



# AMADOR COUNTY UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT

Superintendent, Amy L. Slavensky, Ph.D.

217 Rex Avenue, Jackson, CA 95642 | (209) 257-5353 | Fax (209) 257-5360 | [www.amadorcoe.org](http://www.amadorcoe.org)

**PREPARE, SUPPORT, INSPIRE!**

---

September 21, 2018

**Sent via email to all ACUSD email users and via InTouch messaging to all staff and families in the Amador County Public Schools community.**

Amador Staff, Families and Community Partners,

When I became superintendent of the Amador County Unified School District a little less than two years ago, my goal was to build relationships that strengthen our teams and our students' wellness and achievement. As the months passed, I learned more about the many wonderful qualities of our people and commitments made by so many to support our schools and students. I learned, too, that the past is very much a part of who we are today.

As I spent more time in Amador County, I began to better understand how decisions of the past affect us today. For example, we know there is a history of fragmentation and disputes at the senior leadership level in the school district/county office of education and decision making that was not always transparent or honest. Very recently, I learned that some past decisions have affected the resources available for our students today. This message is intended to clear the air, live up to our commitment of transparency, and educate our community about our current fiscal situation.

Though school districts are receiving more state money recently, the state funds we receive do not keep pace with the rising cost of employee pensions and health/welfare benefits. For example, the state requires us to pay an employer contribution to the State Teachers' Retirement system (STRS) and the Public Employees' Retirement System (PERS) which has been rising significantly each year since 2013-14. In fact, ACUSD/ACOE paid over \$4 million more in these contributions in 2017-18 than it did in 2013-14.

While going through the annual process to close the financial books for the 2017-18 school year, we learned that our actual expenses were greater than what was budgeted. This is due to various factors occurring over the last six years including unexpected costs associated with utilities and facilities, unexpected costs related to personnel matters, increasing Special Education costs, past budget development practices, deficit spending in 5 of the last 6 years, and ongoing rising costs in general.

The ending fund balance for the 2017-18 school year is positive; however, we are not able to carry over the required reserve funds into the 2018-19 school year. This affects the Board approved 2018-19 balanced budget which was submitted to the California Department of Education (CDE) for approval. At this time, we have been told by CDE that they will probably approve both ACUSD and ACOE budgets with cautionary advice and time to submit a plan to restore the state required 3% (district) and 4% (county) reserve funds. It's important to understand that while this is a fiscal concern, it's not a crisis and it can be resolved. Our business services team and I are working closely with CDE. Another state agency called FCMAT is also providing their expertise and support to assist us through this transition.

While many of the financial commitments that led us to this point were made years ago, confronting their impact is my responsibility. In the coming months, I expect to approach these challenges with a collaborative spirit. Stakeholders will be invited to assist us in the decision making processes as we make recommendations to the Board of Trustees. As we all work together, I am confident we can address this shortfall while simultaneously keeping the focus on our students and their education. As a starting point, we are committed to keeping reductions as far away from the classroom as possible.

If you have questions or would like to talk with one of us, Assistant Superintendent Jared Critchfield and I would be happy to talk with you. Please feel free to contact me at 257-5353 or Jared at 257-5345. Your ongoing support is greatly appreciated, as always.

Sincerely,  
Amy Slavensky