



2010 FRN Homework

This “homework” paper provides a general framework for your meetings with your members of Congress and their legislative staff on Capitol Hill during the FRN Conference, as well as for subsequent meetings and discussions that you and other school board members may have during the second session of the 111th Congress. Such information will be very useful in helping your senators and representative and their staffs understand the challenges that your local school board faces.

Working with your superintendent or your central office staff, please complete these questions and bring the information to the conference. (If exact information is not available, please estimate.) ***Please remember to bring the information that you have collected to the FRN conference with several copies to share with your members of Congress and NSBA staff. Members of Congress and their staff appreciate local examples and it strengthens your presentation. NSBA staff also use the information you provide to strengthen their lobbying efforts on Capitol Hill.*

Federal Funding for Education

Jobs for Main Street Act: Congress and the Administration have begun work on legislation to help address the nation’s unemployment rate, as a supplement to the *American Recovery & Reinvestment Act (ARRA)*. The White House began a national dialogue about such legislation last December, and has encouraged communities to hold their own forums and provide ideas about what sectors of the economy are affected and what federal resources can be used to help restore/create jobs. On December 16, the House passed the *Jobs for Main Street Act*, which would provide \$23 billion for an Education Jobs Fund to states for job retention, jobs creation and professional development available for elementary and secondary education and public institutions of higher education. The funding could also be used for school infrastructure repairs and modernization. Senate action is expected early in 2010.

The recession’s impact on education continues to reverberate as a number of school districts grapple with layoffs, defer capital improvement projects, and try to do more with less local and state resources. Although ARRA has reportedly helped save more than 300,000 education-related jobs since its enactment last February, the reality is that a

growing number of districts need additional resources to help save jobs and drive innovation for student achievement.

Building on the insight many of you provided last year that was influential to ARRA's funding for education, please consider the following questions that will be useful to your meetings on Capitol Hill and will help support additional assistance for school districts, through further action in the *Jobs for Main Street Act* or other employment bills.

- 1. What is your district's projected budget for the 2010 – 2011 school year? Given your state's fiscal position, what resources will your district need to retain jobs and continue current programs?**
- 2. What programs and jobs are in jeopardy in next year's budget even with ARRA funding? Has your school district received a portion of State Fiscal Stabilization Funding to help retain jobs? Was this funding sufficient to help save jobs; or, a temporary stopgap measure that your district may not be able to sustain?**
- 3. What are your district's school construction needs? Was your district able to utilize the school bond programs under ARRA? Or, will school bond proposals be an initiative that your community and voters may not be willing to approve during this economic downturn? Would your district benefit from grants for school repairs and modernization that will benefit students and help create jobs and contracting opportunities?**
- 4. What is your district's capacity- building needs to meet the U.S. Department of Education's requirements for implementing common standards and assessments, ensuring equitable distribution of effective teachers and principals, utilizing robust data systems to track continuous improvement, and provide greater intervention for schools needing improvement?**
- 5. What would be the impact of your federal funding for special education (IDEA) continuing at 17.2% of the average per pupil expenditure instead of the 40% promised in the *Individuals With Disabilities Education Act (IDEA)*?¹ After the two-year funding increase from ARRA ends for IDEA, how could your district mitigate any "funding cliff," or dramatic drop in funding?**

¹ To estimate the gap between the IDEA funding you are currently receiving and 40%, it can be calculated by multiplying your current IDEA funding level (not counting stimulus funding) by 2.5.



Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) Reauthorization / No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB)

Eight years after the enactment of the federal law, No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act, many local school districts continue to struggle to comply with the language of the law at a time when the unintended consequences of this complex law are imposing far more dysfunctional and illogical implementation problems. Please prepare responses to the following questions:

- 1. Are any of your district's high-performing schools now being labeled as "in need of improvement" or identified for "corrective action" due to flaws in the accountability system? If so, what has been the public reaction?**
- 2. Are schools in your district being mislabeled based on assessments (tests) that are not valid and/or reliable for certain groups of students? If so, which groups and to what degree?**
- 3. Has your school district been able to demonstrate that public school choice or supplemental educational services has resulted in improved academic performance on the part of participating students? To what degree? Is there a better alternative?**
- 4. In funding the operational requirements of NCLB has your school district had to eliminate or suspend other initiatives that were showing improved academic performance by students?**
- 5. In implementing "corrective action" and/or "restructuring" sanctions, what costs has your school district incurred? Please specify the actions and estimated costs – including those that were required but unnecessary.**
- 6. In attempting to improve academic performance in math and language arts has your school district reduced or eliminated the amount of class time focused on other subjects? What subjects and to what degree?**
- 7. What issues, if any would you anticipate in implementing common standards and assessments?**
- 8. What kind of teacher shortages, if any, are you experiencing?**
- 9. Do you offer Pre-k programs, what are the benefits, what problems do you see in continuing or growing the program in this budget climate?**



Teacher Effectiveness

Currently, the federal government invests about \$3 billion annually on teacher effectiveness initiatives, primarily through Title II of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA).

The American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (the stimulus bill) also included one-time funding for teacher effectiveness initiatives, including the State Fiscal Stabilization formula funds to states, Race to the Top competitive grants, a Teacher Incentive Fund and Investing in Innovation (i3) grants.

The reauthorization for the ESEA will further develop policy for teacher effectiveness initiatives, include improving traditional and alternative teacher preparation, licensing and certification, professional development, recruitment and retention, compensation and tenure and incentive pay.

1. **Is your district experiencing teacher shortages?**
 - a. **Are the shortages a result of recruitment challenges?**
 - b. **Are the shortages a result of inability to retain teachers?**
 - c. **In what subjects are your shortages most acute? (please include teachers of special education and English Language Learners if applicable)**
2. **If you are facing teacher shortages, what strategies (state or local) has your district implemented to try to address them?**
3. **How does your state or district current utilize American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (stimulus bill) funding for recruitment, retention and professional development and accountability for teachers?**
4. **What changes to the Title II program would be most helpful to your district's efforts to improve teacher effectiveness?**



Early Childhood Education

Given the high priority the new administration places on early childhood, strong public support for pre-K education in public schools, and pending legislation to increase funding and quality in early education, we anticipate opportunities for school districts to increase their involvement in this area.

1. Does your school district offer a pre-kindergarten program?
2. If yes (in response to question 1),
 - a. What is the percentage of eligible children enrolled?
 - b. How is it funded (e.g. local, state, other, combination)?
 - c. Has your state's fiscal situation put pressure on the district to reduce resources going to early education?
3. If no (in response to question 1),
 - a. Would your district be interested in providing early education?
 - b. What are your community needs?
 - c. How would the availability of federal funds help?

If you have any questions, please contact:

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