



Testing

Recommendations:

- Include 9th grade in counting toward high school assessment requirements
- Allow the national ACT exam to be the high school assessment
- Allow states to determine how to fix schools that are qualified as “failing”

Background:

Congress is set to begin discussions regarding reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA), also known as No Child Left Behind. This legislation sets up the system of accountability and standardized assessments around the country. This legislation currently mandates testing once a year for students in grades 3-8 in Math and Language Arts and once per grade span in Science.

Funding

Recommendations:

- Move toward fulfilling promise of 40% funding for IDEA
- As federal funding increases toward the 40% promised, allow currently diverted local revenues that fund Special Education to be returned to general education
- Focus on early dispute resolution to reduce litigation costs (\$90 million annually in US)
- Provide a greater amount of funding for students with full support needs on their IEP
- Reduce paperwork for compliance with IDEA
- Focus on Early Childhood Special Education interventions to reduce the cost of services later
- Increase the flexibility of federal funds so that student needs can be met by a variety of highly qualified staff

Background:

Congress will discuss funding for the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA). This legislation governs how school districts must work with students who have been diagnosed with an identified special need. Funding for Special Education has been a long-term issue for many districts, as the cost of services often exceeds federal funding. Today, the federal government funds Special Education at 16% of total costs, with the remaining amount coming from state and local general fund dollars. This diverts dollars from general fund programming to support Special Education students.

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About PSD

Home to more than 29,000 students in Fort Collins, Wellington, Laporte, Belleview, Livermore, Red Feather Lakes and communities north to the Wyoming border.

Mission

Poudre School District exists to support and inspire every child to think, to learn, to care, and to graduate prepared to be successful in a changing world.

Educate...Every Child, Every Day



Testing

Recommendations:

- Use federal minimum requirements for assessments
 - ◆ Math & English Language Arts
 - ° 3rd through 8th grade annually
 - ° Once in high school
 - ◆ Science once per grade span (elementary, middle school, high school)
- Use ACT test for Math, English Language Arts and Science for high school
- Change regulations for high schools to decrease amount of time testing
 - ◆ Eliminate 12th grade tests
- Limit the time students spend on tests in any one content area to three hours or less
 - ◆ For example, a 5th grade CMAS Math assessment currently takes four hours and 30 minutes. Why not two hours?
- Allow districts to use Social Studies End of Course exams for state assessment requirements

Background:

With the passage of No Child Left Behind (ESEA) in 2001, standardized testing in schools became the backbone of both national and state accountability systems. As standards-based instruction evolved, school districts began using assessments not just as a benchmarks for accountability, but as a means of providing teachers with information on how to better refine instruction and support student learning. Throughout the last 15 years, the time students in K-12 schools spend on testing has continued to increase. Currently, an 11th grade student in PSD will spend more than 30 hours on mandated standardized tests. This does not include time spent on college entrance exams, Advanced Placement exams or International Baccalaureate exams, which can add up to three hours per course tested.

Funding

Recommendations:

- Fully fund student growth plus inflation (\$280 million statewide)
- Fund high poverty districts (\$50 million statewide - ongoing)
- Fund rural districts (\$20 million statewide - ongoing)
- Buy down the Negative Factor (\$200 million statewide annually - \$6 million for PSD)
- Use one-time money if necessary (see below)

Background:

Over the course of the recession, the state cut K-12 education funding by approximately \$1 billion dollars. This reduction in revenue was dubbed the "Negative Factor" because it added a negative percentage to the amount of state revenue schools received under Constitutional Amendment 23 (passed by Colorado voters in 2000). This deficit resulted in local school districts making cuts to staffing, maintenance and programming. In PSD, the district cut nearly \$14 million over three years and currently receives close to \$30 million less than what the spirit of Amendment 23 calls for each year. In the 2014-2015 school year, the state reduced the overall negative factor to roughly \$880 million (a \$3 million increase for PSD annually).

Preliminary budget projections from the state for the 2015-16 school year show one-time money flowing to school districts. This money can be used to complete individual projects or other one-time funding needs such as:

- Textbooks
- School building maintenance
- Replacing reserves spent during the recession
- Professional development
- Technology, equipment & supplies