



Legislative Committee Report Spring 2014

Committee Members

Debra Anderson - Oakhill Elementary

Michael Amaro – Bartlett Elementary

Larry Bury – Sycamore Trails Elementary (chair)

Maria Garbarz – Centennial Elementary

Shameka Turner – Timber Trails Elementary

School District U-46 Liaison
Tony Sanders, Chief of Staff

With thanks to CAC Finance Committee Chair Kevin Sweeney

Report approved by CAC Executive Committee
May 8, 2014

Report approved by the CAC General Council
May 8, 2014

Report to be presented to the Board of Education - School District U-46
June 2, 2014

CAC Legislative Committee Goal

For 2013-2014, the CAC Legislative Committee sought to determine how various issues and legislative initiatives impact classrooms in U-46. While U-46 receives both state and federal funding and oversight, the CAC Legislative Committee focused the majority of its attention on Illinois. This effort included: garnering a better understanding of how the Illinois General Assembly operates; learning about various statewide organizations that represent the interests of U-46 in Springfield; discussing how previously adopted legislation has impacted U-46 finances or affected classroom instruction; and, reviewing how state education funding is allocated to U-46 and the impact on the district's budget.

Observations

Based upon how the geographic region encompassed by U-46 overlaps with state legislative districts, U-46 schools are represented State Senators Michael Noland, Thomas Cullerton, Karen McConnaughay, Jim Oberweis and Dan Kotowski and State Representatives Anna Moeller, Fred Crespo, Dennis Rebolletti, Mike Fortner, Tim Schmitz and Michelle Mussman. Considering the size of the General Assembly membership (59 senators and 118 representatives), having potential access to five senators and six representatives presents an opportunity to influence the legislative process when future legislative challenges are faced by U-46.

The CAC Legislative Committee determined that U-46 faces a number of legislative challenges that could potentially impact resources available to our classrooms. These challenges include:

- The state budget faces significant cuts due to the legislatively mandated schedule to reduce the 2011 income tax increase. If the current 5% income tax rate is reduced to 3.75% on January 1, 2015 as planned, it would create a state budget shortfall that would significantly diminish education funding available statewide.
- State funding formulas appear to shortchange the allocation of education funding received by U-46 in comparison to other school districts sharing similar demographic characteristics.

- Various unfunded mandates imposed by Springfield that either impose additional financial burdens upon U-46 or divert valuable classroom instruction time from core education priorities.

Action Item – March 2014 Presentation

The CAC Legislative Committee presented these observations to the CAC General Membership during the March 2014 CAC meeting. The presentation - “How CAC members Can Influence Springfield” - was designed to provide an overview of the Springfield legislative process, the effect state and federal funding has upon the district’s budget, legislative challenges, the impact of unfunded mandates and how CAC members can represent their schools in the legislative process. A copy of this presentation is provided as an attachment to this report.

The result of this action item was the gathering of contact information from attendees who expressed a willingness to contact their legislators if/when needed. The contact information can be utilized to create the capacity to distribute information when legislative challenges need immediate attention.

In order to further refine this capacity to make it fully operational, the CAC Legislative Committee and CAC Executive Committee will need to work with U-46 Board and administration to identify legislative challenges and prepare materials to be utilized by CAC members when needed.

Recommendations

The CAC Legislative Committee recommends the following items for further consideration or action:

- Continue developing the capacity to provide information to CAC representatives when timely action could change potentially negative legislative outcomes. This includes working with the U-46 Board and administration to develop and distribute materials in response to legislative challenges.

- Partner with other interested groups to conduct a forum for General Assembly candidates in October 2014 and a forum for U-46 School Board candidates in Spring 2015 (the CAC has previously participated in similar events).
- Develop an understanding of the U-46 Board's legislative goals and objectives in order to better coordinate legislative communications and activities between the CAC and the U-46 Board and administration.
- Discuss additional outreach opportunities between U-46 legislators and CAC members.
- Explore feasibility of conducting a joint U-46 / CAC trip to Springfield to discuss U-46 legislative issues with legislative leadership and area legislators.