

ADE DAILY NEWS CLIPS

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Audit Finds Districts' School Lunch Documents Falsified (Southwest Times Record)

LITTLE ROCK — State auditors told the Legislative Joint Audit Committee Friday that suspected improprieties in free and reduced-price lunch eligibility reports could cost a southern Arkansas school district hundreds of thousands of dollars next school year.

An audit of the Hamburg School District in Ashley County discovered that the director of the district's child nutrition program had altered more than 50 applications for free and reduced-price meals to enable as many as 60 students to qualify for the meals during 2012-2013, lawmakers were told.

Because the district reported that more than 75 percent of its students were eligible for the National School Lunch program the last two years, when less than 60 percent were actually eligible, the district will lose about \$800,000 in NSL categorical funding for the next year, State Auditor Paul McEachren said.

The person in charge of the child nutrition program for the district resigned and then retired after being confronted with the audit findings, said Hamburg Superintendent Max Dyson.

The superintendent said the employee admitted to falsifying the reports so more students would qualify, saying she just wanted to make sure the children were fed.

Dyson said the district has made some major budget reductions for the next school year in an effort to absorb the cut in NSL funding.

McEachren told the committee the district "was serving a free breakfast to all students ... without amending the agreement" with the state Department of Education or the Child Nutrition Program, and without contributing the funds required under the program.

McEachren said the district has, since the audit findings were revealed, reduced the program almost \$44,000 and the school board has voted to continue to offer free breakfasts to all students.

He also said that Child Nutrition director resigned April 17, a new director has been hired, and someone within the district has been given the responsibility of verifying that all children receiving free or reduced-price meals meet the qualifications to participate.

The audit report, which does not name the former school employee, has been turned over the Ashley County prosecutor's office, auditors said.

Group Meets To Discuss Truancy In Little Rock Schools (KARK, Channel 4)

Video available at http://arkansasmatters.com/fulltext?nxd_id=670162

LITTLE ROCK, AR -- A group of people, working towards the same goal, met today in Little Rock to talk about keeping kids in school.

Judges, children advocates and public school officials met up during the truancy summit.

According to the Little Rock City Attorney, more than 1200 kids missed between seven and nine or more days this school year.

The group talked about ways to prevent unexcused absences, like weekly follow-ups with truant students and feedback surveys.

Organizer Kathy Wells said, "They all want to put the truancy courts out of business because we want to get in their working with the kids and all their complex problems much more quickly."

The group also talked about the Little Rock Community Truancy Board which meets once a month to come up with ways to improve attendance.