

Unfunded Mandates Collective Opposition

Chicago Public Schools -- ED-RED -- LEND -- Scope -- LUDA

The commitment to the improvement of student achievement is the foundation for our collective position to oppose unfunded mandates. Research links student achievement to the quality of teachers and leaders, as well as to the amount of time devoted to instruction. *Each unit of mandated instruction that is not based on Illinois State Learning Standards takes away valuable time and dollars dedicated to teaching and learning.*

Mandates refer to laws passed by the legislature and regulations established by the Illinois State Board of Education. To date 87 mandates are imposed upon schools in our state without regard for the State Mandate Act, with an additional twenty proposed during the 2009 Spring Session.

Our opposition resides within the following major issues:

1. Loss of instructional time and dollars that should be focused upon increasing student achievement. Schools are held accountable for state standards and assessment.
2. No increase in instructional time or resources to support mandates has been associated with legislation.
3. Loss of local control is the result of mandates. School districts should have the ability to determine the most appropriate curriculum, pedagogy, supervision of instruction and operations within the guidelines of state standards. General statewide mandates are not universally applicable to all districts in our diverse state.

We encourage legislators to seek alternatives to mandating instruction of favored units outside of the curricular day or to encourage families and social service organizations to embrace the issues. Local districts should be allowed to make decisions regarding additional curriculum and instructional issues relevant to their communities and within their available resources of time and funding.

Although legislative proposals for additional units of study and oversight are *well-intentioned*, they come without resources for implementation or the ability for local decision-making; therefore our organizations must oppose them.

We understand there will be times the legislature must impose requests on to local districts to garner data and policy-informing information. It is not the intent of our collective position to diminish the ability of the General Assembly to acquire data in order to better inform their policy development.

Alternatives to initiating statewide unfunded mandates:

- Introduce mandates with *permissive language*
- Work with local school districts to provide instruction on the issue
- Provide districts with a menu of options for complying with mandates; for example, continue to require districts to provide a unit of instruction in genocide, but allow districts to cover one of a handful of genocide occurrences (Armenian Genocide, Famine-Genocide in Ukraine, Pontian-Greek Genocide, Cambodia, Rwanda)
- In order to add a mandate, a mandate must be removed from the School Code
- Ensure that all mandates reflect a *state learning standard* and are assessed by state assessments
- Encourage after-school, community groups, or other partners to take responsibility for introducing the concept of the mandate
- Allow mandates to be waived through the ISBE/General Assembly School Code waiver process