



Memorandum

TO : House and Senate Interim Committees on Education

FROM: Bureau of Legislative Research, Policy Analysis and Research Section

DATE : April 15, 2014

SUBJECT : NSL-related responses to district and school survey

PROJECT # 14-001-28d

As part of the 2014 adequacy study, the Bureau of Legislative Research (BLR) conducted surveys of all 238 school district superintendents and a randomly selected, representative sample of 74 school principals. Because the Education Committees reviewed National School Lunch (NSL) state categorical funding and expenditures in January before the completion of these surveys, the NSL-related responses could not be included in the January reports. Those responses are the subject of this memo. This memo also includes responses to questions about federal funding and tutoring that did not fit with any of the report topics remaining in this adequacy study process. Responses to other survey questions will be presented in related reports later in the adequacy study process.

Methodology

The district-level survey was conducted using an online questionnaire. The survey was distributed to the districts beginning October 28, 2013, and the last district responded January 21, 2014. The school survey was conducted through interviews with principals conducted during site visits to the selected schools by BLR staff. The school visits were made beginning October 31, 2013 with the final visit on January 29, 2014.

The district survey allowed the BLR to collect specific, quantitative data from all districts, while the school survey asked open-ended qualitative questions. To elicit the most candid responses, district and school staff were assured their responses would not be individually identified, therefore responses are provided only in aggregate.

National School Lunch State Categorical Funding

The following question appeared at the end of the district survey.

District Survey Question: Please use the space below to provide any additional information pertaining to the questions on this survey or to offer any comments or suggestions you wish to convey to the Education Committees.

Some districts provided a response (or more than one), while others did not. Fifteen districts commented on NSL funding. Eight of those districts specifically mentioned the need for more flexibility in the funds' use or requested the Legislature not to add more restrictions. Others asked that the funding not be reduced or the distribution methodology changed. Below are a few representative samples of responses.

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- “NSLA funds MUST be as flexible as possible. [DISTRICT] is approaching ##% F&R students, those students and their parents drive the culture of the school and the community. By allowing us to use NSLA funds for ALL students, we're experiencing great results; i.e., - 11th grade Lit, F&R students outscored our Full Pay students! We used NSLA enhanced funding for iPads in the high school We've found the gap between the have's and have-not's has closed rapidly. Our F&R students now have the same accessibility to information and the world as everyone else. They also depend on their iPad for communication with their teacher, for job applications (they now have an email address) and for applying for scholarships. There are countless positives that have come with this purchase. PLEASE continue to allow technology purchases with NSLA dollars! It's MUCH MORE than a device, technology is the GREAT EQUALIZER and our F&R students are benefiting tremendously.”
 - “Flexibility in the use of NSLA funds is important to retain. While funds are used for tutoring, intervention teachers, instructional facilitators, summer school, etc., the district also uses funds to provide for additional nurses and resource officers, two areas of importance to the well-being of our students and important to our patrons. Not being able to be flexible in use of these funds would hamper the district's ability to provide these services.”
 - “NSLA funding has been the best money schools get for helping students. Being able to spend this money the way the committee determines from student data has really provided services that the small district could not financially provide in the past. Would love to see this money distributed where all free and reduced children would receive the same funding.”
 - “NSLA funds have been essential in our efforts to raise achievement levels of our students. The continuation of this effort to help low socio-economic students and other students is imperative to our overall efforts to improve schools in this state.”
 - “Please remember the law of unintended consequences as you seek to redefine NSLA funding. I am curious why such a complex two tier approach is being discussed when the other three categorical funds are funded on ADM which seems to be a fair method of distribution, the greater number of qualifying students the greater the revenue.”

School Survey Question: What state or federal laws or ADE rules should be changed or eliminated?

Ten of the 74 school principals interviewed mentioned some aspect of NSL funding. Five of those principals said the funding was either too restrictive or asked that the Legislature avoid adding additional restrictions to the use of NSL. Others asked that the funding not be reduced or noted how essential the funding is for their school.

Federal Funding

In the months when superintendents were completing the district survey, districts were dealing with reductions in federal funding, such as Title I and IDEA Part B funding, due to the federal sequestration. Assuming the funding reductions could affect Arkansas finances in coming years, the BLR added three questions about how the funding cuts were affecting school districts. However, in December 2013, Congress passed the Bipartisan Budget Act of 2013 which rolled back the automatic cuts scheduled for FY14 and FY15.

District Survey Question: How many federally funded full-time instructional employees were cut from the district in 2013-14 due to federal sequestration reductions? (Sum all FTEs, including fractions such as 0.5 for half-time. If none, enter "0".)

All but four of the 238 districts responded to this question. Collectively, districts said they cut 77.27 instructional FTEs in 2013-14 due to sequestration reductions.

# of FTEs cut	Districts Giving This Response	% of Responding Districts
0	196	84%
.5-1	16	7%
>1-2	13	6%
>2-5	8	3%
5+	1	.4%

District Survey Question: How many full-time instructional employees who were federally funded last year (2012-13) are funded with state or local funding this year (2013-14) due to federal sequestration reductions? (Sum all FTEs, including fractions such as 0.5 for half-time. If none, enter "0".)

Five of the 238 districts did not respond to this question. Collectively, districts said they shifted 92.715 federally funded instructional FTEs to state or local funds due to sequestration reductions.

# of FTEs cut	Districts Giving This Response	% of Responding Districts
0	189	81%
.5-1	25	11%
>1-2	8	3%
>2-5	7	3%
5+	4	2%

In total districts said they cut or shifted the funding source for nearly 170 FTEs who were previously federally funded due to sequestration.

District Survey Question: Of the full-time employees counted in 13 and 14 above, how many were funded by each type of federal funds? (If there are any additional funding types, please list in 15a below. If none, enter "0".)

- Title I
- Title VI-B (IDEA Part B)
- Other

Just 215 of the 238 districts provided useable answers to this question. Of the 153 FTEs counted in the usable answers, 94 FTEs had been previously funded by Title I (federal funding intended to support disadvantaged students), while 39 had been funded by Title VI-B (IDEA Part B, which is intended to support special education students). Districts indicated that a little more than 20 FTEs had been funded by other sources, including Title IIA (which is designed to help improve teacher quality), Title I, Part C (Migrant Education Program) and Medicaid.

Supplemental Educational Services and Tutoring

Supplemental education services (SES) are tutoring services provided by companies, rather than by districts themselves. Prior to the state's approval of its Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) Flexibility Plan, schools in school improvement were required to offer and pay for their students to receive SES. With the approval of the state's ESEA Flexibility Plan, school districts are no longer required to offer or pay for these services. In an early adequacy study meeting, some Education Committee members expressed concern about how districts are serving students in the absence of required SES.

District Survey Question: Did your district stop using supplemental educational services (SES) when the ESEA Flexibility plan eliminated that requirement in the 2012-13 school year?

Three districts did not respond to this question. Of the 235 districts that did respond, 55% said they did not use SES services even before ESEA Flexibility. Of the remaining 45%, 91 districts said they stopped offering or reduced their SES services. Just 14 districts said they continued offering SES just as they had before the Flexibility Plan.

Response	Number of Districts Giving This Response
Yes	89
No, our district continued using SES just as we had before ESEA Flexibility	14
No, our district continued to use SES, but we have reduced the amount of SES we use	2
Our district did not use SES, even before ESEA Flexibility	130

District Survey Question: If your district stopped using SES or reduced the amount of SES, please explain why. (Check all that apply.):

Of the 91 districts that said they stopped or reduced the amount of SES they offered, the majority indicated the district is now providing the tutoring that previously offered by SES providers. More than a third of these districts indicated that they stopped or reduced their SES because the tutoring company was ineffective or too expensive. (Because districts could select more than one response, the percentages do not add to 100%.)

Response	Number of the 91 Districts Giving This Response	% of the 91 Districts That Stopped or Reduced SES
SES provider is no longer offering services	1	1%
SES provider was ineffective	33	36%
SES services were too expensive	34	37%
District now providing tutoring that was previously provided by SES	51	56%
No student interest in SES services	14	15%
Other	16	18%

District Survey Question: If you selected "Other" above, please specify. The following is a sample of the responses received by districts that selected "Other."

- Parents in our district declined services every year. We offered after school tutoring at all campuses.
- Hired outside consultants.
- Supplemental services were an inconsistent way to provide services for tutoring to our students when outside providers were involved.
- The District hired a Curriculum Specialist which will help in the same areas that SES worked with.
- They were using our teachers and paying them more than we (the School) could pay them. SES took our best teachers for after school and we could not utilize those teachers.
- Reflex Math was set up to provide math tutoring after SES was discontinued. It was very successful and is provided again this year in the District ACSIP.
- Arkansas flexibility allowed districts to use the funding to pay for external providers due to schools being designated at 'priority schools.' Funds were also used for district provided extended tutoring and summer school remediation.
- There was very little interest in the SES services.
- Non-certified tutors were being used by SES providers

District Survey Question: If your district stopped using SES or reduced the amount of SES, how is your district spending the Title I, Part A funds previously set aside for this purpose?

The following represents a sample of the responses provided for this question.

- Parent involvement
- Materials and supplies for literacy and math
- Education consultants (also known as external providers)
- Tutoring programs
- Expanding summer school tutoring and after-school/before-school tutoring
- Allocating funds to the schools or after school tutoring using their Title I funds as needed within their school improvement plan.
- Purchasing technology equipment and intervention software
- Providing targeted assistance program as a replacement model reading program to these students that qualify, in a 1-to-1 or small group setting.
- Extended day tutoring and remediation and extended-year (summer school) tutoring and remediation.
- Professional Development
- Enriching classroom instruction and point in time interventions
- Saturday school and college courses for free-reduced lunch students including remediation when applicable.
- Additional .5 FTE for Literacy Instructional Facilitator
- Salary
- Retaining employees
- Thirty-minute periods each day for tutoring
- Support labs.
- Instructional Aides

District Survey Question: How important is tutoring (all types of tutoring) to student achievement gains?

Just one district did not respond to this question. The majority of districts (66%) consider tutoring very important or essential.

Response	Number of Districts Giving This Response	% of Districts
Not very important	2	1%
Somewhat important	27	11%
Important	53	22%
Very important	94	40%
Essential	61	26%

District Survey Question: Does your district require schools to provide regularly scheduled tutoring (i.e., specified periods for tutoring)?

Three districts did not respond to this question. Districts are fairly evenly split on this issue. About 51% said they do provide regularly scheduled tutoring, while 49% said they do not.

Response	Number of Districts Giving This Response	% of Districts
Yes	119	51%
No	116	49%

District Survey Question: Approximately, what percentage of your district’s general tutoring is conducted with each method? (If there are more than one set of percentages put the other set[s] in 21a) 21a. If you entered a percentage for "Other" above, please specify.

Response	Average %
Teachers meet with students as needed (not regularly scheduled) outside of class	21%
<u>Tutors</u> meet with students as needed (not regularly scheduled) outside of class	8%
Teachers regularly schedule tutoring sessions for a specific period of time for any students who show up	30%
Teachers regularly schedule tutoring sessions for a specific period of time for <u>designated</u> students who show up	34%
Other	7%

Narrative reviews of research clearly indicate that regularly scheduled tutoring of designated students by the classroom teachers is almost twice as effective in raising student performance as tutoring done by non-teachers, including para-professionals, or tutoring offered on a totally volunteer basis (i. e., whoever shows up). Tutoring that is an extension of the skills and knowledge being taught in the classroom is considerably more effective in student achievement gains than more general tutoring or homework assistance.

Fourteen districts either did not answer this question or provided an unusable response. The right-hand column shows an average of the percentage indicated for each tutoring method for the remaining 224 districts. Districts said the majority of their tutoring (64%) is regularly scheduled and provided by teachers working with designated students or any students who show up. The following is a sample of the responses districts gave if they indicated that any of their tutoring is conducted under an “Other” method.

- Teachers set aside time daily for individual and group tutoring.
- Licensed personnel provide interventions to identified struggling students through the Response to Intervention process.
- Building schedule preparation sessions before state testing for at risk students specifically. Any student who needs extra help can attend.
- Remediation is scheduled for grades 4-12 to address literacy and math areas of need. The district also uses computer software that provides interventions for students. Students in the elementary receive tutoring/interventions on a regularly scheduled time in which those students must participate. Reading Recovery is also available. The high school offers peer tutoring in Writing Lab and during advisory class, 7-12 students are remediated/tutored in math, literacy, and/or sciences.
- No tutoring needed
- We have this year started an after school program with the help from a 21st Grant. Kids receive tutoring from Certified Staff for 30 minutes to 1hr each day during the week.
- Response to Intervention Program in which small groups of 2 to 5 students meet with an aide during the school day
- Time is embedded in the school day for staff and volunteers to tutor specific students in specific content areas.
- Our homework hotline serves students who wish to attend after school.
- Math and literacy classes are double blocked during the school day so that all students, especially those not attending after-school or summer school tutorial services may receive remediation.
- Students are required to attend tutored classes during the day
- There is not an exact percentage for any method of tutoring. Grades 9-12 have an open door policy and set time to tutor in both Literacy and Math for any student who shows up. Grades K-8 have students who are selected to participate at a set time based on needs improvement. Some teachers choose to additionally volunteer their services to students on a one on one basis as needed with no set time other than that identified by the individual teacher.
- Weekly after-school tutoring by volunteers
- In K-12 we also have a pull out program using certified teachers to tutor our students in need. We also hold tutoring sessions before and after school to better accommodate parent and student needs.
- During school, designated students due to test scores, grades, teacher recommendation.