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DEPUTY AUDITOR GENERAL

June 29, 2010

Members of the Arizona Legislature

The Honorable Janice K. Brewer, Governor

Governing Board  
Higley Unified School District

Dr. Denise Birdwell, Superintendent  
Higley Unified School District

Transmitted herewith is a report of the Auditor General, a review of Higley Unified School District's Structured English Immersion and Compensatory Instruction budget requests. This review was prepared pursuant to and under the authority vested in the Auditor General by Arizona Revised Statutes §15-756.12.

My staff and I will be pleased to discuss or clarify items in the report.

This report will be released to the public on June 30, 2010.

Sincerely,

Debbie Davenport  
Auditor General

DD:bl  
Attachment

## ELL Review

### Summary

Higley USD's Structured English Immersion (SEI) and Compensatory Instruction (CI) budget requests were supported by district records.

The District spent its FY 2009 SEI monies to provide eight English language development teachers and to purchase instructional materials and classroom supplies. However, the District's FY 2009 ELL program was not fully in compliance with the SEI model prescribed by the Arizona ELL Task Force because 4 hours of English language development were not consistently provided and Individual Language Learner Plans were not properly implemented. The District has since corrected the deficiencies.

Higley USD spent its FY 2009 CI monies to provide extended-day classes and a summer school program for ELL students.



2010

## English Language Learner programs, costs, and funding

The Office of the Auditor General has conducted a review of the Higley USD's Structured English Immersion and Compensatory Instruction budget requests pursuant to A.R.S. §15-756.12. Auditors reviewed these budget requests to determine whether district records supported them. In accordance with statute, Higley USD was selected for review because its SEI program was monitored by the Arizona Department of Education. The District is located in Maricopa County, about 30 miles southeast of Phoenix, and serves students in kindergarten through 12th grade. In fiscal year 2009, Higley USD identified 229 of its 9,161 students as English language learners.

### Background

English Language Learners are students whose native language is not English and who are not currently able to perform ordinary classroom work in English. ELL students are identified through a state-adopted language proficiency test. School districts are required to administer this test to students if the primary language spoken at home is other than English, and then retest annually those students identified as ELL. School districts must then report the test results to the Arizona Department of Education (ADE).

By reporting their numbers of ELL students, districts are eligible for additional monies for ELL programs through the State's school funding formula (known as ELL Group B Weight monies) and the federal Title III program. In addition, school districts may submit budget requests to ADE for monies to implement SEI and CI programs. SEI provides English language development during the normal school day, while CI provides English instruction outside of the normal school day in

### Levels of English Language Proficiency:

**Pre-emergent**—Student does not understand enough language to perform in English.

**Emergent**—Student understands and can speak a few isolated English words.

**Basic**—Student may understand slower speech, and speak, read, and write simple words and phrases, but often makes mistakes.

**Intermediate**—Student can understand familiar topics and is somewhat fluent in English, but has difficulty with academic conversations.

**Proficient**—Student can read and understand texts and conversations at a normal speed, and can speak and write fluently with minor errors.

Source: Arizona Department of Education.

programs such as after-school tutoring and summer school. However, if a district's Group B Weight monies are sufficient to cover the incremental costs of its SEI program, no additional SEI monies are awarded through the budget request process.

## Fiscal year 2009 SEI program

FY 2009 SEI budget request provided \$541,553 primarily for teachers—The District's fiscal year 2009 ADE-approved SEI budget request was \$541,553. This amount, along with Group B Weight monies, provided for 8.8 incremental teachers, instructional materials, and teacher training costs.

Incremental costs are the costs, as defined by the ELL Task Force, that are associated with an SEI program and that are in addition to the normal costs of conducting programs for English proficient students.

SEI program was not fully in compliance with model requirements—In November 2008, ADE monitored the District's SEI program and found that the District had not properly implemented some aspects of the SEI model. Figure 1 provides an overview of the model requirements for Arizona school districts. The Department found that the 4 hours of English language development were not consistently provided; some teachers did not tailor instruction for ELL students; some teachers did not use the required standards for teaching ELL

students; and Individual Language Learner Plans (ILLPs) were not properly implemented. Specifically, ILLPs were found to be generic instead of addressing the individual needs of the students and also did not demonstrate how the student would receive 4 hours of English language development.

Fiscal year 2009 SEI monies spent for purposes approved in the budget request—The District spent approximately \$424,000 of its approved budget request to provide eight English language development teachers and to purchase classroom supplies and instructional materials. These teachers provided small group instruction and also performed some coordinator functions, such as proctoring language assessments, tracking student proficiency levels, and coordinating instruction with the mainstream teachers for ILLP students. About \$118,000 of the approved monies remained at fiscal year-end because the District hired one less teacher than budgeted; actual teacher salaries were slightly lower than the average salaries used for budgeting; and monies budgeted for training-related costs, such as travel and substitute teachers, were not used because training was provided at the District. Unspent SEI monies remain with the District to be used in future years.

Figure 1: Structured English Immersion Model Requirements

- **English language development (ELD) components**—Students receive 4 hours of ELD instruction daily in the following instructional areas: oral English and conversation, grammar, reading, writing, and vocabulary.
- **Grouping requirements**—ELL students are placed into SEI classrooms according to ELL proficiency level in class sizes not exceeding the non-ELL average class size in the district. In addition, the following maximum class sizes apply:
  - Pre-Emergent and Emergent—23
  - Basic and Intermediate—28
- **Teacher qualifications**—All teachers in SEI classrooms must be highly qualified and have an SEI, English as a Second Language, or Bilingual endorsement. Additionally, SEI teachers at the middle school and high school level must be highly qualified in English or language arts.
- **Individual Language Learner Plans (ILLP)**—Schools with 20 or fewer ELL students within a three-grade span may choose to create ILLPs for those students. These students may be placed in classrooms with English-proficient students. The ILLPs should detail how each individual student will receive the 4 hours of ELD instruction in this setting.

Source: *Structured English Immersion Models of the Arizona English Language Learners Task Force-5/14/08* and *Arizona Department of Education Guidance on ILLP 8/2008*.

## Fiscal year 2010 SEI program

Fiscal year 2010 SEI budget request is supported—Higley USD’s 2010 SEI budget request is supported by district records. Its records adequately support the number of ELL students, proficiency levels, and average class sizes used to determine the District’s SEI budget. The request was approved by ADE in February 2009 and includes salaries and benefits for three incremental teachers, teacher training costs, and instructional materials. The significant reduction in the number of incremental teachers from the prior year is primarily due to the broader use of ILLPs. The District’s budget request indicates that it will create three SEI classrooms and place all other ELL students on ILLPs.

FY 2010 SEI program in compliance with Task Force model—ADE conducted a follow-up review of the District in September 2009 and determined that Higley USD corrected the previously cited deficiencies, including providing 4 hours of English language development and properly documenting ILLPs.

### Approved SEI Budget Fiscal Year 2010

<b>Costs:</b>	
Incremental teacher salaries	\$134,901
Incremental teacher benefits	33,724
Textbooks, instructional aids, and assessments	6,727
Transportation for itinerant teachers	0
Travel expenses for training—administrators	0
Travel expenses for training—teachers	0
Travel stipends for training time outside of regular school days	0
Classroom substitutes	11,999
Other expenses	<u>0</u>
Total incremental costs	187,351

<b>State and local offsets:</b>	
ELL “Group B Weight”	<u>48,787</u>
<b>Net budget request</b>	<b><u>\$138,564</u></b>

## Fiscal year 2009 CI program

CI budget request is supported—For fiscal year 2009, Higley USD requested and was approved by ADE for a CI budget of \$68,280 to provide 15 weeks of extended-day classes and summer classes for ELL students. Based on district projections of program participation, optimal class sizes, program schedule, and estimated hourly salaries, auditors determined that the District’s budget request was supported. The District’s budget request was based on the following estimates and projections:

### Extended-day classes—\$25,880 for teacher salaries and general classroom supplies

The District requested monies to provide extended-day classes for 1 hour, twice per week, for 15 weeks with each school offering one to three classes of language development. The request was to pay 17 teachers \$20 per hour plus related benefits for each hour of instruction and 1 corresponding hour for lesson planning, completing program paperwork, and meeting with parents on student progress. The request also included classroom supplies estimated at \$10 per student.

### Summer classes—\$42,400 for teacher salaries and general classroom supplies

The District requested monies to provide summer classes for ELL students beginning in June 2009. The request was based on offering classes for 5 hours each day, for 20 days, using 17 teachers earning \$20 per hour, plus related benefits. The District estimated that 160 students would participate. The summer classes would include 4 hours of English language development

instruction and an additional hour of enrichment activities, such as using music to help teach language. The request also included classroom supplies estimated at \$10 per student.

Fiscal year 2009 CI monies were spent for purposes requested—The District spent about \$32,000 of its fiscal year 2009 CI budget offering extended-day and summer classes for ELL students.

- Extended-day classes—The District spent about \$21,000 on teacher salaries, related benefits, and instructional materials for the extended-day classes. Review of class rosters indicate about 130 ELL students participated in the extended-day classes with an average class size of about 10 students per teacher. The classes were offered for 15 weeks beginning in January 2009.
- Summer classes—The District spent about \$11,000 providing the summer classes with 70 students participating in the program that was instructed by 5 teachers. Classes were held 4 hours each day, 4 days a week, for 4 weeks in June 2009. Teachers were also paid for 1 hour of preparation time each day. According to district officials, fewer ELL students than anticipated participated in the summer classes, probably because student transportation was not provided.

Unspent CI monies remain with the District and offset future budget requests.