

INTEROFFICE CORRESPONDENCE

Los Angeles Unified School District
Independent Analysis Unit

MEMORANDUM

TO: LAUSD Board of Education

DATE: June 1, 2023

FROM: Andrew Thomas, Ph.D., Director, Independent Analysis Unit
Megan Besecker, Lead Analyst

SUBJECT: Initial Comments on Primary Promise and the District's Proposed Literacy and Numeracy Intervention Model

Board President Goldberg requested that the IAU investigate changes to the District's intervention program as outlined in the Interoffice Correspondence (IOC) to the Board dated May 9, 2023, subject "Literacy and Intervention Model." Accordingly, the IAU has prepared some initial comments and a summary comparison of the two intervention models: Primary Promise (current) and Literacy and Numeracy Intervention Model (new).

Overall, both programs rely on the same foundational theory: small group interventions, though the new model will expand the program to more grades and potentially different schools. We estimate the new program will require a budget comparable to that of Primary Promise in FY 2022-23.

Suggested questions:

We anticipate the District will provide a presentation with more detail than was provided in the May 9 IOC. With the information currently available, the IAU has identified two areas of inquiry for the Board.

1. The Board may want to ask about if and how the new program's small-group interventions will substantially differ from Primary Promise's delivery of small-group interventions (e.g., what aspects of Primary Promise that were not working are changed in the new model)?

Both Primary Promise and the new intervention model appear based on small group instruction. Major programmatic differences between the current approach and the new approach, beyond grade levels served, are not clear. Because they rely on the same model of intervention, the Board may be interested in having the District elaborate on the claim that there is "limited data supporting that the current approach [Primary Promise] has achieved the results as envisioned."

2. The Board may want to ask about the program's sustainability if the rationale for change to a new model is not cost. (We estimate the program will require a comparable budget to Primary Promise).

We estimate Literacy and Numeracy Intervention will have a cost in FY 2023-24 comparable to the cost of Primary Promise in FY 2022-23, based on the number of interventionists and instructional aides listed in the May 9 IOC. Thus, other than funding source, it is unclear what District staff mean by a "transition to a more sustainable model."

Comparing Primary Promise and the Literacy and Numeracy Intervention model:

Key similarities:

- **Same foundational theory:** Both Primary Promise and the new Literacy and Numeracy Intervention model deliver daily, small-group instruction.
- **Similar staffing budget:** We expect the budget for the Literacy and Numeracy Intervention staff (minimum estimate: \$125M)¹ to be comparable to what was budgeted for Primary Promise staff in 2022-23 (\$133M). (The total budget for the new model will likely be larger once salary raises are accounted for, in addition to including costs for other aspects of the program, e.g., professional development and data improvement cycle supports).

Key changes with the new Literacy and Numeracy Intervention model:

- **Increases grades served:** The new model expands Literacy Interventionist grades served to K-8 and Numeracy Interventionist grades served to K-5.
- **Increases number of interventionists:** The new model – if fully staffed – will utilize ~100 more Interventionists than were budgeted for Primary Promise in 2022-23.
 - **Change in # of elementary interventionists:** decrease by ~100
 - **Change in # of secondary interventionists:** increase by ~200
- **Decreases number of instructional aides:** The new model calls for 50% fewer instructional aides than were budgeted for Primary Promise in 2022-23.
- **Possible changes to elementary schools served:** The new model will be implemented in District Priority schools and schools that were unable to “have the support due to staffing challenges”, according to the May 9 IOC (it is unknown whether this means general staffing challenges or unfilled Primary Promise positions).
 - **# of Primary Promise schools that are Priority Schools:** At minimum, we expect ~20% of schools (67) budgeted to have Primary Promise staff in 2022-23 to become Literacy and Numeracy Intervention Schools (these schools are among the District’s 100 Priority Schools)

COMMENTS ON THE DATA USED AND POTENTIAL FUNDS FOR PRIMARY PROMISE IN 2023-24

All cost differences, position counts, and school counts for our analysis were based on budget documents and the IOC on May 9. They do not reflect actual expenditures, staffing, and program scale, but still provide a useful comparison. Specifically, we looked at the following publicly available documents:

- [FY22-23 Primary Promise Position Summary](#) (We used salaries for Interventionists and Instructional Aides to estimate the cost of the Literacy and Numeracy Intervention staff)
- [2022-23 Adopted Final Budget 06.21.22](#) (pg. 38 of PDF)

At time of this publication, the IAU has learned remaining ESSER funds may be slated to fund some Primary Promise positions in the upcoming school year. Thus, the actual number of interventionists and instructional aides at schools in 2023-24 may be larger than either program alone, though ESSER dollars for these Primary Promise positions will sunset in 2024-25. If the IAU obtains any information about which schools will receive these funds, we will communicate this with the Board.

¹ Estimated using position counts in the May 9 IOC and last year’s salaries for Interventionists and Instructional Aides.