



# ALBUQUERQUE PUBLIC SCHOOLS

## 2016 Legislative Agenda

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### APS Board of Education

Dr. Don Duran, President

Dr. Analee Maestas, Vice -President

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### Superintendent

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## SUFFICIENT FUNDING

The Legislature and Executive should prioritize funding to the state equalization guarantee and increase the unit value as much as practically possible due to the increased financial hardship on public school districts.

Albuquerque Public Schools believes that new revenue should be prioritized to the State Equalization Guarantee for several reasons:

- Article XII Sec. 1 of the New Mexico State Constitution mandates that a *uniform system of free public schools sufficient for the education of, and open to, all the children of school age in the state shall be established and maintained;*
- “above-the-line” investment for new revenue available in fiscal year 2017 preserves local school board control to best respond to the strengths and struggles in individual communities to best serve students;
- Recognition that large urban districts are “outliers” in the funding formula and need special attention like micro-districts;
- The State of New Mexico failed to comply with federal special education maintenance of effort requirements and, therefore, inadequately funded special education programs in FY2010 – FY2012;
  - ◊ Local school districts made necessary decisions to support special education in spite of the lack of funding received from the State of New Mexico and should be repaid funding justly due to them to rectify the fiscal shortfall from FY2010 – FY2012
  - ◊ In the future, increasing the unit value is the best way to meet New Mexico’s federal special education maintenance of effort requirements to adequately fund special education programs
- Legislature should fund all new statutory and regulatory requirements for public schools to avoid unfunded mandates from the State
- Reduce the length of time for due process hearings for special education
- Albuquerque Public Schools believes if education stakeholders collaborate with the policy makers that we can all agree that there may be ways we can save dollars by staggering certain statutory requirements to occur at different intervals rather than require districts to complete all requirements annually
- To guarantee there is no inadvertent decline in the unit value, the legislature must fully fund any changes to the funding formula and avoid a loss in funding for districts across New Mexico
- The legislature should consider moving successful “below-the-line” pilot programs into the state equalization guarantee so districts may implement those programs every year rather than rely on grant approval for funding. Programs APS believes should be moved “above-the-line” are:
  - ◊ K-3+ and Pre-K
- Programs moved above the line must be sufficiently funded so there is not a reduction in the number of K-3+ and Pre-K eligible schools

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- If programs continue to be funded “below-the-line” there must be special consideration to sustainability of funding in future years to continue program and flexibility built into applications so local districts can respond to local needs
- Sufficient funds are necessary to continue to eliminate class size waivers and return class sizes to 2008 statutory levels
- Teachers and other public school employees deserve to make a comfortable living wage for the work they do for New Mexico children which considers the increased cost of living and sufficient funds to pay for quality insurance coverage
- Teachers and school staff are professionals and investment in public schools assists districts in providing them consistent professional development and training on the most advanced educational practices to best serve students
- There must be a recognition of the struggles districts have had in providing statutorily mandated transportation for students to and from school and a recognition that the solution is a significant investment in transportation services so districts can meet this requirement and provide equal access to public schools for all students
- The legislature should acknowledge the importance of instructional materials in the classroom and increase funds available for schools to purchase those materials and sufficiently fund instructional materials adoption cycles and from previous years
  - ◊ The Legislature must appropriately fund instructional materials so school districts may meet statutory requirements that every student have a text book.
  - ◊ Instructional materials also include technology to deliver those materials and alternative methods should be found to fund technology in schools
- Public schools are in need of additional funds because they are increasingly responsible for and morally obligated to respond to the wellbeing of the entire student:
  - ◊ Professional counseling services when a student suffers from mental health issues, including but not limited to substance abuse;
  - ◊ Professional psychologist services for all general education and special needs students so we may proactively address mental health issues;
  - ◊ Access to quality health and dental care by continuing support to school-based health clinics;
  - ◊ Assisting families when needed through the services of trained social workers
- The implementation of standards based testing has grown the costs of testing students, and school districts need to have the financial support necessary to purchase, administer and score those assessments and report the data to education stakeholders

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## LOCAL CONTROL

The Legislature and Public Education Department should allow local school boards to exercise their statutorily granted authority to make policy decisions about education.

Local decisions include:

- Allowing teachers, principals and school districts to use their professional judgment to administer assessments as an instructional tool and not go further than what is educationally appropriate for students;
- A parent's right to opt their child out of testing is necessary;
- Local school boards, in collaboration with their superintendent, ought to have the freedom to make decisions related to curriculum programs and the accountability system to monitor the success of the curriculum and student performance;
- Early literacy focusing on intervention and should include and encourage parental involvement in educational decisions of their child;
- New Mexico Public Education Department not requiring the administration of assessments that go beyond what is required in state statute;
- Increased mandates for testing students has hampered districts' ability to allow students to demonstrate their progress and achievement in more creative, individualized ways and has created a situation where districts are forced to treat all students as a score and tie their educational programming to that score;
- Local option for an alternative demonstration of competency should be protected in state statute;
- Funding granted to school districts to implement new programs or proven strategies to increase student achievement which may force the school district to participate in practices that they believe to be substandard and infringe upon the local board and superintendent's ability to make decisions they believe to be in the best interest of their students;
- Ensure that there are no requirements to receive funding that place districts at odds with their local community and school interests in order to receive these dollars
- Trusting local school boards allows them to foster local relationships with families, teachers, elected officials and business leaders and seek buy in from all stakeholders for successful educational reforms in schools;
- The ability to expand Community Schools;
- Local school boards and superintendents should agree on appropriate accountability for personnel decisions and allow appeal hearing authority to be delegated to the local superintendent for review

