

Arkansas  
School  
Boards  
Association

# **Thoughts on Adequate Funding of Public Education in Arkansas**

**A Report for the Joint Adequacy Evaluation  
Oversight Subcommittee**

**Submitted by the Arkansas School Boards Association**



**April 18, 2014**

## Background

The Arkansas School Boards Association (ASBA) appreciates the General Assembly's interest in receiving our thoughts as it re-evaluates the dynamic nature of adequacy and equity. The 2002 Lake View decision has served as the catalyst for significant, positive changes in public education in Arkansas for which the General Assembly deserves the deep appreciation of the state's public school students and their parents.

In spite of the successes of the past ten years, or perhaps it's due to those successes, a serious re-examination of the structure of the Matrix and its components is overdue. In its 2002 Lake View decision, the Court correctly stated adequacy was a moving target that required regular review and evaluation to ensure needed changes to the matrix were made that would help schools have all students learning at high levels. Part of the General Assembly's response to the Court's decision was the passage of Act 57 in the Second Extraordinary Session of 2003, which in A.C.A. § 10-3-2101(c) states: *"The General Assembly further recognizes that while the adequacy study performed in 2003 is an integral component toward satisfying the requirements imposed by the Supreme Court, the General Assembly has a continuing duty to assess what constitutes an adequate education in the State of Arkansas."* In spite of this mandate, there has been no serious examination of Adequacy's matrix components since fiscal year 2007. Simply determining an annual COLA does not fulfill the General Assembly's self-imposed mandate for reappraisal.

As we developed our testimony, we asked the questions, "If you had to counsel your children or grandchildren about what they need to know to get a job or enter college, what would you tell them? Would you tell them not to worry because everything taught as an adequate education in Arkansas is all they need to know?"

The current matrix was substantially based on the remnants of a 20<sup>th</sup> century public education structure and lacked significant input from the business community in the determination of Adequacy and Equity. While we wish the business community had a deeper appreciation for many of the realities facing schools that do not apply to the business world (see Jamie Volmer's "Blueberry Story attached to this testimony), we also know that an important aspect of providing an adequate and equitable education is ensuring our high school graduates have an understanding of the need and a desire for post secondary education that will prepare them for the work world they will be entering. The insights and opinions of the business community are an important facet of ensuring adequacy's and equity's components are aligned to the business community's employment needs.

The bedrock of education in America is the belief that everyone deserves to be educated so they may be responsible, contributing citizens. But public education does not exist in a vacuum; public schools are statutorily bound to accept all students who choose to enroll regardless of a student's prior preparation, physical or emotional issues, or home support for education. To be successful, adequacy must be viewed in the larger context of society and the challenges to learning that students bring with them to the school house door. An inherent problem with the current matrix is that it is sterile.

The statutory intervention and remediation requirements are laudable in their goals, but additional resources are needed for the one-on-one attention that is often required for student success. To

successfully educate the Whole Child efficiently, an increased partnership with other state agencies should be considered so that each student gets the support he/she needs in a cost efficient basis for the state.

The Whole Child approach to education can only truly be successful when addressed within the context of the Whole Community. Act 1326 of 2013 lays out in detail how significantly improving public education requires a coordinated effort at improving the quality of life in the communities the schools serve. The bottom line is that both are going to rise or fall together.

Nearly all aspects of society have changed significantly since 2003, many of which have a direct bearing on public education. The skills and knowledge needed for high school graduates to be prepared for success in pursuit of further education or employment are quite different than they were in 2003. Tomorrow's graduates need to possess knowledge and skills that fundamentally differ from yesterday's graduates and this will continue to change with each graduating class. To be adequate and equitable, public education must be structured through the matrix such that high school graduates possess the appropriate knowledge and skills to give them a genuine opportunity to succeed in their post graduate pursuits. Graduates must have creative and critical thinking skills along with advanced knowledge of technology and an understanding of how to find, analyze, and apply the information they will need to perform their jobs. Since they will probably work with people from many different cultures and countries, they must know how to work with different kinds of people. Meeting these challenges necessitates a corresponding shift in how public education is delivered and measured.

Consider the following as a backdrop for why a major redefinition of adequacy and equity is needed:  
A) In ASBA's March 17, 2008 written Adequacy Testimony, which we believe is as true today as it was in 2008, we wrote:

ASBA believes a disconnect is growing between the skills that are being tested and those that businesses identify as necessary for success in the world of work. The U.S. Departments of Labor and Education formed the Secretary's Commission on Achieving Necessary Skills (SCANS) to study the competencies and skills that workers need to succeed in today's workplace. The results of the study were published in a document entitled, *What Work Requires of Schools: A SCANS Report for America 2000*. The skills and competencies necessary for students to attain proficiency on the state Benchmark exams are a fraction of those the SCANS summary identifies as necessary for success in the workplace.

B) The Human Resource Policy Association in its April 2011 report, *Blueprint for Jobs in the 21st Century* makes the following points.

1. Policymakers and the public must recognize the new economic realities, namely that:
  - a. The economic order of the 20th century has fundamentally changed;
  - b. Technology will continue to transform all sectors of both the American and global economy; and
  - c. The United States now competes on a global stage for resources, investment, and jobs against other countries whose citizens want and are working hard to achieve the same quality of life that Americans enjoy.
2. The American education system must do more to provide America's workers with the education, training, and skill development essential for success in the new 21st century workplace.

3. America's students and workers need a much deeper understanding of what is necessary to achieve successful careers in the new global economy.

C) According to the Georgetown University June 2010 report *Help Wanted: Projections of Jobs and Education Requirements Through 2018*, 63% of available jobs will require at least some post secondary education and nine out of ten workers with a high school education or less will be limited to three occupational clusters that either pay low wages or are in decline. Occupations with high levels of non-repetitive tasks, such as professional and managerial jobs, tend to require postsecondary education and training. These types of jobs are growing, while positions dominated by repetitive tasks that tend to require high school or less, like production jobs, are declining.

D) The Partnership for 21st Century Skills (P21), a coalition of the business community, education leaders, and policymakers, identifies, at the following links, what it believes are the necessary components of 21<sup>st</sup> century student learning.

1. Core Subjects (the 3 Rs) and 21st Century Themes (<http://www.p21.org/about-us/p21-framework/57>) )
2. Learning and Innovation Skills (<http://www.p21.org/about-us/p21-framework/60>)
  - Creativity and Innovation (<http://www.p21.org/about-us/p21-framework/262>)
  - Critical Thinking and Problem Solving (<http://www.p21.org/about-us/p21-framework/260>)
  - Communication and Collaboration (<http://www.p21.org/about-us/p21-framework/261>)
3. Information, Media and Technology Skills (<http://www.p21.org/about-us/p21-framework/61>)
  - Information Literacy (<http://www.p21.org/about-us/p21-framework/264>)
  - Media Literacy (<http://www.p21.org/about-us/p21-framework/349>)
  - ICT Literacy (Information and Communication Technology) (<http://www.p21.org/about-us/p21-framework/350>)
4. Life and Career Skills (<http://www.p21.org/about-us/p21-framework/266>)

E) P21 also offers information at the following links on the critical systems necessary to ensure student mastery of 21st century skills.

1. 21st Century Standards (<http://www.p21.org/about-us/p21-framework/351>)
2. Assessment of 21st Century Skills (<http://www.p21.org/about-us/p21-framework/27>)
3. 21st Century Curriculum and Instruction (<http://www.p21.org/about-us/p21-framework/352>)
4. 21st Century Professional Development (<http://www.p21.org/about-us/p21-framework/831>)
5. 21st Century Learning Environments (<http://www.p21.org/about-us/p21-framework/354>)

ASBA believes that while the interdependence between education and the economy is understood by all to be a "given," A) through E) above, clearly demonstrate the importance of building a new matrix based on the future rather than adding a COLA to the matrix of the past.

## **Moving Forward**

Arkansas is faced with the challenge of how to help ensure our state's future economic well being by examining the components necessary to provide public high school graduates with the skills they will need as identified by the business community to ultimately succeed in the occupation they choose.

An important place to start is Career Education whose funding has **never** been increased since its original level in 2003 when it was funded the same as ALE, \$3250/student. Since 2003, the funding level for ALE has been raised several times and will be \$4383 in the 2014-15 school year. Jobs projections cited above speak volumes for the need for an increasingly robust career education program. Currently, however, there are 68 high schools that have no access to a career education center which leaves a lot of students without the same opportunity to succeed in the future job market as students who have career education center access. That's not equitable. The increasing recognition that project based learning, a cornerstone of career education, helps engage students, increase knowledge retention, decrease absenteeism, and lower discipline problems all speak to the need for increased availability of career education opportunities.

The increasing role of technology in society and the work place challenges education to adapt its curriculum delivery model to remain relevant, or perhaps a more accurate description is to regain relevancy, to the students' world they bring with them to school. This challenge is also an opportunity for increased digital learning options and for lessening the reliance on formal textbooks. Act 1280 of 2013 (codified at A.C.A. § 6-16-1401 et seq.) blew the digital learning door wide open which presents both challenges and opportunities that should be addressed in a new adequacy matrix. Among the questions that need to be answered both in implementing the act and addressing the larger question of the role of technology in public education are:

1. What are its effects on equity? Will students who can afford to access the digital course through his/her own technology device have inherent advantages and opportunities over students who do not have such access?
2. To be equitable, will districts be required to offer off campus technology to all students?
3. How much reliance do we, as a State, want to put on digital learning?
4. How do we ensure that digital learning results in the knowledge and skills deemed necessary to succeed in the employment market?
5. What happens to the definition of "average daily membership" when students no longer physically attend school?
6. What happens to accountability when teachers no longer have to be licensed to teach a digital course? Who fires the inept teacher that is an employee of an outside employer?
7. Who is responsible for the teacher's professional development?
8. Is the digital teacher required to be evaluated under TESS? If yes, by whom?
9. What are the technological needs for the act, and digital learning in general, to be "fully" implemented? The act stipulates the district shall ensure it has sufficient infrastructure for a quality digital learning environment. Lake View effectively transfers that responsibility to the General Assembly.
10. What does the act do to the staffing requirements for districts?
11. The act has the potential to blow school choice wide open. What does this do to student growth and declining enrollment funding?
12. What does the potential for such mass migration do to a district's ability to pass a millage?
13. What does the act's provisions do to the "seat time" requirements that currently exist for a student to get credit for a course.

While the matrix has needed a major overhaul for a long time, Act 1280, by itself, is a tipping point in that regard.

The General Assembly has the very difficult task of how to walk the fine line between micromanaging and being supportive of public education. The business community believes being "nimble" is essential. For public schools to be nimble requires substantially more flexibility than currently exists. The most graphic example of this is a look at the Arkansas School Law book in 2001 (just before Lake View) compared to the 2013 version. The 2001 book had 776 pages in a font size that was actually readable with the naked eye. The 2013 book is 1252 pages in a noticeably smaller font size. For public education to be nimble, the redetermination of adequacy and equity needs to focus on a redesign of the structure and delivery of student learning.

While the Court has said the General Assembly's responsibility doesn't end with the disbursement of funding to districts, ASBA believes the focus needs to shift more to the results and less to the means schools use to get the desired results. In essence, the ADE is the enforcement arm of the General Assembly and is its eye into the health of K-12 public education, but it also serves as the support center to help districts improve student learning. Given ADE's intervention powers for academic, fiscal, and facilities distress, coupled with its support role, a fully staffed ADE and greater flexibility to set salaries and allocate funds could be a very cost efficient way for the General Assembly to both exercise its oversight responsibilities and to help struggling districts become centers of learning. ASBA believes a significant staffing increase for ADE would both help the General Assembly's oversight responsibilities and allow for less statutory micromanaging of how districts achieve their results.

Another way to efficiently improve struggling schools is through an expansion of the Arkansas Leadership Academy. Past testimony by the BLR to the House Interim Committee on Education and the Senate Interim Committee on Education (February 7, 2012) indicated the Academy has success at turning around struggling schools at a much lower cost per school than other school intervention sources.

### **Common Core State Standards (CCSS)**

ASBA strongly supports the CCSS for several reasons. The CCSS are just that, standards. They are not a curriculum. They don't tell teachers what to teach. They prescribe what students have to know and be able to do and leave it up to the teachers to decide how to accomplish it.

The CCSS were developed, in part, to address one of NCLB's biggest flaws. Under NCLB, each state has different standards with different criteria for what determined proficiency, so there has been no meaningful comparison of student achievement between states. Arkansas has had standards for many years and our teachers have been responsible for teaching the Arkansas Frameworks as the prescribed method for helping students attain the required standards. The level of attainment is measured by Arkansas's Benchmark exams which don't correlate to other states' assessments and provide no meaningful way to compare students across state lines.

Our past standards were not aligned with either college expectations for student knowledge or the ACT exam which is the trigger for required college remediation. Students could be proficient on the standards and still do poorly on the ACT and college course work. This situation has cost the state, parents, and students millions of dollars with very little to show for the expense.

The CCSS are:

- significantly less in number than our old standards thus allowing teachers the time to actually teach each standard to a deeper understanding than in the past;

- designed to sequence from grade to grade so teachers build on the previous year's learning with much less redundancy than in the past which should help keep students interested and engaged and aid in teacher accountability;
- aligned to children's brain development so what is taught is relevant to the student's ability to comprehend the subject matter;
- effective at easing student transitions from school to school in our very mobile society;
- aligned with both the ACT and colleges' student learning expectations.

The alignment of the CCSS to both college entry level courses and the ACT will save the state and its taxpayers millions of dollars.

The knowledge and skills desired by the business community fit very well into the goals of the CCSS. Students will be expected to be much more active participants in their learning with significantly less “sit and get” time in the classroom. The CCSS will challenge teachers to teach differently, both how they teach and what they teach. They will need to collaborate across curricula; this will be a challenge for many and would be greatly facilitated by allowing more flexibility in the school day and week (see the Professional Development section below).

### **Assessments**

The Partnership for 21st Century Skills recommends assessments be changed to move from primarily measuring discrete knowledge to measuring students' ability to think critically, examine problems, gather information, and make informed, reasoned decisions while using technology. In addition to posing real world challenges, such assessments should accept a range of solutions to a task. For example, one possible assessment of 21st century skills would focus more on a student's operational skills, such as her expertise in using multiple sources appropriately and efficiently, rather than on whether or not a correct response was submitted.

Some of the links earlier in this testimony examine various needed components of constructive assessments and include the use of portfolios of student work that demonstrate mastery of 21st century skills to both educators and prospective employers and help to assess the educational system's effectiveness at reaching high levels of student competency in 21st century skills. Expanded reliance on portfolios would be a strong step in the direction of more meaningful assessments and encourage the transformation of public education to the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

As expensive as our current assessments have been, they do a generally lousy job of determining a student's attainment of the skills businesses and colleges are looking for. As is often the case, savings on the front end result in higher costs in the long run.

### **Culture and Professional Development**

ASBA has testified on several occasions about the importance of school culture and teacher quality as it relates to improving student learning. Turning around public education requires an understanding of how the turn-around can be accomplished and buy-in from the entire school staff. To successfully change a schools' culture requires significant investment in professional development (PD). On page 34 of the September 1, 2003 Adequacy Report, Picus and Odden (P&O) recommended 100-200 hours/year of PD. In a step backward, Act 2 of the First Extraordinary Session of 2013, took 40% of the PD funding from districts to give to public school employee health insurance. That legislation was further complicated by the ADE's decision to change teacher licensure renewal from requiring 60 hours/year of PD to a mere 36. Given the incredible changes already being implemented in public education and the



significant additional realignments needed to address the demands of an adequate and equitable 21<sup>st</sup> century education, the move needs to be toward more, not less, teacher professional development.

Additionally, there are several statutory impediments to implementing quality PD in the manner P&O have suggested. Ongoing, job imbedded PD requires scheduling flexibility that is currently not available to principals under A.C.A. § 6-17- 114. While ASBA agrees teachers need planning time, collaborative PD also requires time when teachers can work together to learn from each other by analyzing student data to more effectively target teaching to the needs of individual students. Flexible collaboration time is not available under current Arkansas statute or otherwise provided for within the matrix.

The Common Core State Standards provide the necessary opportunity for lessening the reliance on textbooks. For this to occur, however, it will require significant PD and collaboration with fellow teachers. This is one area where funding may be less of an issue than time and flexibility. The collaboration among teachers does not have to include expensive program/presentation costs, but it certainly requires the opportunity for contractual time to be spent in ways not currently permitted in A.C.A. § 6-17-114. It is vital that the adequacy report re-emphasize the importance of ongoing, job imbedded PD that is carried forward into the requirement for teachers' license renewal.

As a senator stated during one of this year's Adequacy Committee hearings, the fact that something is difficult does not mean it shouldn't be done. While we agree that, historically, some PD offered to teachers has been less than stellar, this is a reason to make it better, not a reason to eliminate it. The teacher evaluations required under Act 1209 of 2011 are specifically designed to address the need for meaningful PD that is geared toward addressing each teacher's identified areas of needed improvement. Making only 36 hours of PD required for licensure renewal sends the wrong message to teachers and encourages them to rightfully ask, "If I only have to get 36 hours to renew my license, why do I have to get 60 hours as part of my contract." Moving to 36 hours could also have the unintended consequence of giving new or struggling teachers inadequate support as they strive to improve their teaching.

The funding that was taken from PD by Act 2 of the First Extraordinary Session of 2013 needs to be restored, the ADE's PD Rules need to be rewritten to reflect the required 60 hours, and A.C.A. § 6-17- 114 needs to be amended to allow scheduling flexibility so teachers can collaborate in true professional learning communities.

### **Consolidation, Rural Wastelands, and Regional High Schools**

Arkansas's changing demographics is presenting the need for a fundamental policy decision that will have a profound effect on the future of the state. While education and economics are fully intertwined, one facet of the "cart and horse" question is clear. When a potential employer is looking at possible sites to locate their business, the vast areas of the state that no longer have a school within a reasonable distance (one hour) from the site have little chance of landing the employer. Once a school is closed, the former district's population inevitably declines along with other domino effects such as an increased difficulty keeping a hospital. Couple no hospital with no school and a death spiral has been created for the affected area. This is an unintended consequence of Arkansas's response to the 2002 Supreme Court Lake View decision to require all public school districts to maintain an enrollment of at least 350.

The 2002 Lake View decision included the Court's endorsement of the "Rose Standards", which aligns well with many of the skills identified by the business community as essential for school graduates to possess. The Rose Standards state:

*We concur with the trial court that an efficient system of education must have as its goal to provide each and every child with at least the seven following capacities: (i) sufficient oral and written communication skills to enable students to function in a complex and rapidly changing civilization; (ii) sufficient knowledge of economic, social, and political systems to enable the student to make informed choices; (iii) sufficient understanding of governmental processes to enable the student to understand the issues that affect his or her community, state, and nation; (iv) sufficient self-knowledge and knowledge of his or her mental and physical wellness; (v) sufficient grounding in the arts to enable each student to appreciate his or her cultural and historical heritage; (vi) sufficient training or preparation for advanced training in either academic or vocational fields so as to enable each child to choose and pursue life work intelligently; and (vii) sufficient levels of academic or vocational skills to enable public school students to compete favorably with their counterparts in surrounding states, in academics or in the job market.*

The Court applauded the General Assembly's passage of Act 1108 of 1997 which essentially codified the Rose Standards at A.C.A. § 6-15-1003(a), (b), (c).

Knowing that efficiency certainly also relates to the funding necessary to provide all of Arkansas's public school students with an adequate and equitable education, the economic well being of the state as a whole needs to address how this can be accomplished without creating vast areas of Arkansas that have no viable means by which families may live there.

Inherent in the question and answer is the reality that, in spite of strong efforts by the General Assembly to attract educators to rural areas of the state, little movement in that direction has been realized. ASBA believes that it's time to revisit the idea of Regional High Schools that was recommended in the July 18, 2002 final report of the Arkansas Blue Ribbon Commission On Education and discussed at some length during the 2003 and 2004 consolidation negotiations. High schools are significantly more expensive to operate than elementary grades and also experience the greatest difficulty in finding qualified staffing. Regional High Schools, consisting of grades 9-12, could serve both as a way to keep K-8 under current school district configurations and keep younger children closer to home while economically creating high schools with broad curriculum that could attract businesses and families to rural areas.

As we stated earlier in this testimony, students need to have a greater understanding of and appreciation for the need for post secondary education. The high quality of career education/project based learning that could be offered in regional high schools (especially in parts of the state not previously able to make such offerings) could help entice students to pursue post secondary education. Additionally, local regional industries could have input/partnerships with the regional high schools to entice young people to pursue post secondary training/education which would help improve the education ethic in the state.

## **Additional Considerations**

### **Facilities Funding**

Act 1 of the First Extraordinary Session of 2013 took \$16 million from public school facilities by redirecting funds to The Employee's Benefit Division that had been going into facilities. This is all the more sadly ironic since the statute that was amended is part of the subchapter that "may be cited as the Arkansas Public School Academic Facilities Funding Act".

The Public School Facilities Partnership Program was first funded through a reallocation of state surplus revenue. Those funds have been largely depleted. Predictions for state facility funds are dismal beyond the 2013-15 partnership program. School districts will continue to need state assistance in the area of new facility construction necessitated through student growth. Districts will also be faced with needs of renovating and upgrading existing facilities. It is essential that the state procure a stable funding mechanism to ensure the adequate funding for school district facilities.

The requirement standard for school facility funding has been adopted as “warm, safe and dry”. It is evident that schools will continue to be faced with facility needs. In order to meet the definition of adequacy, schools need to have facility construction and renovation based on the need for adequacy – not on the availability of funds based on a tier system.

The misappropriated funds are not part of any real long term fix for school employee health insurance, but they are part of fulfilling the ongoing responsibility of the state to provide adequate public school facilities. The statute amended by Act 1 needs to be restored to its former language.

Part of the result of the 2002 Lake View decision was an extensive rewrite of school facilities' standards, which barely existed previously, and hadn't been touched for a long time. The changes needed to provide a 21<sup>st</sup> century education for Arkansas's public school students necessarily include changes to the facilities' standards to help facilitate project based learning.

### **Slippery Slope**

The General Assembly was tasked with determining what it took to provide an adequate and equitable education. Among the challenges in making that determination was the fact that Arkansas has approximately 40 different configurations of how schools are organized with each one presenting different pros and cons of why a district would choose that configuration of grades. The General Assembly's answer to the challenge was to create a prototypical school of 500 students consisting of grades K-12 and the staffing it deemed to be necessary to adequately educate the 500 students. Due in part to the knowledge that the prototypical school didn't reflect current reality in almost any district in the state, the matrix was determined to be a **funding** matrix and not an **expenditure** matrix. So while there are many specific components that went into creating the matrix, districts were allowed the freedom to determine how best to spend the allocated funds.

Acts 3 and 6 of the First Extraordinary Session of 2013 took the first steps down the path of changing the **funding** matrix into and **expenditure** matrix. While the acts are to be lauded for creating the task force to determine a genuine, long term solution to the school employee health insurance crisis, the acts also include language requiring schools spend all of the funding allocated for health insurance in the matrix on health insurance. While on first blush this may seem logical, there are many factors that go into a district's decision regarding its contribution level for employee insurance premiums. Some of these reasons include:

- 1) The participation rate of the district's eligible employees. In districts where there are other employers who offer insurance, the district's employee may have insurance through their spouse's plan. In district's where many of their employees choose to not enroll in district offered insurance, using funds to increase insurance premium contributions comes at the expense of using the same funds to give everyone a raise.
- 2) It can be hard for employees to fully appreciate large insurance premium contributions when looking at their monthly take home pay.

3) Many district employees are hired and paid due to funding received through grants; the insurance premium contributions for those employees are traditionally paid out of those grant funds. The acts are very unclear about whether the requirement is for a total insurance premium payout equal to the amount included in the matrix or whether the required payment is strictly required for "matrix" employees. A.C.A. § 6-17-1117(c) requires districts pay all their employees the same insurance premium contribution rate. If the act's intention is that matrix funding is only to be spent on matrix employees, this could end up making districts pay their grant funded employees greatly increased insurance premium contributions with those funds coming directly from funding available to educate students.

We believe Acts 3 and 6 have opened Pandora's box and started the General Assembly down a very slippery slope that needs to be undone in the 2015 legislative session.

### **Broadband**

Implementing the changes necessary to prepare our graduates to be fully functioning, contributing members of the 21<sup>st</sup> century requires Arkansas make significantly more progress on getting affordable broadband to all areas of the state. Even though there has been much legislative discussion on the issue, it has not translated into legislation that will help create the infrastructure to deliver the needed broadband. To help ensure a positive education and economic future for Arkansas, we urge the General Assembly to move swiftly and strongly on this issue. Having broadband throughout the state will provide options for people to live rurally and yet work globally, helping avoid the creation of rural wastelands.

### **Concurrent Credit**

An alignment problem exists in the present ADE Rules governing concurrent credit that needs to be resolved due to its relation to adequacy. A student who takes a high school course on his or her campus taught by the school's teacher, senior English for example, must have 120 clock hours over two semesters to receive a full unit of credit toward graduation. The student's teacher is required to use the curriculum frameworks to plan instruction leading to student demonstration of proficiency in the Arkansas content standards. That same student has the opportunity to take a concurrent credit course, English 101 for example, that might meet three times a week for an hour, the teacher would not be required to teach the Senior English curriculum frameworks and the student would receive a full unit of credit for a one semester course. Something is wrong with this picture.

ASBA supports the concept of concurrent credit, but either the standards are important and require 120 clock hours to be taught, they are not important and senior English should be a one semester course, or the English 101 course doesn't teach all or the required standards high school teachers are responsible for teaching. This issue begs the larger question concerning course credit in general. ASBA believes it is time for a serious discussion about whether "seat time" is an obsolete requirement as a prerequisite for course credit. Is there a better measure of how much a student actually knows? With so many learning options available in this digital age, we believe every opportunity for expanded learning needs to be explored.

## Summary

ASBA has three filters we use to critically view issues such as those we face when providing board members training and assessing adequacy and proposed legislation.

1) The first filter or question that we always ask is, "Is it good for kids?" If we cannot answer unequivocally, "Yes," then there is no point in wasting any resources on the issue. The mission of our organization involves pursuit of academic excellence. How could we support anything that we cannot say for sure is good for kids? There is too much competition for precious resources to waste those on programs that will not benefit the kids.

2) The second filter we consider is, "Will it build an education ethic for the community?" That one is a bit harder to understand. As Americans, we understand the work ethic. We understand that hard work is valued. We look for ways to increase our productivity and save time. We work long hours and take short, if any, vacations. We value work and especially hard work, but do we value education?

Where an education ethic exists in a state, the children are highly treasured and valued. Schools are supported by the entire state. The economic success of the state is directly related to the success of its schools. In a state where the children and the school are valued, the state fairs well. That is what building an education ethic is all about. One of Arkansas's biggest challenges is to build a strong education ethic in all areas of the state.

3) The third filter through which issues or ideas must pass is, "Will everyone be held appropriately accountable?" Accountability for education belongs to all of us. It is more than just holding someone's feet to the fire. We all must play our part. We must consider whether or not a program or idea will promote accountability for all. We must ask ourselves to look at the hard data, consider the facts, and make a sound decision—one that benefits the children even if it is an unpopular one among some groups.

The proposals we have made in this testimony pass all three of our filters. Working together to ensure a redefined approach to adequacy and equity will prepare our graduates for the 21<sup>st</sup> century will also ensure a bright economic future for Arkansas.

## **The Ever Increasing Burden on America's Public Schools**

By Jamie Robert Vollmer

America's public schools can be traced back to the year 1647. The Massachusetts Puritans established schools to:

- 1) Teach basic reading, some writing and arithmetic skills, and
- 2) Cultivate values that serve a democratic society (some history and civics implied).

Gradually, science and geography were added, but the curriculum was limited and remained focused for 260 years. The founders of these schools assumed that families and churches bore the major responsibility for raising a child.

At the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, society began to assign additional responsibilities to the schools. Politicians and business leaders saw the schools as a logical site for both the assimilation of immigrants and the social engineering of citizens of the "Industrial Age". The trend of increasing the responsibilities of the public schools has accelerated ever since.

From **1900 to 1910**, we added

- \* nutrition
- \* immunization, and
- \* health to the list of school responsibilities.

From **1910 to 1930**, we added

- \* Phys. Ed., including organized athletics,
- \* the practical arts,
- \* vocational education, including home economics and agricultural education, and
- \* school transportation began to be mandated

In the **1940s**, we added

- \* business education
- \* art and music
- \* speech and drama
- \* half day kindergarten, and
- \* school lunch programs appeared (We take this for granted today. It was, however, a significant step to shift to the schools the job of feeding America's children 1/3 of their daily meals.)

In the **1950s**, we added

- \* expanded science and math education
- \* safety education
- \* driver's education
- \* expanded music and art education
- \* foreign language requirements were strengthened, and

- \* sex education was introduced (topics continue to escalate)

In the **1960s**, we added

- \* Advanced Placement programs
- \* Head Start
- \* Title I
- \* adult education
- \* consumer education
- \* career education
- \* peace, leisure, and recreation education

In the **1970s**, the breakup of the American family accelerated, and we added

- \* special education (mandated by federal government)
- \* Title IX programs (greatly expanded athletic programs for girls)
- \* drug and alcohol abuse education
- \* parent education
- \* behavior adjustment classes
- \* character education
- \* environmental education
- \* women's studies
- \* African-American heritage education, and
- \* school breakfast programs appeared (Now, some schools feed America's children 2/3 of their daily meals. Sadly, these are the only decent meals some children receive.)

In the **1980s**, the **flood gates** opened, and we added

- \* keyboarding and computer education
- \* global education
- \* ethnic education
- \* multicultural/non-sexist education
- \* English-as-a-second-language, and bilingual education
- \* teen pregnancy awareness
- \* Hispanic heritage education
- \* early childhood education
- \* Jump Start, Early Start, Even Start, and Prime Start
- \* full day kindergarten
- \* pre-school programs for children at-risk
- \* after school programs for children of working parents
- \* alternative education in all its forms
- \* stranger/danger education
- \* anti-smoking education
- \* sexual abuse prevention education
- \* health and psychological services were expanded, and
- \* child abuse monitoring became a legal requirement for all teachers

In the **1990s**, we added

- \* Conflict resolution and Peer mediation

- \* HIV/AIDS education
- \* CPR training
- \* death education
- \* expanded computer and Internet education
- \* inclusion
- \* Tech Prep and School to work programs
- \* gang education (in urban centers)
- \* bus safety, bicycle safety, gun safety, and water safety education

In the first years of the **21<sup>st</sup> Century**, we have superimposed upon everything else a layer of high-stakes, politically charged, standardized tests.

**And in most states we have not added a single minute to the school calendar in five decades!**

All of these added items have merit, and all have their ardent supporters, but they all cannot be assigned to the schools. No generation of Board members in the history of the world has been asked to meet this goal.

America's school board members must facilitate a conversation in every community that answers two essential questions: What do we want our children to know and be able to do when they graduate, and how can our schools and our entire community be organized to ensure that *all* children reach the stated goals.

The bottom line: Schools cannot do it alone. Schools cannot raise America's children.

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