

2016 DRAFT Political Agenda – Legislative Committee Recommendations

Long-Term Focus – These overarching issues must be addressed for public schools to excel and provide an opportunity for every child to succeed. Providing high quality public education is the best investment to grow Arizona’s economy. The items below reflect those key issues on which we will concentrate over the next 5-10 years.

1. **Strengthen** ~~Structurally change~~ the school finance formula to equitably and adequately fund public schools to:

Rationale: The Committee recommends this alteration, as it believes that structural change to the entire formula is not necessary – while there are likely areas of change that need to happen, overall, the current school finance formula would be strengthened by being funded properly.

- a. Assure a more stable and reliable source.
- b. Maximize local school district flexibility in managing these funds.
- c. Require the same **financial** accountability **and transparency** measures of all schools and individuals that receive public funds.

Rationale: The Committee recommends this change as important to better articulate the need for equivalency in both financial accountability and transparency measures (academic, governance, reporting) as they relate to charter schools, student tuition organizations, and Empowerment Scholarship Accounts (ESAs), for these groups of schools and individuals also receive public funds and should be held to an equal standard as district schools in keeping the public informed about these critical areas of operation.

- d. Repeal any program that gives public monies ~~for to~~ private **schooling schools**.

Rationale: The Committee recommends altering this wording to ensure that this provision fully captures ESAs, as those monies can be used for more than private school tuition.

2. Uphold, **preserve, and strengthen** ~~preservation~~ of local control to reinforce the connection between the community and its elected governing board members.

Rationale: The Committee recommends this expansion as we work to be more proactive not only in preserving the local control we currently enjoy but in to maintain and strengthen local control that, in some cases, has been eroded or taken away.

3. Meet the unique educational needs of every student so that **all students have every** ~~student has~~ the opportunity to reach **their** ~~his/her~~ full potential.

Rationale: The Committee recommends this wording change to remove the awkward “his/her” wording.

Short-Term Focus – Building toward our long-term areas of success, the following items represent critical needs to put us on that path, and will engage our energies up to the next 3-5 years.

1. Reinstate and fund ~~capital funding~~ formulas to comply with at least state school building minimum standards.
Rationale: The Committee recommends the removal of the above wording, as it's repetitive and unnecessary.
2. Provide greater equity in funding and access for special education students within the public school system.
Rationale: The Committee recommends keeping this item from the 2015 Political Agenda, as it is still of importance to districts and yet to be accomplished.
3. Allow public school tax credits to be used as determined by local districts.
Rationale: While there were strides made this Session, allowing public school tax credit monies to be used for AP testing, CTE certifications, etc.; the Committee recommends keeping this item from the 2015 Political Agenda, as it is still of importance to districts and there is more flexibility that can be achieved.
4. Establish appropriate financial and academic accountability for Empowerment Scholarship Accounts.
Rationale: The Committee recommends keeping this item from the 2015 Political Agenda, as it is still of importance to districts and yet to be accomplished. This item specifically addresses ESAs while other provisions in the Long-Term Focus expand beyond ESAs.
5. Maximize ~~trust-land~~ income ~~opportunities~~ for teachers' salaries and student ~~support~~.
~~classroom opportunities.~~
Rationale: The Committee recommends these revisions to continue to focus on the need to address teacher salaries and student support as integral to a well-functioning, quality education system, but without such support being tied to a specific funding source.
6. Restore 9th grade CTE/JTEDs so students have the opportunity to explore career fields and/or certification completion.
Rationale: The Committee recommends moving this item from last year's 2015 Session Specific focus to short-term, as new CTE/JTED cuts are more immediately pressing. It is still of importance to districts and yet to be accomplished.

7. Require comparative and consistent Auditor General Reports for public (district and charter) schools.

Rationale: The Committee recommends, as an interim step to the Political Agenda's long-term focus of 1(c), that there be similar Auditor General Reports for all public schools including classroom spending, performance audits, etc.

2016 Legislative Session-Specific – Building toward our long-term areas of success, the following items reflect issues that will not only move us forward, but we believe can be accomplished next year given the legislative atmosphere and current public trends.

1. Fully fund voluntary, full-day kindergarten and include kindergarten students in the override calculation.

Rationale: This item was on ASBA's 2015 Political Agenda as a short-term endeavor; however, the Committee recommends this be considered a more urgent concern and that full funding be reinstated, as full-day kindergarten is a critical foundation to a student's success.

2. Fund inflation fully in the manner prescribed by statute mandated by Arizona voters.

Rationale: The Committee recommends keeping this item from the 2015 Political Agenda and increasing its level of importance, as strides have been made legally and legislatively; however, the entire issue has yet to be accomplished.

3. Restore CTE and JTED cuts slated to take effect in Fiscal Year 2017.

Rationale: The Committee recommends making it a 2016 Session-Specific priority to repeal the \$30 million in career and technical education cuts to school districts and JTEDs that are scheduled to take place in FY17.

4. Change "override/budget increase" language to "locally controlled funding" to better reflect what voters are being asked to support.

Rationale: The Committee recommends keeping this item from the 2015 Political Agenda, as it is still of importance to districts and yet to be accomplished.

5. Fund the implementation costs of Arizona's ~~new~~ standards, assessments, and technology and provide for adequate assessment transition time.

Rationale: The Committee recommends keeping this item from the 2015 Political Agenda with changes to reflect that Arizona's standards have been in effect since 2010 and that legislation passed this year, SB1289, will allow for assessment transition time. The issue of funding is still critical to districts and yet to be accomplished with additional funding.

6. Restore Building Renewal funding to ensure school facilities are adequately maintained.
Rationale: The Committee recommends keeping this item from the 2015 Political Agenda, as it is still of importance to districts and yet to be accomplished.
7. Allow districts the option to operate individual schools for 200-day school years and increase accompanying funding to 8% from 5% to improve student achievement.
Rationale: The Committee recommends keeping this item from the 2015 Political Agenda, as it is still of importance to districts and yet to be accomplished.
8. Increase the compulsory attendance age from 16 to 18 years.
Rationale: The Committee recommends that students be required to stay in school until 18 years of age. With the increase in expectation with Arizona's College and Career Ready Standards, as well as increased accountability measures for schools, districts, and teachers and principals, it's important that students are required to attend school.
9. Eliminate the change to current year funding.
Rationale: The Committee recommends making it a 2016 Session-Specific priority to repeal the \$40 million change to current year funding that is slated to take place in FY17. This will especially affect small and rural districts.
10. Advocate to lessen unfunded mandates and administrative burdens.
Rationale: The Committee recommends keeping this item from the 2015 Political Agenda as a perennial issue that should be constantly reviewed to reduce the burden on school districts created by unfunded mandates and regulation.
11. Allow school districts greater flexibility in the divestiture of property to address population and course needs.
Rationale: The Committee recommends keeping this item from the 2015 Political Agenda, as it is still of importance to districts and yet to be accomplished.
12. Protect desegregation funding from any cuts or modifications.
Rationale: The Committee recommends including this item, as the issue of desegregation funding emerged this Session, and is critical not just to student success in the districts that receive these monies, but also in supporting their ability to comply with court and/or Office of Civil Rights orders.
13. Require charter applicants to use the local entity's most recent demographic study and enrollment demand data to justify the need for a new school within district boundaries.
Rationale: The Committee recommends that charter holders that want to expand use similar demographic data that school districts must produce in opening a new school with the School Facilities Board to account for need.