

April 16, 2007

EDUCATION ROUNDTABLE ISSUES CALL TO ACTION ON SCHOOL FUNDING PRIORITIES



The Illinois Education Roundtable is an organization committed to unifying the voice of educational organizations and consists of representatives from 19 school leadership associations and organizations representing more than 6000 school board members, over 7000 school leaders and in excess of 230,000 teachers and other school personnel.

The Illinois Education Roundtable has identified four (4) school funding priorities and calls upon the Illinois General Assembly to unify around a tax reform plan in order to take action for schools in 2007.

Proponents of the Governor's Plan (Helping Kids Learn) and HB/SB750 (Education and Fiscal Responsibility Act) and other plans all agree that significant new revenues are needed to adequately fund public education in Illinois. However, with different plans under debate, the possibility is high that a status quo approach to school funding for 2008 may be the only compromise that emerges.

THE STATUS QUO IS NOT ACCEPTABLE FOR THE CHILDREN OF ILLINOIS.

NOW IS THE TIME FOR ACTION ON AT LEAST THE FOLLOWING FOUR (4) FUNDING PRIORITIES:

1. Special Education Personnel Reimbursement

Special Education Personnel Reimbursement has remained at \$8,000 annually for certificated personnel (teachers) and \$2,800 annually for non-certified support personnel since 1985.

The Illinois Education Roundtable recommends that Special Education Personnel Reimbursement be established and sustained at 33% of the average Illinois teacher salary.

2. Foundation Level

The Education Funding Advisory Board (EFAB) formula establishes a minimum "adequacy" or "Foundation Level" to be funded through the Illinois General State Aid formula. It is based on real examples of schools where two-thirds of the students meet or exceed Illinois academic standards at a relatively low cost per pupil. The fiscal year 2005 EFAB recommendation was \$6,405 per student, but the actual 2007 Foundation Level is only \$5,334.

The Illinois Education Roundtable recommends that the General Assembly appropriate adequate resources to fully support the EFAB recommended Foundation Level by 2010.

Additional Recommendation:

- The Roundtable urges the Governor to convene EFAB on an annual basis to update the recommended Foundation Level.***
- In addition, an annually updated EFAB Foundation Level should be sustained by a long-term funding solution.***

3. Mandated Categorical Funding

Most programs required by Illinois statutes are good for children and worthy of being implemented. However, local districts are typically required to provide more services without more funding. Inadequate appropriations have resulted in the “pro-ration” of funding commitments from the State of Illinois. This requires each district to allocate more local resources to comply with legislative mandates.

The Illinois Education Roundtable recommends that sufficient funds be appropriated to fully fund current categorical levels for 2008.

Additional Recommendations:

- ***The Roundtable urges the legislature to enact accountability legislation that would restrict the addition of any new legislative mandates on schools until the current mandates are funded at statutory levels.***
- ***Further, any new mandates must be fully funded by new revenues from State of Illinois sources.***

4. School Construction

There are 22 districts still waiting for the State of Illinois to fund entitlements from 2002. In most of those districts statutory bond authorization established by local referendum is about to expire (5 years). In addition, there are hundreds of districts in the state that have already applied for assistance with construction and maintenance costs. This is a critical issue in terms of equity and adequacy for Pre-K through 12th grade education in every county in Illinois.

The Illinois Education Roundtable recommends that at least \$1.5 billion in construction funding and \$150 million in maintenance funds be authorized by the General Assembly for 2008.

Additional Recommendations:

- ***The Illinois Education Roundtable supports the funding of current entitlements (22 districts) prior to any other construction funding.***
- ***In addition, with more than \$8.2 Billion in identified construction needs in Illinois (2006 ISBE Capital Needs Assessment Survey), ongoing and sustainable sources for state construction funding must be identified and authorized.***

The Illinois Education Roundtable recognizes and commends the current commitment of the Governor, House and Senate Leadership, the General Assembly, the Education Caucus, and the Center for Tax and Budget Accountability toward solving critical school funding issues.

Now that the major issues have been identified, 2007 must be a time for consensus and action on the priorities identified above.

For more information, contact Dr. Michael A. Jacoby, Chair of the Illinois Education Roundtable at: Illinois ASBO, NIU (IA-103) 108 Carroll Ave., DeKalb, IL 60115, 815-753-9369, mjacoby@niu.edu.

Illinois Education Roundtable Member Organizations:

IASB, IASA, IASBO, IPA, IEA-NEA, LUDA, ED-RED, LEND, SCOPE, IFT-AFT, IAASE, IARSS, EDO, HSDO, INSPRA, IASPA, MPC