



CLASSROOMS FIRST INITIATIVE COUNCIL MINUTES

General Meeting – October 29, 2015 2:30 P.M.

Location: Duffy Family Community Center
Governing Board Room
5145 E. Fifth St., Tucson, AZ 85711

Members Present: Alicia Alvarez, Brian Capistran, Tim Carter, Susan Chan (telephonic), Janna Day (telephonic), Kenneth Hicks, Beth Maloney (telephonic), Greg Miller

Members Absent: Governor Doug Ducey, Superintendent Diane Douglas, Co-Chair Jim Swanson, Annie Gilbert, Dawn Wallace

Staff Present: Carmen Ronan, Kristin Sorensen

Call to Order, Welcome & Introductions

Greg Miller called the meeting to order at 2:31 P.M.

Mr. Miller then called for an approval of the October 8, 2015 Council meeting minutes as presented. Tim Carter motioned for approval, Brian Capistran seconded; the motion passed unanimously.

Mr. Miller advised the council that public feedback on the Classrooms First Initiative Council collected online between October 7 through October 28 has been compiled and included in their packets.

Kristin Sorensen then provided a demonstration of the Classrooms First Initiative Council webpage, including the online public feedback form.

Mr. Miller announced that the previously scheduled Working Group sessions were cancelled because several Council members and consultants had scheduling conflicts due to the special legislative session for education funding.

Public Comments

Scott Little said overrides and bonds are essential to local school districts and should not be taken off the table until adequacy of funding is addressed. He added that, even with the special legislative session, funding is not adequate.

Monica Nelson, Associate Superintendent of Amphitheater Public Schools, said principals feel they have active and adequate involvement in how classroom dollars are spent and don't want additional financial duties extending into procurement and bidding.

Kenneth Hicks thanked the Governor for advocating for more funding for schools. He mentioned top issues the Council is working in, including moving the Group A Weight into the Group B Weight, Current Year Funding, and JTEDs.

Mr. Carter said he is not in support of requiring districts to sell or lease property to other entities against their will.

Beth Maloney said she hopes the Council will continue to look at teacher recruitment and retention.

Julie Bacon of the Paradise Valley Unified School District (USD) and Arizona School Boards Association said that while she supports the premise of a performance weight for high-achieving schools, it takes a lot of work for low-performing schools to move the needle. She advocated for more resources to meet the needs of low-performing schools.

Doreen Zannis of the Arizona Parent Network said “C,” “D,” or “F”-rated schools don’t deserve less funding than “A” schools and teacher certification should be the same across the board for all public schools.

Dr. Jennifer Johnson, Executive Director of Support Our Schools AZ, spoke about teacher retention. She said her group does not want to move away from certification, they just want to streamline and improve the certification process. Additionally, she encouraged the funding of structured induction, which is proven to be particularly successful in helping teachers feel supported in the classroom. She also encouraged the funding of market value teacher salaries. She said many neighboring states have successfully implemented reforms to increase teacher retention, and Arizona can do the same. Mr. Hicks said he understood that there were federal funds available for structured induction and asked Dr. Johnson if that funding was still in place. Dr. Johnson said limited funds are available to districts for structured induction, but it competes with other needs in title funding. Mr. Carter said the state certification unit heard the streamlining call and is making that a priority.

Calvin Baker, Superintendent of Vail School District urged the Council not to complicate financial reporting requirements and advocated for bonds and overrides as a means of adequately funding schools. He also said charter and district schools have different missions, so they should not be funded exactly the same.

Chuck McCollum of the Tucson USD said JTED cuts going into effect will inhibit students from becoming contributing members of the community and encouraged the Council to support the restoration of JTED funding.

Michael Konrad of the Tucson USD expressed concern that Proposition 301 funds are not being fully provided to schools, schools lack capital funds, and current year enrollment funding has negative consequences. He also advocated for CTE programs and increasing teacher salaries.

Crissie Rowley of Sonoran Schools said schools in Arizona are running as lean as possible and there is not enough money going into teacher salaries.

Stefanie Boe of Tucson USD urged a capital funding increase. She also advocated for increasing teacher salaries and arts education.

Jeremy Plumb, a JTED Superintendent in Yavapai County, reminded Council members that JTEDs have had Proposition 301 funds withheld from them, along with public school partners. Regarding the \$30 million statutory reduction to JTEDs taking effect in 2017, he asked the Council to support reducing the cuts and unwinding the statutory change that resulted in the cuts. He expressed JTEDs' concern about Current Year funding because JTEDs could be doubly affected by both district reductions in enrollment and reductions in enrollment they are already experiencing due to funding cuts. He elaborated that Current Year Funding is difficult for JTEDs to predict because they don't have predictable cohorts. He also said JTEDs would like to work with the Council to simplify the funding formula for JTEDs, improve understanding of the JTED funding formula for both central and satellite campuses, make the process more transparent, and eliminate confusion and complication in JTED state statutes. He emphasized that Arizona's economy can't support the JTED cuts currently in effect.

Anna Maiden, Chief Human Resource Officer for the Tucson USD, said Arizona cannot compete in attracting and keeping teachers because teacher salaries are too low. She also said public education deserves more from elected officials.

Dee Puff of the Palominas Elementary School Board encouraged broadening the definition of classroom spending because instructional and student support are very important. She said her rural district needs more money for teacher salaries because it doesn't have the same opportunities for overrides and the same level of funding as districts in larger cities. She also said rural schools are concerned about Current Year Funding because they need to know what their budgets are and that they will remain constant. She also expressed concern about a lack of capital funding. She encouraged giving the schools flexibility to allow Kindergarten teachers a couple of years to obtain certification after they are hired because teaching Kindergarten requires a special certification.

Maria Marin said student achievement is important to help shape the minds of students who will solve the problems of tomorrow. She also asked the Council not to limit principals in being able to make funding decisions.

Kristel Foster of the Tucson USD spoke on behalf of ELL students. She said she did not see ELL students mentioned in the preliminary framework, but she understands that they are part of the Group B Weight, which could be eliminated. She encouraged the Council to consider ELL student needs. She also mentioned that graduation rates of ELL students are falling. Mr. Hicks clarified that the Council does not plan to eliminate Group B Weights, just to change the weight to an equivalent dollar amount so it is easier to see how much funding ELL students generate.

Rachell Hachheirm of Tucson USD commented that Arizona has not funded schools appropriately. She said districts need to be able to use bonds and overrides. She also urged the Council to focus on early learning.

Jim Hall of Arizonans for Charter School Accountability commented that Arizona doesn't have good transparency in terms of charter school spending. He said he hasn't seen the Council address charter school transparency. He added that comprehensive schools that provide extracurricular activities and diverse populations are important.

H.T. Sanchez, Superintendent of Tucson USD, lamented that Texas schools get much more funding than Arizona schools even though Texas is only two states away and there are not many political or

demographic differences between the states. He emphasized the importance of providing more funding for teachers and more capital funding. He urged the Council not to increase financial and procurement responsibilities for principals because their plates are already full. He also mentioned that it may be harder for low-performing schools to turn around and close the achievement gap if funding is being taken from them and given to high-performing schools. Mr. Miller clarified that the Council has only considered performance funding that was based on additional funding (i.e., not taking existing funding away from one program to give to another).

Jen Darland of the AZ Education Network parent group asked the Council to not make the funding formula so simple that we forget why it's complicated: because students have diverse needs. She emphasized that administrative pay in Arizona is the lowest in the nation and added that schools need an infusion of funds.

Michael Gordy of the Arizona Education Association emphasized that arts education is important for helping encourage creativity, which is important to achievement. He said charter schools should not be able to use capital funding because they would be able to keep it if they go out of business. He advocated for increasing teacher salaries and allowing administrators to teach more.

Karla Soto, Chief Financial Officer of Tucson USD, posed several questions about the legislative education funding plan.

Kevin Startt of the Tucson USD asked the Council to reconsider any initiatives that would decentralize financial processes and make site administrators responsible for USFR or financial matters. He said centralized financial processes, including procurement, provide best value to the district because it ensures best use of public funds, enables a competitive purchasing process, and allows site administrators to focus on educating children.

Maura Clark-Ingle of the Tucson USD said students with disabilities can help change the culture of a school to make teachers and students more understanding and conscientious. She said high-incidence and low-incidence special education students require equal resources. She added that if students with disabilities do not have access to the education they need, typical students will also suffer because they will not have the experience of being part of a diverse community.

Johnson Bia of PPEP TEC Schools said we must invest in basic academics and work skills for alternative education as well as teacher salaries and capital funds. He also said the state needs to identify of a unique achievement profile for alternative education.

Jason Freed advocated for increasing school funding.

MaryCarmen Cruz of Tucson USD called on the Council to remember the impact of teacher professional development on student achievement and encouraged the Council to support structured induction programs to help teachers adapt their teaching practices for the better.

Adjourn

With no further business before the Council, Mr. Miller adjourned the meeting at 4:55 P.M.