



## **2010 Legislative Platform November 10, 2009**

This platform is intended to guide the interactions between Adams County School District 14 and the Colorado General Assembly during the 2010 session. It contains a statement of beliefs and guiding principles as well as items targeted at specific legislation. As legislative issues arise, the Board of Education and Superintendent of Schools will use this platform to develop District positions on potential legislation.

### **Beliefs and Guiding Principles**

We support the State's efforts to ensure a thorough and uniform system of free public education through the establishment of reasonable standards and assessments, applied equally to all districts and all educational institutions receiving public funds.

We hold the State accountable for providing adequate funding to achieve a thorough and uniform system of education.

We support the State's objective of closing the achievement gap for all of Colorado's children.

We believe that local school boards understand the unique needs of their communities. As such, local school boards are best positioned to create policies and programs to achieve state standards while meeting the needs of local communities. We oppose any effort to weaken the local control provision of the constitution by the State's imposition of specific programs, or by the state taking control of local schools.

We believe that any mandates by state authorities should include funding for local school districts to effectively implement new requirements, including new testing requirements. We support efforts to eliminate non-essential state reporting and other administrative requirements that would free up more time and resources at the school and district levels.

We believe that the needs of children are best met when the State works collaboratively with local districts in a spirit of continuous improvement. We oppose actions that are punitive in nature and result in taking control away from local school boards.

### **GOVERNANCE**

- We support legislation that reinforces the responsibility and accountability of the local board of education. We strongly believe that as a local board of education, we are responsible for the organization of the learning environment, the implementation of curriculum, the configuration of school facilities, staffing, and necessary programs that create a safe and academically rich opportunity for all students.
- We believe the local board of education is the final authority for local management decisions regarding student achievement, educational programs, accountability, expenditures and personnel.

- We believe school board representatives should be included in any state initiated planning, advisory or decision-making process that affects public education.
- We believe local school boards must retain sufficient flexibility to approve, continue or discontinue charter schools and all local public school choice options for the benefit of all students in the school district.

## **SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT:**

- We support legislation that provides state funding for increased teacher quality and staff development.
- We support efforts to create a single accountability system for schools.
- We believe that all schools receiving public funds should be required to meet the state standards for assessment and accreditation.
- We support efforts to increase the appropriate use and availability of educational technology in public schools including funding for equipment, software, hardware, technical support and telecommunications.
- We oppose legislative efforts to establish mandatory statewide uniform high school graduation requirements. However, we do support legislation that sets forth statewide high school graduation standards that clearly articulate what students will know, do and understand as long as a local school district can determine how such standards will be achieved and reported.
- We strongly support legislation to provide in-state post-secondary tuition to all Colorado high school graduates in order to help decrease the achievement gap, increase the graduation rate and positively contribute to Colorado's economic development and growth.
- We support legislation that will assist local school districts in their efforts to raise the achievement of all students while closing the gap for underperforming groups of students.
- We support legislation that fosters effective school and family partnerships and fosters parent involvement to increase student achievement.
- We support efforts to improve student achievement by extending the school day, adding school days and providing students with academic enrichment activities like after school programs.
- We support the implementation of full day kindergarten and expanding early childhood programs that can give all students a pathway to success.
- We encourage the Legislature to commission an independent study of the State's charter schools. This study should look at the State as a whole and also address the fiscal impacts of charter schools on a school district to determine whether additional operating funds are necessary and whether any other changes in the law are warranted. Such a study should also include, but not be limited to, a review of whether charter schools have promoted the legislative purpose underlying the Charter Schools Act, the effectiveness of charter schools in increasing student performance (value added), the impacts on neighborhood schools, the variety of programs and instructional strategies offered by charters within districts and throughout the State, the diversity of charter schools' student populations, and the demographic composition of each charter school vis-à-vis the district of which they are a part, and the State as a whole.

## **SCHOOL FINANCE**

- We believe educational opportunity should be a function of the taxable wealth of the State, not the taxing ability of a local district. Differences in educational expenditures should be based on the educational needs of each district's students.
- We believe the State's funding formula should be adequate to provide a suitable level of funding for all students and districts to achieve expected outcomes, and adjusted annually to reflect the voters' intent of Amendment 23 which is to increase public education funding at a rate of inflation plus 1 percent annually.
- We strongly urge the Legislature to continue efforts for comprehensive reform of Colorado school finance and the overall State tax structure.
- We oppose legislation that would modify total program funding of K-12 public education through the Colorado School Finance Act by adjusting the factors which would reduce funding for school districts.
- We oppose any state or federal legislation that diverts public funds for nonpublic schools through a tax credit, voucher system or any other such plan that is not within the control and discretion of local boards of education.
- We support maintaining and, when possible, increasing reimbursement levels for the categorical programs of English Language Proficiency Education, Gifted and Talented Education, Special Education, Transportation and Vocational Education. We further support beginning the funding of a technology categorical program to support districts' technology needs resulting from increased data requirements by the State and increased instructional technology needs for academic achievement.
- We support legislation that increases the pool of funds available for reimbursement to districts with students with severe special needs and associated high excess costs.
- We support an increase in the state reimbursement rate for school nutrition programs that promote and support higher wellness standards, nutrition curriculum and healthier school foods.
- We strongly encourage the legislature to continue support of the mill levy freeze to generate additional revenue to stabilize the State Education Fund and to fund full day kindergarten.
- Based on the extensive research indicating the importance of early childhood programs, we support additional funds for the Colorado Preschool Project and full day kindergarten programs.