

## REPORT HIGHLIGHTS PERFORMANCE AUDIT

## Similar student achievement and efficient operations

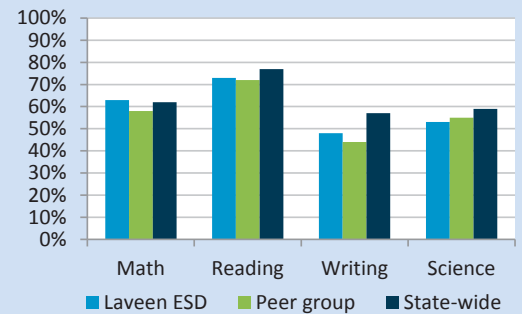
### Our Conclusion

In fiscal year 2012, Laveen Elementary School District's student achievement was similar to peer districts' averages, and the District operated efficiently overall with lower costs per pupil than peer districts', on average, in all operational areas. Despite operating efficiently, Laveen ESD spent 21 percent, or \$751, less per pupil in the classroom than peer districts, on average, because it received less funding primarily because it had a lower poverty rate and fewer special needs students. In fact, the District had nearly the lowest overall per pupil spending amount in the State. Although the District operated efficiently overall, it needs to better ensure that its bus drivers meet all certification requirements and it may be able to reduce its plant operations costs by further reducing the amount it pays for custodial services.

**Student achievement similar to peer districts'**—In fiscal year 2012, Laveen ESD's student AIMS scores were similar to peer districts' averages in the four tested areas. Additionally, under the Arizona Department of Education's A-F Letter Grade Accountability System, the District received an overall letter grade of B. Three of the seven peer districts also received B letter grades, and four peer districts received C letter grades.

**District operated efficiently with lower per pupil costs than peer districts'**—In fiscal year 2012, Laveen ESD operated efficiently with lower per pupil costs than peer districts' averages in all nonclassroom areas. The District's administrative costs per pupil were 8 percent lower, in part because it employed fewer administrative staff. The District's food service program operated efficiently with lower costs per pupil and per meal, and its transportation program was reasonably efficient. The District's plant operations costs were mixed, with a higher cost per square foot but lower cost per pupil, primarily because the District maintained substantially less building space per student than peer districts, on average. Despite operating efficiently overall, Laveen ESD spent 21 percent, or \$751, less per pupil in the classroom than peer districts, on average, because it had less to spend. In fact, the District had nearly the lowest overall per pupil spending amount in the State.

Percentage of students who met or exceeded state standards (AIMS)  
Fiscal year 2012



Comparison of per pupil expenditures by operational area  
Fiscal year 2012

	Laveen ESD	Peer group average
Administration	\$730	\$796
Plant operations	689	811
Food service	347	523
Transportation	255	271

## District failed to ensure bus driver certification requirements were met

Auditors reviewed driver files for all 22 of Laveen ESD's bus drivers from fiscal years 2012 and 2013 and found that the District failed to maintain complete records demonstrating that its bus drivers met all certification requirements in accordance with the State's *Minimum Standards for School Buses and School Bus Drivers (Minimum Standards)*. For example, 7 of the 22 drivers did not have evidence of required biennial CPR training on file. In addition, the District failed to ensure that one driver's suspended Commercial Driver's License (CDL) had been reinstated before the driver resumed driving. As a result, the driver transported students for 9 months during fiscal year 2013 on a suspended CDL.



2014

To comply with the *Minimum Standards* and to help ensure a safe transportation program, the District should create a process to ensure that drivers meet all required standards and should maintain all documentation demonstrating such.

### Recommendation

The District should maintain driver certification documentation and ensure that drivers meet all requirements as specified in the State's *Minimum Standards*.

## District may be able to further reduce plant operations costs

In fiscal year 2012, Laveen ESD's plant operations costs were 15 percent lower per pupil but 18 percent higher per square foot than peer districts', on average. The District may be able to lower its plant operations costs by reducing its custodial costs. The District uses outsourced custodial services to clean its buildings nightly during the regular school year and more extensive cleaning during school breaks, such as summer, winter, and spring breaks. To its credit, in fiscal year 2012, the District began contracting with a different vendor, reducing its custodial costs from almost \$420,000 in fiscal year 2011 to \$295,112 in fiscal year 2012. However, the District may be able to lower costs further because it apparently has adequate staffing to meet more of its custodial needs in house. In fiscal year 2012, the District employed 28 percent more plant operations staff per square foot than peer districts, on average, and most peer districts did not contract for outside custodial services. While it is not uncommon for districts operating substantially lower amounts of square footage per student to have higher per square foot costs, including labor costs, in light of its higher staffing level, the District should determine whether it can reduce or eliminate its contracted custodial services.

### Recommendation

The District should review its current custodial needs and staffing levels and determine whether it can further reduce or eliminate its contracted custodial services.