



COLORADO STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION

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Seated January 9, 2001

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1st Congressional District

AMENDMENT 23: WHAT IS TO BE DONE

DATE: January 30, 2001
TO: Joint Budget Committee
FROM: State Board of Education
RE: PRIORITIZING AMENDMENT 23 FUNDING

At the time we presented our budget in December, the JBC invited our thoughts on the above noted subject.

While we recognize that ultimate decisions must properly rest with Governor and Legislature, we welcome this opportunity.

The following thoughts are neither exhaustive nor detailed. Nonetheless, we hope they are of some value.

They represent the unanimous consensus of this Board.

- I. ACCOUNTABILITY Given the mandates of Amendment 23, Part 1, all agree that enhancements of public education expenditures should be balanced by a comparable accountability for the expenditures of those monies.

Mechanisms for this purpose already exist.

Both Governor Romer (HB 98-1267) and Governor Owens (SB 00-186) signed into law bills well designed to meet our current accountability needs. The State Board of Education has both the capacity and the will to fully implement the direction of our constitutional partners in this regard.

II. CATEGORICAL FUNDING The State Board of Education has repeatedly included in its annual budget proposals the concept of growth plus inflation for categorical programs such as Special Education, Gifted and Talented, and English Language Proficiency. Amendment 23 represents an historic opportunity to redress long-standing shortfalls in funding those needs, at least in part.

Special Education represents at once our high obligation to our most vulnerable children and the ultimate in unfunded mandates. School districts have faced cruel dilemmas that set child against child and program against program as they bore the brunt of broken federal promises on special education funding and state shortfalls. We recommend, if possible, the accelerated funding of this critical need area.

III. CLOSING THE LEARNING GAP Closing the Learning Gap separating the more fortunate and the most vulnerable children is an imperative of such compelling power that it must transcend partisanship and debates over funding sources.

Nonetheless, if Amendment 23 opens a new door of opportunity, it seem inconceivable that this cause would find no place on the agenda.

During our earlier visit, we asked that at least a "tiny sliver" of this new bounty be dedicated to CLOSING THE LEARNING GAP and that perhaps it could take the form of a "categorical called Hope."

In practical terms we seek support for three things (details attached):

- A. DATA BASE Energize our capacity to "see and analyze" the gap we seek to overcome.
- B. PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT In many places teachers have proved beyond any doubt that the learning gap can be significantly narrowed. Empower the CDE, BOCES, districts, and schools to accelerate the "export of success" so that the needed environment of support can be found not in some schools, but all schools.
- C. NEW STRATEGIES Allow us to explore new strategies such as e-learning and partnerships with community based organizations in addressing the needs of under-resourced schools.

IV. CLASS SIZE Along with Governor Owens, Legislative leaders, and many others, we recognize the importance of class size as an educational issue.

However, as the Governor noted in his State of the State Address,

reducing class size must be seen as an opportunity, not a mandate.

For many districts, the research validated issue of teacher quality will be the highest priority. Other districts, already confident of their teacher quality, may indeed place first focus on reducing class size or making good the earlier loss of some other component of their educational tool chest.

- V. PRINCIPAL AND TEACHER RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION The State Board supports the Governor and Legislature in their proposals to apply some of Amendment 23's "discretionary" funds to attracting and retaining excellent principals and teachers, particularly in our hard-to-staff schools and subjects.
- VI. MAINTENANCE OF EFFORT Recognizing that strict adherence to the 5% mandate will effectively remove both the Governor's and the Legislature's flexibility (e.g. in restoring special education shortfalls) and new initiatives (e.g. Closing the Learning Gap -- see section III. above), we suggest that the JBC, wherever possible, maintain traditional growth levels in general fund investments in k-12 education (6.1% on average over the past seven years).

Respectfully submitted,

The Colorado State Board of Education:



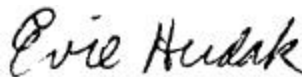
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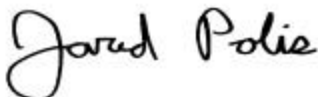
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