



Arizona Department of Education

The Audit Unit

1535W. Jefferson St., Bin 19

Phoenix, Arizona 85007

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Average Daily Membership Audit Report Paloma Elementary School District Fiscal Years 2016, 2017 and 2018

Report Number—19-35

May 7, 2019



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Arizona Department of Education

Audit Unit

May 7, 2019

Kristin Turner, Superintendent
Paloma Elementary School District
38739 W. Interstate 8
Gila Bend, AZ 85337

Dear Superintendent Turner:

The Arizona Department of Education Audit Unit has conducted an audit of the Paloma Elementary School District (District) Average Daily Membership (ADM) for fiscal years 2016, 2017 and 2018. The purpose of the audit was to address whether the District properly reported student enrollment, and to determine if it received the correct amount of Basic State Aid.

Auditors determined that the District failed to properly maintain some required documentation in student cumulative files. Auditors also tested instructional hours, enrollment data, SPED data and limiting but found no material findings.

We appreciate the cooperation and assistance provided by the District's administration during the course of the audit.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Melissa Moreno".

Melissa Moreno,
Chief Auditor

Kathy Hoffman, Superintendent of Public Instruction

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Introduction and background

The Arizona Department of Education (ADE) Audit Unit has conducted an Average Daily Membership (ADM) audit of the Paloma Elementary School District (District) pursuant to Arizona Revised Statutes (A.R.S.) § 15-239. This audit focused on whether the District properly reported enrollment and attendance data to ADE and received the correct amount of Basic State Aid for fiscal years 2016, 2017 and 2018.

Average Daily Membership audits of district and charter holder funding—Pursuant to A.R.S. § 15-239, ADE may conduct ADM audits, which help ensure the appropriate distribution of Basic State Aid provided annually to school districts and charter schools. School districts and charter schools receive Basic State Aid based on several factors related to student enrollment and attendance. To receive funding, school districts and charter schools report enrollment and attendance data to ADE. ADE processes that data, determines payment amounts according to the relevant statutory funding formulas and distributes payments to schools up to twelve times each year.

The ADM audit process determines whether payments were correct or if an adjustment is needed. The audit process compares the school district's or charter school's information reported to ADE's student data system to information found on the original records kept at the school. If auditors find that the school district's or charter school's reported information does not match the original documentation, the audit will calculate and report the funding adjustment needed to the school district's or charter school's Basic State Aid. These funding adjustments can be positive or negative, depending upon the audit findings. The audit findings are written and compiled into a report that is then issued to the audited entity.

Superintendent's legal notice links the audit and appeals processes—In addition to the report, the audited entity receives The Notice of Audit Findings and Required Reimbursement (Notice) that details the audit findings and determination of the Superintendent of Public Instruction (Superintendent) regarding adjustments to be made to the school district or charter school pursuant to A.R.S. § 15-915. The audited entity may appeal the Superintendent's decision in the Notice.

Opportunity to appeal the audit—A.R.S. § 41-1092.03 provides the audited school district or charter school that disagrees with the Superintendent's decision in the Notice with the opportunity to file a formal appeal within thirty (30) days after the report was issued. If an appeal is filed, the school district or charter school and ADE may reach agreement in an informal settlement conference. If an agreement is not reached at the informal settlement conference, the appeal will be adjudicated by the Office of Administrative Hearings.

Funding adjustment process and timeframes—When the Notice is finally settled or adjudicated, if ADE has determined that a school district or charter school received an incorrect amount of Basic State Aid, A.R.S. § 15-915 directs that corrections to schools' funding be made in the current budget year. In case of hardship, schools may request that the Superintendent allow a correction to be made partly in the current budget year and partly in the following budget year.

In addition, ADE will adjust the District’s budget capacity if required. ADE School Finance Memorandum 13-011 summarizes the budget capacity adjustment authorized by statute:

A.R.S. §15-915, as amended by Laws 2014, Chapter 357, Section 3, requires the superintendent of public instruction, when it is determined that state aid or budget limits have been calculated in error, within the prior 3 years, to make corrections to budget limits and state aid in the current year. (Hardship application may be approved by the superintendent). Effective for audits initiated during FY2016 and continuing in subsequent years, corrections for audit findings to both budget capacity and state aid (when applicable) will be made.

District information—The District, located in Gila Bend, Arizona, had one elementary school during the fiscal years audited. Table 1 presents the District’s unaudited student, staffing and financial information for fiscal years 2016, 2017 and 2018.

Table 1

**Paloma Elementary School District
Total students, revenues and expenditures
Fiscal years 2016, 2017 and 2018
(Unaudited)**

	2016	2017	2018
Students enrolled	101	102	112
Number of teachers	7	7	8
Revenue			
Local	\$4,087,174	\$4,160,632	\$2,860,494
Intermediate	\$0	\$0	\$0
State	\$113,421	\$101,708	\$241,924
Federal	\$212,834	\$249,544	\$277,920
Total revenues	\$4,413,429	\$4,511,885	\$3,380,338
Total expenditures	\$5,478,447	\$4,900,475	\$3,883,120

Source: Annual Report of the Arizona Superintendent of Public Instruction for fiscal years 2016, 2017 and 2018.

SCOPE AND METHODOLOGY

The audit focused on whether the District accurately reported its data to ADE and received the correct amount of Basic State Aid in accordance with statutes, the Uniform System of Financial Records (USFR) and its own policies and procedures for fiscal years 2016, 2017 and 2018.

To conduct this audit, auditors used a variety of methods, including examining District and ADE records to review 150 of 329 students over the three fiscal years audited. Adjustments to ADM are based solely on those identified students that the auditors evaluated further and are not extrapolated to create findings for the entire student population. Auditors also reviewed state statutes and District policies and procedures and interviewed District management and staff. Specifically:

- **Enrollment data** – Auditors reviewed enrollment dates and attendance data to determine if the enrollment data reported to ADE was correct. Auditors compared the entry and exit dates to determine if an adjustment was necessary. Auditors also reviewed absences to ensure that they were reported correctly. No findings were identified for this area.
- **Student files** – Auditors reviewed student files to ensure that they maintained required birth certificate, immunization records and residency documentation. Auditors identified files that did not contain all residency documentation that was required to be kept in them by statute and ADE guidelines.
- **Instructional hours** – Auditors reviewed the bell schedules and calendars for the District for fiscal years 2016, 2017 and 2018. The total instructional hours offered for each grade met the minimum required by statute for each of the three fiscal years audited. No findings were identified for this area.
- **Special education (SPED) data** – Auditors determined whether an adjusted student had also been funded for a special education category. No findings were identified for this area.
- **Limiting**—Auditors reviewed the total ADM for each enrolled student to ensure that they were appropriately limited by ADE’s system. No findings were identified for this area.

The Audit Unit expresses its appreciation to the District’s administration and staff members for their cooperation and assistance during the course of the audit.

FINDING 1: THE DISTRICT DID NOT PROPERLY MAINTAIN SOME STUDENT RECORDS AS REQUIRED BY STATUTE AND GUIDELINE

Auditors determined that the District failed to properly maintain residency documentation for some students as required by statute and ADE guidelines. The District did not properly maintain required documentation in some of its student cumulative files. In the future, the District should properly maintain these documents to ensure compliance with statute and ADE guidelines.

The District did not properly maintain student residency documentation

Auditors determined that the District failed to maintain residency documentation for some students as required by statute and ADE guidelines. According to A.R.S. § 15-802 and the ADE Arizona Residency Guideline, school districts and charter schools are required to maintain verifiable documentation of Arizona residency in the student’s cumulative file. This documentation must be provided each time a student enrolls in a school district or charter school and reaffirmed during the annual registration process. The ADE Arizona Residency Guideline identifies an approved list of options a parent or legal guardian may provide to the school district or charter school to meet these requirements.

The District did not maintain the proper documentation required by statute and ADE’s residency guideline. Of the 45 students sampled, eight of the student files did not have a proper residency documentation as the ADE Arizona Residency Guideline requires. The residency documentation provided for these students only contained a PO Box, and not a physical address or description of the student’s residence. In addition, two students were missing an ADE Arizona Residency Document. Table 2 lists the Residency documentation maintained by the District for fiscal years 2016, 2017 and 2018.

Table 2

**Paloma Elementary School District
Student cumulative file documentation
Fiscal years 2016, 2017 and 2018**

	Total sampled	Unapproved documentation	Residency documentation missing
2016	15	3	0
2017	15	2	1
2018	15	3	1
Total	45	8	2

Source: Auditor analysis of District records for fiscal years 2016, 2017 and 2018.

In the future, the District must ensure that it complies with statute by collecting and maintaining in each student's cumulative file copies of verifiable residency documentation as required by law.

Recommendation:

1. The District must comply with statute and collect and maintain in each student's cumulative file copies of verifiable residency as required by law.