



ARKANSAS DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

Legislative Update for Pine Bluff School District

State Authority

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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. The current report is part of the new process of quarterly reporting under the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA). Although a district may be under state authority for various purposes, the Arkansas Department of Education (ADE) believes that all systems must be fortified in order to have an effective school district. These systems are Academics, Facilities and Transportation, District Operations and Fiscal Governance, Human Capital, Student Support, and Stakeholder Communication/Family and Community Engagement. The major focus of this report will be around the Academic System and Fiscal System due to the district being in need of Level 5 Support and a district in Fiscal Distress.

The Academic System consists of academic updates from the district based on the district plan of support. The district plan of support is based on school-level plans that were developed by the schools. These school-level plans are based on the review of data and the development of a continuous cycle of inquiry. The district plan of support includes items that were responsive to the needs of the schools by the district. The ADE then can work in a collaborative manner to support the district based on items identified in the district plan of support and continue to work with the districts to prioritize and identify solutions to further enhance any other systems including the use of ADE supports. ADE will further work with the districts to develop local capacity in addressing each system by developing measurable goals and monitoring progress. This is intended to be reflective in nature and a way for ADE and the districts to be purposeful in their future work together for the betterment of students.

The legislative report consists of information related to the district plan of support. All subsequent reports will be updates on the monitoring of the district plan of support and any other relevant academic information that supports the goals of the schools. In the event that the district is under state authority for fiscal reasons, the report will contain all relevant financial information as well. The final part of the report will be a list of current ADE support provided to the district by system. The Pine Bluff School District does not contain a District Plan of Support, but it is under development at this time.

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BACKGROUND

The Pine Bluff School District (PBSD) was placed under the direction of the Commissioner of Education on September 13, 2018. At that time PBSD was classified in Fiscal Distress. State statute related to schools classified in Fiscal Distress has given the State Board of Education the authority to administer a wide range of actions when schools or districts are classified in Fiscal Distress. These actions are inclusive of removal of the local school board and assignment of the overall district administration to the Commissioner of Education. The SBE voted to remove the school board and superintendent. Commissioner Key then appointed a new superintendent to oversee the district operations.

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. PBSD has 5 of 6 schools that have a letter grade of F. The district also has 4 schools identified in need of Comprehensive Support and Improvement (CSI). These CSI schools are Broadmoor Elementary, Thirty-Fourth Street Elementary, Jack Robey Middle School and Pine Bluff High School.

State statute requires quarterly progress monitoring of districts in state authority with updates provided to the legislature. The intent of the requirement for quarterly reporting is to keep both the public and the legislature informed regarding progress toward the exit criteria from state authority. This report seeks to fulfill that requirement for the PBSD which is under state authority for academic issues.

The Arkansas Department of Education (ADE) subscribes to the educational research-supported belief that plans of improvement must be both personalized to a school, and developed by the educators and parents charged with the responsibility for increasing student assessed proficiency. ADE does not seek to impose a plan on any district but does seek to support districts in analyzing and supporting school level plans.

In keeping with the idea that each school across the state will have a personalized plan, the district in consultation with the ADE will collaborate on a district plan of support. A district support plan shall follow a continuous cycle of inquiry and at a minimum specify the support the public school district will provide to public schools identified pursuant to the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965, Pub. I. No. 89-10, as reauthorized by the Every Student Succeeds Act of 2015, Pub. I. No. 114-95; collaboratively establish priorities regarding goals or anticipated outcomes with the school or schools, including feeder schools as applicable; identify resources to support the established priorities; describe the time and pace of providing support and monitoring for the established priorities; and describe the measures for analyzing

and evaluating that the district support was effective in improving the school performance.

The ADE conducted an initial systems analysis to determine the scope of work needed in each system. A copy of the analysis can be found [here](#). The district working action plan with updates can be found at the link below.

[ADE/District Work Plan](#)

Updated ESSA School Index By School.

The link [here](#) shows the updated ESSA School Index scores and each indicator for the 2016-2017 and 2017-2018 school year.

School Level Plans (Link)

[All School Plans](#)

District Support Plan

[District Support Plan \(Current\)](#)

Fiscal Distress Plan

Pursuant to Ark. Code Ann. § 6-20-1905, on August 8, 2018, the Arkansas Department of Education identified the Pine Bluff School District as a school district in fiscal distress. The Arkansas Department of Education made this identification because the Pine Bluff School District met the following fiscal distress indicator(s) as set forth in Ark. Code Ann. § 6-20-1904: (Declining balance identified by ADE to jeopardize the fiscal integrity of the school district and Any other fiscal condition of a school district deemed to have a material detrimental negative impact on the

continuation of educational services by that school district). A copy of the latest plan can be found [here](#).

District Narrative:

During the time that we have been here, we have working towards addressing all fiscal matters that are negatively impacting the fiscal stability of the Pine Bluff School District. We worked towards ensuring that all personnel members had current contracts that are aligned with their current job roles. We also initiated the Reduction-in-Force process. Dr. Owoh personally hand-delivered each letter and discussed the reasons for the RIF process with the personnel members who were impacted. The District has also recommended the sale of underutilized and unused District facilities and land. Due to declining student enrollment, the District will reduce the number of elementary schools for the 2019-20 school year. The District has made a conscious effort in reviewing all expenditure requests and approving the requests based upon student needs.

Student Attendance

The District continues to review the student attendance data for trends and to discuss proactive measures that would engage students more in the educational setting. The District has started district-wide Recognition Ceremonies for excellence in academics, behavior and attendance. The District plans to begin the development of a monitoring process for student cohorts so that the District will be able ascertain if students are on-time in receiving academic credits to matriculate to the next grade level and to ensure that the students who leave the district leave with the necessary credits to matriculate to the next grade level, which will positively impact the District's ESSA School Index. The District plans to continue to monitor student attendance so that individual plans for intervention can be developed to support the students. The District will continue to work with our community partners, including Judge Earnest Brown, on addressing chronic student absenteeism. The district is also in contact with the ERZ at University of Arkansas at Monticello to learn more about strategies to combat chronic absenteeism.

[Student Attendance Data](#)

Teacher Attendance

The District is addressing Teacher attendance according to District policy. Just as the District recognizes the students for attendance, the staff is also recognized. Principals have been instructed to address excessive absenteeism among the licensed and classified staff members. We are monitoring the number of times that educators are out of the buildings because of Professional learning sessions, district obligations, sick leave, etc.

[Teacher Attendance Data](#)

Student Discipline

The District has started to review the trend data and root causes for student discipline issues. Based upon the current data, we have met with community mentoring groups, area behavioral therapy groups, and our partners at the Juvenile Court 6th Division. The Juvenile Court 6th Division provides services for students who have chronic absenteeism and excessive misconduct/ misbehavior. We have a group of high school student leaders who have visited our ALE and middle schools and discussed with other students the appropriate ways to solve disagreements. As mentioned before, we have started district-wide celebrations for students who have not received behavior sanctions. We celebrate all of the positive academic and behavior celebrations in our weekly District-wide news letter. We will continue to monitor the student discipline data, as well other data, and meet with all stakeholders to develop positive ways to support the appropriate student behavior.

[Discipline Report](#)

ADE Systems Supports

The Arkansas Department of Education (ADE) continually provides all districts general supports. There are numerous supports that are provided to districts on a daily basis. The items listed below are highlights of some of the supports provided to the district that are beyond general support. **New supports since last report are in bold.**

Academic System

- Support of the district in crafting and review of school-level plans with the aid of the Standards and Systems Support Specialists and Office of Coordinated Support and Service (OCSS).
- Support of the district in creation of the District Plan of Support.
- Support of the district by a curriculum audit and development of a curriculum plan of action for the 2019-2020 school year.
- Support with State Leadership Coach in TESS Observations for all schools.
- Support with Master Schedules.
- Notification of CSI Schools.
- Training and planning for internal Standards for Accreditation using ADE tool.
- **[OCSS Superintendent Meeting on Supports 1](#)**
- **[Curriculum Audit](#)**
- **[Instructional Audit](#)**
- **[1003 Application Support](#)**
- **[OCSS Superintendent Meeting on Supports 2](#)**
- **[OCSS Superintendent Meeting on Supports 3](#)**

Student Support System

- Support with ELL Funding.
- Additional Support with ESOL program.
- Support and review of SPED program.
- **[SPED Support Update 1](#)**
- **[SPED Support Update 2](#)**
- **[SPED and Discipline Policy Training](#)**

District Operations and Fiscal Governance System

- Support of the district by providing ADE personnel to support the district with budgets, business manager training and other fiscal operations.
- Support in review of all contracts and eFinance budgeting with assistance in corrections.

- Support in review and planning based on FY18 Preliminary Audit.
- Unrestricted Budget projections as of 11/19/18.
- Review of current board policies and support in updating policy with district personnel policy committees.
- [Audit Meeting](#)
- [Budget Support Update 1](#)
- [Policy Support](#)
- [Unrestricted Budget projections as of 2/19/19](#)

Human Capital System

- Support of the district by providing grant funds to cover the cost of EdReflect Premium Services that include video observations.
- Support of the district by providing ADE and OCSS personnel to train in TESS/LEADS.
- Support of the district by including a staff member on the State Team for Urban Human Capital Academy. This is a professional development for enhancing Human Resources practices.
- Support with Licensure needs for 1240 teachers.
- Support for teachers on various licensure pathways.
- Support on how to support Teacher Leaders
- Professional Development of TESS/LEADS.
- [Principal Support Update 1](#)
- [Principal Support Update 2](#)
- [Principal Support Update 3](#)
- [Principal Support Update 4](#)

Facilities and Transportation System

- Support of the district in reviewing current status of facilities and transportation by ADE.
- Development of Master Plan update to include closures and uses for 2019-2020 school year.

Stakeholder Communication/Family and Community Engagement

- No supports at this time by ADE.

District Efforts

- The district has started having community meetings with students, parents, business partners and community members to discuss areas for growth and enrichment.
- The superintendent meets monthly with the Go Forward Pine Bluff community group.

- The parent involvement coordinator, in conjunction with the literacy curriculum coordinator, is in the process of increasing our community partners with the city-wide Barbershop/ Literacy Initiative. Books in the Barbershop is a Pine Bluff School District Title I Parent & Family Resource Center community-based literacy initiative modeled on the Reading Holiday Project that creates child-friendly reading spaces in barbershops for boys ages 4-8.