



ESSA Hub Committee

February 6, 2017 Meeting

Decision Point: How will CDE allocate the required 7% of the state Title I funds to support identified schools for school improvement?

Majority Voted: Colorado should award school improvement funds in a manner that strategically allocates fiscal and programmatic resources to identified schools using a “needs-based” approach. Colorado will consolidate multiple school improvement grant applications into a single annual application process. The process will match identified needs with differentiated services and grant dollars for a three-year period.

Minority Voted: To support a process that favored allocations made through a competitive grant process.

Rationale for the minority position:

We respect and appreciate the hard work CDE staff put in to come up with a strategy to allocate the 7% of state Title I funds ESSA requires the state to use for the purpose of supporting school improvement. A majority of the hub committee supported a plan that "has been designed to: maximize impact on student learning; incentivize innovative and bold ideas; create fair and transparent processes; increase efficacy and efficiency; and providing fairness and predictability to LEAs."

Several of these goals are in direct tension with one another, most notably the desire to "incentivize innovative and bold ideas" while also providing "predictability to LEAs." We believe that achieving the goal of incentivizing fresh thinking and bold actions is best achieved through a competitive allocation process of these Title I funds. Competitive allocations, however, are fundamentally at odds with the notion of ensuring funding predictability. CDE staff did their best to come up with a plan to achieve these incompatible goals, but their task was effectively impossible.

Because this tension was never resolved, and because we believe competitive allocation would have been a more productive course of action, we felt uncomfortable signing on to the majority's preferred plan without clear accountability for student results. Recent research has shown that similar strategies have failed to achieve the desired results. For instance, the federal School Improvement Grant (SIG) program failed to meaningfully improve student outcomes. Despite \$7 billion in spending under the SIG program, recent research by the U.S. Department of Education's Institute of Education Sciences found that "...implementing any SIG-funded model had no significant impacts on math or reading test scores, high school graduation, or college enrollment."

The majority plan may have been acceptable if it had included clear triggers to change course if the plan was not having a demonstrable positive impact on student achievement. However, such triggers are not included.

This relatively small amount of reserved funding should be used to make big bets on new strategies to help Colorado's neediest student, rather than distributed in through a rigid formula like the other 93%



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of Title I funding. Underserved students in our state need and deserve bold new thinking, not more of the same.

For these reasons, we the undersigned respectfully enter our disagreement with the majority opinion of the hub committee.

Submitted by:

Sean Bradley, Urban League of Metropolitan Denver

Jeani Frickey Saito, Stand for Children Colorado

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Luke Ragland, Colorado Succeeds

Dan Schaller, Colorado League of Charter Schools

SUBMITTED: March 13, 2017