

SASD LEGISLATIVE POSITIONS 2008-2009

INVESTMENT IN THE FUTURE

BELIEF STATEMENT – SASD believes the investment in the education of our youth is vital to South Dakota's future.

1. **SUPPORT** the use of public funds exclusively for students enrolled in public schools.

***RATIONALE:** Resources to adequately support public education are limited and must be protected and utilized efficiently.*

2. **OPPOSE** the implementation of a voucher system and the establishment of charter schools.

***RATIONALE:** Nothing in current statute prohibits South Dakota schools from creating a charter school. A voucher system would only tend to polarize student populations. Money and jurisdiction of alternative forms of education must remain under the control of the local school board for the benefit of all children – not select groups of students.*

3. **SUPPORT** legislation that would change the number of votes necessary to pass a bond issue from the current sixty percent to a simple majority of those voting. (SDCL 6-8B-2)

***RATIONALE:** A shift in demographics means that approximately 20% of school district patrons have students in school vs. approximately 80% of patrons having children in school at the time SDCL 6-8B-2 was adopted. Therefore, a simple majority vote is more reflective of the school district's patrons at large.*

4. **SUPPORT** that the portion of special education state aid set aside for extraordinary expenses be adequately funded.

***RATIONALE:** Without adequate set-aside funds in the special education extra-ordinary expense fund, school districts will be subject to pro-rata distributions for extra-ordinary special education expenses.*

5. **OPPOSE** any statewide tax limitation measures which do not identify and secure replacement revenue sources.

***RATIONALE:** Limiting or eliminating tax revenues without securing other equitable funding sources leads to deficit spending and less revenue for school programs.*

- SUPPORT** incentives for school districts to consolidate and/or enter into collaborative agreements with other education entities in order to improve educational opportunities for students.

***RATIONALE:** Financial incentives encourage communities to deal with the difficult issues that emerge when they engage in consolidation and/or cooperative ventures.*

- SUPPORT** continued funding of the Education Service Agencies (ESA) Delivery from the ESA that is equitable and evenly proportioned to South Dakota schools.

***RATIONALE:** The ESA provide valuable services to school districts by offering quality research-based professional development opportunities through regional and site-based programs. Programs specifically designed to increase student achievement and to improve instructional strategies and leadership are especially beneficial.*

ESA staff work jointly with the DOE to provide specific assistance and support for schools that have been identified for school improvement and in the development of the mandated consolidated applications. ESA also offer customized services based on needs identified by school districts.

SCHOOL OPERATIONS AND MANAGEMENT

BELIEF STATEMENT – Effective public education occurs in consort with local leadership, adequate funding and state support.

- OPPOSE** legislation that removes local control from school districts.

***RATIONALE:** Schools share many common concerns and issues. Each district's community has an autonomous approach to educating its children, especially in curricular decision-making. Unfunded mandates, unsolicited directives, general fund cash reserves and mandated curricula from the state inhibit a district's ability to be responsive to local values and preferences.*

- OPPOSE** legislation that creates new mandates or reinstates former mandates without full funding.

***RATIONALE:** Per the requirements of SDCL 6-15-1 & 2 and the fact that school district budgets are already limited, it is imperative that any mandate has full funding as a backing to insure that educational programs are not adversely affected.*

- OPPOSE** the use of binding arbitration as a final solution in negotiations.

***RATIONALE:** School policies, priorities and expenditures are the responsibility of the local school board, not a third party arbitrator.*

4. **OPPOSE** state or federal school spending mandates or limitations such as the 65% Rule.

***RATIONALE:** School districts ought to spend as much as they can afford on instruction and support of instruction; however, the differences among school districts in enrollment, geographic size, population density, climate, etc. dictate that there is no single template for school district spending patterns.*

State or national mandates regarding school district spending patterns violates local control of schools to govern their schools in ways that fit local needs as well as the larger national interests.

The definition of instruction promoted by the backers of the 65 Percent Rule is not prioritized correctly. For example, direct therapeutic services, such as those provided by speech therapists, school psychologists and school nurses are not included, but voluntary recreational activities supported by athletic coaches are.

There is no evidence that the percentage spent on a very narrow definition of instruction has any effect on student achievement.

5. **SUPPORT** strengthening the current system of assessing real property using comparative sales information making sure that all property is assessed at no less than 85% of full and true value.

***RATIONALE:** General Fund revenue, for the most part, is provided by a state aid formula that generates revenue based on a per student allocation as determined annually by the legislature. The formula generated revenue has two sources – local property taxes and state aid. The portion based on local property taxes is calculated by multiplying a dollar per thousand levy times the assessed valuation of local property that is to be assessed at no less than 85% of full and true value. While most counties are assessing property at 85% or more of its full and true value, some counties are not doing so. If property is assessed at less than 85%, local levies will not generate property tax revenue for schools at the same rate as property assessed at 85% or more of full and true value. Assessment of all property needs to be consistent in all counties in the state to assure that the current state aid formula generates optimum levels of property taxes for public schools and the state of South Dakota.*

PROFESSIONAL ISSUES

BELIEF STATEMENT – SASD believes that administrative leadership and educator competence are critical to educational excellence.

1. **SUPPORT** the employment of certified education administrators and teachers in each local school district.

***RATIONALE:** All effective schools research supports the important role appropriately trained and certified school administrators and teachers play in providing quality educational*

opportunities for all children. NCLB requires schools to hire highly qualified and certified administrators and teachers.

We support this concept for all students and all schools in South Dakota.

- SUPPORT** programs designed to assist educational leaders in their professional development and school improvement efforts.

***RATIONALE:** Quality professional development activities for South Dakota's educational leaders must be promoted and financially supported.*

- SUPPORT** actuarially sound improvement to the South Dakota Retirement System (SDRS) and oppose unfunded liability to the South Dakota retirement system.

***RATIONALE:** Recommendations to improve the retirement system should be made by the SDRS Board of Trustees and supported by members. The balances within the SDRS were accumulated for the specific purpose of providing an adequate income for retired members. Any use of these funds in a manner not consistent with the original intent could erode the SDRS and member benefits.*

- SUPPORT** the continuation of an active public school administrator, a public school teacher and public school board member on the South Dakota State Board of Education.

***RATIONALE:** The education of South Dakota's children must remain a high priority item for all South Dakota citizens. A benefit to the State Board of Education would be to include a school administrator, teacher and local school board member who have education, expertise and experience to aid in the decision making process.*

- SUPPORT** proposals that involve differential pay as long as local control is maintained and funding follows.

***RATIONALE:** Schools currently have the ability and authority to utilize differential pay. We currently have a few schools that have developed plans and policies addressing this issue. If state legislative action seeks to address this concept, SASD supports the concepts that provide local control and funding for this issue.*

STUDENTS AND LEARNING

BELIEF STATEMENT – SASD believes that international developments and advanced technologies require an educational system that enables students to compete globally in the information age.

- SUPPORT** early childhood education programs if funding for the program comes from a new funding source and does not affect K-12 funding of current education programs.

RATIONALE: *Early childhood education is needed for South Dakota's youth. Educational research clearly demonstrates the value of early childhood education, particularly when teachers are certified and age appropriate curriculum and activities are provided for students in a proper educational environment. Schools support the addition of early childhood educational programs in public school if the necessary new sources of funding are provided to schools to cover the cost.*

SCHOOL ACCOUNTABILITY

BELIEF STATEMENT – SASD believes that accountability for student performance is an important and complex policy issue that requires ongoing study and review.

- 1. SUPPORT** an appropriate statewide accountability system that includes participation and input from the education community.

RATIONALE: *Schools, educators, parents and students should be held accountable for continued student achievement. The statewide accountability system must be reviewed on a regular basis with input provided by the entire education community.*