

League of Women Voters of Greater Las Cruces

Unit Meeting – July 18, 2011 – 10:00-11:30 a.m. Good Samaritan Social Center, Small Conference Room 3011 Buena Vida Circle, Las Cruces

STATE AND FEDERAL GOVERNMENT REGULATIONS AND HOW THEY IMPACT LOCAL SCHOOL SYSTEM

- 1. Introduction
- 2. School Funding Bonnie Burn
- 3. Curriculum Development & Application Sue Cain
- 4. Teacher Preparation & Ongoing Education Jane Asche
- 5. Mandated Testing of Students Erika Graf-Webster
- Schools in New Mexico are unique in that 57% of students live in poverty. There are many who speak no English, and we have an immigrant population that is transient. Some students will be first generation high school graduates and some will be first generation college students. The state has a population of 2,059,179. There is a large rural population, and distances are great. The state raises the majority of its general funds through gross receipts tax, personal income tax, and taxes on the oil and gas industry.
- New Mexico Education Formula
 - Developed in 1974
 - Among the top 3 funding models across the country; now among the top 10
 - In 1983, the education formula provided 51% of General Funds for education throughout NM. Now it provides 41%.
 - 1990 state legislators began changing the formula making it less equitable and not keeping pace with the needs of the schools
 - NM Educational goal: to ensure access to a "sufficient" education that is afforded to all school age children.
- Current Funding Process
 - All funds collected by the state go into the General Funds
 - School funding is based on a formula of averaged indexed costs.
 - Ex: Grades 4-6 least costly students to fund; therefore, index is 1.0. High school students, most costly, are indexed at 1.25.
 - Special education and other programs and services are indexed as well.
 - Smaller districts that are more expensive are funded through a size-adjustment index.
 - Other funds are available (e.g., supplementary adjustment funds).
- American Institutes for Research (AIR) Study 16 month study in 2008
 - Commissioned by the Funding Formula Study Task Force appointed by the NM State Legislature and Governor Richardson and under the direction of the Legislative Council Service (LSC).

- State school funding should be increased by 14.5% (achieve a level of \$750 million dollars to fully fund "to ensure access to a 'sufficient' education that is afforded to all school age children").
- No school districts would lose money.
- Special education would be funded based on a flat rate of 16% to discourage districts from over identifying special education students.
- End results: Defeated by the NM Legislators.

Las Cruces Public School Budget

- Operating Budget
 - \$170 million (90% of formula funding)
 - o \$22 million Federally funded programs. For example:
 - IDEA Part B, Special Education \$6.2 million
 - Title I \$6 million
 - USDA Cafeteria \$5 million
 - Other costs: For example, Bus Transportation \$4.2 million
- Capital Outlay repair, remodeling, and maintenance of buildings and grounds
- Equipment 6 year depreciation (preferred would be 3 years)
- Vehicles turned in when mileage 100,000. LCPS vehicle are 140,000-150,000 (13-15 years old).
- Building maintenance = \$2 million; another \$2 million would be helpful.

Cost Savings Measures

- Consolidation of Schools In Superintendent Rounds opinion, this measure does not achieve much savings; NM is rural and distances are great. Once schools are closed, the small towns disappear.
- Coordination of administrative services (e.g., using CPAs for accounting and services such as human resources and social services can be shared). NM Regional Education Cooperatives (REC) already established. Services provided include teacher and staff training, information, data gathering and analysis, technical assistance and resource library, to name a few).
- Cost savings best achieved with districts between 20,000-30,000 students
 - LCPS 25,000 students
 - Gadsden 13,000 students
 - Hatch 1,300 students
- Cost per student in NM is \$7,235; not including busing; National average is \$11,000+/student

Funding Wish List

- Intervention with students (truancy, academic support, social work services)
- Reducing class size
 - o Kindergarten capped at 20 students (between 15-20 students gives teacher an educational assistant)
 - o Grades 1, 2, and 3 average is 22 (a class of 21 entitles the teacher to a full time educational assistant).
 - o Grades 7-12 the teaching load should not exceed 160 students except for
 - teachers of required English courses in Grades 7 and 8: not exceed 135, with a maximum of 27 students per class.

- teachers of required English Courses in Grades 9-12: not exceed 150, with a maximum of 30 students per class
- o Secretary of Education may waive the individual school class load. Requested annually and only granted for two consecutive years.
- 30% net pay increase for teachers. (1,765 teachers) teacher retention is problem
 - o \$32,300 starting salary, bachelor's or master's degree in education (Tier 1)
 - o \$40,000-\$42,000 master's degree in education and 3 years teaching experience (average is 5 years) (Tier 2)
 - o \$50,000-\$52,000 graduate work beyond the master's degree and 7 years experience. (Tier 3)
 - o \$1.2 million to move the teachers out of Tier 1 and 2 salary categories
- Full funding for instruction materials. \$1.6 million is needed for the reading program

• Other financial issues

- Continued State reductions in education budgets
 - LCPS Administrative costs as a percentage of the total budget are 0.73 of 1%.
 Albuquerque has a 1.23% administrative cost and small district can have 7-8%
- Top down decisions made for school district Superintendent Rounds believes decision making should occur at the local level.
- Longer school year from 180 to 190 days that would give teachers personal development days; however, there is a cost attached to this option.
- Cash balance at beginning of school year can leave districts without adequate funding because cash cannot be carried over from one year to the next. State regulates how much cash can be kept on hand.

• Rating the LCPS

- Top rating for financial management
- Student drop out rate is within a reasonable rate; but we could do better.
- Reasonable retention of teachers, parental involvement and student success, but we could do better in all three areas.

- Deficits

- o Technical programs and instructional materials are underprovided.
- o Gang problems are not good.
- More counselors are needed LCPS has 680 students per counselor and the national standard is 400 students per counselor.