

# Editor's Note

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School finance occupies more space on state board of education agendas than any other single topic, making up about half of all information and action items that NASBE captures in its State Board Insight database. These tend to be items of the moment: a review of budget requests and legislative appropriations, guidance to districts on how they report spending, or approval of disbursing grant funds. We hope this issue will provide a wider angle on these critical issues and a context for state boards' ongoing discussions.

First off, we take a step back to get a better view of the arc of the struggle for adequate and equitable funding for public education. Michael Rebell, who leads the Center for Educational Equity and teaches at Teachers College, follows the role of state supreme courts, where plaintiffs arguing for equity have gotten mixed results over the last several decades, but those arguing for adequacy have—since the advent of high-quality learning standards—enjoyed more success. The issue ends with Kris Amundson's interview with two venerable leaders of the Kansas State Board of Education, Jim Porter and Jim McNiece, who discuss their board's role in advocating for students over the many years that the Kansas Supreme Court and legislature have struggled over funding adequacy.

Georgetown University's Marguerite Roza urges state boards to also look at the spending side of the equation. While local school boards and district officials make spending decisions, states are not yet doing a good job of ensuring that local officials have the training they need to spend wisely and equitably, she says. "That dearth of skill is hamstringing leaders who could otherwise be making

better-informed decisions for deploying money so they can help students the most," says Roza. Local capacity for financial leadership became more urgent with a new provision in the Every Student Succeeds Act, writes The Education Trust's Ary Amerikaner. State leaders—and parents—will have access to school-level spending data, and education officials will thus need to be prepared for the questions such transparency is bound to generate. Resource allocation reviews are another transparency tool that state leaders should use to assess how well education dollars are spent and where they go, she writes.

Karen Hawley Miles and Nicole Katz of Education Resource Strategies address the timely topic of teacher salaries. They detail the uneven compensation landscape from state to state, and they urge state boards to ask tough questions about how teachers are paid within the larger context of whether all resources are distributed equitably and well.

Margie Wallen and Judy Reidt-Parker of the Ounce of Prevention Fund press state boards to take the lead in identifying and removing obstacles to braiding and blending the many diverse funding streams that feed pre-K programming in their states.

No issue on school finance would be complete without an article on the benefits of student-driven funding and on Exhibit A in that lane: California's Local Control Funding Formula, with the attendant Local Control and Accountability Plan (LCAP) required of each district. In the view of EdBuild's Rebecca Sibilia, LCAP "brings accountability to the next level by empowering the state board to consider and evaluate alignment between funding and planned priorities and programs." ■

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