



Nicholas M. Gledich, Ed.D., Superintendent of Schools

(719) 520-2001

FAX (719) 520-2278

nicholas.gledich@d11.org

March 3, 2014

Colorado State Senate
Colorado State House of Representatives
Colorado State Capitol
200 E. Colfax Avenue
Denver, Colorado 80203

Dear State Legislator:

Colorado Springs School District 11 parents and community members care deeply about public education in our district and around our state. School District 11 is a member of a state school system whose funding has been cut dramatically in recent years.

In 2000, Colorado voters supported their public schools with the passage of Amendment 23, the spirit of which was intended to reverse years of cuts to education that occurred in the 1990s. Unfortunately, recent budgetary shortfalls in the state have all but erased the positive affect that Amendment 23 should have had. Currently, state funding of education falls \$1 billion short of inflation and enrollment growth. That is \$1 billion dollars short of what was intended by Amendment 23. For our district and our students, this amounts to approximately \$35 million being taken out of our classrooms over the past four years.

As a result of this decreased funding, our students experience larger class sizes, higher staff turnover, reduced curriculum, declining facility and technology infrastructure and reduced individual support from their teachers. All of these things negatively impact a student's ability to succeed and to grow intellectually. In addition, this ongoing reduction in funding from the state has come at a time when the state has adopted numerous reforms that cost the districts additional money to implement. The adoption of new state standards and the new and additional assessments that accompany them will require substantial investment by the districts to implement. New, more frequent principal and teacher evaluation systems will also require substantial monetary investment by the districts, if they are to be implemented properly. Furthermore, during the current legislative session, our representatives are considering initiatives to change the method used to determine student count and to require new financial reporting practices. Both of these initiatives will again take money out of our classrooms in their implementation with no clear evidence that they will, in any way, improve student achievement outcomes. Therefore, the state continues to ask the districts to invest their shrinking budgets into these new programs, which effectively take money out of the classrooms and do not directly address student achievement.

It is time for our state to start investing in education once again. School District 11 believes it stands with the majority of district superintendents, Great Education Colorado and other concerned Colorado citizens in asking the legislature to begin to undo the harm that has been done to our educational system in the past.

In the coming weeks, the General Assembly will be making decisions about budgetary priorities in the state. We ask that public education funding be one of your highest priorities. A positive step toward improving the school budgetary crisis is by addressing the "negative factor" that is utilized in the current school finance formula. This mechanism has been used by the legislature to reduce state funding to the school districts. A reduction of the negative factor can begin to restore the funding that the districts so desperately need. An increase in funding by a reduction of the negative factor will give school districts the flexibility to utilize the new funds in ways that they find are best for their students. Districts take different approaches to managing their budget shortfalls, and their school boards and superintendents are the most qualified to determine how any additional funding should be spent for the highest benefit of the students in their districts. We also ask the legislature to cease imposing reform mandates on our districts that have no clear bearing on improving student success and achievement in the classroom.

The time has come to take a leading role in restoring the funding streams that were not possible when the economy in Colorado was struggling. It is now time to step up, take advantage of the boost to our economy, right the wrongs, and stop kicking the can down the road for others to solve. Five years of systemic, annual cuts may seem very small at the "bird's eye" state budget level but in the career of a student or in the eyes of their parents, those are years now lost forever. It is over one third of the K-12 experience. If Colorado is to compete at national and international levels for job creation, industry acceleration and scientific innovation, we need to reinvest in our students and schools. There is no other time but now. Please take advantage of the wealth of knowledge you receive from the experts in the field, the people in the trenches, and the people who have students in the system right now that are being let down every time public school funding is cut.

We thank you in advance for your attention and time in these matters and appreciate your hard work at the capitol. We are anxiously awaiting your votes during this legislative session and welcome all dialogue with you.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Nicholas M. Gledich".

Nicholas M. Gledich, Ed.D.
Superintendent of Schools

RESOLUTION ON ELIMINATING THE NEGATIVE FACTOR
Resolution 2014-26

WHEREAS, to ensure that every student in Colorado has the same educational opportunities regardless of where the student lives, Colorado's school finance formula since 1994 has included both a base amount of per pupil funding and an additional amount based on "factors" to account for unique local conditions and equalize total per pupil funding across school districts.

WHEREAS, the factors funded through Colorado's school finance formula address significant variables, including district size, personnel costs, cost of living, and number of at-risk students in a district.

WHEREAS, starting in fiscal year 2010–11, the legislature created a new "negative factor" to make across-the-board cuts to education spending. The negative factor acts to reduce funding the factors, thereby destroying the equalizing mechanism of the school finance formula and disproportionately impacting the districts and communities with the highest needs.

WHEREAS, when the Colorado voters passed Amendment 23 in 2000, the constitutional provision was designed to help Colorado's public school funding catch up to the national average and to keep it at that level. In contravention of this expressed will of the people, the legislature's invention of the negative factor leaves Colorado 42nd, more than \$2,500 below the national average, in per pupil funding.

WHEREAS, in the 2013-14 fiscal year alone, the negative factor extracted more than \$1 billion from the state's support for public education.

WHEREAS, the negative factor in school finance has required the Colorado Springs School District 11 Board of Education to do the following:

- Close or repurpose 14 schools
- Freeze pay (with the exception of nominal payments four years in a row)
- Cut pay with furlough days for three consecutive years
- Increase class size twice
- Cut administration by 15-20 percent
- Reduce other positions across the district
- Reduce benefits through plan design changes
- Cut instructional programs like summer school, tutoring, and at-risk programs
- Defer maintenance on schools, facilities, vehicles, and grounds
- Defer capital replacement on schools, facilities, buses, support vehicles, and technology

WHEREAS, even as the legislature continues to reduce school funding, the legislature has passed multiple significant reform efforts, including but not limited to the Preschool to Postsecondary Education Alignment Act (CAP4K) (Senate Bill 08-212), the Education Accountability Act of 2009 (Senate Bill 09-163), the Educator Effectiveness Law (Senate Bill 10-191), and the Colorado READ Act (House Bill 12-1238), without adequate revenue support. These laws impose additional

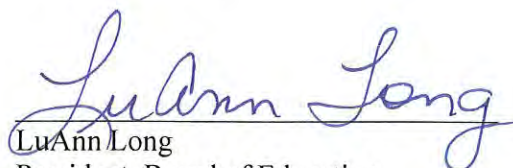
unfunded obligations on school districts already burdened by reduced funding to implement the existing education reforms.

WHEREAS, state revenues are increasing and the legislature has discussed paying off the state payday holiday and replenishing cash funds, the legislature must make it a priority to eliminate the negative factor and return to a sensible and constitutional system of school finance.


THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, the Colorado Springs School District 11 Board of Education calls upon the Colorado legislature to eliminate the negative factor in K-12 education funding and restore, within the next five years, funds lost due to its use to date.

Dated this 26th day of February, 2014.

Colorado Springs
School District 11


LuAnn Long
President, Board of Education

Attested by:


Julie Rene Stevens
Secretary to the Board of Education

SUMMARY STUDENT SUCCESS ACT

RECURRING FUNDING (\$155 million)

Item	Amount	Purpose
Negative Factor	\$100 million	Increases total program funding for all school districts and institute charter schools.
Early Literacy	\$20 million	Annual funding for early literacy.
ELL Funding	\$35 million	<p>\$5 million – Excellence Awards Program to acknowledge the highest academic achievement for English Language Learners who successfully transition out of the English language proficiency program.</p> <p>\$30 million – Professional Development and Student Support Program. Funding based on percentage of statewide English Language Learners enrolled.</p>

ONE-TIME FUNDING (\$55 million)

Item	Amount	Purpose
Implementation Fund	\$40 million	Assist school districts, boards of cooperative services that operate public schools, the state charter school institute, and charter school to implement: accountability, early literacy, educator evaluation statutes, and initiatives and projects to improve educational practice. Will be allocated on a per pupil basis.
Financial Transparency and ADM Funding	\$15 million	Assist (1) in establishing and implementing a “school-site” level of financial reporting (\$5 million); and, (2) local school districts and institute charter schools to move toward a multi-point student count to better assess actual student enrollment (\$10 million).

CAPITOL CONSTRUCTION (\$53 million)

Capitol Construction & Infrastructure	\$40 million	<p>75% for full day kindergarten</p> <p>12.5% for technology assistance</p> <p>12.5% for charter school facilities assistance</p>
Charter school increase	\$13 million	Boosts charter school capital construction from \$7 million annually to \$20 million annually.