC @ Work Districtwide session there was a focus on the use of CFAs and collaborative teams. CFAs are utilized to identify students who require additional support, measure the accuracy of assessments, identify effective instructional practices, and plan interventions. Based on new learning during the sessions this quarter, the leadership team determined that the Lead Teacher identification process and job description need to be updated to reflect the role of a team leader as described in Dr. Janel Keating's book: Leading PLC @ Work Districtwide. The role was posted and interested teachers applied, were interviewed and recommended to the Superintendent. The selected teachers were part of the HWHSD Leadership Institute conducted in June. During the institute the teams met to familiarize themselves with the PLC process, establish goals, and plan for professional development days. The meeting was led by the newly organized District Academic Leadership Team.

Student Support

Throughout the current school year, the Special Education Department has required on-site intensive support provided by Julie Amstutz from OCSS. In spite of the support throughout the school year, staffing and leadership challenges led to inconsistent practices in both schools. Some personnel changes occurred in the second semester, resulting in positive feedback from parents and students. More changes are planned for the upcoming year, including the addition of an Executive Director of Student Services who will oversee the Special Education Department, dyslexia services, and wrap-around services for students.

Sandy Shepard, DESE RISE Specialist, has created an assessment document to clarify all

end-of-year (EOY) assessments that should be administered at the elementary school. This document was shared with district and building leadership. To assist with administration scoring of assessments and uploading of data, the district received support from DESE RISE Specialists and OCSS. This data will be analyzed to identify students who may require Level II screeners, Tier 2, and/or Tier 3 interventions. Currently, the district has four dyslexia interventionists, with three using the Barton Reading and Spelling Program and one using the Take Flight program. Five school and district employees attended the Level II assessment training provided at GRESC on June 14 and 15 and will be expected to administer the screeners when students return in the fall. As previously mentioned, there will be allotted time in the master schedules for interventions. Also, to ensure high school students requiring dyslexia interventions will attend sessions consistently, the intervention will be part of the students schedule. All students in grades 7 and 8 will receive additional reading instruction through Strategic Reading which is part of the ELA double block schedule.

Human Capital

The bulk of the district work in May has revolved around personnel decisions, interviews for key leadership positions, and policy work which included an update of the salary schedule. The district has also held meetings to review job assignments for the upcoming school year, ensuring that personnel are assigned to the appropriate grade/subject area based on their licenses or degree. Based on these job assignments, the district has identified professional development needs and developed a plan for summer professional development to address those needs. Superintendent McGee and OCSS reviewed all certified contracts for the 2023-24 school year and compared them to the job assignments and current salary schedule. Discrepancies were found, and Dr. McGee met with the current GBM to clarify and revise the contracts. Additional assistance was provided by APSRC.

During the quarterly PSA Act 1082 virtual meeting, discussions took place regarding proficiency pathways under the SoR initiative, RISE Academy training, and awareness training. GRESC provided a list of participants from the district who attended RISE and assessor training. Furthermore, the district plans to send at least four staff members to a training-of-trainers session for the new ELA (English Language Arts) standards on May 30.

All leadership positions have been filled this month, and an organizational plan has been developed with district-level positions focusing on key areas to improve student achievement and create a safe, supportive, and collaborative environment for students and staff. The Deputy Superintendent, Executive Directors of Student Services, Learning Services, and School Improvement will provide supervision and support in various areas, including federal programs, special education, dyslexia interventions, mental and physical health services, curriculum and instruction, school improvement planning, supervision of building leadership, recruitment and retention of qualified teachers, ensuring progress towards licensure for staff working under a 1240 waiver, and academics.

Facilities and Transportation

In the wellness area, plans are currently being developed for a project with an anticipated ground-breaking date in mid-summer. The area will include playground equipment, walking track, an outdoor classroom area and areas to promote student physical activity.

Regarding the HVAC Partnership project, it has been approved but did not meet the funding threshold. As a result, a decision needs to be made whether to withdraw the project and reapply for the 2025-2027 application cycle or to fund the project using other sources of funding. Superintendent McGee and the local school board are planning a work session and a special board meeting in June to discuss the available options for improving JF Wahl, presumably the location or context of the HVAC Partnership project as well as whether to apply for a Partnership funding in 25-27 for a new K-6 elementary school facility

Furthermore, the district has submitted a preapproval application for the purchase of buses using ARP ESSER (American Rescue Plan Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief) funds. The purchase has been approved, indicating that the district will be able to use the allocated funds to acquire new buses.

Fiscal Governance and District Operations

All board members attended a training session with Dr. Janel Keating from Solution Tree. The purpose of the meeting was to identify the role of the board when leading the PLC Process district wide. Feedback and questions were relevant and student focused. During this quarter, extensive work was done by Dr. McGee with support from APSRC and OCSS to create a salary schedule for the upcoming school year. The staffing spreadsheet was submitted to fiscal services for review and feedback was provided. Dr. McGee will spend the upcoming school year working on a pay incentive plan connected to student achievement, attendance and additional criteria. He plans to work with the PPC to develop a plan that is equitable and promotes a focus on student learning in all areas of the content.

OCSS attends all regularly scheduled board meetings and can report that the board meetings are more student focused, member interaction is more respectful, and questions from the board to the superintendent are typically pertinent to the agenda items; with said, there is still room for improvement. For example, members tend to delve into day-to-day operations and the superintendent is contacted frequently by members regarding situations outside the purview of the board requiring continual redirection by the superintendent. Continued training is needed to ensure the board is learning to operate within the roles and responsibilities of local school boards as well as to make decisions based on data and student achievement.

Working in collaboration with Jayne Green, DESE Federal Programs, there are planned work sessions with various staff members in PSA Federal Programs for the new federal programs coordinator for the upcoming school district. During a phone conference with Jayne Green, Superintendent McGee addressed several topics: the funding source for new positions; recommendation for Exe Dir of Learning Services; the need for continued support for Deputy Superintendent who will be serving as Fed Programs Coordinator.

The district's policies required considerable revisions; some policies were in contradiction with other policies, some had not been updated for several years and did not reflect current legislation, etc. Additional work will need to be done during the upcoming school year.

Throughout the current school year, the district has relied heavily on support from APSRC, DESE, and OCSS; it is apparent that much work needs to be done in the Central Office to create more efficient and effective business and financial transactions. To ensure oversight and provide support to the district's current general business manager, the district has contracted with APSRC to assume the fiscal operations in the district's finance department. A plan will be developed collaboratively with the district leadership and APSRC to ensure a smooth transition and to clarify the roles and responsibilities of the APSRC Lead and district staff. Although the current staff is cooperative with Supt. McGee and willing to seek support as needed, more direct and consistent support are required to establish standard operating procedures that will streamline day-to-day operations, provide better support to schools and ensure internal controls are in place.

The DESE Fiscal Support and Services Unit in coordination with OCSS provides ongoing support to the district through onsite visits and remote assistance in all fiscal matters. Additionally, the district has continued to work with OCSS and DESE to help prepare for new salary schedules and staffing for the 2023-2024 school year.

Budget Summary
HELENA/ WEST HELENA SCHOOL DISTRICT(5403000)

FY23 as of 2023-06-15			
Beginning Balance <u>7/1/2022</u>			Ending Balance <u>6/30/2023</u>
	Revenue	Expenditures	
3,027,257.27	11,057,803.75	10,696,916.11	3,388,144.91
FY23 Budget			
Beginning Balance <u>7/1/2022</u>			Projected Balance <u>6/30/2023</u>
	Revenue	Expenditures	
3,027,257.27	11,352,868.58	10,828,427.64	3,551,698.21
FY22			
Beginning Balance <u>7/1/2021</u>			Ending Balance <u>6/30/2022</u>
	Revenue	Expenditures	
2,368,875.02	12,212,752.21	11,554,369.96	3,027,257.27
FY21			
Beginning Balance <u>7/1/2020</u>			Ending Balance <u>6/30/2021</u>
	Revenue	Expenditures	
1,877,309.16	11,826,505.92	11,535,771.61	2,168,043.47
FY20			
Beginning Balance <u>7/1/2019</u>			Ending Balance <u>6/30/2020</u>
	Revenue	Expenditures	
1,867,896.76	10,665,789.49	10,656,377.09	1,877,309.16

(Does not include Building, Categorical, Federal, Activity and Food Service Funds)

Jun 15, 2023