Center Unified School District

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Established 1858

November 30, 1999

Mr. Bruce Reed
Chief Domestic Policy Advisor
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue
Washington, DC 20500

Dear Mr. Reed:

This letter is directed to your attention at the suggestion of Dr. Michael Casserly, Executive Director, National Council of Greater City Schools. As you may know, a decision has been made that McClellan Air Force Base in Sacramento County, California will close July 13, 2001.
During the debates regarding base closure, President Clinton visited our community and made statements regarding his empathy for the impact of base closure on our community. While there are several school districts in the community surrounding McClellan Air Force Base, Center Unified School District is the only one with a substantial percentage of its enrollment made up of dependents of military personnel. Consequently, our needs are unique. Therefore, we feel justified in requesting a unique remedy to our situation.

During the past year, we have had conversations with the offices of Senator Feinstein and Congressman Ose regarding the need for federal assistance. Now, we would like to enlist the aid of the Office of the President, to assist our small district in maintaining its high quality programs, in reading and technology. The remedy we are seeking is described in attached proposal. The proposal defines our needs in terms of two projects that will be in jeopardy when the base closes, the student enrollment declines and our state and federal revenues decrease. While funding these projects will not restore all the revenues that we stand to lose, they will help us maintain the quality of our instructional programs in reading and technology.

Obviously, we are open to any other funding strategy that you would consider more feasible than this one. In that regard, I would be happy to meet with you or members of your staff, at your convenience, to determine what modifications to our proposal would be necessary, if any. I am prepared to meet in Washington or wherever you prefer.

I am looking forward to hearing from you soon and thank you in advance for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Rex Fortune, Ph.D.
Superintendent

Enclosure

cc: Board of Trustees

"Proud of the Past, Planning for the Future"

FEDERAL PROPOSAL TO OFFSET McCLELLAN CLOSURE EFFECTS

Center Unified School District is one of sixteen school districts in Sacramento County, California. Last fall, the district documented that there were 995 federally connected students among its 5699 enrollees, when the most recent report was completed. About 760 (13.4%) of those students were dependents of active duty military personnel, all of whom will leave the district when McClellan Air Force Base closes in July, 2001. Another 232 (4%) of those students are children of civilians who work at McClellan Air Force Base and who may also leave as the Base closes.

The district receives approximately $3800 in state or federal revenue for each enrolled student; therefore nearly $3.8 millions of dollars are associated with the 995 students. It could be argued that parents of the civilian students will remain in the area or that other civilian students will move in to replace them. If that happen, then our problem would be reduced by over $800,000. Even so, the district will suffer significant financial loss while this theoretical transition period occurs.

The school district anticipates the need to reduce a corresponding number of teachers and other personnel who provide direct services to students, as the student population declines. A critical challenge will be to maintain the quality of certain critical support services which are not so easily tied to a per pupil ratio. Two critically needed support services which are very likely to be placed in jeopardy when we start to cut budgets are the coaches for reading and for technology. The need for reading coaches (specialist) at our elementary and secondary schools and the need for technology support personnel and training are describe in attached proposals. The key point here is that those needs are becoming more apparent as we refine our analysis of student assessment data and as California has intensified its accountability measures.

Enrollment is projected to grow again in the 2004-05 timeframe. During periods of growth in the past, our district has been able to afford to purchase computer hardware, software, networking connectivity and some staff training. Because of this, both of our high schools were able to gain approval of their applications for the California Digital High School program. The district has just recently converted all of its business functions and other program function to a new systems program (QSS) which still requires training of our staff for full implementation. As important as these and other recent improvements are, they will all go down the tubes, when we will have to eliminate the staff to support these systems due to Base Closure, and the resulting decline in state resources. Yet, these services may be affordable once again in another four or five years when new housing is scheduled to develop in our district.

We need the funding associated with the two proposals as "bridging the gap" funding during the period between now and say 2005, when new housing should be coming on line. Obviously, we will have to cut staff and other services during the next few years. But it would be most beneficial to students and parents to prevent the decline in the quality of our critical reading and technology programs and services during this four or five year period of enrollment decline. The four-year cost of the reading support proposal is $1,868,000, and the four year cost of the technology proposal is $4,964,000. This request is secure an appropriation for the sum of $6,832,000.

RESOMMENDATION:

It is recommended that an appropriation bill be amended as follows:

"The Congress hereby appropriates to the Center Unified School District in Antelope California an amount of $6.8 millions of dollars for the purpose of implementing their reading support and technology support programs as defined in section…….(See Proposals)."

PROPOSAL FOR READING COACHES AND STAFF DEVELOPMENT

Prior to the 1999-2000 school year, Center Unified School District had experienced over a decade of annual increases in enrollment due to new housing development. As a growing district, Center was able to appropriate general funds to establish a strong reading program. Recently, our efforts K-12 have focused on the Governor's measures for school accountability, including the newly revised English Language Arts standards, statewide promotion/retention policies, the proposed ELD assessment and the high school graduation exam. To this end, the district has used a combination of state, federal, local and private resources to establish an exemplary reading program. The David and Lucile Packard Foundation paid for three reading coaches and a district reading co-ordinator to provide direction, assistance and supervision to all K-3 classrooms in the district. Center Unified has expanded this successful K-3 coordinated coaching model to grades 4-12. Federal Impact Aid funds enabled the district to hire reading coaches at grades 4-6 and reading teachers for the secondary schools. State and federal staff development grants have allowed for a part-time secondary reading coach.

Principals worked in concert with highly trained reading coaches to assure that teachers understand the importance of effective reading instruction, and how to provide it. Reading is now taught to all students daily for two and one half-hours in primary grades and for two hours in upper elementary. Reading is required for below grade level students for a full section (47 minutes) in junior high school and a full section (90 minutes) in high school. These secondary sections include direct instruction by the teacher using a phonics-based curriculum and computer assisted instruction in reading. A special summer school program, Successful Start, has increased the reading skills of 8th graders before they begin high school. Center Unified's focused model provides a research-based reading curriculum for all students, including special education and English Language Learners (ELL). The coaching model assures instructional accountability at all levels.

Student test scores were strongest in the grades where coaches were employed the longest. For example, in first grade, 85% of our students scored at or above grade level last spring on a nationally normed standardized reading test. Reading coaches visit classrooms, monitor instruction, conduct staff development and make program improvement recommendations to teachers. The district used its state textbook funds to purchase a uniform, standards-based curriculum for all classrooms. Center Unified received two state grants, which allowed for staff development in standards-based reading strategies for specific groups of teachers.

In June 2000, funding from the Packard Foundation and from state and federal reading grants will end. In addition, the district loses eligibility for federal Impact Aid Funds when McClellan Air Force Base closes on July 13, 2001. The loss of these three funding sources, along with the fiscal problems brought about by declining enrollment associated with base closure, puts our reading program is in jeopardy.

This proposal will enable the district to not only continue the highly successful elementary model, but to fully implement its planned expansion at the secondary level. The keystone of our success, as indicated by our K-3 test scores, has been the coaching component. Our focus on success for all students and accountability for all staff has resulted in significant achievement gains as we prepare our students for the high school exit exam, the ELD exam, and the STAR program.

The attached budget shows funding for a four-year period. At that time, we believe that new growth in student population associated with new housing starts will generate sufficient revenue to continue funding this successful reading improvement model without outside assistance. We also believe that after seven years, our reading model will have generated enough student achievement data so that other districts might benefit from our efforts.

BUDGET FOR READING PROPOSAL

READING COACHES	
Five Elementary @ $51,000 each	$255,000
One Junior High School @ $51,000	51,000
One High School @ $51,000	51,000
One Coordinator @$90,000	90,000
STAFF DEVELOPMENT	
Training Stipend; subs teacher costs	20,000
ANNUAL SUB COST	467,000
FOUR-YEAR COSTS	
@$467,000 per year	$1,868,000

CUSD TECHNOLOGY PROPOSAL

For more than a decade the Center Unified School District has experienced enrollment increases associated with new housing development, which was very strong at the end of the 1980's and early 1990's. The district built new schools and portions of schools during this period. Educational technology has been a priority for the district during this period also, and these new schools were wired to accommodate the technology that was available at the time. By now, the district has invested heavily in hardware, connectivity, software and staff training. Computers are in classrooms in most schools. There are computer labs in each school, and the district has recently installed a new computerized system (QSS) for its financial, accounting, pupil personnel services, master schedule development and parent communication processes. These purchases have been guided by a Technology Plan which calls for staff support of computers as well as the purchases mentioned above.

The 1999-2000 school year marks the first of several years when the district's student enrollment will decline, in relationship to the closure of the McClellan Air Force Base in July of 2001. Continued enrollment decline will be accompanied by losses in revenue for the school district. Unfortunately, the district will have to reduce staffing even beyond the reduction in the number of teachers corresponding to the number of students no longer enrolled. We are certain that the support staffing for technology will be at risk, along with other staff not directly used in classrooms with students. To lose our current technology support staff at a time when the schools actually need more technology support, would result in a huge step backwards in terms of instructional opportunities for students and in terms of modernizing administrative operations for the district.

To maintain our existing technology support for schools, this proposal would provide for technology staff to keep the current and newly purchased equipment operating. The proposal would provide support staff at the district and at the school sites. The proposal would also improve the ability of current instructional staff to perform simple trouble-shooting and repair procedures by providing training on an on-going basis. The proposal would also improve the quality of instruction by providing time for teacher preparation of units of instructions and student projects utilizing the technology available in libraries, technology labs and in classrooms. Finally, this proposal will provide wiring for Internet access in all classrooms of the school closest to military housing, where new houses will be constructed to replace current military housing. (See attached budget) The proposal has an annual cost and a cost for four years, after which time projected student enrollment growth should produce the revenue to keep these support functions operating.

BUDGET FOR TECHNOLOGY PROPOSAL

STAFFING	
One director @ $65,000	$ 65,000
Four support technicians @ $ 40,000	160,000
Six school troubleshooters @ 40,000 And one @$20,000	260,000
TECHNOLOGY COACHES	
Eight @ $45,000	360,000
Teacher Release Time for on-going Training 8 @ $37,000	296,000
WIRING : INTERNET & OTHER CONNECTIVITY	
	100,000
ANNUAL SUB-COSTS	1,241,000
FOUR-YEAR COSTS	
@ $1,241,000	$4,964,000