

AR Education Association Adequacy Testimony Summary - May 13, 2014

An adequate education is dependent upon a number of interrelated issues – some of which can be dealt with by schools and others which schools cannot directly control.

A majority of Arkansas public school students live in poverty. Language development, literacy development, self-confidence, health and housing, along with economic and cultural divisions in society are some of the factors that can impact how well children learn.

The Adequacy report should focus on what works to best prepare, recruit and retain quality educators:

- Rigorous educator preparation programs that stress high academic performance, knowledge of subject matter and pedagogy (teaching), cultural competency and provide one full year of residency under the supervision of a master teacher - all teacher preparation programs should meet the same standards and demonstrate the same required level of performance
- National Board Certification – research shows clearly that National Board Certification leads to improved teacher practice and improved student performance
- Supportive conditions for teaching and learning
- Good principal and teacher leadership in schools
- Commitment to creative teaching and inquiry learning, project-based learning, arts-infused instruction, as opposed to scripted instruction
- Relevant, high-quality collaboratively developed professional development embedded in the school day and year

- Restructured school day and year that provides teachers and others who work with students the time for professional development, as well as more time for individual and collaborative planning
- Greater collaboration between teachers and school leaders, and cross-generational learning teams that bring together new teachers and veteran teachers

Putting all this information together, AEA recommends that the Adequacy Report include the following:

- Provisions that evaluate how well the state, schools and communities are meeting the comprehensive needs of all students
- Recommendations that address the circumstances that create disadvantages for low-income students, minority students, students with developmental disabilities, and students with different cultural and language backgrounds
- Access to high-quality health care programs for all students

- Class size of 1:15 in Grades K – 3
- Recommendations for research-driven elements that lead to permanent systemic change, such as leveraging community assets, improving staff capacity and effectiveness, and developing family and school community partnerships
- the Educator Quality Recommendations already mentioned, including the establishment of standards for teaching and learning conditions
- Recognition that early childhood education is a part of adequacy and that funding needs to be increased substantially for quality pre-school
- A significant level of funding for the Positive Youth Development Act
- A recommendation for entry-level salaries and career earnings for teachers comparable to those in other professions with similar preparation and structured to provide compensation levels that will encourage teachers to remain in the classroom
- Significant increase in the Minimum Teacher Salary schedule
- Adequate funding levels for Teacher Retirement
- A more equitable funding system for school employee health insurance
- Recommendation of a new study of all public school academic facilities, as well as strengthening facility standards and increasing facility funding
- Access to broadband sufficient to meet the needs of Common Core Standards and 21st century learning
- More targeted expenditure of NSLA categorical funding.