

Lake Arthur Municipal Schools



**Legislative Education Study Committee
Presentation**

Michael Grossman, Superintendent

Artesia Administrative Building

September 27, 2017

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Chair Senator Stewart, Vice Chair Representative Garcia Richard, Members of the Legislative Education Study Committee, Guests and my fellow educational colleagues I thank you for this opportunity to address the LESC committee.

Lake Arthur Municipal Schools is located in southeast New Mexico 32 miles south of Roswell and 8 miles north of Artesia as the most southern school district on State Route 2 that includes from north to south Dexter Municipal Schools, Hagerman Municipal Schools, and Lake Arthur Municipal Schools.

It is located in the Town of Lake Arthur with the town population listed at five hundred and twenty-five (525) with a per capita income level of \$22,050 dollars. The Town of Lake Arthur and Lake Arthur Municipal Schools are the only employers in the community itself. However, except for the employees who are living in the teacherages of Lake Arthur Schools all other employed staff commute to and from the school district. This is also true for the family wage earners residing in Lake Arthur. They travel outside the community to be employed as part of the work force of the Artesia, Carlsbad and Roswell areas.

For the 2017-2018 school year the student population is at 102 students as of today. In 2016-2017 the student population was 91 students. Since 2008 the overall student population of 156 has decreased steadily to just below 100 for the past two years. Free and Reduced Price meal percentage has averaged between 60-70% as a correlate with the low socio-economic status of a significant number of our students entering and receiving their educational program from Lake Arthur Municipal Schools. During the 2017-2018 school year the district is reestablishing the qualifying Provision 2 base year data that provides free breakfast/lunch meals to all students.

The community members that reside within the Lake Arthur School District boundaries have supported Lake Arthur Schools with the passage of over 7.3 million dollars in capital improvement bonds, Ed Tech bonds, and SB9 2-mill levy appropriations from 2005 through 2018. During this time period the only funding support the district has received from the Public School Facilities Authority is for the revision of its Facilities Master Plan. The district has never received actual facility remodeling, renovation, or construction funds from the PSFA since its inception. This despite the fact that the district has had roof water running on the inside walls of its buildings, major repair and maintenance of its HVAC systems, and the need to create a viable technology infrastructure to support the district's educational efforts to improve opportunity and the use of technology as a tool for its students.

In regards to the overall funding of the instructional program from 2010 to 2018 the district's budget has experienced a steady decline both in the state equalization guarantee, SEG, and in the availability of emergency supplemental funding. With constantly decreasing resources the district is required to maintain the same basic instructional program plus meet expanding requirements in early childhood education, workforce pathways of study initiatives, and accountability structures.

We supported Representative Hall's efforts to successfully pass the Size Adjustment Law, NM Statute 22-8-23 and it certainly aids a small school district in establishing a more positive SEG funding result. However, it supplies small school districts with about half of what is needed for those school districts to satisfy their obligation of meeting all accountability measures cited in Public School Statutes, Chapter 22 and 22A and in the Title 6 Primary and Secondary Education Section of the New Mexico Administrative Code.

As in most cases small school districts turn to Emergency Supplemental Funding to provide the additional funds to address creating a budget that will provide the minimum of educational opportunity to students attending small school districts. However, Lake Arthur Schools' experience is that Emergency Supplemental Funding is administered in a

punitive fashion. For the past five years the district's business manager and I have had to create a budget that uses actual costs to project what is needed as a budget for the next school year. As the budget is formalized invariably we are directed by the Public Education Department of Budget and Finance to cut the assigned budget line items for those real costs of essential supplies and services. An example of what happens during the budget building process is that the Lake Arthur Schools' business department analyzes the electrical usage through a study of the monthly electric utility bills. The sum total for the twelve months is then placed in the correct budget line item. This expense total reflects installation of energy efficient lighting, replacement of HVAC systems with energy efficient units, repair of components of the heating and cooling systems, and personal energy conservation strategies implemented by staff and students. Upon review of the line items associated with utilities by the district's PED budget analyst, the business manager was directed to cut the actual expenditure for electrical service from \$11,500.00 dollars to \$10,000.00 dollars. Since the district has already reduced personnel costs to the lowest possible level, the cut must come from other essential supplies and services. The ability to provide essential services such as basic utilities directly affects the learning environment for students. The only other remedy that I have is to pray for warmer winters and cooler summers.

If you are receiving Emergency Supplemental Funding the process of seeking approval of a change or addition from the Public Education Department involving a Full Time Equivalent, FTE, staff member is primarily concerned only with the dollars of the request. It seems the PED presumption is based on the belief that the district has only a rudimentary understanding of what is best for students and their learning. A recent case in point would be significant if it required additional funding but in this current situation additional funds are not required. The request was pursued because the student situation or data demonstrated a significant need, and if not addressed, would result in students not meeting grade level proficiency standards.

During the past spring budget process I was not allowed to increase the school district's FTE count by one (1) staff member for 2017-2018 to avoid creating K, 1, 2 and 3, 4, 5 combination classrooms. The movement of staff was required to address a weakness at the secondary level in which I had no dedicated middle school teachers. At the start of the year there were ten (10) students in the K-2 combination classroom.

Now, the count is seventeen (17). To begin with by any instructional standards I was playing in a student achievement mine field by attempting an elementary three grade level combination classroom. Picture if you will an organizational setting where one is requiring young children ages 5-7 to be self-directed in accomplishing a task such as dressing themselves. Then visualize that same group of children self-directing their personal practice of the beginning skills of reading, writing, and arithmetic? Through observations conducted by the principal of those seventeen children ages 5-7 with the teacher trying to meet the needs of each student, instruction was dissolving into an impossibility. That classroom needed additional instructional assistance.

The steps to get approval for changes to remedy the situation because of the district receiving Emergency Supplemental Funding are:

- Contact your district's budget analyst to determine the feasibility of securing approval.
- Submit a written request.
- Budget analyst confer with a PED Budget and Finance Bureau supervisor.
- Conduct a re-discussion by the superintendent with the PED Budget and Finance Bureau supervisor of the need for the change or the additional support through Emergency Supplemental Funding that meets the criteria within NM Statute 22-8-30.
- Establish if a statutory requirement must be met. In most instances it is not because each situation is unique to the instructional setting of the school. In this case, the class is not exceeding class overload counts that require an additional FTE.
- Convince PED that you have exercised all options as remedies to the instructional need, especially if it is for additional funding.

- Approval or Non-approval.
- Non-approval. Recognize that it is a situation in which negative results are more likely even with maximum effort being applied.

In this case I, as superintendent, have been authorized to proceed provided I do not need additional funding and if I meet overload requirements. I am proceeding even though I don't meet traditional overload requirements because it is in the vital educational interests of those children that we alter the educational setting.

In this presentation in Addendum A I have included a graph showing a comparison of Lake Arthur's elementary, middle and high school grades vs actual operating budget. The trend line for Lake Arthur Elementary School is almost parallel with the funding trend line. The trend lines for both Lake Arthur Middle School and Lake Arthur High School are even more regressive due to a decrease or non-improvement in the components of school grade criteria. Included on that same page with the performance graph is a summary of the budget deficit that Lake Arthur Schools' has experienced over the past eight years, six years of receiving less funds than the year before and only two years of increased funding. A regression of \$1,028,238.00 dollars compared to an increase of \$51,490.00 dollars in overall funding from 2010-2011 to 2017-2018.

Immediately, one could say that there are other factors that I am not including in this graphical and numerical representation. However, I contend that it is directly the result of inadequate funding.

Here are the instructional losses in staff that are directly connected to program implementation or deletion of actual programs associated with the staff reductions. The staff reductions were only implemented due to the lack of sufficient funding and each directly affects student achievement performance.

- Loss of 3.0 elementary teacher FTE's. Requires the use of combination classrooms with a minimum of eight (8) different teacher lesson preparations involving two or three grade levels.
- Loss of 4.0 secondary teacher FTE's. Requires a minimum of seven (7) different teacher lesson preparations due to each teacher being assigned seven (7) different grade levels.
- Loss of 1.0 special education teacher FTE. Loss of supplemental specialized instruction for learning disabilities.
- Loss of 1.0 bilingual education teacher FTE. Loss of supplemental English Language Learners, ELL, support for acquisition of English
- Loss of 1.0 K-12 Counselor FTE. Does not meet requirements for college/career readiness preparation, does not meet components of new Wellness Policy structures, does not meet standards of student emotional, mental, or behavioral support situations, does not meet IEP requirements for emotionally disturbed or behaviorally challenged special need students.
- Loss of 1.0 Intervention Specialist FTE. Loss of support for students who are experiencing literacy or numeracy difficulties.
- Loss of 1.0 K-12 Fine Arts FTE. Loss of any fine arts opportunities for elementary and/or secondary students.
- Loss of 1.0 Career/Technical Education FTE. Loss of implementation of Career Paths of Study except for core subject preparation.
- Loss of 1.0 Instructional Coach FTE. Inability to address professional development needs for returning staff to meet NMTEACH teaching elements, preparation of beginning staff for developing 21st century

teaching skills, and preparation of long term substitute teachers to assume teaching responsibilities due to the lack of license teacher applicants.

- Loss of 1.0 Maintenance/Custodial FTE.

Loss of preventative maintenance/custodial care of facilities.

These funding-based staff reductions within the district have created limitations in our abilities as instructional institution and has contributed to the loss of students and thus at least stable maintenance by student membership of the district's State Equalization Guarantee, SEG, funding.

The work load has become beyond the capability of the staff to address student needs on a daily basis. The very corner stone of a small school district is the ability of an teaching adult to get to know each student one-on-one and to help each student individually. If you have multiple position responsibilities such as addressing a student behavioral situation along with seven or eight (7-8) different teaching preparations on a daily basis, it is very difficult to find the time or to structure the time to individually meet and assist in attending to each student's support needs.

Counseling and instructional intervention support are either non-existent or carried out at a less than optimal level by the administrative team because it is not a clean partnership between counseling and supervising/disciplining a student. It limits the ability to maintain a standard of accountability to provide the best instructional environment and educational opportunity to maximize the potential of each child.

Operational support services become a reaction to the most immediate crisis. To give examples: event preparation vs daily cleaning of all areas of the buildings; extra time element in general cleaning of the building vs a student emergency, a weather situation of excessive wind or rain storm; or a general cleaning of the building vs major repair event, such as a water pipe breakage. This does not include all of the preventative maintenance tasks that are left undone because work day hours are completely full. Those maintenance tasks then accumulate and lead to major construction repairs. That in itself is another major funding issue.

An equalizer for small school districts is the ability of the district to constructively use technology to more finely support day-to-day instruction, re-teaching, and remediation efforts. At present the technology system at Lake Arthur Schools is second to none in any comparable setting to support instruction. However, it is getting old and in need of replacement. This does not account for new technology purchases that should be part of a student's learning process. Couple the age of the technology base with a non-existent replacement schedule to minimize the drain of a major expenditure in a given year and the hardware base becomes a major obstacle for providing technology that can be used as a tool for instruction.

In addition, the expenditure for software licensing is a major budgetary item each year. Yet, it becomes a point of contention for each budget cycle, especially in regards to Emergency Supplemental Funding. If the district is not allowed to adequately fund instructional FTE's, then instructional and management technology becomes vital in attending to the educational mission of the district.

Recently due to the program staff adjustments and the limited number of elective programs that Lake Arthur Middle and High Schools can offer to students, parents are looking for other options to provide known learning experiences beyond the capabilities of Lake Arthur Schools. This statement has been made directly to the administrators and the Lake Arthur Board of Education. "I do not want to leave Lake Arthur Schools, but my child will have the opportunity for a particular program in a neighboring district." It could be a music program or a career technical education opportunity. The opportunity to provide multiple program opportunities simply is not possible within the present level of funding.

Despite the suggestion by the Public Education Department that the Lake Arthur Schools' district administration and the Board of Education really don't know how much funding it actually has or that we are ineffectual in the use of our available funds, the astounding fact is that we are still functioning and working very diligently to meet the needs of Lake Arthur students within the scope of resources just described.

The work ethic and willingness of staff to take on responsibilities beyond normal expectations to support Lake Arthur students is phenomenal. Each work day for Lake Arthur staff is often a 9-10 hour day within the school campus. Every teaching staff member besides the instructional responsibilities of lesson planning, delivering instruction, assessing proficiency, analyzing achievement results is to perform the duties associated with being a class sponsor, advisor, coach, mentor, and/or before/after school tutor.

We have instituted specialized programs to offset some of the deficiencies stated above. Lake Arthur Schools is the only model school district in New Mexico for Positive Behavior and Intervention Support System, PBIS, to address constructive student behavioral management. For ten years Lake Arthur Elementary School, Lake Arthur Middle School and Lake Arthur High School have been conducting Student-Led Parent/Teacher conferences with each student providing the parent/guardian with a first-hand account of his/her performance. Yes, even our kindergarten students conduct his/her Student-Led P/T Conference. The importance of PBIS as a school improvement tool is illustrated by it is a major component of 2017 and 2018 Title I Results Driven Accountability effectiveness training program.

The elementary and secondary school's daily schedule has a designated mentor period to try to address the lack of counseling resources for students. Each teacher is assigned students with whom they meet at least an every other week to discuss student performance results and structure guidance to seek personal improvement.

The district's secondary online class structure simulates a virtual school in which technology is the instructional tool to establish subject offerings for credit, advanced content area and dual credit courses and credit recovery classes. Each of these technology-based applications are provided to promote a horizontal expansion of the curricula opportunities for each Lake Arthur student.

The district is implementing a STEM-based Systems Go rocketry/aeroscience program to move into project-based instruction where students design and develop remotely operated vehicles and unmanned aerial vehicles for research or industrial applications and life skills such as teamwork, critical thinking, problem-solving, design and development, testing and analysis, and documentation. We are the only small school district in New Mexico participating in this project-based program. This year Lake Arthur High School science is sponsoring two Systems Go teams. One being the Scientific Research & Development (SRD) Tsiolkovsky Level in which the student learns problem-solving tools found within the four main energy systems: mechanical, fluid, electrical, and thermal and then in the second semester, the students complete a design and development project with two success criteria: rocket on the pad by scheduled date and flight performance that gets a 1.0-lb research package to an altitude of 5,280-ft. The second will be the Engineering Design & Problem Solving (EDPS) Oberth Level team where students continue to learn problem-solving skills, to complete a design and development project with these two success criteria: rocket on the pad by scheduled date and flight performance to achieve transonic velocity while staying under a 13,000-ft ceiling.

It would be important to be able to utilize these structures in a more expansive educational setting. If we are just coping now on a day-to-day basis, think what could happen if adequate funding was available that would promote a greater balance between what is mandated as the basic educational program components and the resources that could be brought to bear within Lake Arthur Schools' educational setting.

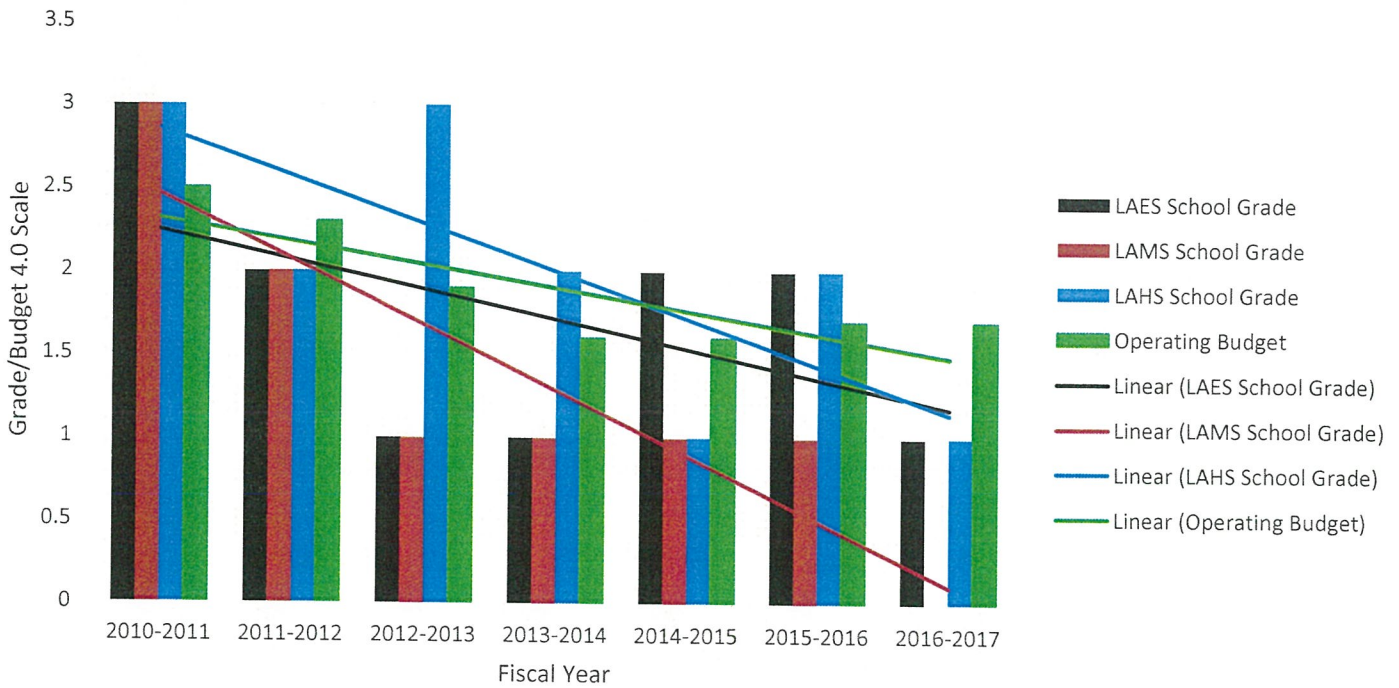
It may be presumptuous of me, but I think the challenge for New Mexico is to have the legislative and the executive branches of government cooperatively develop a pathway that leads to economic development across the state. The Rio Grande Corridor, portions of the Pecos Corridor, and the Permian Basin have structures or natural resources that contribute to those area's financial productive success. However, if New Mexico wants to become a fully functioning economic enterprise that is not largely dependent on oil and gas revenues then it has to look at the state as a whole to move the state funding options into the 21st century. Perhaps then the State of New Mexico's public schools wouldn't be seen as segregated institutions with limited productive results that only drain money from other state needs. With a cohesive and comprehensive economic development plan public schools would be a sufficiently funded integral component of an economy that continues to revitalize itself on the foundation of a quality educational product.

Addendum A

**LAKE ARTHUR MUNICIPAL SCHOOLS
COMPARISON OF SCHOOL GRADE VS ACTUAL OPERATING BUDGET**

Comparison of Public Education Department’s School Grade Report with the ability of the Lake Arthur Municipal Schools’ to receive “sufficient” funding to address the State of New Mexico’s mandated educational program. The trendlines between student achievement performance and funding inadequacy are remarkably similar.

Comparison of Lake Arthur Schools' School Grade vs Operating Budget



Year	LAES School Grade	LAMS School Grade	LAHS School Grade	Operating Budget (million dollars)	Year	Operating Budget	Operating Budget Difference
2010-2011	B	B	B	2.5	2010-2011	\$2,509,406.00	
2011-2012	C	C	C	2.3	2011-2012	\$2,310,291.00	\$199,115.00
2012-2013	D	D	B	1.9	2012-2013	\$1,961,630.00	\$348,661.00
2013-2014	D	D	C	1.6	2013-2014	\$1,685,691.00	\$275,939.00
2014-2015	C	D	D	1.6	2014-2015	\$1,682,756.00	\$151,606.00
2015-2016	C	D	C	1.7	2015-2016	\$1,716,275.00	\$34,519.00
2016-2017	D	F	D	1.7	2016-2017	\$1,733,246.00	\$16,971.00
2017-2018					2017-2018	\$1,628,601.00	\$52,917.00