



2008 LEGISLATIVE PRIORITIES

Quality Education Act of 2008

Mississippi Rising to the Challenges of the 21st Century

Full Funding of MAEP (Amount subject to change in December based on final Average Daily Attendance calculations.) **\$11.1 million (Estimate)**

The Mississippi Adequate Education Program (MAEP) was designed to provide the resources necessary to all schools in an equitable manner. During the 2007 Legislative Session, the Legislature fully funded MAEP for the first time since its inception. While this was an important step forward for Mississippi's schools, MAEP must be fully funded each year to provide schools with a stable funding source that is necessary for long-term planning. Consideration may also need to be made to hold harmless those school districts on the Gulf Coast that have not returned to pre-Katrina enrollment levels.

Additional Funding for At-Risk Students

To be determined

Mississippi has one of the greatest populations of at-risk students, yet we provide one of the lowest levels of funding needed for the additional services necessary. The State Board recognizes that it takes more resources to educate students raised in poverty and, therefore, supports additional funding for at-risk students. The state currently provides an additional 5% of the Base Student Cost for students that qualify for the federal free lunch program administered by the U.S. Department of Agriculture.

During the 2007 legislative session, a study commission was formed to evaluate and report on 'at-risk' funding and other learning challenges. Prior to making a specific at-risk funding recommendation to the legislature for the 2008 session, the State Board will await findings of the at-risk study commission and make a recommendation at that time.

Pilot Pre-Kindergarten Programs

\$20 million

The mental development of children from birth to age 5 is a critical component of their success in school. It is upon this foundation that all other learning takes place. A recent study of Reading First programs in Mississippi found that some children enter kindergarten with the vocabulary of a one-year-old child. The Early Learning Collaborative Act of 2007 passed by the Legislature authorizes a voluntary Early Care and Education Grant Program. Also, legislation passed in the 2006 session expanded the Mississippi Child Care Quality Step System and provided for a Statewide Child Care Resource and Referral System. It is time to fund these programs.

Continued Funding for High School Redesign

\$18.3 million

Redesigning Education for the 21st Century Workforce in Mississippi is a comprehensive initiative that will dramatically change the face of education in Mississippi. Pilot sites for the program were funded during the 2007 legislative session. Additional funding is needed to sustain the pilot sites and expand the program. The plan is designed to increase graduation rates, better prepare students for higher education and the workforce, and improve the quantity and quality of the workforce.

Restoration of Diverted Funds

Teacher Supply Funds

\$20 million

A portion of the sales tax diversion into the Education Enhancement Fund has been absorbed into MAEP for five of the last seven years. Because of this, districts have not had the resources needed for instructional supplies.

Public School Building Funds

\$20 million

For the past six years, these funds have also been absorbed into MAEP, leaving districts without the resources necessary to make much-needed repairs and renovations to their schools.

Teacher Pay Increase

\$48.4 million

The State Board of Education supports increasing the base teacher salaries by 3% and expanding the incremental salary increases for teachers' years of experience from 25 to 30 years. Currently, 8,000 teachers, or approximately 25%, are eligible for retirement. Extending the salary schedule five more years could help retain many of these teachers.

TOTAL \$137.8 million*

Appointed Superintendents

The Mississippi Board of Education supports appointment of all school district superintendents. Only 147 of the nation's approximately 14,500 districts have elected superintendents. Alabama, Florida and Mississippi are the only three states that elect superintendents. The Board supports legislation to phase in the transition from elected to appointed superintendents.

Decreasing Bond Passage Rate from 60% to 55%

With the diversion of public school building funds, school districts must rely more on bond issues for construction and renovation needs. Reducing the percentage of positive votes needed for passage from 60% to 55% would enable more districts to utilize bond issues to meet facility needs.

Educational Enhancements for School Board Qualifications

Current law mandates that one must have either a high school diploma or GED. Because school board members have ultimate control and authority for policies and multi-million dollar funding for school districts, the State Board supports legislation to increase educational requirements to be eligible to be a school board member.

*Total increase above the FY 2008 level; amount does not include additional funding for at-risk students or \$3 million request for state agency operations.