



Office of the Superintendent

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The Washington Elementary School District is committed to achieving excellence for every child; every day; every opportunity.

September 11, 2008

Debra Davenport
Auditor General
2910 North 44th Street, Suite 410
Phoenix, AZ 85018

RE: Response to Washington Elementary School District #6 2006-2007 Performance Audit

Dear Ms. Davenport:

Washington Elementary School District respectfully submits its response to the Performance Audit conducted by the Auditor General for fiscal year 2007. While the final report provides recommendations that will certainly improve our procedures, we believe that the audit demonstrates that the District is committed to both fiscal and programmatic integrity and fidelity.

The comprehensive scope of the audit revealed areas on which we will focus intently for improvement. Plans are already underway and are currently being implemented to address the recommendations. The audit also highlighted areas of operation of which we are proud:

CHAPTER 3 - PLANT MAINTENANCE AND OPERATION

CHAPTER 4 – PROPOSITION 301 MONIES

CHAPTER 5 – CLASSROOM DOLLARS

We appreciate the professionalism of your staff during the audit and their willingness to engage in dialogue to ensure accuracy and understanding. Meaningful conversation occurred during every interaction and that is a genuine tribute to the quality and caliber of the individuals who conducted the audit. The Washington Elementary School District will continue to operate the District in a manner that demonstrates fiscal responsiveness and responsibility that are squarely focused on the needs of students.

Thank you.

Sincerely,

Susan J. Cook, Ed.D.
Superintendent

CHAPTER 1 - ADMINISTRATION

Recommendation #1

The District should restrict access and regularly review employees' access to its computerized accounting system to ensure their access is appropriate.

The District agrees with this recommendation and does regularly evaluate user access to the system. At the time of this performance review the District had just completed implementation of the new accounting system and had given some users additional access while completing the task of setting up the system. We had not completed the entire review and adjustment of user access after implementation, but this will be finalized.

Recommendation #2

The District should implement basic computer security training for employees to inform them of the importance of security measures, such as locking computers when away from their desks to prevent unauthorized users from accessing district software and data.

The District agrees with this recommendation and has already taken action toward implementation. A global policy has been implemented for the network which automatically locks all computers in the district after forty five minutes of inactivity. This is the average length of a classroom period. There is also a plan being developed to train employees upon hire how to lock computers whenever they leave the immediate work area.

CHAPTER 2 - TRANSPORTATION

Recommendation #1

To improve the efficiency of its student transportation program, the District should:

- a. Evaluate its bus driver staffing levels to determine if the number of drivers can be reduced;
- b. Review rider counts throughout the year to evaluate and adjust routes to increase efficiency; and
- c. Develop and monitor performance measures, such as cost per mile, cost per rider, driver productivity, and bus capacity utilization.

The District agrees with this recommendation. A plan has been developed to monitor routes and the number of riders each day. Staff is currently in the process of assessing the efficiency of routes in order to evaluate staffing levels. Adjustments have already been made to the daily process of tracking riders and mileage. Both areas will be consistently monitored throughout the year to assess and optimize the routes. The Transportation Director will develop specific performance objectives to assess our efficiency in all aspects of the Transportation Department. The District will monitor progress toward these objectives throughout the year and modify processes as necessary.

Recommendation #2

The District should determine whether the employee incentives available to transportation employees are cost beneficial and help to recruit and retain transportation employees.

The District agrees with this recommendation and an evaluation of the incentive program was completed in June 2008. The program will continue for one more year and allow for a three-year trend of data collection to evaluate the success of the program and investigate other options to provide incentives for staff.

Recommendation #3

The District should establish and maintain contracts with all of its transportation vendors and ensure that the contracts include all necessary terms and rates so that invoices can be reviewed for accuracy.

The District agrees with this recommendation. The District has developed a plan to clearly define current and future contracts and will monitor charges. The District has requested current vendors to provide more detailed invoices that list the riders by route and day.

Recommendation #4

The District should maintain adequate documentation of its riders and miles, and accurately calculate and report the data needed for state funding.

The District agrees with this recommendation and has already begun to implement process changes in this regard. The District contracted with an outside consultant to review rider and mileage tracking procedures and implemented their recommendations. Transportation staff has been fully trained on the new procedures.

Recommendation #5

The District should ensure that bus preventative maintenance is conducted and documented as specified in the Arizona Department of Public Safety's *Minimum Standards for School Buses and School Bus Drivers* and according to district policies.

The District agrees with this recommendation and will implement. During the 2006-2007 school year a preventative maintenance position was unfilled for a portion of the year. This position has since been filled and other qualified staff is assisting in this program to ensure all maintenance is up to date for vehicles. A plan has been developed to ensure that vehicle maintenance is given priority and that the utilization of shop personnel is maximized.

Recommendation #6

The District should implement proper fleet management practices, such as ensuring that it is adequately overseeing its bus fleet's use and maintenance.

The District agrees with this recommendation and will implement. The District is currently upgrading the fleet maintenance software to maintain more accurate documentation on fleet maintenance. All maintenance must be entered into the computer to ensure accurate accounting of all tasks completed.

Recommendation #7

The District should maintain complete driver files and implement a procedure to ensure that all driver requirements are met in accordance with DPS *Minimum Standards*.

The District agrees with this recommendation and has already begun to implement changes. The filing system has been consolidated to keep training and certification information filed by driver. The District is in the process of implementing a software program linked to the Human Resources system that will track trainings and provide notification when renewals are due. A plan has been developed that includes the Internal Auditor reviewing files and reporting any discrepancies throughout the year.

Recommendation #8

The District should discontinue using 11-15 passenger vans to transport students to and from school.

The District agrees with this recommendation. The 12-passenger van has been taken out of service for transporting students; however, the van was never used to transport more than 8 people.

CHAPTER 3 - PLANT MAINTENANCE AND OPERATION

There were no recommendations for this area.

CHAPTER 4 – PROPOSITION 301 MONIES

Recommendation #1

The District's Proposition 301 plan should specify an amount or a range of performance pay each eligible employee can earn if performance criteria are met.

The District agrees with this recommendation. In the future the Performance Pay Plan will identify an amount or range of amounts that employees might earn that year.

CHAPTER 5 – CLASSROOM DOLLARS

There were no recommendations for this area.

CHAPTER 6 – DESEGREGATION MONIES

Recommendation #1

The District should create a desegregation plan based on findings from its past complaints and compliance review. The plan should specify the needs and goals of the desegregation program and budget monies based on these stated needs and goals.

The District agrees with this recommendation. The District has developed a desegregation plan identifying needs and outlining our goals to align with the district's English language learner program. The budget has been set based on needs identified by schools to provide instruction in accordance with the program.

Recommendation #2

The District should ensure that it levies desegregation monies in accordance with its plan and budget and use these monies for purposes stated in its plan.

The District agrees with this recommendation and has levied and budgeted desegregation monies in accordance with its plan for the 2008-2009 school year. The District will monitor programmatic needs throughout the year and make adjustments to the budget as necessary.

Recommendation #3

The District should begin accounting for ELL-related desegregation costs using the correct account codes.

The District agrees with this recommendation, however, the nature of our program since 2003 has been to designate every teacher in the system as a teacher of English language learners. Therefore, calculating incremental costs was impossible. The District began accounting for specific ELL related desegregation costs during the 2007-2008 school year. Further alignment with the plan and specific coding has been added for 2008-2009.

CHAPTER 7 – ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNER PROGRAMS

Recommendation #1

The District should begin expanding its English language development instruction to align with the models adopted by the ELL Task Force in September 2007.

The District agrees with this recommendation insomuch as it applies to every school district in Arizona.

Recommendation #2

The District should begin separately accounting for the incremental portion of ELL costs, including those funded by desegregation monies, and retain documentation supporting how those amounts are determined.

The District agrees with this recommendation, however, the nature of our program since 2003 has been to designate every teacher in the system as a teacher of English language learners. Therefore, calculating incremental costs was impossible. The district will review expenditures to ensure that all actual costs associated with ELL are appropriately coded.