
Issue Brief – Jean Massieu Integration

STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION – SCHOOLS FOR THE DEAF AND BLIND

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SUMMARY

The Jean Massieu Charter School was one of the first charter schools established in Utah. The Jean Massieu School (JMS) catered to deaf students and offered a bi-lingual/bi-cultural educational experience. This approach teaches deaf students in their native language (ASL), exposes them to the English language through reading and writing, and supports both the deaf and hearing cultures. Due to the unique nature of teaching deaf children, JMS struggled to financially support itself. Parent volunteer hours, private contributions, and supplemental state aid helped maintain the school. During FY 2005, the Jean Massieu Charter School dissolved its charter and merged with the Utah Schools for the Deaf and Blind (USDB).

OBJECTIVE

This brief provides information on the budgetary impacts associated with the merger of JMS and the Utah Schools for the Deaf and Blind.

DISCUSSION AND ANALYSIS

Legislative intent language passed during the 2004 General Session, directed the State Board of Education to make a substantial effort to combine the services of USDB and the Jean Massieu Charter School.

Representative from both schools met over the course of the 2004 interim to discuss how the services of the two schools could be combined. Specific focus was placed on maintaining the quality of services to students and parents. The meetings included parents, teachers, and school administrators from both schools. Work groups were formed of meeting participants to evaluate merger details, such as personnel, transportation, curriculum, instruction, etc. A substantial portion of the merger issues have been resolved between the two schools.

The Jean Massieu Charter School Board voted to merge with USDB beginning in the 2005 school year. The most important aspect Jean Massieu sought to protect in the merger discussions, was retaining and fostering the Bilingual – Bicultural method of instruction used at Jean Massieu.

Budget Impact

It was anticipated that the process of merging Jean Massieu Charter School with USDB would result in greater efficiency and cost savings. USDB has indicated that although some overhead costs will be reduced, overall savings will not be realized. Several reasons explain why savings will not occur.

The educational program, nature of instruction, and classroom environment offered by JMS does not facilitate combining classes with USDB. This required USDB to lease additional space to house the former JMS students. USDB worked with the Division of Facilities Construction and Management (DFCM) to secure a lease.

Increased transportation costs also prevented an overall cost savings. Pupil Transportation was provided by JMS, however, by merging with USDB state and federal pupil transportation regulations must be followed. In addition, the leased facility for the former JMS students is separate from USDB's Connor Street location and other schools serving USDB students. This has resulted in the need for additional bus routes to accommodate these students.

Finally, the merger proved that JMS was operating at a funding level higher than provided by the state through the Minimum School Program. JMS was able to secure donated funds to help make-up any budget gaps. Because of the general one-time nature of donated funds, these funds will not be available to assist USDB operations.

FY 2006 Impact

USDB has requested \$745,600 in supplemental one-time Uniform School Fund revenue to support the increased costs of merging with JMS. This revenue will help cover incurred expenses associated with the building lease, student transportation services, and employee salary costs not covered by JMS revenue transferred to USDB during the 2005 General Session.

FY 2007 Impact

USDB has also requested \$745,600 in ongoing Uniform School Fund revenue to support the JMS merger. As in FY 2006, this revenue will support increased building lease costs, student transportation and employee salaries.

Recommendation: The Analyst recommends that the subcommittee prioritize \$745,600 to provide FY 2006 supplemental revenue to cover the costs mentioned above. Further, the Analyst recommends that the subcommittee prioritize \$114,000 in one-time Uniform School Fund revenue for FY 2007 to cover the costs of the building lease and \$631,600 in ongoing Uniform School Fund revenue for FY 2007 to cover the increased costs of student transportation and employee compensation.

USDB indicates that the newly leased facility is only available for a couple of years. Assuming that USDB is still located in this facility for FY 2008, additional funds to support the lease would be required. USDB is in the process of trying to get Legislative approval for a new building to replace their Connor Street facility and JMS classrooms. The Governor recommended this building in his proposed capital budget. The subcommittee may wish to indicate to the Capital Facilities and Administrative Services Appropriations Subcommittee its priority for this facility.

LEGISLATIVE ACTION

This section provides a guide of what actions might be taken if the Legislature wishes to adopt the recommendations made in this brief. The Analyst recommends the Legislature:

1. Prioritize \$745,600 in one-time Uniform School Fund revenue to cover the FY 2006 costs associated with the JMS/USDB merger.
2. Prioritize \$114,000 in one-time Uniform School Fund revenue and \$631,600 in ongoing Uniform School Fund revenue to provide for the FY 2007 budget impact of combining JMS and USDB.
3. Recommend to the Capital Facilities and Administrative Services Appropriations Subcommittee that the requested USDB Connor Street Replacement Building be considered and prioritized.