

SASD LEGISLATIVE POSITIONS 2021

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. Oppose any state or federal funding going to non-public schools.

2. **OPPOSE** the implementation of a voucher system or any diversion of public funds for non-public means.

RATIONALE: 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** 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.

4. **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. This approach will never gain broad support among educators. SASD can only support funding proposals that address providing increased, ongoing dollars to the funding formula. The dedication of public funds to K-12 education is an investment in the future of our state.

5. **SUPPORT** incentives for school districts and schools to cooperate 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 cooperative ventures.

6. **SUPPORT** a state budget that adequately funds K-12 education.

RATIONALE: Devoting public funds to K-12 education is an investment in the future of our state. SASD feels that it is imperative that the state continue to provide adequate funding.

7. **SUPPORT** efforts to secure funding from the federal government, sent through the state government intended for local school districts.

RATIONALE: If federal money is approved in the future, every effort should be made to flow the money directly to schools over the state supplanting funds.

8. **SUPPORT** funding for learning experiences for building the capacity of all educators in South Dakota to allow them to successfully implement a high performing educational system that can meet the needs of our diverse population. This funding shall not impinge on the state formula in any way.

RATIONALE: If South Dakota feels that school districts should work towards continued improvement, funding for building the capacity of all educators must accompany any proposed mandates. If South Dakota is serious about being a leader in student performance, placing money with the rhetoric is a necessity, and a complete training of all educators will exemplify a commitment in building the capacity of all school districts to meet the diverse needs of our student population. However, there must be certitude that this funding does not compete with any funding of the school formula. This must be a separate funding issue.

9. **SUPPORT** Academic Standards, provided that the state has a workable plan that includes sufficient funding and professional development to facilitate implementation of the standards.

RATIONALE: Standards establish a framework for what South Dakota students (grades K-12) should know and be able to do and will be used to guide local curriculum decisions to help students succeed in college and/or career.

SCHOOL OPERATIONS AND MANAGEMENT

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

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

RATIONALE: School districts across South Dakota share many common concerns and issues. Each local school board needs a certain level of local autonomy in developing a plan to meet the diverse needs of its students. School districts need to retain the ability to determine those needs and make appropriate decisions at the local level. Unfunded mandates from the legislature and unsolicited directives from the Department of Education inhibit a school district's ability to be responsive to local values and preferences.

2. **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 ensure that educational programs are not adversely affected.

3. **SUPPORT** funding of a multi-faceted approach to school safety that augments safe and orderly school environments through the utilization of professional school resource officers; training and technical assistance; facility security enhancements and the addition of mental health programming and mental health professionals.

RATIONALE: A comprehensive approach will heighten the level of public confidence in creating safe school environments.

PROFESSIONAL ISSUES

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

1. **SUPPORT** the recruitment of and adequate compensation of certified education professionals in each local school district.

RATIONALE: SASD supports the important role appropriately trained and certified education professionals play in providing quality educational opportunities for all students. This concept must be a reality for all students and all schools in South Dakota. It is imperative that if South Dakota is going to continue to challenge our students, we need to have high quality applicants from our administrative and teacher positions. South Dakota must focus financial resources on attracting, supporting and retaining high quality education professionals. While pay is not the sole solution, it is a factor. Compensation provides a livelihood and supports professional growth and accomplishment. SASD supports a commitment to the important work of focusing more financial resources on attracting, supporting, and retaining quality education professionals. Our premise, backed by most of the research, is that quality education professionals' matter and it matters a great deal. This is a vital issue that we cannot afford to neglect.

2. **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.

3. **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.

4. **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.

STUDENTS AND LEARNING

BELIEF STATEMENT – SASD believes that public education is an investment in the future of our state. All students can learn and are entitled to high quality instruction. A safe, secure and nurturing learning environment is strengthened by embracing diversity, respecting self and others in the world around us. Student success is achieved through shared responsibility of students, staff, families and community. Accountability is attained through open dialogue, transparency and fiscal responsibility. We are committed to innovation and continuous improvement.

1. **SUPPORT** the adoption of state standards for accredited Early Childhood Education programs and the appointment of an Early Learning Commission.

RATIONALE: The adoption of standards for Early Learning Programs encourages accountability in preparing South Dakota’s children who will soon enter kindergarten. A myriad of privately and publicly offered early childhood education programs exist within the state of South Dakota. In order to guarantee the quality of such programming and to make such offerings consistent across the state, it is necessary to create standards applicable for all Early Childhood Education programs. All accredited early childhood education programs would be required to meet such standards. Access to quality Early Learning programs which are established with high standards assist children in elementary school to meet learning benchmarks. Most states have already adopted minimum quality standards as a means to promote quality Early Learning programs. The existence of these standards and the appointment of an Early Learning Commission would allow the state to be eligible for additional federal grant programs.

2. **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.

3. **SUPPORT** legislation that that fully supports the utilization of technology in schools.

RATIONALE: As schools continue to increase the use of technology for teaching and learning, they require greater amounts of bandwidth, new hardware, new software, and professional development. Technology in our schools is the new normal, and thus, support and training are necessary to ensure that technology tools and instructional strategies are well suited for success in the 21st century.

4. **SUPPORT** Non-traditional learning under the authority of local school districts.

OPPOSE any legislation authorizing the use of vouchers, the creating of charter schools or special hybrid schools that avoid accountability through the public education system.

OPPOSE any state funding being allocated to non-public types of educational programming.

RATIONALE: The South Dakota constitution mandates support of public education and separation of church and state. Any funding for K-12 education should be allocated to the public school system. Public schools in South Dakota support meeting the needs of students through alternative programming as long as local school districts retain authority of the funding allocated to these types of programs.

5. **SUPPORT** co-curricular activities as an important component of South Dakota's educational system and support legislation that will eliminate current undue restrictions on participation.

RATIONALE: Studies show that students who participate in activities have better attendance and graduation rates, higher GPA's, fewer social and legal problems, and are more successful in life after high school. We should encourage students to participate in activities rather than prohibiting them from doing so.

6. **SUPPORT** the notion that juveniles who are low level offenders should be provided with the least restrictive alternative and should stay in the local community if possible.

RATIONALE: incarcerating juveniles for low level offenses is typically not good for the individual nor society as a whole. However, adequate resources need to be appropriated to ensure that communities are properly suited to serve the needs of the young people and families involved in these low-level offenses. Communication between the state and local entities must be ongoing. Consideration should be given to including schools, states attorney offices, law enforcement, and court services in meetings to ensure a better understanding of the system.

7. **SUPPORT** legislation which would assist schools in providing resources to support students social, emotional and physical well-being.

RATIONALE: The development of these qualities benefits all students and individual student academic performance is enhanced when these skills are in place and fully functioning. These are lifelong skills and educators need the resources to help students acquire these skills.

SCHOOL ACCOUNTABILITY

BELIEF STATEMENT – SASD believes that accountability for student performance is an important and complex policy issue. Growth model assessments are fair for all groups of students and measures learning progress.

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

RATIONALE: With the passage of the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) it is crucial that state and local educational leaders review and understand the implementation of this new federal law and how it can positively impact K-12 education in our state. ESSA provides the state and local schools relief from past federal law. It supports more flexibility and will allow changes to occur that support increased student achievement and student learning at the local level. The performance of schools in South Dakota is critical to our future and to the lives of the students who experience the educational opportunities provided. The fundamental responsibility of schools is student learning and valid measures of how well schools are doing to meet their students' needs are important. 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. SASD believes high quality and appropriate assessments should be used for the purposes they are designed and assessments for the purpose of accountability should be required of all identified students.