

**Arizona School Administrators (ASA)
Superintendents' Priorities
February 2013**

To thrive and prosper now and in the future, the State of Arizona has a vested interest to ensure that our children receive a high quality education that advances the long-term economic needs of our state. As superintendents statewide who know what it takes for students, educators, and schools to excel, we implore you to join us in committing to the following:

Common Core

We eagerly embrace the increased rigor and depth of knowledge central to the Common Core standards. The impact of this transition cannot be understated when one considers our collective charge of preparing graduates to succeed in an increasingly competitive global economy. Educators stand ready and willing to effectively transform classroom instruction; this effort extends well beyond a basic embrace of the standards.

In addition to the need for ongoing professional development, the following areas also must be supported to ensure success with the implementation of the Common Core standards: a statewide system to provide accurate and timely data; aligned instructional materials that address both curriculum changes related to Common Core and the differing instructional levels of our students; and the necessary technology to support instruction and assessment. As echoed in several studies, the magnitude of support necessary to sustain change over time will be substantial; the notion of one-time monies will be insufficient to effectively reform education. (Fordham Study, Pioneer Study). As a state, a long-term financial commitment to Common Core is essential.

Early Childhood

Investing in full-day kindergarten, preschool, and early education generates returns throughout a child's educational life, creating more productive adults and demonstrably reducing state costs. According to the nation's longest follow-up study of a large-scale early childhood program -- which tracked more than 1,400 individuals over 25 years (Reynolds and Temple, 2011) -- individuals who had participated in an early childhood program starting at age 3 showed higher levels of educational attainment, socioeconomic status, job skills, and more as well as lower rates of substance abuse, felony arrest, and incarceration than those who received standard early childhood services.

According to a meta-analysis of data (RAND Labor and Population, 2005), as school outcomes improve, fewer resources may be spent on grade repetition or special education classes. The researchers state "well-designed early childhood interventions have been found to generate a return to society ranging from \$1.80 to \$17.07 for each dollar spent on the program." Therefore, we believe it is imperative that we fully fund early childhood education and services.

2% Inflation Rate

When Proposition 301 passed in 2000, its provisions included annual inflation adjustments to the base education-funding formula funding (2% or the actual rate of inflation). These adjustment have been critical to school district budgets, particularly with the reduced level of funding provided by the state since FY2008, a 21.8% decrease (Center on Budget and Policy Priorities, 2012). Additionally, the past three budget years, the Legislature has not funded these voter-approved adjustments.

What does that mean in hard dollars? According to figures from the Joint Legislative Budget Council, average per-pupil funding for a student in Arizona over the 5-year period from 2004-2008 ran \$4,067 annually; it then dropped to \$3,407 per student from 2009-2013. If FY14 funding remains the same as FY13, next year's per-pupil funding would be only \$3,162. That ranks Arizona per-pupil spending 47th among the 50 states (Education Week Quality Counts, 2013); the *average* per-pupil spending in the U.S. is 36% higher than Arizona. To attract and retain the brightest and best to the teaching profession and truly support student success, we urge the full funding of Proposition 301's 2% inflation requirements.

Bond Caps

The crash of the Arizona real estate market drastically impacted many school districts statewide because we lost our capacity to sell bonds despite having voter approval to do so. Not only has this diminished local control for school districts, it has reduced our ability to provide an employment stream in our communities.

Additionally, Arizona no longer provides district schools funding for school maintenance although charter schools receive \$1,654 per student. The disparity originally served to offset charters' inability to issue bonds and compensate for funding that districts receive from the State Facility Board (SFB). However, SFB has provided no funding to school districts since 2007; therefore charter schools now receive far more funding for capital expenditures than most school districts, particularly those that have not or cannot issue general obligation bonds. Nonetheless, facilities must be maintained; to accomplish this, it is vital to raise the bond cap.