



CLASSROOMS FIRST INITIATIVE COUNCIL MINUTES

General Meeting – October 8, 2015 2:30 P.M.

Location: Yavapai County Education Service Agency, Giffin/Taylor Training Room
2970 Centerpointe East Dr.
Prescott, AZ 86301

Members Present: Brian Capistran, Tim Carter, Susan Chan, Kenneth Hicks, Greg Miller, Co-Chair Jim Swanson, and Dawn Wallace

Members Absent: Governor Doug Ducey, Superintendent Diane Douglas, Alicia Alvarez*, Janna Day*, Annie Gilbert, Beth Maloney
**Attempted to attend meeting telephonically but were unable due to technical difficulties.*

Staff Present: Carmen Ronan, Kristin Sorensen

Call to Order, Welcome & Introductions

Jim Swanson called the meeting to order at 2:39 P.M.

Mr. Swanson then called for an approval of the September 22, 2015 Council meeting minutes as presented. Tim Carter motioned for approval, Brian Capistran seconded; the motion passed unanimously.

Dawn Wallace described the Council's efforts to collect public feedback on their work, including the creation of an [online public feedback form](#) and traveling meetings to Prescott (on Oct. 8) and Tucson Oct. 29.

Public Comments

Dr. Mark Joraanstad of the Arizona School Administrators (ASA) provided general comments on the Council's preliminary recommendations. He stated the importance of M&O override funds and bonds in allowing communities to exercise local control and augment capital funding, which has been cut by 85% in the last few years. He commended the Council for recommending that special education be funded at 2007 cost levels. In terms of human capital/teacher recruitment and retention, Dr. Joraanstad emphasized the shortage of teachers in Arizona and highlighted the importance of: publicly acknowledging the value of the teaching profession, supporting accountability policies that acknowledge the need for multiple measures of teacher effectiveness, increasing funding to make Arizona competitive in the compensation marketplace, and increasing funding for mentoring and induction programs. He commended the Council for bringing attention to barriers to certification, adding that the ASA is working with the ADE and the State Board to modify many certificates. In terms of transparency, he said principals are expressing deep concern over assuming greater financial management responsibilities. Dr. Joraanstad expressed support for the Council's

Opportunity Funding recommendation, stating that achievement will continue to stagnate without additional resources going to those with most need. Regarding the Council's Achievement Funding recommendation, he presented the following concerns: without more concrete details on the new A-F framework in development, it is impossible to predict how this proposal will play out; it is unclear how the incentive-based funding would be implemented; and rewarding high achieving or high growing schools could leave lower achieving or lower performing schools permanently behind. He concluded by asking the Council to use resources at its disposal to conduct impact analysis of the proposals, and he advocated that the Council's proposals should lead to a more robust funding structure, not a shuffling and relabeling of current funds.

Stacey Morley of the Arizona Education Association provided comment on Teacher Experience Index (TEI) reallocation. Ms. Morley presented financial analysis of TEI, by county. She stated that only 107 out of 233 school districts receive TEI, and TEI has the biggest impact on rural and small districts, as it makes up a greater percentage of their budgets than larger, more urban districts. She added that a sudden loss of TEI would likely result in a reduction in force, particularly for small and rural districts. Mr. Swanson asked if TEI is discretionary for the district in terms of how it can be spent on personnel. Ms. Morley said it is discretionary.

Jill Barragan of the Arizona Association of School Business Officials provided general comments on the Council's preliminary recommendations. Ms. Barragan asserted that many students could benefit from the Opportunity Weight the Council is proposing. She then expressed concern around eliminating audits and financial procurement requirements; she said audits provide valuable feedback to administrators, and changing procurement requirements for "A" schools could cause evaluation issues because audits are performed at a district level, making it difficult to evaluate exempt schools. In terms of current year funding, she requested a workable solution to help districts whose budgets will decline more sharply than enrollment next year. She advocated that the Council recommend prior year funding for both districts and charters. She stated that the current funding system in the state is relatively strong in terms of equity (it received a B+ score in terms of equity from the Education Week 2015 Quality Counts report), and she recommended that the Council seek the perspective of school finance practitioners before finalizing tweaks to the funding formula.

Sarah Ells, a Governing Board Member of the Flagstaff Unified School District, provided feedback on local control and equitable funding. She used the example of Puente de Hozho school in Flagstaff, a nationally recognized school in terms of achievement, to illustrate her points. Ms. Ells said Puente de Hozho succeeds and moves students toward equity due to local choice, including desegregation funding, local elected funds, and a maintenance and operations override. She asked the Council not to remove these, and other, local control revenue possibilities because they are valuable ways for the community to invest in education, and local school boards and district leadership are accountable for funds. Lastly, she advocated against reducing financial accountability for A-rated schools because it could open the door to fraud and result in under-management of budgets.

Barbara Hickman, Superintendent of the Flagstaff Unified School District (FUSD), provided general feedback about how changes to the funding formula might affect Flagstaff. She urged the Council to consider the diversity of the state's climate when considering capital funding. She shared that three years ago FUSD spent almost \$1 million on snow removal; additionally Flagstaff schools have more indoor facilities due to colder weather. She described her dissatisfaction with the letter grade system, citing that FUSD has excelled at improving graduation rates for Navajo students, but still has only a

“C” grade. She asked the Council not to simplify the school funding formula, saying the formula is good, it just needs to be fully funded. She also stated her belief that Current Year Funding will destabilize teacher contracts, which could negatively affect the Flagstaff economy, as FUSD is a major employer in the area. Lastly, she advocated in support of JTED programs, saying they generate successful students that get degrees and become contributing members of society.

Mr. Quinn Kellis, Superintendent of the Madison School District, provided comment on shared building space and current year funding. He said his district successfully shares space between district and charter schools on a middle school campus, enabling shared leadership and planning; however, he said this only works because there is mutual interest and benefits on both sides. In terms of Current Year Funding, he said if the estimated student count is wrong, administrators should not have to scrounge for money.

Risha VanderWay, Coconino County Superintendent, spoke about JTEDs. Ms. VanderWay stated that many of the JTEDs in Coconino County are small and fall within diverse, rural communities. She said the JTEDs in the area would not be able to have central facilities in small, rural schools, and there is often limited access to other education options within these communities in Northern Arizona.

Dr. Jennifer Johnson of Support Our Schools AZ discussed funding and teacher retention from the parent perspective. She said adequate funding and quality teachers are essential for providing quality educational opportunities for children in Arizona. She urged the Council to contemplate the impact of their recommendations on instability of teacher salaries, which could act as a disincentive to attracting quality educators.

Mr. Swanson commented on the issue of bonds and overrides. He said the Council does not want to usurp local control, but it wants children throughout the state to have equal opportunity for excellence in education.

Update: Equitable Funding Structure Working Group

Tim Carter provided an executive summary of the working group’s discussion at the request of working group chair Kenneth Hicks. He said the group concentrated on three topics – Current Year Funding, online instruction, and JTEDs.

The group’s Current Year Funding discussion centered around the need for ADE to continue their work to create a multi-year transition process, a process which should be open to public comments. The working group also decided to take online instruction off the agenda and concentrate on concurrency and funding equity as they relate to online schools. Regarding JTEDs, he said the Council had concerns based on perceptions of satellite campuses that will need to be addressed in the final recommendations, and they agreed JTEDs need to be funded well.

Update: Recognition of Excellence Working Group

Greg Miller provided an executive summary of the working group’s discussion. He said the group primarily discussed two items: Redesign of the A-F grading system and certification. In terms of A-F redesign, the Council hopes to have more information about updates to the system by December. The Council’s discussion of certification revealed that no members are happy with the existing certification process because it takes far too long. The possibility of speeding up the certification process through an online system and further funding the certification system were discussed. He also said the majority of

Council members who are practitioners do not want schools to take on the liability of certifying teachers. The Council has asked for a review of the State Board certification rules and current process.

Update: Student Centered Learning Priorities Working Group

Mr. Swanson spoke on behalf of working group chair Beth Maloney, saying the planned discussion of Opportunity Funding would be tabled at the request of Ms. Maloney.

Next Meeting

Dawn Wallace advised that the Council will have its next meeting on October 29, 2015 at the Duffy Family Community Center in Tucson.

Adjourn

With no further business before the Council, Mr. Swanson adjourned the meeting at 3:59 P.M.