



Doc H's Blog

Kentucky Education Commissioner
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Budget cuts impacting our children's future

Last week I told you about naming this year's Next-Generation Student Council, a group that I started a few years ago. This group represents students across Kentucky. I meet with them in person or virtually three or four times a year. The group is always energetic and they have tremendous ideas on how to improve public education.

We had our initial meeting for 2013-14 this week and we discussed a multitude of issues. One issue that I asked students to respond to was concerning budget cuts. I asked students if they had observed the impact of state education budget cuts in their school or district. Here are some of their responses.

- The fees for my science club went up from \$30 to \$90 this year since the school and district were no longer able to support the club due to state budget cuts.
- I have a cousin who is a special education student who lost his teacher assistant this year due to budget cuts. My cousin is having a difficult time in class since he does not have the assistant to help.
- Our school eliminated several science classes. My school no longer offers physics due to budget cuts.
- My school eliminated several extracurricular clubs due to budget cuts.
- My school eliminated several art and music classes due to budget cuts.
- My school lost a full time librarian due to budget cuts.
- Our computers are slow and the school has no funding to replace them.
- Our internet at school is slow and there is no money to increase bandwidth.
- Class sizes are larger at my school due to budget cuts.
- My school does not have funding to offer several math and science classes that I need for my future career.
- Our school district told my school they had to increase class size due to budget cuts.
- Our school district eliminated funding for small classes and told our school to focus more on general education classes that have larger enrollment. I lost several classes I needed for my career interest.
- Students in our automotive technology class lost their instructor and had to take another class.
- My principal said these students would not be able to meet career-ready requirements since they lost the automotive class.
- My calculus textbook is falling apart and teacher says we cannot get replacements due to budget cuts.

It was very painful for me listen to the reality of budget cuts in our schools. I know our Kentucky teachers and administrators are doing an amazing job every day – the results certainly show the tremendous progress we are making. However, it must be very discouraging to our teachers who are taking money out of their own pockets to support what children need in their classrooms. It is also discouraging to students and parents who often have to raise funds in order to provide for basics like school supplies and technology. The most depressing statement comes from the student who is unable to fulfill his/her dreams of being a scientist or an automotive engineer because the school was not able to offer classes the student needed to meet college and career ready expectations.

The Kentucky Association School Superintendents and the Kentucky School Boards Association are urging local boards of education to pass a resolution ([see sample](#)) and submit it to elected officials highlighting funding concerns. To date, 66 boards have done so. The Kentucky Education Association has launched the [“Raise Your Hand” campaign](#) in support of public schools. There is a growing grass roots movement across Kentucky to restore funding to education. I hope readers will join the effort.

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