



“Quality leadership and advocacy for children in public schools.”

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Panfilo H. Contreras

The Honorable Jan Brewer
Governor of Arizona
1700 West Washington
Phoenix, AZ 85007

May 14, 2010

Dear Governor Brewer:

The Arizona School Boards Association is a non-partisan, non-profit organization dedicated to promoting community volunteer governance of public education and continuous improvement of student success by providing training, leadership and assistance to public school governing boards. With over 240 traditional school district and charter governing boards as members, we very much appreciate being a part of the P-20 Coordinating Council process and associated task forces. As we embark on Arizona's Phase II application, ASBA looks forward to our continued dialogue and partnership in moving our students forward.

In order to encourage student achievement, a quality data system is critical. Not only will this provide us with the needed information on how our students and schools are currently performing, it will also provide our school leadership and teachers with the necessary information to transform and remediate struggling students. In addition, it will enable us to hold our leaders and teachers accountable. To that end, ASBA worked during the 2010 legislative session to implement crucial personnel reforms and support the development of effective evaluation systems for teachers and administrators. These teachers and instructional leaders who excel in their profession and inspire their students and colleagues are essential for a quality public education system. The best and the brightest must be recruited and retained in our classrooms. ASBA shares the vision that Race to the Top promotes with these reforms in acknowledging the importance of finding and retaining high-performing teachers in every classroom for every child. ASBA is eager to continue working on these reforms and can provide a unique perspective from the local governance level.

When it comes to standards and assessments, Arizona worked diligently in reforming our standards. In fact, Arizona has some of the most rigorous standards in the United States. Now, national Common Core standards are being discussed. ASBA understands how critical it is that every child is prepared for a successful future; however, we are cognizant that local communities have played, and should continue to play, a significant role in determining the full spectrum of what our students learn. We believe that as we pursue reform to standards, we must continue to

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support and uphold those structures, including local school boards, that ensure communities are vested in and accountable for the success of their students and their public schools.

In addition, Race to the Top contemplates a tiered-system for intervention in low-achieving schools, an approach ASBA embraces. Due to the unique needs of each school and each community, a one-size-fits-all approach is illogical and unlikely to yield the desired results. Instead, appropriate interventions should be based on the needs of the community as well as the degree and persistence of the low student achievement. Arizona also has unique needs, whether it is our high English Language Learner population or the struggles faced on many of our Native American reservations. ASBA has experience in these tiered approaches and partnered with the State Board of Education and other stakeholders to develop a successful model for intervention in financially struggling schools. Intervention models need to respect local control and the diversity of communities throughout Arizona while implementing best practices and appropriate resources to assist these schools and districts.

ASBA is dedicated to the continuous improvement of Arizona’s education system with a focus on student achievement. RTTT has allowed ASBA and other stakeholders to continue the conversations surrounding important education reform areas in a meaningful way. We are committed to staying in this dialogue as we work to implement education reforms that will benefit all students – regardless of the success of our RTTT application. However, a successful Arizona Phase II RTTT application will provide the resource assistance necessary to better ensure success. We look forward to this partnership in creating a world-class public education system that ensures all students receive a rigorous education that prepares them for a successful future.

Sincerely,

Paffilo H. Contreras
Executive Director