

AR School Boards Association Adequacy Testimony Summary - May 13, 2014

CONTEXT

Our current matrix and much of the other legislation passed since 2003 was in response to NCLB which was signed into law on Jan. 8, 2002 and the Lake View decision rendered on November 21, 2002.

Taken together they created the Age of accountability

Society is changing faster than the matrix. The matrix needs to be rethought to reflect the current needs of public education. The business community needs to be part of the process.

Schools need more flexibility such as offered in Schools of Innovation.

Project based learning is a way to help student WANT to come to school each day.

SPECIFICS

Career Education:

Funding needs to be significantly increased (aligned with ALE); Quality and availability of programs needs to be aligned with needed job market skills. Basically, it needs to no longer be the step child of K-12 education.

Accountability:

Project based learning does not innately align itself with our current assessment timelines. Accountability needs to be based on assessments that measure a student's ability to think critically, examine problems, gather information, and make informed, reasoned decisions while using technology. Such assessments should accept **a range of solutions** to a task.

TESS:

To enable principals to properly conduct summative evaluations and truly be building level leaders, the matrix needs to include a full time assistant principal position to give principals the time necessary for the evaluations. This is especially true for struggling schools that have high teacher turn over.

Digital Learning and Act 1280 of 2013:

Digital learning opportunities are essential to bringing the world students live in outside the classroom into the classroom. Successful implementation requires answering many questions. See our written testimony for a listing of some of them.

Culture:

Moving to project based learning will be a challenge to parents as well as teachers. Changing education's culture to lessen its reliance on textbooks, and assessment measures is a significant change from existing culture. Schools' outreach to parents to address their fears about moving to a new system coupled with significant professional development for teachers is necessary as we move to a project based learning system.

Common Core State Standards:

For many reasons, we strongly support common core and urge the legislature to stay the course.

Regional High Schools:

Allowing the opportunity for multiple districts to remain as K-8 districts while creating a regional high schools could help the state stop the "rural wasteland" effects of consolidation while being a relatively economical way for those districts to provide a high quality high school education for grades 9-12. This idea was recommended in the 2002 Blue Ribbon Commission On Education Report.

Pre-K:

While not part of adequacy, it's probably the single best investment the state can make in lowering future education expenditures. It needs to be expanded.

Health Insurance Matrix Determination

There are only 35.665 positions in the matrix that included funding for health insurance. Act 3 of the 2013 Special Session had "black box" language directing BLR to determine the per student health insurance funds in the matrix and it determined there were 41.06 positions that counted toward the per student amount.

We are unaware of any public meeting when that determination was established and would like to know where the extra positions came from.

Charter School Facilities:

The problem with giving unused or consolidated school's facilities to charter schools is that it's in violation of Article 14 Section 2 of the Arkansas Constitution. Districts cannot, constitutionally, give their unused facilities to charter schools or anyone else.

Possible solutions are:

- Amending the Constitution

- Legislation establishing a way to determine the fair market value of unused facilities. Once established, if there were no takers, the facility could become state property and the disposal wouldn't have the constitutional constraints as it does for school districts.