



2009 LEGISLATIVE PLATFORM

January 13, 2009

This platform is intended to guide the interactions between the Boulder Valley School District and the Colorado General Assembly during the 2009 session. It contains a statement of beliefs and guiding principles as well as items targeted at specific legislation. Legislative issues that arise, which are not addressed in this platform or require additional interpretation before a district position can be articulated, shall involve the Board of Education Legislative Liaisons and the Superintendent of Schools.

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 while each district should be held to a uniform standard, we also believe that each district has unique needs and circumstances, and that local school boards are in the best position to create policies and programs that can best achieve those standards. 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 deregulation or relaxation of 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.

We support the collaborative effort of the Governor's P-20 Council to develop a coherent and aligned comprehensive plan for public education for Colorado.

We remain open to exploring new and innovative ways to educate today's children for tomorrow's challenges. We stand willing to be a part of discussions relative to different aspects of educational reform.

GOVERNANCE

1.1 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 of its students.

STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT:

2.1 We support legislative actions that may emerge from the work of the P-20 Council unless such legislation would directly contradict those items in the BVSD Legislative Platform.

2.2 We oppose efforts to increase the total amount of time devoted to state mandated testing. We also believe that as a matter of fairness, parents should be assured that students will not be punished through denial of course credits, of grade to grade promotion or of a diploma, as a result of taking or failing to take the CSAP test.

2.3 We support funding and requiring the State Board of Education to administer the ACT writing test so that students applying to institutions of higher education that require the writing test will not need to take the ACT test battery a second time at their own expense.

2.4 We support legislation modifying the Colorado English Language Assessment (CELA) so that the CELA exam would serve as a substitute for the CSAP reading and writing tests until a student has been determined English proficient as measured by CELA. We support limiting CELA testing to once per year, leaving districts responsible for the selection and administration of placement tests for English learners.

2.5 We support legislation that provides a consistent funding source for "Read to Achieve" based on the original purpose and design of the program. (The original program was intended to provide opportunity for all schools across Colorado--low, middle or high needs--to compete for these funds.)

2.6 We oppose legislative efforts to establish mandatory state-wide uniform high school graduation requirements. However, we do support legislation that sets forth state-wide 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.

2.7 We support legislation establishing a state-wide structure with the authority to oversee early care and education programs and funding streams that will lead to more efficiency and equity in program quality and funding while not reducing funding for K-12.

2.8 We support legislation that ensures all educational organizations receiving any public funding to educate students whether online, public, private or parochial, meet the requirements of state accountability, accreditation and assessment standards. Specifically, the reporting of student participation and completion rates in online programs should be comparable to traditional public schools for accountability purposes.

2.9 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.

2.10 We would continue to 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.

2.11 It is our belief the Colorado Charter School Institute serves as another state-funded educational system and is thereby unconstitutional; therefore, we do not support legislation supporting this agency. 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.

2.12 We strongly support legislation to provide in-state postsecondary tuition to all Colorado high school graduates in order to help decrease BVSD's achievement gap, increase our graduation rate and positively contribute to Colorado's economic development and growth.

2.13 We support the implementation of full day kindergarten and expanding early childhood programs that can give all students a pathway to success.

SCHOOL FINANCE

3.1 We strongly urge the legislature to continue efforts at a comprehensive reform of the Colorado school finance and overall State tax structure.

3.2 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.

3.3 We oppose legislation that would reduce "Total Program" funding for public education through the Colorado School Finance Act, by adjusting the factors which modify funding for school districts.

3.4 We support legislation allowing school districts to trigger the enrollment averaging formula for funding purposes based on the percent of decline of its non-charter school population.

3.5 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.

3.6 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.

3.7 We support legislation that increases the current mill levy override limit by 5% from 20% to 25% of district total program funding for districts with stable or declining non-charter student enrollment.

3.8 We support legislation providing additional funding and resources to promote school safety, truancy and gang prevention/intervention programs and services.

3.9 We support funding for sustainable initiatives.

3.10 We support additional funding for transportation costs.

3.11 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.

EMPLOYMENT

4.1 We support legislation that improves the process for teacher contract renewal and employment rights.

4.2 We support legislation that will expand employment for areas where a school district has declared a critical shortage or inability to hire qualified staff.

4.3 We support legislation that provides improved state funding to increase teacher quality and staff development.

4.4 We support legislation that ensures the long-term financial health of the Public Employees Retirement Fund for existing and future school district employees.

ADMINISTRATION AND OPERATIONS:

5.1 We oppose legislation that makes it the responsibility of a school district to verify a contractor's prompt payment of its subcontractors.

5.2 We support legislation requiring the Colorado Department of Education to streamline data collection procedures required of school districts.