

Kristin Sorensen

From: Office of the Arizona Governor <noreply@az.gov>
Sent: Tuesday, July 05, 2016 11:50 AM
To: GOE
Subject: Submit a Proposal to the Council
Attachments: classrooms_first_letterhead.docx

Submitted on Tuesday, Jul. 5, 2016 11:50am Submitted values are:

First Name: Dr. Timothy

Last Name: Ogle

Phone Number: [REDACTED]

Email Address: [REDACTED]

Organization: Arizona School Boards Association

Comments: The attached proposal is being submitted by ASBA who represents every K-12 school district in Arizona.

Documents: http://education.azgovernor.gov/sites/default/files/webform/cfi/classrooms_first_letterhead.docx



Proposal for Classrooms First by Arizona School Boards Association

Adequacy of state funding should be the council's primary focus. Arizona is ranked the fourth best state in the country in equity of funding, as measured by student-to-student, district-to-district and school-to-school terms (Education Week, Quality Counts). However, Arizona is the second lowest state in adequacy of funding (Education Week, Quality Counts). In other words, Arizona is fair in terms of its funding distribution, but it's funding is inappropriately low for providing the quality education we desire and expect for our students.

If the Classrooms First Council's primary focus is rearranging or re-allocating existing funding, the council is not dealing with the real problem. To improve education in Arizona, funding adequacy should be of paramount importance. We believe that Classrooms First Council should shift its focus and engage in a summative analysis of funding needed to support quality education in Arizona. The study would determine a legally adequate level of funding needed to provide the quality of education that we want Arizona students to have. The study must put a high priority on the state's obligation to provide nationally competitive professional salaries necessary to attract and retain excellent school staff, as well as appropriate program support.

Once adequate funding has been determined through research and analysis, a fair but stable revenue structure should be devised to pay for the additional investments needed. A statewide dedicated and sustainable tax supported revenue stream is the fairest way to accomplish this.

So-called "backpack" funding should only be allowed if it can be documented that every student is funded for that student's true cost and then only if funds for common expenses (those not directly tied to the student) are also provided.

Locally-approved funding must remain. Arizona believes in local control and the maxim offered by Thomas Jefferson that "the government closest to the people serves the people best." As such, there should remain a source of locally-controlled funding to go above and beyond the adequate level of funding provided by the state, specifically to include:

- Bonding to improve capital facilities that are assets to the community.
- An ability to ask for voter approval for additional locally-levied revenue (budget overrides) to fund defined instructional improvement strategies.

azsba.org – o: 602.254.1100 – f: 602.254.1177 – 2100 N. Central Ave., Suite 200, Phoenix, AZ 85004

Executive Director – Dr. Timothy L. Ogle

President – Kathy Knecht, Peoria USD • **President Elect** Julie Bacon, Paradise Valley USD

Treasurer – Linda Lyon, Oracle ESD • **Secretary** – Lawrence Robinson, Roosevelt ESD

Immediate Past President – Jesus Rubalcava, Gila Bend USD

Quality leadership and advocacy for children in public schools

A poverty weight must be established in any revised formula. Arizona is a high-poverty state with over 58 percent of our students qualifying for free and reduced lunch – and that number is growing by the day. Students in poverty represent our greatest educational challenge and we must have the resources to provide compensatory programs, grounded in the concept of educational equity, to give them opportunities to succeed. Moreover, while the federal government does provide directed funding for this purpose, it is a state obligation to ensure educational fairness and student success.

To this end, Arizona must add a poverty weight and assign it to students that meet federal free and reduced lunch eligibility to ensure greater state and local resources to overcome the educational challenges these students face. This weight should not be considered a replacement for current weights. Furthermore, this weight should be subject to a statutory periodic cost study to ensure the weight matches the need and cost.

Dedicated capital funding is necessary. While greater flexibility with regard to operating expenses is welcomed, it is imperative that capital funding – construction and maintenance – be kept separate from operations funding to ensure that capital funding exists at all. The evidence from previous experience is clear: the pressure on operations funding, particularly staff salaries and benefits, is immense and, if this funding competes with capital funding, capital funding will understandably suffer.

Special education must be funded at its true cost. Special education equitable formula weights must be established to provide for the true cost of special education in all schools. We must reinstitute a required bi-annual cost study to ensure that the resources are adequate to fund special education students. We should also examine whether barriers exist, particularly among Arizona charter schools, that prevent special education students from accessing all of the school choice options available to other students.

A mechanism for funding diverse transportation needs of students should be part of the plan. With the vast difference in school communities and geography a dedicated funding mechanism must exist to allow every Arizona student to be safely transported to and from school. This mechanism will almost certainly require some customization to encompass the wide variety of transportation costs of Arizona students and the communities they live in.

Equitable financial accounting must be included in any reform.

Financial accountability for public dollars is essential for the success of any proposed changes to the existing funding formula. Reporting and accounting for education dollars must be consistent and transparent for any school or district receiving revenue from the formula. Identical information and accountability measures should be required of every district or charter school.