



INADEQUATELY FUNDED MANDATES

Q. As a public education advocate, what drives your passion?

A. *I believe that public education is the great equalizer and has the potential to change the lives of each child in our nation. I also believe that public education is critical for our democracy to thrive. American educational philosopher, John Dewey, wrote "Only as the coming generation learns in the schools to understand the social forces that are at work, the directions and the cross-directions in which they are moving, the consequences that they are reproducing, the consequences that they might produce if they were understood and managed with intelligence - only as the schools provide this understanding, have we any assurance that they are meeting the challenge which is put to them by democracy."*

Q. Funding our public schools is a major topic in the current state legislature. What is one important aspect that needs to be reviewed?

A. *School funding is one of the most complex issues surrounding public education in Texas. The complexities of the system are at the heart of the issue to be resolved – fair and equitable funding for the benefit of every student in every district. In addition to the complex, archaic, and convoluted wealth equalization model currently used, the issue of unfunded and underfunded mandates continues to burden school district budgets across Texas.*

Q. How do unfunded/underfunded mandates affect students in our Texas public schools?

A. *Legislated mandates that are not properly funded need to be revisited by our policymakers in Austin. There is no question as to the intent and potential benefit expected from most of these regulated requirements. However, it is imperative that our legislators examine the implementation and maintenance cost and recognize the*

negative impact inadequately funded mandates have on school district budgets.

Mandates that are not properly funded only compound the issue of equitable funding for public education. As districts implement these directives such as those outlined in the 2017 TASB Report on School Mandates: Cost Drivers in Public Education, it is important to remember our public schools have limited financial resources.

Every required mandate arguably is intended to benefit our students. Administrators, teachers, and staff ensure that all mandates are applied and followed. However, when mandates are not properly funded, there is a direct consequence on district budgets and student programs. The hard reality is that each unfunded and underfunded mandate has a real impact on an already limited budget designed for optimum student success.

Q. How do you see this funding issue being resolved?

A. *In terms of public education, our legislators must consider the effect their decisions make on our students, budgets, and local communities. The lack of funding for required mandates has been a topic of discussion among educators for decades. As a whole, we are compliant by nature and we choose this profession to make a positive impact on the lives of all children. We will always do what is right and best for kids.*

Resolving the funding issues associated with mandates can be accomplished with a cooperative attitude between our legislators, school boards, and educators. Together, we can determine which are absolutely necessary and agree to properly fund them. When legislators and educators truly collaborate, I am confident our students and communities will benefit.

Q. History provides us with inspiring quotes about public education. What is your legacy quote that we might find inspiring future generations?

A. *"If we believe in educating all children in Texas, we must provide strong support for our neighborhood public schools." ~Daniel Gallagher*