



Community Unit School District #205

..... *Helping Students Achieve Their Dreams*

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Families and Colleagues of School District CUSD 205,

As you may know, for the first time since the 90's, Illinois has the opportunity to change how schools are funded. In May the Illinois Senate passed the Illinois School Funding Reform Act of 2014 –also known as SB16—which better directs existing state dollars to the neediest students in our state.

I'm writing to ask you to join in my effort to raise awareness and support this bill not only because it helps better fund our student's education, but because it provides fairness for ALL the students in Illinois.

In recent weeks, much of the discontent with SB 16 is from communities that will not directly benefit from the changes to the formula. The reality is that under our current system we all lose. Nationally Illinois ranks 49th in state funding for students. We are only as strong as our neediest children. Under our current system, no one wins.

There is no doubt that as a state we need to invest more in educating our children but first we must ensure that we invest the dollars we have equitably.

If we get this right, we ALL win. The time is NOW. We cannot wait. Here is why:

- ❖ Illinois contributes just a quarter of the total investment in K-12 education statewide while other states, on average, cover half.
- ❖ Illinois has cut \$1.4 billion from public education since 2009.
- ❖ Funding disparities continue to worsen in a state with one of the largest equity gaps nationwide.
- ❖ The state spends \$2,500 less per-student than what the state's independent funding commission recommends.
- ❖ Low-income students have been hurt the most. For four years now, Illinois school districts that are most reliant on state support have been hit hardest.

Who supports SB16?

A long and growing list of districts, leaders and organizations are <http://fundingilfuture.org/>

What does SB16 mean for District 205?

SB16 is still being discussed and will likely be amended before it comes for a final vote. So it is difficult to know the impact of the bill on our district until we have a final bill. That said, as currently drafted, and as calculated by the Illinois State Board of Education, District 205 stands

to gain an additional \$1,123.00/per pupil in funding, for a total boost of \$4,941,240.00. As you know, we have been hard hit by proration, losing roughly 7.8% of our operating budget over the past four years. These new dollars are therefore badly needed as we work to ensure the best educational experience for every student. New funding – which will be phased in over four years – and hopefully will allow us to avoid property tax increases along with significant decreases in spending.

How can you help?

SB16 has already passed the Senate, and is now being seriously discussed in the House. If your Senator supported it, thank them for helping ensure your child and community thrives. If they voted against it, let them know how important it is for the state to address funding equity – an issue that has languished for too many years and is hurting your schools.

And as the bill moves to the House, reach out to your State Representative to let them know you are watching this issue closely and agree we must find ways for state dollars to support those students most in need. That’s what state dollars are supposed to do.

Finally, join the Coalition working to ensure fairer funding in Illinois. Nearly 100 organizations and school districts are joined the Coalition to Fund Illinois’ Future. If you are involved in local organizations, encourage them to learn more and encourage them to join the Coalition.

Senate Bill 16 would be transformational for districts across the state whose needs are not being fully assessed. We currently have a funding formula that is broken.

We believe, the journey cannot, and should not, stop with Senate Bill 16. It is increasingly clear that the state needs to invest more in its students and its future. We should all advocate for more education funding overall. But during these dire times in education funding, there is even greater need for a system that directs state dollars in a focused and responsible way where they are the most needed. Senate Bill 16 does just that.

Given what’s at stake for our district, and more broadly for our entire state, we urge you to get involved and have your voice heard.

Thank you for your support,



Bart Arthur
Superintendent
Galesburg CUSD No. 205