



ARKANSAS
SCHOOL BOARDS
ASSOCIATION



Student Focused
Leadership

Thoughts, Concerns and Recommendations Regarding Funding Public Education in Arkansas

A Report for the Interim House and
Senate Education Committees

January 12, 2016

Preface

- Thank you for the opportunity to provide input
- Recognize recent progress in areas of broadband and career education
- Changing world requires change in education to meet societal needs
- Constant review and adjustments necessary as noted by Special Masters
- Allen Odden--Satisfied with progress or not?
- Believe there is still much work to be done



Teacher Staffing

- Conflict may exist between staff allotted in Matrix and staff required by Standards of Accreditation
- Necessary to look at a specific example to understand the concept
- Consider example of K-4 “model school” of 100 students per grade for total of 500 students
- Per Standards of Accreditation:

| | |
|--------------------------------|-------------------|
| K – 20 per class | 5 teachers |
| Gr. 1-3 – 23 per class average | 15 teachers |
| Gr. 4 – 25 per class average | <u>4 teachers</u> |
| Total | 24 teachers |



Class Size

- Picus and Odden reference to potential benefits of smaller class size; especially in lower grades
- K – 3 15:1 Teacher/Student ratio
- 4 – 12 25:1 Teacher/Student ratio
- Used researched based approach to justify recommendation
- Study revealed students from smaller classes performed significantly higher than students from larger classes
- Same study also showed higher level of performance magnified for low income and minority students
- Recommendation: Take a closer look at the potential value of lower class sizes in early grades.

Teacher Staffing - Continued

- Matrix allocates 20.8 core teachers per 500 students
- 24 core teachers required by Standards for Accreditation minus 20.8 allocated through the Matrix leaves underfunding of 3.2 teachers for that K-4 school
- Even in model K-12 school, there are problems with staffing per the Matrix vs. Standards of Accreditation
- An example of this problem is given in the written testimony

Teacher Staffing - Continued

- Another issue is whether or not it is realistic that all the necessary certifications to teach the required coursework can be met with the Matrix allocation
- Small districts seem to have a disadvantage staffing within the Matrix allocations

Recommendation: Use education professionals to conduct a study of actual staffing needs per requirements of the Standards of Accreditation compared to staffing through the Matrix

Transportation

- Critical component of public education in Arkansas
- Funded in Matrix per ADM
- All public schools, including open enrollment public charter schools, should transport their students that reside within their boundaries
- Some districts incur high cost per ADM to transport students due to location, size and geographical challenges

Transportation - Continued

- Funding method unchanged except for one-time \$500,000 supplemental appropriation in 2011-12

Recommendation: Continue the recommendation from the 2014 Adequacy Report as included in the original filing of House Bill 1663 for the need for enhanced high-cost transportation funding

Professional Development

- Picus and Odden research supports need for educators to receive between 100-200 hours of professional development per year
- Recommend part of that time be spent as collaborative teacher team during the school day
- 200 minutes per week planning time statutorily required
- AG opinion is that time is individually driven by the teacher
- May not be counted if driven by administration

Professional Development - Continued

- Funding for Professional Development is inadequate
- 2014 Adequacy Report reported \$2M transferred from NSL funds for PD
- That transfer amount was prior to the 40% reduction in per ADM PD funds used for health insurance
- We believe districts are still transferring funds from NSL to cover PD needs; even after Act 44 of 2015 which reduced the mandatory PD days from 10 to 6
- Same rationale for increasing ELL and ALE funding (due to transfers from NSL) was not applied to PD

Professional Development - Continued

Recommendations:

1. Amend A.C.A. 6-17-114 to allow for the administration to assign a portion of the weekly planning period and
2. Either restore both the mandatory number of PD hours along with the associated funding or provide enough additional funding that districts don't need to transfer NSL funds to cover PD costs

National School Lunch Act

- Many successful programs supported by NSL funds are currently interwoven into school improvement plans
- A.C.A. 6-20-2305 lists 18 allowable uses for these funds and ADE Rules and Regs further clarifies 32 allowable uses
- ASBA recognizes that as very broad allowable use but also recognizes the need for flexibility

Recommendation: If narrowing the allowable use of NSL funds is considered by the General Assembly, districts that have those funds committed to programs that are successful should be able to continue those programs

Facilities

- The Academic Facilities Partnership Program has contributed over \$1 Billion to building and improving public school facilities in Arkansas
- The initial \$455 Million placed in the program when it was started will be depleted in 2017
- There is uncertainty about funding to cover the anticipated demand going forward
- There has not been a full assessment of public school facilities in approximately 10 years
- The \$175 per sq. ft. Funding Factor is insufficient at today's construction costs

Facilities - Continued

Recommendations:

- 1) Conduct full assessment of public school facilities
- 2) The cost per square foot Funding Factor needs to be revised to match current construction costs
- 3) An adequate funding stream to meet demand should be developed
- 4) Reasonable guidelines should be developed to allow open enrollment charter schools access to Partnership Program funding

Cost of Living Adjustment (COLA)

- 2% COLA added to Matrix funding from 2009 through June of 2015
- Total added for 2015-2017 biennium was only about half that amount even though inflationary factor was determined to be 2%
- Act 1087 of 2015 added much needed minimum teacher salary requirement on districts
- Lower COLA increase, higher minimum teacher salary requirement and statutorily mandated staff salary increases were more than the increase in revenue for some districts

COLA - Continued

- Recommendation: The annual COLA added to the Matrix funding should, at a minimum, match the inflationary factor and any new requirements placed on districts

Conclusion

- Appreciative of the hard work Education Committees and sub-committees have put into providing adequate and equitable education for state' children
- Your efforts have made a positive difference
- Must now ask if adequate is good enough to reach the desired economic goals for Arkansas
- ASBA is eager to work with you to move Arkansas forward