



## *Sahuarita Unified School District No. 30*

Sahuarita High School  
Sahuarita Primary School

Sahuarita Middle School  
Sahuarita Intermediate School

Sopori Elementary School  
Sahuarita Intermediate School

### **Office of the Superintendent**

November 21, 2003

Deborah K Davenport, C.P.A.  
Office of the Auditor General  
2910 N. 44<sup>th</sup> Street, Suite 410  
Phoenix, AZ 85018

Dear Ms. Davenport:

This letter is to serve as a preliminary response to our audit.

Sahuarita Unified School District appreciates the opportunity to have the Auditor General's School Wide Audit Team (S.W.A.T.) visit our school district. It has provided another view of the way in which we spend our education dollars. We appreciate the opportunity to respond. The response will be by section. The staff from the Auditor General's office was very accommodating to our needs in continuing to operate while being audited. They were very pleasant people to discuss and evaluate our district operations.

#### Chapter I

##### Administration

Sahuarita Unified School District, according to the S.W.A.T's report, has lower administrative costs per student than comparable districts. This was done deliberately on the part of the Governing Board.

#### Chapter II

##### Food Service

A contracted service provider operates the food service program at Sahuarita Unified School District. When the district originally agreed to outsource that responsibility we were struggling with large deficits in the cafeteria fund, and some expenses were being transferred to the Maintenance & Operation fund. Our vendor has assisted us in reducing the use of M&O funds to subsidize the Cafeteria fund. The district will respond in setting up an analysis of its costs and revenues to see whether the Governing Board is interested in passing on an increase of the cost of the meals to the parents of the district to cover the cost of equipment needs for the program. Historically, the district supported the cafeteria program out of the Maintenance & Operation fund, but never charged the capital costs back to the cafeteria fund. This will be a decision of the Board.

#### Chapter III

##### Transportation Service

We appreciated the fact that the Auditor General's office recognizes that in some school districts the transportation program is expensive to operate on a per child cost basis depending upon the geography of the school district.

The districts responses to the recommendations are as follows:

1. The District will pursue action to recover overpayments made to the vendor. The district has already taken action on this issue. We have turned the situation over to our attorneys.
2. In the future the District will insure that the method of calculating charges is specifically included in any contract for outsourcing transportation if that be the case.
3. The Governing Board directed the administration (early in the S.W.A.T's process) to employ an outside consultant (unfortunately additional administrative cost) to analyze the situation. At a recent Governing Board meeting the Board directed the administration to re-bid the transportation contract. They also directed them to present information to the Board about whether the district should return to operating the program itself.

## Chapter IV

### Operation & Maintenance Costs

The operation and maintenance costs in our district were described as being 17.4% of our current operating expenditure. The district historically has been a very property- wealthy district and has had excellent facilities. Nine years ago, the district was informed that there was a master plan community of twelve thousand homes being developed in our district. At that time, we asked the taxpayers in the district to approve general obligation bonds to build an additional 155,000 square feet of space. The plan on the part of the district was proactive rather than reactive, and we appreciate the fact that the Auditor General's office acknowledged that we have a great deal of square footage. We anticipated that we would have to operate and maintain that additional square footage until the student growth occurred.

1. The district is vigorously reducing its energy usage throughout the district. The general obligation bond issue that the voters approve in November 1995 included energy management systems at three of the five buildings in the district. The district has called upon the staff and patrons of the district to assist in a district wide energy reduction program including incentives through Proposition 301 for staff.
2. The Governing Board continues to schedule replacement of older, less efficient heating and cooling equipment. The Board at its most recent meeting voted to replace the inefficient heating and cooling equipment in the Auditorium. We have also asked the School Facilities Board to remove the auditorium from our instructional space.
3. The Governing Board is in the process of building a new administration building, which will include smaller meeting room facilities to make less use of the auditorium facilities. We have also asked our auditorium director to plan to combine schedule uses of the auditorium facilities to the same days to maximize energy efficiency.

## Chapter V

### Proposition 301 Monies

Sahuarita Unified School District is pleased with the way in which proposition 301 monies are expended in our district. The district plans to continue making that money available to improve salaries for certified teachers in the district.

## Chapter 6

### Classroom Dollars

The district appreciates the Auditor General's report indicating that moving additional dollars into the classroom dollar percentage needs to be a district wide effort. The district is experiencing a high rate of student growth. We feel that the plan operation & maintenance costs will go down as we will have a larger student base over which to spread those costs. We feel that the district has enough additional classroom space to support another 800 students without asking the School Facilities Board to provide additional space. That was a deliberate strategy on the part of the district to make sure that we didn't have to come up with a plan for the growth that have included items such as year round school. The district will correct the high transportation cost situation either with the current vendor, by changing vendors, or by returning the transportation program to the district.

Respectfully yours,

Jay C. St. John, Ed.D.  
Superintendent