

New Auditor General Report Released on WUSD Operations

Recently the State Auditor General released their latest report on WUSD's operations and this analysis will become the basis for our next WUSD Stewardship Report, which we hope to publish later this spring. The report measures the school district's spending levels and compares them to its peer group (like sized school districts in Arizona) as a benchmark.

The report showed that the district is starting to spend a higher percentage on "plant operations", which is a function of aging facilities and the fact that the state has cut funding for maintenance and repairs by approximately 35%. This past year the legislature made that cut "permanent" so Arizona school districts will be faced with eroding facilities as we move into the future. Although these maintenance and repair expenses are increasing, WUSD's expenditures in this area are still considered "very low" compared to our state level peer group.

A second area where the district spends at a "very low" level compared to its peer group is in the category of administration. The report indicates that WUSD allocates \$843/student to this area, while its peer group spends \$1,077/student. The report further indicates that the expenditure level of \$843/student decreased by \$10/student from the previous year (\$853/student).

Expenditures for transportation in WUSD are also reported to be "low" as compared to the peer group and food service is "comparable". Thus, overall, WUSD ranges in expenditure levels from "comparable" to "very low". The District has no area which is designated as "high" or "very high" when benchmarked against its peer districts.

The report also looks at student performance and indicates that WUSD performs approximately 13% better than the peer group in math, 3% better in reading, 5% better in writing and 5% below in science. These data are based upon the AIMS test, which is administered in grades 3-8 and 10. As I have stated in earlier articles, we are in the process of transitioning to the new Arizona College and Career Readiness Standards and a new state assessment to measure our students' performance. I will provide additional information on that process as we progress through the various stages of implementation.

The final component of the report which I would like to highlight relates to WUSD's graduation rate. The report indicates that WUSD's graduation rate stands at 88% and its peer group average is 82%; statewide averages sit at 77%. Although we have ongoing work to do in this area clearly we are heading in the right direction.

I encourage you to look for the WUSD Stewardship Report which will be out later this spring as it will have even more data regarding the school district and its academic and financial performance. If you have questions please don't hesitate to contact me at 668-5350.