

Independent, principled state policy fostering limited and responsible government, free enterprise, and a robust civil society.

May 2020

More Education Reforms to Make a Difference - Summary*

Introduction

The six education reforms suggested below are intended to weaken the solid wall of reactionary forces within public education that effectively resist reforms since all education reform has accomplished in the United States for nigh-on 60 years is the growing of education bureaucracy and the expending of a great deal of treasure.

Only by weakening public education's iron triangle (elected officials, union/trade associations, and government bureaucrats) will we get anything like real, positive change in public education that leads to more knowledgeable students graduating from high school ready to succeed in other educational endeavors and the careers of tomorrow.

Prohibit Collective Bargaining and Pass a Meaningful No-strike Law

Elected officials have a fiduciary duty to ALL taxpayers. Unionized government employees can effectively "hire" their own employers by participating in low-turnout elections.

Due to the problem of divided loyalty that government-employee collective bargaining creates, several states explicitly prohibit collective bargaining for teachers, including Texas, often cited as a state that pays teachers relatively well.

It is considered legal behavior if local boards declare the schools closed and allow teachers to be absent to protest at the state capitol for higher pay and benefits. This loophole needs closing.

Make the State Superintendent of Public Instruction an Appointed Office

Oklahoma's state governance model in public education is the same as that adopted by only eight other states (AZ, CA, GA, ID, IN, MT, NC, and ND).

This recommendation to have the Governor appoint the Superintendent of Public Instruction has much more to do with appearance and unity of governance than education quality.

An elected state school superintendent is far more likely than one appointed to narrowly construe their constituency to the public education industry, especially teacher unions, administrator organizations, and school board associations.

Transfer School Performance Review Responsibilities to the Lieutenant Governor

The Oklahoma School Performance Review (OSPR) is patterned on the Texas School Performance Review (TSPR), originally overseen by that state's Office of the Comptroller, a statewide elected position.

The TSPR was a newsmaker as long as an elected official was in charge. The incentive was to make it as effective as possible in order to earn unassailable praise.

Prioritize Early College High School

Why limit concurrent enrollment to only juniors and seniors? Why limit free-tuition hours to only eighteen only for seniors?

In principle, college-bound high school graduates should be able to earn an associate's degree (60 college credit hours) by the time they have completed high school, with savings to taxpayers, especially given the advent online resources.

The following changes to Oklahoma's dual credit/concurrent enrollment system are recommended:

- Require high schools to establish on-campus resources for online college courses such as tutoring and technology,
- Require districts to establish cost-effective online college course offerings and allow students to earn as many credits as they wish, especially if such credits can be earned more cheaply than today's regular public school classroom, a distinct possibility,
- Set a goal that every college-bound high school student will graduate with an associate's degree (60 college credit hours), without extra public expense and without parents/students incurring expense,
- Allow private college/university participation in the

free-tuition program where they are willing to accept state subsidies as low as afforded to public institutions,

- Eliminate the geographic service area restriction with respect to online courses.

Means-Test Pre-kindergarten

Establishing a universal pre-k program is clearly premature without having first established excellence in teaching early grades.

Pre-k should be limited to families whose children are *truly* eligible for the federal free or reduced-price lunch program and *true* English language learners.

Ensure Accurate Reporting of Funding-weighted Student Populations

The numerical weights that accrue with certain children in the school funding formula provide an incentive for districts to over-report weighted student counts, effectively stealing from those who are honest.

Over 60 percent of Oklahoma's school children are claimed eligible for free/reduced price lunches. Eligibility is limited to households at or below 185 percent of poverty. Official statistics show only 49 percent of Oklahoma's children are below 200 percent of poverty.

English language learners are also over-counted, as indicated by statistics regarding Hispanics in the state.

Careful audits should be conducted.

Parents should be required to show evidence of their claimed low income when applying for free/reduced price lunch eligibility or at least required to sign a sworn statement under penalty of perjury.