

2019 Adequacy Testimony

Public Education funding and review of Adequacy & Equity
for Arkansas's Public School Students

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Arkansas Education Association

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Primary Recommendations

1. Adequacy Study
2. Teacher Quality Investment
3. Pre-K
3. Special Education
4. Resources for Behavior and Discipline
5. Education Support Professionals
6. Using CPI
7. Community Schools
8. Facilities



Adequacy Study

- Conduct a full, *credible* study of the needs of public education in Arkansas including a deep look into the funding Matrix.
- Ensure the funding Matrix includes a line item that allows the state to fund legislative mandates.



Teacher Salary & Teacher Quality

Increase the minimum teacher salary to a level on par with the state salary schedules with the highest educational outcomes.



Labor Costs

- Ensure the state prioritizes and ensures *ongoing* funding so increased labor costs are not shifted to local school districts.



Pre-K

- Arkansas has been a leader in Pre-K education.
- Ensure all 4 year olds have access to a high-quality, public Pre-K program.



Special Education

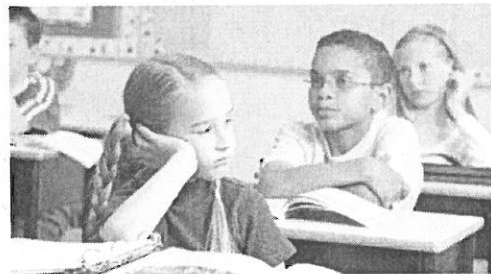
Fully fund special education catastrophic needs and suspend the use of a funding guidance that favors some districts over others.

Ensure all students in need of special education services receive all the services to which they are entitled.



Behavior and Discipline

- Behavior issues impact teaching and learning.
- Over half of teachers report wishing they could spend fewer school-day minutes on discipline.
- The need – Behavior Support in the form of funding for social workers and counselors in every school.



Education Support Professionals

Teachers are not the only educators that make our schools work. Education support staff - including bus drivers, cafeteria workers, janitors, secretaries and others - play an integral role.

ESPs need a line item in the Matrix.



Minimum Wage Increase

- In 2018 Arkansas Voters increased the minimum wage to \$11/hour over 3 years.
- Direct Impact on School District Budgets
- State should support school districts' need to fund that mandate by the voters.



Consumer Price Index

- Adequacy funding recommendation should at minimum, use the CPI as the baseline for state funding support of public schools.
- When CPI is not the minimum standard, and the state funds below the CPI, it is effectively a cut in funding to districts who then have to make up the gap.



Community Schools Model

- Rural and Urban school districts – adopt community school model.
- Needed resources to low income communities to both schools and families.
- Serve as a true community hub.
- Utilize ESA funds to implement Community Schools.



School Facilities Funding

- Arkansas has been a leader in expanding broadband access for schools.
- Some school facilities don't meet standards that can incorporate technology needs.
- Facilities Partnership Program needs to be fully funded as well as a ongoing funding source for the evolving needs of technology.
- Restrict Facilities funding so they can meet their purpose and not be shifted to cover other costs: ex. insurance



Conclusion

The Adequacy recommendations for FY22-FY23 must include a more comprehensive look at the true cost for public school student success and be committed to supporting districts with costs that continue to fall outside the Matrix.



