
March 20, 2019

Eckert Seeber
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Mr. Seeber,

As you are aware, the Contract for the ASES program with Santa Rosa City Schools requires a Mid-Year Evaluation (see Section 1 (b)). That review took place between January 8, 2019 – February 25, 2019 with some follow up on March 8, 2019 & March 14, 2019. Below are the findings and recommendations.

Director Aracely Romo-Flores and I developed the grid for evaluation in accordance with 1, (a), H and shared it with Ralph Hernandez on December 10, 2018

We reviewed the following categories that are listed in the grid:

- Safety
- Meal Adequacy
- Communication
- Enrichment Programs
- Enrollment
- Education Literacy

We performed both announced and unannounced visits at each school site. We logged our results in a Document shared with you and your staff in real time. The results of these visits are as follows:

SAFETY

Findings: Overall rating = 3 Satisfactory

We evaluated this in the area of staffing ratios, Sign-in Sign-out documents, emergency card information and Walkie-Talkie communication. We found that in this area there are the fundamentals in place with areas of improvement. We observed sign-in and sign-out sheets in all locations. We found that parents knew the procedure for picking up their children and there were satisfactory procedures in place at all locations. We observed adequate staffing ratios on our visits. We understood that there was some moving of personnel between sites to insure this. We observed emergency card information for all students and heard appropriate walkie-talkie communication.

Recommendations:

This category is of course the most significant aspect of the program. The evaluators noted some complaints early in the year. They seem to have been addressed by the Provider and improvements have been made. This area continues to be of primary focus by the Provider to each site as it requires.

MEAL ADEQUACY

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Findings: Overall Rating = 1 Unsatisfactory

The evaluators noted repeated concerns about poor quality of food provided. The Evaluators noted that the Provider is using the “Food Bank” for warm meals two days per week. On other days, prepackaged meals and snacks are provided and students and school teaching staff rated them poorly. It was also noted during the visits that the “Food Bank” had a number of restrictions that did not seem to work for the provider either. As an example it was found that on these “Hot Meal” days that the food arrived after 3 pm. In at least two school examples, this pushed out the “homework” time until after 4 pm, which then found some students unable to complete their homework, which was a disappointment for the students we interviewed. The Evaluators understand the nature of the program with its limited funding for all the elements of the program. However, all learning, including supplemental, begins with good energy and adequate health for effectiveness. The evaluators found this lacking. In addition, if the meal program adversely effects the structure of the program and does not provide enough time for students to complete homework, the foundation of the program is at risk.

Recommendations: Meals

The Provider needs to ensure adequate meals for a healthy program. The evaluators recognize that most students would prefer pizza and Cheetos and healthy choice meals may not be a popular, however, in an educational institution it is necessary to find a balance. The recommendation is that the SRCS Nutrition Services meet with the Provider to develop reasonable and reimbursable snacks and meals that may “supplement” the existing supplier to balance out the meal needs of students. Of primary focus is the need to insure that whatever meal program exists, it allows students to complete the primary task of working on school homework.

COMMUNICATION

Findings: 2 Needs Improvement

In this area, the evaluators looked at contractually obligated monthly meetings with site principals (1, b, E), the coordination of students and communication with families. The evaluators found that while there has been some communication described above it requires improvement. Monthly meetings - Evaluators noted that this has been formalized. At most schools, there are informal meetings that occur between the Provider’s Site Director and the Principals. These are not necessarily frequent or consistent enough to provide feedback from the Principal. Communication is a TWO-WAY street. We expect site principals to take an ownership role in this process. Family communication was determined to be very haphazard. There was one communication that went to some families in December. There were some night Parent meetings early in the year, but none since. The evaluators recognize that no concerns from families can also mean satisfaction, however the District expected more frequent communication. There have been examples of incidents where families have brought up concerns, and these were met satisfactorily. In addition, communication with student’s teachers should be given greater opportunity. The evaluators would like to see the Provider trained on how to access teacher websites and how to e-mail directly to a student’s teacher. As an example, if the Provider observes that a student says they do not have homework, it would be important for an e-mail be sent to confirm. The more the Provider and the classroom can coordinate, the greater efficacy of the program.

Recommendations:

In this area we expect to see more formalized meetings calendared and notes taken. The Head of Program does not need to be at each school site monthly meeting unless requested in advance. The Site Director and the Principal need to set aside time in the day so there can be an effective meeting. This does not mean on the playground or while the Director is expected to be supervising students. The District recognizes this is a mutual responsibility and will take steps to insure the Principals make this a priority. At these meetings it is expected to

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review: 1. Caseloads, adequate capacity and waitlists 2. Facility concerns 3. Student concerns. Develop a monthly newsletter to go out by April 30 that is in English and Spanish.

ENRICHMENT PROGRAMS

Findings: Overall Ratings = 2 Needs Improvement

One of the Strengths of the awarded contract was the promise of enrichments courses that included, STEM activities such as robotics and coding and music. In our review we found that getting these programs in place has taken all semester with some mixed results. Some schools have had a small music program since early November; some were just beginning. Examples of the program were Keyboarding and Guitar. When observed these program were with small group instruction and the instructors were knowledgeable and good instructors. Criticisms were that there were not enough instruments and students had to share. The Robotics program was not in use at all schools. It was unclear why some and not all. It may have to do with the knowledge of the instructor. This does not feel like an equitable distribution of the program and may be related to the workforce issues around hiring. Scratch coding was observed but it was noted that again, shared computers and some access problems to the SRCS network were obvious.

Recommendations: Enrichment Programs

Continued focus of the program needs to occur in 1. Continued hiring of appropriate instructors, and 2. continued purchase of equipment. These programs were a core component of the granting of the proposal to Creative Brain. They need to improve. Some of these programs require solid network access. To better serve students enrolled in the ASES program, we recommend that SRCS sites share access to computer labs or Chrome carts for use in these programs. However, other music equipment should be purchased and replaced as needed.

AVERAGE DAILY ATTENDANCE

Findings: Overall Rating = 1 Unsatisfactory at Middle School / 3 Satisfactory at Elementary

The program required that a roster of 100 for each school be kept with a minimum of 84 students 1 (b), B.

Here are the enrollment figures reported for the 1st half of the enrollment period:

Brook Hill	75.96
Biella	88.19
Burbank	92.73
Lehman	81.77
Lincoln	77.25
Monroe	87.55
Steele	73.25
Cook	13.41
Comstock	40.42

Recommendations:

The programs at the middle school level do not appear to be sustainable under the ASES grant. If attendance does not show a positive trajectory in 30 days, we recommend that the program be discontinued at the conclusion of this year. The elementary programs show satisfactory enrollment. It will be important to continuously review that enrollment to maintain the appropriate ratios are maintained.

LITERACY SUPPORT**Findings: Overall Rating = 1 Unsatisfactory**

Literacy support is one of the key foundations of the ASES program. This includes using appropriate reading and math interventions for appropriate students. The Evaluators did not find an example where the school and the Provider were sharing information to support students in a meaningful way. The types of interventions used by the school were not available to the Provider. This is a mutual issue for resolution. Haphazard reading was observed in the primary ages and primarily literacy support took the form of “homework” at the upper grades. However, we observed instances of students saying they had “no” homework and allowed free time. Even if done quietly, which was not always the case, it may not be accurate. Teaching staff asked about having better communication so that their struggling students could receive the help they needed. This communication needs to be two-way. If the Provider had greater access to the school’s “portal” or classroom websites, they could assign work more accurately. In addition, if Let’s Go Learn and the intervention program “Edge” were made available, it could be used more effectively.

Recommendations:

The Provider needs to make strong improvements in this area. It is one of the hallmarks of the federally funded program. The intent of this program is to allow additional time and services to students that are historically underserved based on their needs. With this foundation, students in the Creative Brain program are indeed still students from the school and resources for their improvement need to be shared. We recommend that the Creative Brain staff be trained on access to any available information on a student so they may ensure proper homework and assignments to students who may be struggling. In addition, SRCS will discuss how to share the Intervention Program “Edge” with the Creative Brain staff, so they may assign students these interventions. This may require that the computer lab and or Chromebooks be shared between the school and program.

DISCIPLINARY EXPECTATIONS**Findings: 2 Needs Improvement**

A key requirement of the ASES contract is to provide a similar positive and restorative behavior system to the ASES program. In our evaluation we found only that recently has a formal process of communication and identification of behavior concerns has been developed. It is unclear if it is system wide or at individual sites. Based on parent, staff and student interviews the issue of cell phones came up as a consistent concern. This needs to be addressed in a consistent manner in accordance with the school rules. The evaluators heard concerns of Provider staff “yelling” at students. We observed examples of “off task” behaviors. In one interview we heard from students that there had been a practice of “slap-ass” between students. We were told that it has since been halted, but that is an example of the need for on-going vigilance and a consistent, progressive and restorative approach to behavior management across the schools.

Recommendations: Discipline Expectations

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Within 30 days, the Provider will 1. Develop a philosophy statement that is line with the District's published behavior goals, 2. Outline a progressive level of consequences for student actions, 3. An outline of how parents will be notified of this progressive level of consequences and 4. Meet with staff to train behind this behavioral guideline. The District commits its Restorative Specialist staff to assist and lead these trainings as requested by the Provider.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Continue to actively monitor your sign-in and sign out procedures to ensure students are accounted for all times on campus.
- SRCS Nutrition Services will meet with the Provider to develop reasonable and reimbursable snacks and meals that may "supplement" the existing supplier to balance out the meal needs of students.
- Have a monthly meeting to review: 1. Caseloads, adequate capacity and waitlists 2. Facility concerns 3. Student concerns.
- Publish a monthly newsletter to go out by April 30 that is in English and Spanish.
- To better serve students enrolled in the ASES program, SRCS will share access to computer labs or Chrome Carts.
- Music equipment should be purchased for full implementation and replaced as needed.
- Creative Brain staff be trained on access any available information on a student so they may ensure proper homework and assignments to students who may be struggling.
- By April 27, 2019 the Provider will 1. Develop a philosophy statement that is line with the District's published behavior goals, 2. Outline a progressive level of consequences for student actions, 3. An outline of how parents will be notified of this progressive level of consequences and 4. Meet with staff to train behind this behavioral guideline.
- Meet with District Staff to review these improvements by March 30, 2019 in person or by phone and again on April 29, 2019 to review progress.

The Evaluators thank the Creative Brain staff at all schools for their service to the students and families of Santa Rosa City Schools. While the implementation of this program has been problematic this year, there are many positive indications. We will recommend to the SRCS Board that the ASES provider Creative Brain continue at this time while a 30-day improvement plan outlined above is made and a possible explorative Request for Proposal is developed to seek vendors for next year including Creative Brain's continued contract if applicable.

Thank you,

Steve Mizera, Assistant Superintendent
Student and Family Services

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