



DIVISION OF ELEMENTARY & SECONDARY EDUCATION

Lee County School District

Legislative Quarterly Report

January - March 2023

Submitted by

Office of Coordinated Support & Service

Stacy Smith, Deputy Commissioner

April 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. Assistant State Superintendent 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 is the cornerstone of the support provided during the 2022-23 school year.

Academics

The first data dig of the second semester was facilitated by Dr. Karen Power, Solution Tree District Level Coach. The principals shared the most recent data from their respective schools and how the data is being used to group students, provide interventions and prepare for the ACT Aspire Summative Assessment. CFAs from each school were also shared. Also,

the team is planning a book study over the book by Dr. Anthony Muhammad, *Time for Change*, led by Dr. Stone and utilizing segments from *Solution Tree Global P.D.* Dr. Power commended the team for the focus on the right work, the leadership and cohesion she observed during the meeting. During the meeting, Dr. Stone voiced a concern about the number of locations and spreadsheets containing student data; in response, OCSS worked in collaboration with building instructional support staff to move individual student data to one spreadsheet and upload the document in the district leadership shared drive. Vicki King provided extensive support this month to ensure all appropriate assessments were administered to students scoring In Need of Support on the ACT Aspire, but may not have been receiving additional support this school year. DESE RISE Specialists have been instrumental in assisting the district with administration of the assessments resulting in a variety of data points that will be analyzed during the next data dig on April 3, 2023. The goals for that day include: making certain all students requiring additional Level II Screeners for dyslexia are identified; grouping students according to skill deficits; creating lists of students that will be enrolled in Strategic or Critical Reading in the upcoming school year as well as reviewing data of the students receiving dyslexia interventions. There are currently seven staff members from the district attending the Certified Academic Language Therapist Training which allows them to use the Take Flight program for dyslexia interventions. The Director of Learning Services has reported that there are approximately one hundred fifteen (115) LCSD students receiving Tier III intervention using the Take Flight program. The OCSS Team, RISE Specialists, Vicki King and district leaders are monitoring the progress through focus walks and visits with the interventionists to ensure implementation is done with fidelity and that the schedules are providing for consistent intervention sessions. This quarter, Vicki King has provided direct support through coaching, modeling and providing feedback. Interventionists have reported students are responding well to the new program and that based on initial data they believe students are demonstrating better progress than they were the Barton Reading and Spelling Program which was used in previous years. As shared in previous reports, the district's dyslexia program has lacked consistency in delivering services and administering needed assessments in a timely manner; however with extensive support from DESE as well as a focus on improving the program by the district and school staff, the students identified with characteristics of dyslexia are being served consistently and those requiring additional diagnostic assessments will be screened and will be placed accordingly.

District leadership, OCSS and DESE consistently conducts Focus Walks at both schools and the data collected are shared with the principals as well as debrief meetings to discuss Glows, Grows and Next Steps. Although there is evidence of improved core instruction, continued support and professional development are needed to make certain instruction is engaging, demonstrates grade level rigor, and is paced appropriately. With that said, LCSD teachers at both schools are cooperative and respond positively to coaching conversations. The district's instructional support staff meets regularly to review school and student progress and plans for targeted interventions for teachers and students; these meetings are led by the Director of Learning Services and Dr. Stone is actively involved in the conversations during these meetings. DESE RISE specialists are also regularly on site to provide coaching support for teachers and for instructional support specialists. ACT Aspire preparation materials have been provided to ELA and Math teachers by DESE RISE Specialists and Great Rivers Education Service Cooperative Specialists with the implementation of said materials being monitored to ensure teachers are using resources to help students prepare for the upcoming high stakes test. OCSS provided training on understanding the ESSA Index Score emphasizing the importance of a positive impact on all students discussing the

difference between the old “bubble students” approach to today’s approach of ensuring value is added to all students through effective core instruction and skills-based interventions. Attendees made plans for meetings with the students that scored In Need of Support, but other data points indicate they should have scored better, review all data entries that would have an impact on SQSS indicators and plan for incentives that will motivate students to do their best on the test. Some feel testing fatigue may have a negative impact on student effort so plans to create excitement around the summative assessment are underway.

Currently, the district is using iReady for the top of the rope instructional material at the elementary, but iReady is approved as a supplement not the core; therefore, the district is working with DESE to develop a timeline for adoption and implementation of an approved program. After visiting other districts to observe implementation of reading programs and in collaboration with the DESE RISE Specialist, the district has chosen CKLA as the top-of-the-rope reading program for students in K-5 and My Perspectives for students in grade 6. Professional development is being planned for the summer as well as throughout the upcoming school year to ensure teachers have the training needed to effectively deliver instruction using the new program. The Instructional Support Specialist (ISS) is also planning work sessions for teachers to become familiar with the new ELA standards. The work done with Solution Tree to develop instructional units will be updated to align with the new standards.

OCSS, district and building leaders had a meeting with Ross White, DCTE Director, to assess the school’s CTE status and future needs. Mr. White shared the WFS Report for the area and there was discussion about current and future employment needs in the county and surrounding areas. Currently, the district has an MOU with EACC; students are enrolled in diesel mechanics, MedPro and CDL training. The district is offering Ag, CADD, Industrial Tech and JAG on site. Dr. Farr and Dr. Stone shared ideas for future plans which include adding FACs (PreEducator Pathway) , Automotives (technical permit person has been located), Barbering and expanding the AG program. A tour of the campus was conducted exploring ideas for locating new programs and what would be needed to upgrade/update the current automotives area. In addition, Dr. Farr shared that there is a registered nurse in town that is interested in teaching some medical foundational skills on campus which would allow the students to take advanced med courses at EACC possibly graduating with a CNA or LPN.

Student Support

A leadership position was added this school year with the responsibility of leading two collaborative teams: Response to Intervention Collaborative Teams for Academics and for Behavior. The teams are composed of support staff that include counselors, the school resource officer, instructional support staff, alternative learning leadership, school nurses, behavior specialists and interventionists. The teams use a variety of data points to identify students and to track progress; the data sources include attendance, office referrals, grades, interim assessment, teacher observations, etc. Because this team composition is unique to the area, LCSD has allowed leadership teams from a local district to observe CTMs in an effort to learn more about the process, how it impacts student engagement, student achievement and the overall social and emotional health of students that are identified as

needing more direct support. The team leader of the four teams is currently the same staff member which has proved to be a challenge. Next year, Dr. Stone has plans to reorganize and reassign some staff members to allow for a team leader at each school believing this change will strengthen the effectiveness of the teams at their respective schools.

A security fence at the high school and security vestibules at both schools have been added creating a much safer learning environment for students. In addition, the district has added an SRO to the elementary so each campus now has security on site throughout the school day.

Human Capital

There is a continued effort to ensure all staff working under the Act 1240 waiver are on a path to licensure and that any support needed is provided through the Recruitment and Retention Consultant, OCSS, the DESE Licensure Unit and the R & R from Great Rivers Cooperative. A staffing analysis was conducted to identify additional staff that will be needed for the upcoming school year. Vacancies are currently being advertised and some have already been filled with licensed staff. There have been multiple applicants for many of the advertised positions which is an anomaly for Lee County and is testament to the great work happening at both schools. Dr. Stone is reviewing all roles and responsibilities of members of the support staff to determine the most effective and efficient use of each member's time and skill set. The ultimate goal is to capture as much student contact time as possible without jeopardizing the support provided to the classroom teachers and principals through facilitating collaborative team meetings, collecting data, assisting with administering screeners, progress monitoring, instructional material implementation and planning.

Lack of housing continues to be one of the greatest challenges the district faces when recruiting new teachers and retaining current staff. As mentioned in the previous quarterly report, the superintendent is continuing efforts to secure funding for providing housing for teachers and hopefully, develop a duplex community on the district owned property near the administration office. The initial plan for the Teaching Housing Project was presented to members of the DESE as well as a virtual meeting with the DESE federal programs staff and national federal programs representatives to address concerns, questions and identify next steps. Currently, the construction management company is finalizing plans that will be submitted to the Division of Public Facilities and Transportation for prior approval. This project is the first of its kind in the state and will be a game changer for the district's recruitment and retention of high quality certified teachers which will have a positive impact on the overall achievement of Lee County School District scholars.

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.

Fiscal Governance and District Operations

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. The superintendent, OCSS and APSRC staff have worked diligently since the passing of the LEARNs Act to ensure the district is effectively and efficiently planning the budget for the increase in teacher salary and building a budget that can be sustained over time promoting fiscal health in years to come. 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.

Budget Summary

LEE COUNTY SCHOOL DISTRICT(3904000)			
FY23 as of 2023-03-13			
Beginning Balance			Ending Balance
<u>7/1/2022</u>			<u>3/31/2023</u>
	Revenue	Expenditures	
1,135,850.68	3,836,860.92	4,185,953.59	786,758.01
FY23 Budget			
Beginning Balance			Projected Balance
<u>7/1/2022</u>			<u>6/30/2023</u>
	Revenue	Expenditures	
1,135,850.68	5,508,077.86	5,507,625.8	1,136,302.74
FY22			
Beginning Balance			Ending Balance
<u>7/1/2021</u>			<u>6/30/2022</u>
	Revenue	Expenditures	
1,103,558.35	5,842,627.67	5,810,335.34	1,135,850.68
FY21			
Beginning Balance			Ending Balance
<u>7/1/2020</u>			<u>6/30/2021</u>
	Revenue	Expenditures	
1,114,925.8	5,535,533.22	5,586,984.24	1,063,474.78
FY20			
Beginning Balance			Ending Balance
<u>7/1/2019</u>			<u>6/30/2020</u>
	Revenue	Expenditures	
675,177.02	6,258,452.64	5,818,703.86	1,114,925.8