



Amador County Unified School District

FAQ: Our Financial Current Reality

January 11, 2019

In an effort to share more information and be responsive to recent questions from the community, the following is provided. If you have more questions, please feel free to reach out to Superintendent Amy Slavensky at 209-257-5353 or Assistant Superintendent of Business Services Jared Critchfield at 209-257-5345.

This information provides more response to three email messages to all staff from Dr. Slavensky, dated September 21, 2018, October 19, 2018, and November 9, 2018. There are also two previous related FAQs dated September 27, 2018 and November 20, 2018, available here: <https://www.amadorcoe.org/departments/business/frequently-asked-questions/>.

- 1. How are decisions being made about professional learning? How are consultants, professional development (PD), and teacher cohort/committee work being funded?**
Site-based decisions are usually made collaboratively through site leadership teams and School Site Councils. School level activities are paid for through site funds. District level PD has been reduced and is funded through certain federal and state funds that have restricted uses and cannot help rebuild our reserves. Examples of these funds are Title 1, Title 2, Title 4, MTSS grant, Foster Youth grant, and the new, one-time Low Performing Students Block Grant. Title 2 funds come with the requirement that they are used for professional development only. An example is the recent trauma-informed practices training funded with Foster Youth grant carryover dollars that must be sent back to the state if they are not spent by January 31.
- 2. How are site budget allocations determined?** Site budget allocations include Local Control Funding Formula (LCFF), Title 1, and Lottery and are based on state and federal rules. LCFF dollars are intended to meet the needs of English learners, low income students, and foster youth; therefore, the site allocation is based on the number of students in each population at that school. Title 1 is designed to serve educationally disadvantaged youth and is based on the free/reduced meal rate (i.e., poverty rate) at the school. Lottery funds may support all students so this allocation is based on total enrollment at the school. The plan for use of these site funds is collaboratively decided and written in each school's Single Plan for Student Achievement (SPSA) and annually approved by the School Site Council and the Board of Trustees.
- 3. We've heard that some district office leaders have expensive mentors or consultants who advise them. What is the truth about this?** At the July and August 2018 Board meetings, several contracts were approved by the Board, prior to knowledge of our current reality and prior to the Unaudited Actuals Report to the Board on September 26, 2018. These contracts are as follows: (a) School PRPro Communications at \$2,430, which

is greatly reduced from previous years' contracts and already planned to be phased out at the end of this year as internal capacity grows; (b) Tim & Ann Hern Consulting at \$5,000 to support essential business services work; (c) Leadership Associates at \$4,000 to support the superintendent's evaluation process and provide executive coaching services; and (d) Total School Solutions at \$2,250 for the first semester of this school year only for executive coaching services.

- 4. We've heard that Assistant Superintendent Jared Critchfield is involved in a mentor program. How much does that cost the District and what is the benefit?** Mr. Critchfield is participating this year in the Financial Crisis Management and Assistance Team (FCMAT) CBO Mentor Program which happens on Friday evenings and Saturday sessions once a month. It is funded entirely by FCMAT except for minor travel costs to Sacramento. This professional learning and mentor support for Mr. Critchfield has been instrumental to his success in uncovering fiscal problems and identifying solutions (i.e., resolving AT&T overcharges, resolving matters associated with the energy conservation project, negotiating prudent agreements, etc.).
- 5. Why was the superintendent's secretary position upgraded to a different, more expensive position?** In order to build needed internal capacity related to important public relations and communication work, the superintendent's secretary position was eliminated last spring and a different position was created to replace it. The new position is called Executive Operations and Communications Specialist. It is a confidential position. Comparing range 1 of this position to range 1 of the superintendent's secretary position, the monthly increase is \$610. This position assumes the work of the School PRPro Communications consultant which has been supporting Amador County Public Schools since the 2015-16 school year. This decision was made prior to knowledge of our need to rebuild state required reserve fund levels (i.e., the outcome of the Unaudited Actuals Reports, September 26, 2018). This is a cost efficient move providing essential communications work and support.
- 6. What is the status of the Opterra/Engie energy conservation project right now? Is it really conserving energy and are we getting any credits/dollars from it?** The solar panels at Argonaut and Amador High Schools have been online since late spring 2018. The District is working closely with PG&E to ensure all energy credits are being applied appropriately as the solar brings an overall savings to the district. The new energy efficient lighting throughout the District and the 83 HVAC units have also helped to reduce utility expenses. The District will continue to find ways to reduce operating expenditures through various strategies.
- 7. What is happening with Shenandoah Valley Charter School (SVCS) and what is the impact on the District and/or County Office of Education budgets?** During this school year, enrollment has gradually declined from 41 students on 9/6/18 to 15 students on 1/10/19. This is due to a variety of reasons. During the 2017-18 school year, central office staff worked diligently with the SVCS Governance Council, principal and staff to review and revise the charter in order to strengthen and support the school. Because

the District and County Office of Education are experiencing tight times financially, we are looking at ways to reduce costs. At SVCS, this may include consolidating the two classes into one class for the second semester. Leaders are working with the school staff and families on this. According to state law, charter schools must be reauthorized every five years. Reauthorization requirements include fiscal health and positive student outcomes. Since this is the fifth year of SVCS's existence, working with the school community, the Governance Council and Principal will determine if a reauthorization application will be submitted to the ACOE Board of Trustees for approval.

- 8. We heard that Fiscal Crisis and Management Assistance Team (FCMAT) members were in the District before winter break. How did the visit go and what happens next?** A FCMAT team of three people, which includes former chief business officials, spent 1 ½ days at the district office interviewing various staff members, managers, labor leaders (ACTA, SEAC, and CSEA), board members, a former board member, and the county superintendent-elect. Prior to the visit, they had requested and received volumes of financial documents from the Business Services Office. During the next 2-3 months, they will study the documents and prepare a report which will include verification of our financial reports (i.e., the 2017-18 Unaudited Actuals Report and the 2018-19 First Interim Report) and recommendations for consideration by the ACUSD and ACOE Administration and Board of Trustees. To be clear, this is not a crisis. Rather, with **assistance** from the FCMAT team, the goal continues to be the necessary rebuilding of our mandatory reserve funds while simultaneously serving students well.
- 9. What happens next?** During the months of January-May 2019, we will engage in the annual Local Control Accountability Plan (LCAP) stakeholder engagement processes. This will include: (a) staff meetings at every school and a community meeting in each major region of the county to share information/data and gather input to assist with the decision making process; (b) LCAP Advisory Committee meetings to review data and stakeholder feedback, and make recommendations; (c) LCAP Development Team meetings to compile the data and feedback into one plan; and (d) submission of the 2019-20 LCAP and supporting Budget Plan for Board of Trustees approval in June 2019. This process will emphasize cost savings with a continued focus on our two LCAP goals: students' social-emotional learning and student achievement. Simultaneously, District staff will: (a) collaborate with labor leaders and other groups to determine other cost savings solutions for recommendation to the Board of Trustees, which may include some certificated and management reduction of staff for the 2019-20 school year; and (b) receive information and use recommendations from the FCMAT team.
- 10. What is the vision in moving forward?** Keeping with our 2017-2020 Strategic Plan and our mission statement which is the foundation of the plan, "Enriched by the diversity and deep traditions of our unique community, Amador County Public Schools will prepare, support, and inspire each student to achieve career and college success in a rapidly evolving world through highly engaging teaching, rigorous learning and innovative pathways supported by strong partnerships in a safe, caring, and collaborative environment." Each day, together we strive to attain this mission.