

## 8. EDUCATION

To ensure quality education for all Illinois children, we endorse the principles of accountability, adequacy, and equity and will actively work to include these principles in any commission, task force, or legislative proposal.

Accountability is the efficient use of taxpayers' dollars to provide a comprehensive education to achieve goals with measurable outcomes.

It includes the size and structure of school districts, the operation/administration of school districts and performance of school districts in achieving desirable educational outcomes.

We support:

1. Seeking significant long-term solutions to the problems of financing a quality education for all students through political, legislative, or judicial means.
2. Seeking full funding for general state aid to school districts.
3. Timely delivery of meaningful state incentives to support voluntary school consolidation and other forms of school district reorganization.
4. Teacher/staff professional development to improve teaching quality and to address challenges associated with the School Recognition Process.
5. Seeking the removal of tenure and replacing it with a merit program for teacher evaluation.
6. The goal of preserving and strengthening local control of schools.
7. School district reorganization when determined locally by each district and if approved by front door referendum. The requirements of a reorganization vote should consist of the following:
  - A. Either each board of education initiate the reorganization vote or petitions requesting the reorganization vote from 10 percent of the registered voters in each district be required for a referendum.
  - B. A majority of those voting on the reorganization be required for passage in either a unit or dual district.
  - C. Referendum consideration should be restricted to general elections only.
  - D. Taxpayers in the proposed consolidation area should be given the property tax implications of the proposed consolidation in advance of the referendum vote.
8. Efforts to allow school district annexation proceedings to occur through approval of the Regional Board of Trustees provided public notice and hearing requirements are met.
9. The formation of co-operative high schools when such co-operatives would broaden and enhance academic opportunities and will result in economic efficiencies.
10. Innovative pilot efforts that include creative partnerships with business and industry, higher education and government; encourage exploration of new ideas and new approaches to make schools more effective and efficient. Ideas and approaches should include, but not be limited to, Charter Schools, Distance Learning, and new approaches to Vocational Education, Special Education, and transitioning to a new educational model centered on classrooms that emphasize creativity, innovation and teamwork while helping individual students identify their passions earlier in their educational experience.
11. Policies allowing local initiatives to increase academic time such as restructuring the school day, calendar and schedule.
12. County Farm Bureaus to establish programs which assist members in understanding and participating in their schools. Such programs may include meetings with school boards and school administration to establish open communications about district operations, curriculum development, budgeting and finance.
13. Full funding of state and federal education mandates by the entity proposing the mandate and a full review of those mandates every three years.
14. Seeking legislation limiting the requirement for schools to fund special education to the education component only. The State of Illinois should be required to provide student housing and medical care within state or federal agencies.
15. Requiring a hearing by local school boards before levying a tax for Life Safety and Energy Conservation bonds if such bond issues exceed \$100,000.

16. Evaluating the legislation and rules concerning the waiver of mandates requested by local school districts. The legislature needs to evaluate each request on its own merit.

Adequacy is financing education at a level sufficient to fund a comprehensive educational program.

We support:

1. The concept of using a foundation level of funding as determined in the Education Funding Advisory Board report. This level should be recalculated annually and be based on the desired level of outcome.
2. The use of prior year Equalized Assessed Valuation (EAV) to provide accurate information for school budgeting and fiscal management.
3. Retention of categorical grants that address special needs and allow all schools to benefit. Revenue from other categorical grants, which are competitive, should be included in the general state aid formula.
4. A State funded capital program to assist school districts in modernizing existing facilities. This program should include funding for the Americans With Disabilities Act.

Equity is fairness in educational opportunities for students and fairness in the way education is funded.

We support:

1. The concept of leveling up (defined as reducing overall variation by increasing the expenditure/revenue per student at the lower end of the distribution).
2. A local individual income tax for education, by front door referendum. The local income tax rate should be a fixed flat rate for all school districts. The revenues from such a tax could be used as local tax effort, to replace property tax revenues, to enrich educational opportunities above the foundation level or some combination thereof.
3. Requiring an equitable local tax effort in every school district as an important part of achieving fairness in educational opportunities for students and fairness in the way education is funded.
4. Increased State investment in technology to increase productivity, enhance student achievement, expand learning time and staff development.
5. Efforts to improve and expand the curriculum and delivery of services in small and rural schools through development of a statewide two-way telecommunication system or other means of communication technology.
6. Cooperation between school districts through inter-governmental agreements.
7. Working with the State Board of Education to simplify grant application requirements.
8. The general concepts of the Education Funding Advisory Board (EFAB) of the Illinois General Assembly relating to property tax relief, adequate funding for schools, and school reorganization.
9. Teaching concepts of Science, Technology, Engineering and Math (STEM) in public schools in the State of Illinois. We support amending these teaching concepts to include agriculture: Science, Technology, Engineering, Agriculture, and Math (STEAM).
10. Monitoring the work of the Vision 20/20 elementary and secondary education reform coalition.
11. Increasing engagement of students in local, state, and federal activities in an effort to gain a better understanding and knowledge of the political process and the importance of civic engagement.

We oppose shifting responsibility for the state's contribution to the Teachers Retirement System (TRS) on the local school districts.