



Illinois State Board of Education

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Gery J. Chico
Chairman

Christopher A. Koch, Ed.D.
State Superintendent of Education

October 1, 2013

The Honorable Andy Manar
State Senator, 48th District
119A Capitol Building
Springfield, IL 62706

The Honorable David Luechtefeld
State Senator, 58th District
103B Capitol Building
Springfield, Illinois 62706

Senators Manar and Luechtefeld:

The Illinois State Board of Education (“ISBE”) sincerely appreciates the opportunity to partner with you to study the current Illinois education finance system and recommend changes to the system. We are providing you with a final copy of a “white paper” developed by Augenblick, Palaich and Associates to provide background and context and to serve as a starting point for the discussion.

As we work together to address our funding system, the driving goal must be to fulfill the state’s constitutional mandate of providing an “efficient system of high quality public educational institutions and services.” In addition, we must maintain focus on the ISBE’s mission of preparing all students to “succeed in careers and postsecondary education.”

Wide variations in student funding and local tax rates across our state serve as strong evidence of inequity. The Operating Expenditure Per Pupil in our state can range from \$6,016 to \$25,289, depending upon where the student resides. In addition, local total tax rates can range from 2.3 percent to 15.3 percent of property value, depending upon the location of a taxpayer’s home.

The Illinois State Board of Education believes a successful education finance system should provide adequate funding to local school districts, should be simple, transparent, and equitable and should provide a return on the taxpayers’ investment. Therefore, any recommendations for change should be measured against these principles:

1. Adequacy—provides a level of funding sufficient for a high quality education.
2. Simplicity—provides districts a predictable, understandable revenue stream that is used to maximize student outcomes.
3. Transparency—is easily accessed and understood by all citizens.

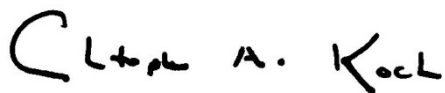
4. Equity—begins with everyone contributing a minimum tax rate and adjusts for student need by weighting the formula to allow for additional resources to address impediments to student achievement.
5. Outcome-focused –encourages student growth in learning.

We fully recognize that a new finance system will not single handedly produce better outcomes for our students. The legislature and the Board have actively worked together over the recent past to develop an aggressive agenda to promote student success. We have approved the internationally-benchmarked Common Core Learning Standards to better prepare students for college and careers. We are changing the way we evaluate teachers and principals based on student growth and are developing a longitudinal data system that allows us to reduce local paperwork burdens while improving data quality. We have raised the bar for entering the teaching and principal profession so that our students have the best quality instruction possible. Further, we are increasing transparency through a new and improved school report card that provides a more accurate picture of student growth and the learning climate within schools.

We understand the desire of the members of the Senate Education Advisory Committee to bring legislation forward; however, we must take the time and allocate the professional resources necessary to support us as we develop and recommend a formula that works according to the principles we have outlined above.

We look forward to working with you to develop a new education finance system that will best serve all our students and taxpayers.

Sincerely,



Christopher A. Koch, Ed.D.
State Superintendent of Education
Illinois State Board of Education



Gery J. Chico
Board Chairman
Illinois State Board of Education

Enclosure

cc: Senate Education Funding Advisory Committee Members