

Monday, 16 April 2018



## **Administrative cuts don't solve K-12 funding crisis**

The call by the #Red for Ed movement for a 20 percent increase in teacher salaries and funding increases for public education to 2008 levels results in the obligatory editorial about "bloated" administrative salaries in school districts (Jon Gabriel, April 8).

This argument is inaccurate and will not solve the problem. It is also overly simplistic and designed to take the focus off the real issue. There is not bloated administration in public school districts; the real issue is the structural deficit in this state, due to over a decade of tax cuts.

These cuts have reduced the amount of revenue coming into the state and have resulted in the Legislature not having the revenue to meet the needs of various sectors, including public education.

The annual Auditor General report on traditional public schools (the report does not include public charter schools) spending has consistently shown that traditional public schools in Arizona on average spend less than the national average on administrative costs. This amount is less than 10 percent of the total budget.

This amount includes salaries of district office staff, district office administrators, school office staff, school administrators, and supplies at both the school and district office level. The cost of the administrative "salaries" for both schools and the district office is approximately 5 percent of the total school district budget.

I am always amazed that the solution to the any K-12 educational funding problem is always to reduce administrative costs, yet at the same time no other business in the world operates without midlevel and upper level management. In this simplistic solution there is a belief that multimillion dollar organizations (school districts) will be able to operate with minimal or no mid-level and upper level management. This philosophy does not seem to apply to other businesses and in fact an analysis of most professions would show administrative costs running at 15-20 percent.

In the private sector the average pay for a CEO in comparison to the average worker pay for that CEO's organization has been reported at 250 to 300 times greater. In Arizona the comparison for a Superintendent is generally 3 to 5 times greater. Cutting the salaries of district office level

administrators will not solve the issue of the lack of funding of K-12 public education in this state.

The correction to the lack of funding for public school districts, along with cities and towns, counties, public health care and assorted other areas of the state budget, is to address the structural imbalance in this state between revenues generated and expectations, needs and wants of the citizens.

This year several different factors have placed a focus on the lack of funding of public education in this state. Solutions will require a detailed discussion about a variety of factors, but overly simplistic solutions, such as the administrative costs argument, will not solve the problem.

This type of solution is a smoke screen to prevent a discussion on the underlying issue. Solving the structural imbalance in the state is the real issue.

*Gregory Wyman is superintendent for the Payson Unified School District. Reach him at [greg.wyman@pusd10.org](mailto:greg.wyman@pusd10.org).*



## **Your Turn**

Gregory Wyman Guest columnist