



UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT 490

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Testimony Before the K-12 Performance and Efficiency Commission

Sue Givens, Superintendent USD #490 – El Dorado
 September 4, 2014

Thank you for an invitation to address the Commission regarding variances in per-pupil and administrative expenditures relative to USD 490 and comparable districts as reported for your charge. As directed, information regarding cost-efficiency measures, and implementation of recommendations from the *Governor's School Efficiency Task Force* will be presented.

Variances in Per-Pupil and Administrative Expenditures

Special Education Cooperative

When the 1000-1999.9 FTE cohort data from 2012-13 Expenditures is sorted from lowest to highest *Total Expenditures per FTE*, El Dorado ranks highest. A major factor in this ranking lies in district organization. Since it's inception the *Butler County Special Education Cooperative* has been sponsored by El Dorado - USD 490. Because the cooperative budget flows through the district, special education expenditures for all nine school districts in the county, serving nearly 3000 students, are reflected in the budget, yet still divided by the El Dorado FTE of 1922.6. Our district budget totals just over \$11 million dollars, but is inflated by the \$19 million dollar special education cooperative budget. When 2012-13 expenditures are adjusted to remove special education cooperative expenditures, the following functions are affected as indicated, reflecting an immediate drop of \$10,000 in *Per Pupil Expenditures per FTE*:

<u>Description</u>	<u>Total Expense</u>	<u>SPED Expense</u>	<u>Actual USD 490</u>
Instruction 1000	\$27,193,558	\$14,243,581	\$12,949,977
<i>Instruction Per Pupil</i>	<i>\$14,144</i>	<i>\$7,408</i>	<i>\$6,736</i>
Student Support 2100	\$4,736,374	\$3,698,232	\$1,038,142
<i>Student Support Per Pupil</i>	<i>\$2,464</i>	<i>\$1,924</i>	<i>\$540</i>
Staff Support 2200	\$1,145,057	\$144,996	\$1,000,061
<i>Staff Support Per Pupil</i>	<i>\$596</i>	<i>\$75</i>	<i>\$520</i>
Admin 2300, 2400, 2500	\$2,597,609	\$801,012	\$1,796,597
<i>Administrative Per Pupil</i>	<i>\$1,351</i>	<i>\$417</i>	<i>\$934</i>
Operation/Maint 2600	\$2,471,335	\$216,511	\$2,254,824
<i>Operation/Maint Per Pupil</i>	<i>\$1,285</i>	<i>\$113</i>	<i>\$1,173</i>
Transportation 2700	\$650,313	\$56,006	\$594,307
<i>Transportation Per Pupil</i>	<i>\$338</i>	<i>\$29</i>	<i>\$309</i>
Total Expenditures	\$45,222,356	\$19,160,338	\$26,062,018
Total Expenditure Per Pupil	\$23,521	\$9,966	\$13,556

The disproportion caused by special education funding has become more pronounced in the USD 490 budget as metro area schools have increased in enrollment. While El Dorado was once the largest district in the cooperative, it is now third largest behind Andover and Augusta.

This shift in enrollment and continued growth of the special education cooperative caused the USD 490 Board of Education to notify the Butler County school districts of its intent to terminate the role of sponsoring district this past fiscal year. The districts remained committed to sharing special education costs by maintaining a cooperative, but have moved to an interlocal structure, with no one district holding the role of sponsor.

However, USD 490 will not see an immediate change in our *Per Pupil Expenditures* until the 2015-16 budget. The interlocal cooperative was not officially formed until July 1, 2014, requiring special education fund balances to be carried over into the USD 490 budget for 2014-15 then transferred to the new entity after July 1. The process of distributing other items such as salary, benefits, and insurance that do not align with the July 1 changeover will continue throughout this fiscal year.

Even more unfortunate for the perception of our budget is a “glitch” in KSDE reporting for the *Budget at a Glance* “Total Expenditures by Function” that causes special education cooperative funds to be reflected in the individual fund reporting, but not in the total expenditures “bottom line”, even though it is no longer a district budget. The bottom line is accurate, but the total expenditures by funds include the special education cooperative for the coming year. The requirement to post this document on our website is unfortunate since it is in error.

Bond Debt and New Facilities

Additional variances are related to local patron support for new facilities. Two bond issues approved by voters to build new facilities, dictates a \$3,677,325 debt service in line 5100. This figure does not reflect that USD 490 is a relatively wealthy district in terms of per pupil valuation, garnering only 5% state aid. New facilities weighting is also reflected in revenues and expenditures since completion of each facility. At this time, weighting for only one building, El Dorado Middle School, is in effect and projected to continue through 2015-16. These additional revenue and expenditures are a variant from some others in the cohort.

Low Income Weighting

El Dorado USD 490 had 43.89% of students receiving Free Lunch/Breakfast and 11.46% receiving Reduced Price Lunch/Breakfast in 2012-13. A 20% increase since 2004, this results in additional federal dollars, as well as increased state budget authority through weightings.

Cost-Efficiency Measures

Shared Services

The district has shared the services of a mechanic with a neighboring district, purchases fuel and supplies through group purchasing exchanges, is a member of the Butler County Special Education Cooperative, and utilizes SCKESC, ESSDACK, Greenbush, and Southwest Plains Service Centers to share costs and services for ELL, Carl Perkins, credit recovery, staff development, instructional monitoring and evaluation. We purchase all cars/vans for our fleet from expired local leases, creating substantial savings. Several of these strategies were recommendations of the *Governor’s School Efficiency Task Force* although some were already in place.

A district representative meets with other metro area school districts to consider other areas where shared services or purchases may create efficiencies. These meetings are hosted by Wichita USD 259. District transportation directors from throughout the County recently met to determine areas where students were transported for special education across district boundaries, where transportation could be shared and reduce expenses.

All Butler County Schools participate in a CTE initiative work group partnering with Butler Community College to provide CTE Academies throughout the county. By focusing on a specific pathway in each district, more academy opportunities are available to all students, creating efficiencies similar to those provided by the special education cooperative in both personnel and facility costs. Further collaboration with the Wichita Area Workforce Center provides student summer employment opportunities hosted by the school district.

Vision and dental screenings for students are provided through partnerships and grants with the local *Lions Club* and *GraceMed*, respectively. This alleviates school health personnel costs for these statutorily mandated services.

Most recently, the district will provide two new programs through partnerships. A *JAG (Jobs for America's Graduates)* program will be offered this year at El Dorado High School. This grant provides employment focused, dropout prevention. A full-time "recruiter" is provided through *JAG*. An opportunity for a *Communities in Schools (CIS)* site at El Dorado Middle School presented itself this year, and students will have access to "wrap-around" social services as an early intervention for dropout prevention through a full-time employee of *CIS*, alleviating the loss of social workers due to budget cuts in the special education cooperative.

Shared Facilities

The district has a long history of sharing facilities with other agencies in the community, beginning with a shared Activity Center, built in partnership with the City of El Dorado. The three gyms are an extension to the high school physical education facilities and serve students during the day and community rec activities on evenings and weekends. Personnel and facility costs are shared through a long-term lease agreement.

When the 1930's-era middle school auditorium was in need of repair and refurbishment, a community fund-raising project resulted in a complete renovation, in return for an agreement to allow free use by the *El Dorado Community Concert Association*. This month, the district will approve a similar agreement for use of the new high school auditorium in return for maintenance of concert equipment and the historic Steinway Grand Concert Piano.

Since their first football game, Butler Community College has leased the district football stadium. Built in the 1930's, *Galen Blackmore Field* was also shared with the Junior Wildcat Football League and the City Recreation Department. An aging facility, cost projections for repair and refurbishment were over \$3.5 million dollars in 2006. By forming an athletic facility authority, the City of El Dorado, Butler Community College and USD 490, were able to direct the same dollars collectively and construct a state-of-the-art athletic complex, *BG Products Veterans Stadium*. Additional donations from fund raising provided the venue with amenities that facilitate hosting national junior college athletic events, district-wide wellness activities, and City promotion of concerts and special events.

The City of El Dorado is one of the smallest communities to host a local YMCA, as an extension of the Greater Wichita YMCA Organization. Again, this can be attributed to community-wide support and fund raising. When the new middle school was constructed last year, the school

district partnered with the Greater Wichita YMCA to provide a turf practice field at the new site. The school district provided the necessary land, track surface and fencing. The YMCA provided the artificial turf field. The school district uses the field as part of its facilities during the school day and for practices. The YMCA has first use on evenings and weekends for their events. The YMCA also provides after-school programming that is hosted in one of our elementary schools. All major construction projects in recent years have utilized the *Construction Management at Risk* (CMR) approach, allowing for greater efficiencies and control over construction costs.

Reallocation of Personnel

Since the first major budget cut of the recession, a primary strategy has been reevaluation of any personnel vacancy. When an opening occurs, a position is analyzed for need, replacement through attrition, potential for job-sharing, and/or change in classification. By using this approach, we have been able to reduce personnel throughout all levels of classification.

The construction of a new elementary school replacing two smaller, 1950's buildings has allowed greater efficiency of personnel. The two buildings each had enrollment under 200 students and had multiple shared staff members. Travel time and schedule inefficiencies were remedied with the new facility. The district has only two such buildings remaining, both with enrollments of under 200 in a common neighborhood. It is the intention of the district to continue to work toward greater efficiency by building a new facility to replace them, but until district valuation grows it is not economically sound to pursue a bond issue.

The district has also collaborated with the *El Dorado Chamber of Commerce* since 2007, to begin a community-wide mentoring program, *Adopt-A-Class*, that pairs businesses with classrooms. The business provides four volunteers who work with students in a classroom on a weekly basis - from the time they enter kindergarten until they graduate. Our first class of volunteers in 2007 will move with their students to 7th grade this year, and we will utilize over 250 volunteer staff members throughout our district.

Food Service

Pursuant to a recommendation of the *Governor's School Efficiency Task Force*, the district entered into an agreement for contracted food service management with *OPAA!* in 2013-14. The first year saw sizeable increases in the number of student and adult meals served. Increased sales were anticipated to offset the cost of food in prior years, but that forecast was modest, with the first year offsetting food costs as well as other operations expenses.

The district also partners with a local not-for-profit, *Kids Need 2 Eat*, which provides free lunches throughout the summer months to all children up to age 18. The program begins when summer school ends in July and continues throughout enrollment in August. The meals and volunteers are provided through *Kids Need 2 Eat*, and the district provides a free shuttle route and space as needed.

Curriculum Materials

As recommended by the *Governor's School Efficiency Task Force*, library media specialists take advantage of the State Library of Kansas. The district also reduces textbook costs by purchasing electronic subscriptions for curriculum materials. Virtual field trips, special classes such as Mandarin Chinese, and curriculum presentations are available through the use of interactive video. In lieu of purchasing pricey Promethium Boards, the district invested in Wi-Motes that are a fraction of the cost, with similar functionality for touch-screen instruction.

Energy and Safety Audits

Early energy audits as part of a district contract with a service company provided the basis for ongoing monitoring. While the contract was victim to a budget cut, the process of monitoring and seeking efficiencies continues and is part of the district strategic plan. Automated thermostat controls, natural gas purchasing consortium participation, and motion sensors/lighting controls are employed as recommended in the *Governor's School Efficiency Task Force*. The district has contracted two performance contracting studies to seek additional efficiencies with building projects, although neither produced enough offset costs to fund projects as anticipated. We also purchased a bus through an energy grant last year, resulting in an efficiency rebate.

Through the district insurance provider, annual safety audits are conducted and the district has been able to lower our mod rate for workman's comp. While this savings isn't realized until several audit periods, the potential for savings on insurance are present. Also through our provider, we were able to replace online compliance training modules with free online modules for mandated as well as additional professional development trainings.

Incentives

Creative methods of providing incentives for excellence are considered consistently in our district. This recommendation from the *Governor's School Efficiency Task Force* has been implemented primarily through incentive days. As example, following a year of stellar accomplishments, district staff members were rewarded by a shortened contract year. That single day provided positive affirmation for specific accomplishments. When the district recorded a record number of *State Standards of Excellence* and met district goals established in advance, the entire district, students and staff, received an incentive day. A less successful incentive was extended to a single school that met performance goals. This was implemented although it was met with argument by the local teacher's association.

Alternative Funding Sources

In addition to booster clubs for athletics, forensics, band, and drama the district is privileged to have other foundations that support its mission. *Partners In Education (PIE)* is one of the oldest and most lucrative school foundations in the state. Established in the 1980's, *PIE* holds over \$1 million in assets and annually supports creative classroom projects through a teacher grant program. In addition, they provide scholarship endowments, special project funding and assistance with specialty grants.

The El Dorado Sports Foundation is a new venture by alumni to support athletic programs from grades K-12. A good companion to the district strategic plan goal for student achievement in extracurricular activities, the foundation has invested in weight room makeovers, helmet purchases, and has a list of planned improvement projects.

The district also capitalized on the Kansas Reading Initiative Grant made available through the legislature. USD 490 was awarded an \$81,292 grant to provide student licenses and professional development for *Lexia Reading* software.

Priorities

As USD 490 looks at budget priorities, local decisions are based upon the unique needs of our district. Some of these are not offered or considered in other districts.

All Day Kindergarten and PreK

When the "new" money was available in 2007-2008, our district instituted all-day kindergarten. At that time, the district was on improvement, was seeing a sharp increase in poverty, and had a

lack of affordable preschool opportunities. Because of the percentage of low-income students in our district and documented growth in performance, all day kindergarten has remained a priority, despite being only partially funded by FTE.

The district has long been a grant recipient for the State 4 Year Old Preschool program. The program, which only serves students who meet one of a specific set of at-risk criteria, is always full and has a waiting list. Though the community has a Head Start program and the cooperative allows “role models” on a limited basis in Early Childhood Special Education programs, the demand remains greater than available slots. The lack of affordable or free preschool programs in a district with higher than average poverty manifests itself in a greater number of students being identified as “developmentally delayed”. That initial placement partially contributes to the district’s high population of students with special needs, 22.17%, compared to the median for our cohort group of 14.17%.

Class Size

With higher than average poverty and special education needs, the district has prioritized class size limitations when personnel and budgeting decisions are made. Primary classes are targeted for 15-22 in a class. Intermediate class size is targeted at 18-24. The first strategy when classes reach maximum levels is to transfer from areas with less caseload. The second is to transfer students who may be new to the district to another attendance center. The final option is hiring new staff. Unfortunately, due to the transient nature of families of poverty, this is often a decision that is made on or near the first day of school.

Summer Enrichment

With many students lacking sufficient background experience due to poverty, the district completely restructured the elementary summer school program. Rather than offering remedial courses, *Summer Academy* offers experience-rich, fun learning activities more similar to a summer camp, which middle and upper income parents can often afford, to all students. The base requirement - each course must be creatively designed by teachers and must incorporate math and reading standards. This year, over 300 students (nearly 1/6th of our total enrollment) participated in classes such as quilting, fishing, cooking, scrapbooking, robotics, zoo animals, mad science, and pole-vaulting. Students also receive a free breakfast and lunch through the federal food service program for enrolled enrichment sites and free transportation on district shuttle busses. Busses also provide, and district staff coordinate, transportation to other community youth activities, such as the library, museum, YMCA, recreation department, and swimming lessons. Parents can be confident that their child is safely delivered to summer activities, reducing their own expenses while securing safe transport for their children to be engaged throughout the day. This is a significant dedication of resources that is a priority in our community and district.

Equitable Opportunities

While poverty has been described as the single greatest barrier to student achievement, it is not accurate to say that all children of poverty have low achievement. This is evidenced by the large number of USD 490 students who, when provided with educational opportunities in an equitable setting, achieve at the highest of state and national standards. Several examples of this include:

- *Support for National Competitions* – When students qualify for national competitions in extracurricular events, the district pays for their travel. They are expected to conduct fund-raising or otherwise pay for their lodging and food. We have had students compete nationally in Art, Debate, Forensics, and DECA who would have not been afforded these opportunities otherwise. Many have garnered scholarships as a result.

- *1:1 Technology* – Providing students with school-issued laptops at the high school and tablets at the middle school has been accomplished through a combination of lease programs and grants. This program provides a level playing field for students, provides parents with access to technology and improved school-home communication, and allows us to accomplish savings on curriculum materials. Students pay or work at school activities to cover an insurance fee. The district currently self-insures the devices after initially paying an insurance provider, then discovering the efficiency of self-insuring. It is not uncommon to see students or parents sitting outside our buildings accessing internet services on the evenings or weekends.
- *Uniforms* – Band uniforms were ragged and aged. A new instructor, ironically raised in poverty, suggested “stock” uniforms rather than custom designed. At less than one-third of the cost, the band of 45 was outfitted, empowered, and grew to over 100. Uniforms were a factor, but not as much as a quality, kid-focused instructor. It wasn’t difficult to pick out our students of poverty at vocal concerts. Even when asked to wear simple black and white concert dress, many came in ill-fitted and/or soiled clothing. A new purchase this year is a set of choir robes for the newly named, “Robed Choir”. Providing students with an equitable playing field has been extended to our extracurricular activities.
- *School Resource Officers* – We employ our own district police officers to provide support in our schools. Two officers provide intervention, referrals, truancy prevention, screening, and security for school events. Social service needs related to the stress of living in poverty represent the bulk of their work and our prioritization of their service.
- *Transportation* – El Dorado is a small district of only 128 square miles. Two major highways intersect the town, a highly traveled bypass circuits the south end of the community, and the recent addition of a new middle school in the northern most section of town dictate an in-town bus system that provides transportation to and from every district attendance center in order to insure safe travel to and from school.
- *Alternative Programming* – In 2008, the district secured a federal charter grant to provide school-to-work alternative programming for high school students. Believing these students would be first to enter our local workforce and become the first to return as parents, a program was developed based upon individual self-pacing, work ready credentialing, service learning, and community internships. The district purchased a local popcorn business as a major component of the school’s curriculum. Although federal funds are no longer available, the district continues to provide the *Extend* program for less than one-tenth of the high school population. *Old Town Popcorn* provides the popcorn for all USD 490 and BCC events, as well as for patrons and businesses throughout the year, but especially during the holidays.

Conclusion

Despite the challenges presented as variances herein, we can document growth in student achievement in USD 490. We need to have a statewide measuring stick, but it needs to meet so much more than NCLB. We need local flexibility to direct funds where they are best targeted to meet those measurements. We need to be accountable – but first and foremost to our local taxpayers, who are a subset of the state tax base.

A partial list of accomplishments from the *2013-14 Budget At A Glance* is evidence of initiatives and continuous improvement in and beyond math and reading:

- Implemented a new professional evaluation system for certified staff - the *e4E*.
- Employed *iPods* from a federal grant for instructional support in grades 4-5.
- Restored a certified art instructor position for elementary art classes.
- Revised K-5 Performance Cards aligned with Kansas College & Career Ready Standards.

- Initiated intramural soccer and began planning 7-12 interscholastic soccer for FY15.
- Hosted the first district-wide Homecoming Parade, with participation from all staff.
- Established athletic *Twitter* accounts and developed *iTunes University* courses.
- Conducted the *EHS Future's Fair*, showcasing careers of local and area professionals.
- Developed individual plans of study as a *Career Plan* requirement for early graduation.
- Received \$11,000 in *CTE* incentives for students achieving industry credentials.
- Implemented *Intruderology* training and drills as prevention for increased student safety.
- Launched *El Dorado Schools App*, providing parents with portable access to information.
- Launched an SMS texting service for increased parent communication.
- Student attendance reached 95.1%, tying FY12 for highest attendance rate in 6 years.
- Expanded parent technology training in all schools.
- Added an elementary assistant principal and parent/early education coordinator.
- Posted gains over FY13 averages on the *ACT* in Math, Reading, Science & Composite.
- Provided *Conscious Discipline* training to preschool parents.
- Implemented a *Walmart* grant to build raised garden beds at all elementary schools.
- Worked with community partners to host the first annual *KIDZ-Fest* connecting parents with support agencies and resources.
- *State Challenge Award Certificate of Merit* to Lincoln Elementary.
- 2014 *KS State High School Activities Association Class 4A 4-Speaker State Champion*
- *KS Authors Club's Youth Writing Contest Winner*
- *DAR Christopher Columbus Essay Contest State Winner*
- *2014 Scholastic Silver Key Art Awards*
- *KSDE Annual Conference Cover Art Design Contest Third Place*
- 2013 *KS School Bus Safety Poster Contest First Place*
- *Wendy's High School Heisman Award State Male Winner*
- *4A State Boys Basketball Tournament – 4th Place*
- *4A State Cross Country Meet 8th Place Winner*
- *4A State Swim Meet 7th place in the 200 Freestyle Relay*
- *4A State Forensics Competition – 5th Place*
- *President's Volunteer Service Award*
- *Hugh O'Brian Youth Leadership (HOBY) President's Volunteer Service Award*
- 2014 *Scholastic National Art Gold Medal Award*
- *Sunflower National Forensic League District Student of the Year*
- *International DECA Competition Top 20*
- 2014 *NCFL Grand National Competition Top 48*
- *13th Annual International Public Policy Forum Top 64*
- 2014 *Kansas Master Teacher*
- 2014 *Kansas School Resource Officer of the Year*
- 2014 *USA Kansas Outstanding Service Award*
- *4A Swim Coach of the Year*

Our greatest challenge in El Dorado is preventing our demographics from defining us. While we have many students who meet the qualifiers for poverty, we have many who are children of millionaires, whose parents have choices and choose USD 490. While we have students who become parents too soon with limited post-secondary planning, we have students who enroll in some of the most prestigious universities in the nation. In closing, please allow this story to provide you with a defining moment for our district:

It was nearing the end of “Late Night With the Cats”, an initiative designed to showcase athletes training efforts over the summer months and a kick-off to fall athletics. Every team member for every sport was challenged to run a “midnight mile” with a goal time set by each coach.

Middle school athletes were first, followed by high school, each sport in turn, each athlete making their way around the track in small or large clusters, some in easy companionship.

High school football was last. 65 members strong, they barreled through the mile – linemen bringing up the rear as expected. One, a single, heavy-set, heavy-footed runner trailed the pack. When every other player had crossed the finish line, he had more than half a lap, 200 meters, to run in solitude, as an entire community watched his painful progress.

Then, one by one, without prompting, then in droves, the student athletes from middle school and high school - cheerleading, volleyball, soccer, cross country, golf, tennis, and football – gathered around the lone runner and ran with him through the finish line as a team, a community of students – a student body. We don't know who he was – that last man on the track. His notoriety at being last was overcome by the spirit of teamwork, of all for one and one for all. And we were blinded by the tears in our eyes and the pride in our hearts, as we the audience – their parents, their teachers, their community – stood in ovation.

It is well to think well; it is divine to act well. ~ Horace Mann

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