

Commission on Access to Sound Basic Education

Finance and Resources Work Group

Draft Priorities

Highlighted priorities were revised per the discussion at the May 14 Commission meeting

Core values that should be reflected throughout a constitutionally compliant public school finance system:

- To ensure that LEAs have sufficient personnel and the best, most qualified staff possible to provide a sound, basic education, the state should maintain some form of an allotment system, including position allotments, for staffing K-12 public schools and funding school systems.
- To ensure that educators are compensated adequately on average and equitably across the state and across experience levels, the state should set and maintain a minimum statewide salary schedule that is sufficient to attract and retain high quality educators in districts throughout the state.
- To account for the diversity of costs, student needs, and revenue-raising capacity in LEAs across the state, the state's school finance system should include mechanisms to ensure that each LEA has enough (adequate) funding to provide a sound, basic education to all of its students. Resources should be continually adjusted so that a student's race, geographic location, and family income level do not limit his or her access to a sound, basic education.
- The state's school finance system should provide public schools with adequate funding and appropriate flexibility in ways that will best meet their needs, while also ensuring accountability and transparency in how those funds are spent.
- The state's school finance system should be designed to meet the funding needs of schools and LEAs today, and include a process for updating funding so that the system is effective and adequate in the future.

Based on those core values and the Commission's work over the past 18 months, the Finance and Resources Work Group brings forward for discussion the following items:

1. Determine an adequate level of funding in order to provide a sound, basic education to every student, accounting for individual student needs, the concentration of high-needs students in schools and LEAs, and the importance of high quality early childhood education.
2. The state has the obligation to provide sufficient resources to districts to allow them to attract and retain principals, teachers, and staff who are able to deliver a sound, basic education to the students in the district. This requires a determination of the appropriate balance between state and local funding, and a consideration of the capability of the county, particularly low wealth counties, to provide local funding.
3. Adjust the allotment system with the goals of providing more funding to support high-needs students and of consolidating allotments to provide appropriate flexibility to LEAs so that they can effectively meet the needs of students.

4. To meet the academic, physical, and mental health needs of students and to ensure that our schools are safe and supportive learning environments, the state should provide sufficient funding to ensure that schools are staffed with specialized instructional support personnel (SISP) at the nationally recommended ratios. School districts should be given appropriate flexibility in SISP position allotments so that they may strategically hire SISP staff to best meet the needs of their students. Such allotments should not be used for other purposes.
5. Under current statute, the state is responsible for funding the operational expenses of public schools and local governments have the responsibility to provide for capital and infrastructure needs to the extent they are capable. The decline in state funding support for our public schools has resulted in local governments having to cover the costs of more operational expenses, which has led to a strain on their ability to cover capital and infrastructure needs. Since some local governments are not fully capable of providing for capital and infrastructure needs, the state should develop a process for recurring statewide support for capital, infrastructure, and technology needs, especially in low-wealth school districts. This process should include an expanded dedicated fund to which districts can apply based on need, which would be funded through a dedicated revenue stream, like lottery funding, along with regular bonds given appropriate interest rates and the current fiscal environment.
6. Implement statewide salary schedules for teachers, school administrators, and instructional support personnel to ensure that they are adequately compensated and given the necessary incentives to grow professionally, to remain in the profession, and to work in high-needs schools and districts.
7. Ensure that districts have sufficient funding, staff capacity, and access to professional development and technical assistance to make evidence-based, informed decisions.
8. Ensure that the Department of Public Instruction has sufficient funding and staff capacity to enable the agency to support school districts in providing a sound, basic education to all students.
9. Public charter schools were created to be laboratories of innovation to help improve public education and provide alternative learning environments for students. Unfortunately, the expansion of charter schools has begun to place a financial and planning burden on traditional public schools. Given that the state is obligated to ensure that every public school student has access to a sound, basic education, the state should modify the funding for charter schools so that funds for new charter schools and charter school enrollment increases are funded by a direct state appropriation rather than in reduction to student enrollment funding for districts.
10. Establish that child nutrition is an integral aspect of a sound basic education and provide adequate funding to ensure access to free breakfast and lunch programs for all students with needs.