

ADEQUATE AND EQUITABLE STATE SCHOOL FINANCE SYSTEM

Adopted by Convention Delegates April 29, 1987

Reviewed by Board of Managers March 2009

- WHEREAS, The California State PTA supports providing equal educational opportunity for each student as indicated in its Legislation Platform, Planks One and Two*; and
- WHEREAS, The California State Supreme Court ruled in 1971, in the Serrano v. Priest case, that California's system of school finance was unconstitutional because the quality of a student's education depended upon the wealth of the school district in which the student lived; and
- WHEREAS, The Court recognized that there is a distinct relationship between **per pupil expenditure** and the quality of educational opportunity offered, and that differences in dollars do produce differences in pupil achievement; and
- WHEREAS, The State was ordered to remedy the inequities of the school finance system by 1980 by **reducing disparities in per pupil expenditure** to considerably less than \$100; now therefore be it
- RESOLVED,** That the California State PTA and its units, councils and districts actively seek a new method of public school finance which includes, but is not limited to, the following components:
- a. A level of funding which provides adequate resources to give all students **equal access** to optimum educational opportunity.
 - b. Sufficient *additional* revenues to meet the unique educational needs of California's diverse student population: the economically disadvantaged, limited- and non-English-speaking students, gifted students, and students with mental or physical or learning handicaps.
 - c. Allocation of resources which addresses the differing needs and special problems of school districts.
 - d. Swift remedy of those lingering revenue disparities which deprive California students of equal educational opportunity.
 - e. Achieving equity by increasing revenue allocations to low wealth school districts rather than by reducing revenue allocations to high wealth districts.

* PLANK 1. To provide the most comprehensive and diversified education possible for all children, youth and adults; education that will achieve quality and excellence, encourage maximum individual development, and **provide equal educational opportunity for each student.**

PLANK 2. To secure financing for public education which will be sufficient to **provide optimum educational opportunity for all students** including state aid to school districts for building purposes as well as **state funds to cover excess costs of all programs mandated by the Legislature.**

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BACKGROUND SUMMARY

Inequities in school funding and the resultant inequalities in educational opportunities have been acknowledged in the California State Supreme Court's 1971 decision in *Serrano v. Priest*, and addressed by the Legislature in subsequent legislation. Despite such efforts, including the California State PTA's ongoing activity in seeking additional revenues for education, funding inequities still exist. Continued efforts are necessary to rectify remaining inequities in per pupil expenditures. Although the Court directed (in 1974) that the funding disparities be reduced by 1980 to less than \$100 per pupil, subsequent Court decisions have permitted the \$100 figure to be adjusted for inflation (e.g., the current figure is over \$190). Categorical special needs were specifically exempted from this figure; such funds were perceived by the Court to be necessary *additional* funds to provide for specific, diverse student needs.

With the passage of Proposition 13 in 1978, the school finance system became essentially a state-funded system. The thrust toward equity became more urgent as the state itself bore the fiscal as well as constitutional responsibility for public education. As a result, major legislative equalization measures were enacted.

Today, although per pupil expenditure disparities no longer exist for the great majority of California's student population, some inequities do remain. The Courts and the Legislature have recognized the relationship between dollars and the quality of educational opportunities available to students. PTA has long held that such fiscal inequities should be rectified and has supported the corrective measures taken by the Legislature.

The struggle to ensure equal access to optimum educational opportunity is not over. PTA should remain a leader in the effort to achieve an adequate and equitable state school finance system.