

Carmel Clay Schools 2019 Legislative Priorities

Aligned with the ISBA 2019 Legislative Priorities

Our Mission: Carmel Clay Schools will provide opportunities for all students to realize their potential in an ever-changing world.

Our Guiding Principles start with “Students are at the center of every decision.” and end with “Fiscal responsibility is fundamental to achieving our vision.”

- 1. Increased funding for K-12 students** - Carmel Clay Schools desires adequate funding of public schools and automatic annual adjustments to keep pace with inflation.

Discussion: According to a 2018 report from the National Center for Education Statistics, Indiana ranked 36th in the nation (in 2015) for instructional spending per pupil at \$9,529, compared to the U.S. average of \$11,454.

State tuition support appropriations have not kept pace with inflation since 2010 when using the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics CPI Inflation Calculator. Had tuition support funding kept pace with inflation over this period, \$270 million more would have been available to school corporations for per pupil dollars in FY 2018, and more than \$573 million in total for the 2017-2019 biennium (Downs, 2018). An appropriation amount above projected inflationary rates in the next biennium will help school corporations keep up with the cost of doing business and allow for reasonable salary increases that are needed to maintain a high-quality teacher workforce.

CCS supports funding that provides an equitable and level playing field for school corporations to provide equal educational opportunities for all children. Adequate funding will allow local school boards to improve the quality of public education.

- 2. Enhanced teacher recruitment and retention programs** - Carmel Clay Schools desires our legislature to fund programs to recruit and retain teachers in Indiana.

Discussion: Studies suggest that fewer individuals are entering the teaching profession. Considering the significant role a teacher plays in the education of a child, efforts need to be made to attract more persons to the field of education. Similarly, efforts need to be made to keep teachers in the classroom. School boards need greater flexibility in the current compensation system to reward teachers with advanced education degrees and those with experience in the classroom.

The average salary of Teachers in Indiana was \$54,308 in 2017, more than \$7,000 below the U.S. average of \$61,386, which placed Indiana 30th out of 50 states according to a NEA report.

- 3. Tax credits for public schools' foundations** - Carmel Clay School believes Indiana needs a state income tax credit for charitable contributions to public school education foundations.

Discussion: With the changes to Federal tax laws, it will be more difficult for charities to obtain contributions. There currently exists a tax credit system for monetary donations to

Indiana colleges and universities and for financial contributions to scholarship-granting organizations (for choice scholarships). It would be good public policy to also incentivize taxpayers to donate to their local public schools' educational foundations. There are fewer than 100 education foundations associated with school corporations and that are members of the Indiana Association of Public Education Foundations. Such a tax credit will facilitate the creation of more educational foundations that can, in turn, fund special initiatives, classroom grants, and one-time program costs to provide a suitable intermediate funding source.

CCS supports a \$1,000/individual taxpayer, \$2,000/per joint filing, and the greater of 10% of a corporation's total adjusted gross income tax liability or \$10,000.

4. Expand Criteria of Safe Havens Grant to Support Social, Emotional, and Mental Health Needs

Discussion: CCS supports expanding the selection criteria and use of the Safe Havens Grant program to allow for use of funds by school corporations to implement or sustain evidence-based programs to support the social, emotional, and mental health needs of students, including hiring or funding onsite social workers, psychologists, and/or mental health counselor positions.

5. Tax deduction for school textbooks/supplies - CCS believes that Indiana should provide public school parents with a tax deduction for textbooks and supplies.

Discussion: Parents of students enrolled in private schools or home schools are entitled to claim a \$1,000 income tax deduction per dependent for costs related to tuition, textbooks, computer software, and other school supplies. There is no tax deduction available to parents of students who are enrolled in public schools. Considering the significant amount of money that public-school parents pay for textbooks and other school supplies, these parents should also be entitled to claim a \$1,000 income tax deduction per dependent. Indiana is one of four states that has parents pay for text books.

6. Assistance for losses from the circuit breaker - CCS believes Indiana should provide assistance to public school districts hurt by the circuit breaker.

Discussion: The circuit breaker was designed to cap property taxes, but an unintended consequence has been to reduce funding to public schools. More and more schools are feeling the effects of property tax caps.

7. Non-public school funding and accountability - Indiana should stop reducing public school funding by funding vouchers, education savings accounts, and other private school funding mechanisms. There should also be greater accountability and transparency required for private schools accepting state funding. Student assessments should be equivalent to those in public schools.

Discussion: Currently there is only one fund from which public schools and non-public schools receive funding from the State. This means fewer dollars going to public schools if the State continues to distribute these funds to non-public schools. There should be auditing procedures established to ensure that state tax dollars are expended on approved educational costs.

8. Change Kindergarten ADM Cut-off Date to September 1

Discussion: CCS supports changing the law that specifies that children must be at least five-years old on August 1 (“cut-off date” created by HEA 1001 (P.L. 135-2018)) for the kindergarten ADM count. A September 1 date would be appropriate and in line with school corporations that have implemented sound early admission waiver procedures with fidelity. School officials follow the early admission screening protocol to ensure children are emotionally, socially, and cognitively ready for kindergarten.

Adopted: November 26, 2018

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