



Riverside Unified School District Key State Issues

- Moving Beyond COVID – Expanded Learning
- Base Funding for K-12 Education
- Special Education Reform
- Career Technical Education

1. Moving Beyond COVID – Expanded Learning

The Legislature and Governor Newsom began actions last Spring that clearly set public K-12 education as a top priority by ensuring that schools had immediate resources and were given significant flexibility and relief from statutory rules that would have otherwise prevented immediate services to students during the crisis. A budget was adopted intentionally avoiding deep cuts and additionally providing help to local schools.

With the unprecedented passage of \$6.6 Billion to move schools beyond the COVID crisis into a period of expanded learning and interventions for our students, Riverside Unified School District has embraced the opportunities and challenges that lie ahead. We are advocating that the Legislature and Governor remain committed to this purpose.

- Recognize that districts may continue to need some flexibility in offering distance learning to students in circumstances where it best meets their needs despite a broad return to in-person instruction.
- Avoid the implementation or re-implementation of rules, statutes, and regulations that will slow the recovery of our schools and conflict with the reality schools will encounter in the coming year.
- Ensure that new mandates related to health care and PPE are not paid for with Proposition 98 dollars intended for teaching and learning.

THE ASK:

Recognize that the crisis does not end with an arbitrary date but that schools and our students will be transitioning back to expanded and accelerated learning over a multi-year period.

2. Base Funding

Despite the billions in one-time funding that will help school districts recover over the next two years, the persistent problem with ongoing base funding of K-12 schools continues. Governor Newsom is the only Governor in 30 years to publicly acknowledge that ongoing school funding is woefully below where it should be. We believe that school funding should place California in the top tier of national per-pupil funding and fully cover the cost of educating our students. The funding system should equitably distribute *ongoing* resources across LEAs to pay for the real costs of educating each of California's students including the costs of stabilizing the state-controlled retirement systems under PERS and STRS.

- The Governor's budget would take a giant step backward due to his proposal to repeal the only action taken to address base funding issues since the inception of Proposition 98. The Legislature and Governor acted last Summer to adopt a State Budget that included a "Supplemental Payment" to Proposition 98 that over a multi-year period would increase the base of Proposition 98 from the current 38 percent of the General Fund to 40 percent, adding more than \$12 Billion in ongoing funding to K-14 education. We oppose the Governor's proposal to repeal the "Supplemental Payment."
- The Cost-of-Living Allowance provided in the budget is only applied to the LCFF and not other key programs including Special Education. A compounded COLA for last year and next year should be extended to all K-12 programs.
- The COLA (Cost of Living Allowance) for schools should be recalibrated to reflect the actual cost increases facing public schools from one year to the next. It is an antiquated formula that is in desperate need of updating.
- California must provide enough resources to support the actual cost of ensuring that all public school students and the LEAs who serve them perform at the highest possible levels. California should also provide LEAs the resources for non-instructional services including unfunded mandates and required spending increases (PERS and STRS) and infrastructure necessary for effective school operations.
- Funding must be allocated to account for the actual cost of meeting the differential needs of all students. This also requires the equitable distribution of funds among all LEAs, including county offices, school districts, and charter schools. LEAs are

responsible for the equitable distribution of resources to meet each student's needs.

- Funding must be sufficiently allocated for school districts when the state imposes local cost pressures, such as mandates, restrictions on uses of funds, and other financial obligations.
- Public funding should be protected from being used in support of vouchers or for providing education in non-public schools for general education purposes.

THE ASK:

Oppose the Governor's proposal to repeal the boost in Prop 98 approved in last year's budget known as the Supplemental Payment. It represents, the only action by the Legislature and Governor to address the "full and fair" ongoing funding for California public schools.

Fund the COLA for all K-12 programs, not just LCFF

Pay down all of the K-14 funding deferrals enacted last year instead of leaving \$3.7 Billion unpaid as the Governor proposes with no plan to retire the remaining debt to schools.

3. Special Education

Important gains have been made on special education policy and funding prompted by the work of Senator Roth and Assembly Member Medina. While Governor Newsom and others are advocating for various reforms to special education delivery, the entirely inadequate funding for special education is the single greatest impediment to making the system work better.

- The objective of funding increases for special education should be principally aimed at helping offset the burden local school districts have accepted to ensure that every child with disabilities has equal and fair access to quality public education.
- Special education reform tied to the continued increased funding and further increases in state support for special education should be accomplished in a way that also recognizes the need to offset existing financial sacrifices districts are making to ensure every child is provided the opportunity for a great education.

- Clearly, the Federal government bears a huge responsibility toward adequately funding special education and California's elected leaders can continue to apply pressure on the State's Congressional delegation and both houses of Congress along with the White House to take action.

THE ASK:

Building on the progress of the current year, there needs to be a recognition that the constant growth in special education population, incidence, and cost is the single greatest fiscal challenge facing most school districts. Along with the anticipated legislative efforts regarding further reform should be another effort to raise the funding levels for schools aimed at special education costs.

4. Career Technical Education

Only recently, California has slowly begun to reverse a trend toward disinvestment in Career technical education. The Local Control Funding Formula dismantled dedicated funding for this important purpose and the current-year budget has less than half of historic funding levels. Our districts are implementing ambitious and successful career technical education programs but need the State to increase its commitment to these educational programs that are directly linked to job creation and our regional economic future.

THE ASK:

We urge the Legislature and Governor to adopt proposals to redirect \$150 million to K-12 that was previously allocated to non-K-12 agencies and to add another \$150 million next year in order to ramp up overall funding. Assembly Member O'Donnell, along with many colleagues, has been a leader in advancing this effort.