

SANDABS

SAN Bernardino County District Advocates for Better Schools

SANDABS 2012 State Legislative Platform

San Bernardino County District Advocates for Better Schools (SANDABS) has adopted this legislative platform to provide the basis for reviewing and taking positions on policy and budget issues addressed by the State Legislature in 2012. Efforts will be made to meet directly with legislators and their staffs to discuss proposed legislation and its impact upon the education community. Senators and Assembly Members are encouraged to communicate directly with the SANDABS Executive Committee for clarification and background information for a clear and full understanding of educational issues.

School Funding

State funding for schools is based upon formulas and methods established over many years of piecemeal legislative mandates, state ballot initiatives, funding deferrals, and court rulings. Since 2007-08, K-12 public education has borne a disproportional share of actual and on-going cuts in state funding. A complex web of funding deferrals has further exacerbated school finance. SANDABS is supportive of the full review and analysis of these formulas, methods, and program requirements that will eventually lead to changes to provide a long-term, equitable system of school finance for public education in California.

The 2011-12 State Budget Act together with Assembly Bill 114 created a minefield of uncertainty through language that could trigger up to \$2 billion in mid-year cuts to school funding as well as a one year suspension of a number of fiscal accountability provisions. SANDABS is appalled that the legislative “solution” is to allow school districts to negotiate lopping off up to seven days from the school year when the year is half over.

Additionally, with more than \$11 billion in education deferrals in place, SANDABS believes that deferrals are budget gimmicks that must be stopped. As legislated, deferrals raise funding equity issues. School districts with high property values receive proportionally less state money to fund revenue limits. Deferrals have a mild to moderate impact on these school districts. Most school districts in San Bernardino County, however, have low property values and rely more on state funding. State funding deferrals severely impact “low wealth” school districts and wreck havoc with cash flow. California needs an equitable stable system of school finance for public education.

Priorities for 2012-2013 State Budget Act

- Pass an on-time state budget with no mid-year cuts to K-12 education;
- Maintain the integrity of the Proposition 98 funding guarantee;
- Prohibit additional deferrals of revenue limit and categorical funds;
- Eliminate the class size penalty for grades 4-6;
- Apply COLA and growth funding formulas to ROC/Ps in the same manner as K-12 education, as they generate average daily attendance and provide classroom instruction for students;
- Establish the definition of cost-of-living adjustment (COLA) to mean a cost-of-operations adjustment;
- Fully fund a cost-of-operations adjustment and growth for all existing programs, school district revenue limits, and county offices of education;
- Increase state support for special education and ensure that all federal dollars allocated for this program flow directly to local education agencies;
- Do not cut state school funding when districts receive federal funds for one-time use;
- Equalize funding among similar types of school districts and county offices of education;
- Protect the integrity and funding of alternative education programs;
- Restore funding for class size reduction and 180-day school year;
- Fully fund reimbursements for mandated costs in a fair and timely manner without deferrals;
- Fund the development and maintenance of a statewide student data base system;

- Examine home-to-school transportation funding formulas for adequacy;
- Examine the impact of declining enrollment upon school districts and develop a reasonable approach to balance declining resources with ongoing expenses; and
- Restore full funding for instructional materials to align with future textbook adoptions;
- Address pension reform for school employees that is reasonable and sustainable;
- Pass legislation to address the unfunded liability of CalSTRS;
- Cap private attorney fees for special education litigation and settlements;
- Expand opportunities for community college credit through concurrent enrollment of high school students.

In addition to these budget priorities, SANDABS will review adequacy of education funding given objectives to improve student learning, narrow the achievement gap, and reduce dropout rates.

School Facilities

School facilities are an essential component of the educational program and an essential part of state and local infrastructure. SANDABS supports the following issues related to school facilities:

- Place a statewide school construction bond on a 2012 ballot for voter approval;
- Eliminate prevailing wage requirements to more accurately reflect local market conditions and to provide greater flexibility in school construction;
- Provide adequate funding for deferred maintenance to ensure necessary maintenance for all school buildings;
- Include schools in any provisions for planning and funding state and local infrastructure;
- Include a method to fund the increased need for school facilities as part of any property development and expansion;
- Fully fund ADA (Americans with Disabilities Act) access requirements separately from other modernization funding;
- Require full participation of school districts and/or county offices of education in planning for local infrastructures before a government entity takes any action that would have an impact on schools; and
- Remove the timeline for ROC/P exemption in non-Field Act compliant facilities; and
- Review and determine the impact of rising construction costs and the resulting imbalance between state and school district contributions for building new schools and/or other facilities including offices, conference rooms, and professional development facilities.

Accountability

SANDABS supports holding schools accountable. SANDABS supports appropriate alternate tests for special education students and English language learners. SANDABS supports accountability based upon students' progress, i.e. a growth model. SANDABS believes that school accountability should focus on student results rather than on compliance issues. A comprehensive school accountability system must include a fair and equitable system to identify low-performing schools and report progress in reducing the achievement gap and dropout rates. SANDABS calls for adequate timelines and resources to support improvement efforts.

SANDABS will continue to monitor the implementation of the Public Schools Accountability Act and any legislation introduced in 2012 relating to school accountability issues.

SANDABS strongly encourages state and federal leaders to consolidate into one program the components of the state Public School Performance Accountability Program and the federal *No Child Left Behind* Act to eliminate duplication, reduce confusion, and create one accountability program that can be implemented by school districts and understood by parents. SANDABS will continue to promote an aligned accountability system which makes sense, one which includes standards of what students should know and when they should know it; assessment instruments which measure student progress and guide instruction; resources to support training related to new assessment requirements and teaching strategies; and shared responsibility of all stakeholders (students, parents, educators, community members, and state and federal leaders).

SANDABS supports amending the Senate Bill x5 4 that created the Open Enrollment lists that now mandates placing high-achieving 800 API schools and schools with large API gains on a list of low performing schools simply because the list must include 1,000 schools.

SANDABS supports efforts like the Early Assessment Program (EAP) that allows 11th-graders to take an

assessment as part of their California Standards Test in the spring. The assessment is designed to give high school students an early indication of college-readiness in English language arts and math, and to avoid incoming college students' need for remediation. A student who is deemed college-ready by the Early Assessment Program can enroll directly into college level courses upon admission.

Advancement Via Individual Determination (AVID) is one of the most successful college-readiness programs in the state. SANDABS supports state efforts to continue and expand AVID programs.

SANDABS is also supportive of legislation that would provide for consistent accountability requirements for all career and technical education programs. Finally, SANDABS believes in providing students with a positive learning environment that balances the need for contextual-based learning with the fine arts and physical education.

Charter Schools

SANDABS acknowledges that charter schools are a recognized educational alternative to traditional public schools. SANDABS supports charter schools that offer quality programs that are innovative and uniquely different from traditional public schools. A strong collaborative partnership should exist between the authorizing entity and the charter. SANDABS asserts that charters should be held accountable for improved student achievement and sound business practices with fiscal transparency. SANDABS supports the following issues related to charter schools:

- Require charter schools to comply with Government Code Section 1090 et. seq., conflict of interest reporting and the Brown Act (open meeting law);
- Prohibit blanket submission of the same charter petition to multiple districts and multiple counties;
- Remove the 1 percent cap on charter oversight reimbursement to authorizing agencies in order to recover actual and necessary costs of oversight;
- Require charter schools to publicly disclose all contracts with management companies and make the records of the management company subject to the Public Records Act and subject to Education Code requirements to produce records when requested by the county superintendent or chartering authority;
- Require charter school board members and management employees to publicly disclose potential conflicts of interest to the chartering authority and file with the FPPC;
- Require charter schools to annually report to the chartering authority the total compensation of all officers and management employees and all large payments to vendors and independent contractors over a specified amount;
- Require charter schools to report to the chartering authority the purchase of all real property;
- Require charter schools to provide the chartering authority with a report of all vehicles purchased or leased;
- Prohibit a school district from approving a petition for a new independent charter school if the average daily attendance of the charter school in the first year of operation is projected to be larger than that of the chartering authority; and
- Authorize the California Attorney General to receive complaints and investigate charter school violations of the law and to bring legal action, both criminal and civil, against charter schools and their operators.

SANDABS further supports a mechanism to lessen the programmatic and financial impact on school districts that provide facilities to charter schools under Proposition 39.

2012 Platform Draft reviewed on: November 9 and December 14, 2011

Adopted on: January 3, 2012

SANDABS Executive Committee