

Position
Realignment
Recommendations

2/10/2025

Agenda

- Review of Budget Outlook
- Discussion of Goal
- Presentation of Realignment Recommendations
- Q&A
- Board Action/Direction

Budgetary Overview

Impact of Learning Recovery Funds

Budget Reduction Targets

With the expiration of the Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief (ESSER) funds in September 2024 and the imminent expiration of the current allocation of Learning Recovery Emergency Block Grant funds, it is imperative that the District reduce the unrestricted general fund operating budget by approximately \$2,500,000 as soon as practicable.

This reduction will account for increased operational and programmatic costs and a reduction in LCFF funding, predominately due to decline in enrollment, and move the District toward a more sustainable budget.

District staff have already taken steps, with Board approval, to move as many staff as possible into grant and categorically funded positions, to eliminate unfilled positions, and to reduce general fund expenditures. It is important to note that approximately 81% of the District budget is tied directly to salaries and benefits.

Understanding Post-COVID Supplemental Funds

Learning Recovery and ESSER funds were intended to:

- Allow districts to hire additional staff to mitigate instructional time lost during the pandemic;
- Address air filtration, air flow, distancing, and other environmental concerns related to COVID-19; and
- Help students “catch up” to where they were or would have been if not for the pandemic.

Learning Recovery and ESSER funds were not intended to:

- Create ongoing positions, programs, or obligations related to learning recovery;
- Permanently augment or supplement general funds; or
- Supplant any general fund expenditures.

Recommendations Overview

These recommendations for position realignment with the Del Norte Unified School District are being made due to the expiration of COVID-era funding that was received from state and federal sources beginning in 2020 and that experienced staged expirations each year since.

During the term of learning loss mitigation funding, decisions to create and hire positions, expand programs, and adjust student to adult ratios were made with the best information available and with staff and community input. The expiration of these funds requires a revisitation of those decisions. The proposal includes position and program adjustments designed to maintain the District's ability to provide core educational services, while ensuring long term fiscal sustainability.

Recommendations do not include grant or categorically funded or special education positions.

Recommendation 1: Reduction in Paraprofessional I Positions

Current Situation

The District funds 33 positions for Paraprofessional I. This new job classification was created as part of the classification and compensation study, finalized in 2023. Prior to augmented funding, Para I positions were predominately funded by sites out of site-based allocations for site specific needs. With the additional funding provided through COVID relief, the District took on these positions and added positions to support learning recovery in Kindergarten and 1st grade classes. Many of these positions have since been reassigned by site administration to other roles, and some have not been filled.

Looking forward to 2025-2026, the District will need to maintain approximately 10 Para I positions to adequately staff transitional kindergarten, and school sites may choose to revert to pre-COVID staffing levels out of their site allocations.

Recommendation 1: Reduction in Paraprofessional I Positions

Programmatic Data

No programmatic data was collected by school sites regarding the effectiveness or utilization of Para I staff. Para 1 staff are highly qualified and able to perform a wide range of instructional support services.

Recommendation

It is the recommendation that all Para I positions be noticed in March, and that approximately eight (8) positions be retained for TK. Notice would be required in compliance with Ed Code and collective bargaining to ensure job rights based on seniority and adequate notification. This would reduce the overall budget deficit by approximately \$825,000.

***Note:** With the proposed realignment of special education behavioral services, Para I employees whose positions may be eliminated may be eligible to fill an open position within that job family.*

Recommendation 2: Reduction in Library Services Technician (LST) Positions

Current Situation

The District funds 9 Library Services Technician positions. Prior to the pandemic, LST positions were predominately funded by sites out of site-based allocations, typically on a part time basis. With the additional funding provided by COVID relief, the District took on these positions, added positions to include all schools, and increased time for the positions. The intention was to promote reading interest and support literacy. All but one of these positions is currently filled.

Recommendation 2: Reduction in Library Services Technician (LST) Positions

Programmatic Data

No programmatic data was collected by school sites regarding the academic impact of LSTs, and LSTs are utilized in many different ways at schools, making collection of data difficult. Some sites use the LST to run robust, interactive library programs, while others utilize the LST to provide enrichment activities, and others have opted to have the LST perform a variety of tasks.

Recommendation

It is the recommendation that all LST positions be noticed in March. Should a school or schools wish to retain an LST on a full or part time basis, this notice protects staff employment rights regarding seniority and adequate notification. This would reduce the overall budget deficit by approximately \$350,000.

10 ***Note:** School sites may revert to the LST staffing that they had pre-COVID and expend site funds for that purpose, in alignment with site need.*

Recommendation 3: Reconfiguration of the Long Term Independent Study (LTIS) Program

Current Situation

The District funds 2.5 certificated teaching positions to support LTIS. This new program was created to preemptively address concerns communicated to the District by families regarding proposed forced COVID immunizations, announced by the State Governor in 2021. Prior to the creation of this program, staffing did not exist. In 2022, the program served approximately 75 students in K-12, and that number was reduced to less than 50 in 2024. For 2024-2025, the Board reduced staffing from 3.5 FTE to 2.5 FTE. With the declining number of students, cost of online curriculum, added office work and management, the program is cost neutral. Elimination of the program as a stand alone program would reduce the overall operations cost.

Recommendation 3: Reconfiguration of the Long Term Independent Study (LTIS) Program

Programmatic Data

The program is successful. Students are enrolling for a minimum of a grading period, and many 12th grade students are graduating on time. It also allows for flexibility in schedules and the ability to engage fully with co- and extracurricular activities at the student's home school.

Recommendation

By reconfiguring LTIS to be housed with current staff at a school site, with dedicated period(s), LTIS students would still be able to take advantage of this program. This would reduce the overall budget deficit by approximately \$450,000.

***Note:** Depending on enrollment, if this were eliminated in its entirety, the deficit reduction may rise to \$600,000.*

Recommendation 4: Restoration of Class Size Ratios

Current Situation

Prior to the pandemic, the District had consistently utilized class size ratios. The local bargaining agreement sets class size maximums, but at the recommendation of the Asst. Superintendent of Business Services and the approval of the Board, standard class size ratios were used. Each year, depending on the budget outlook, the Board would engage in conversations regarding class size reduction, combo classes, etc. Following the pandemic, the District goal was one grade level of student with each teacher, based on site enrollment. This has led to classrooms, sometimes in the same grade, with extremely low enrollment (fewer than 10 students) or typical or higher than typical enrollment. Additionally, the District has had a decline in enrollment of approximately 300 students.

If the Board were to utilize past ratios, mathematically, the District would be overstaffed by approximately 18 certificated teachers.

Recommendation 4: Restoration of Class Size Ratios

Programmatic Data

There is no data locally or nationally that points to lower class sizes improving outcomes for students. In fact, the primary factor related to student outcomes is teacher effectiveness. Since the post-COVID class size reduction, student academic outcomes have not significantly improved. However, mathematical calculations do not account for a variety of factors. Therefore, the District would most likely only reduce staffing by thirteen (13) FTE.

Recommendation

By reestablishing class size ratios to pre-COVID numbers, classes would be more balanced, and the District could better account for the drop in enrollment. The restoration of a ratio would reduce the overall budget deficit by approximately \$1,100,000.

Final Takeaways

These recommendations have been carefully considered to balance the District's financial constraints with the need to provide a quality education to all students. While these adjustments will impact staff and change some services to students, the overall goal is to ensure that the District remains financially viable while continuing to prioritize core instructional services.

To reiterate, the services established above, following COVID, were brought on with **one-time funding** to provide **limited-term response** to the impact of COVID in schools to **mitigate learning loss**. *Those funds are now exhausted*. District staff, through Board approval and direction, have already addressed a number of other fiscal concerns over the past months by eliminating unfilled positions, shifting one-time funded positions into grant or categorical funds, realigning positions into the LCAP process, or other means.

The District will continue to utilize grant funding, federal categorical funding, state mandated funding and other revenue streams to address academics, attendance, school climate and culture, transportation, facilities, professional development, and other needs.

Board Action

It is recommended that the Board of Education approve these recommendations to meet legal obligations to staff who may be impacted and to the creation of a budget that reflects the expiration of one-time funds, declining enrollment, increased costs, and future fiscal uncertainty.

Thank
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