

CRPE

REINVENTING
PUBLIC EDUCATION

Testimony on Texas School Finance

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Problems to be solved in school finance

- No way to link spending to results (no focus on productivity)
- Exploit opportunities for personalization, new modes of instruction

The Route to Productivity

- Knowing exactly what everything costs
- Linking practices of known cost to results
- Promoting natural and deliberate variations in practice
- Enabling and creating incentives to adopt productive methods

Barriers to efficiency based on state law and policy:

- Earmarks, non-fungible pots of money
- District and state central offices that keep money from reaching the student
- District-run substitute pools that facilitate teacher absences
- Increasing teacher pay for training not related to school needs
- Class size ceilings
- Seniority pay, pay for MA degrees
- Licensing that prevents scientists and mathematicians from teaching
- Rules about what facilities schools can occupy
- Student seat-time requirements

A vision of what's needed at different levels

- School
- District
- State

Schools: adaptive, coherent, and accountable

- Funded in real dollars
- Free to hire, set salaries, trade salaries for other resources
- Able to change readily and buy help from any source
- Pay real prices for what they consume
- Compete for students and faculty
- Face closure if unsustainable, stuck on low performance

Districts oversee schools that differ by design

- Ensure level playing field in finance and regulation
 - Minimize central spending, maximize cash to schools
- Identify unmet needs, new opportunities
- Close weakest schools to make room
- Reproduce or expand the best
- Track, report actual school expenditures and student gains
- Identify highly effective uses of funds

State needs to enable schools and districts

- Incentivize districts to manage - not operate-
great, diverse schools,
- Require real-dollar accounting and student-gain
measurement
- Eliminate categorical programs and other funds
tie-ups

Implications for state school finance system

- Allocate dollars to districts in a pupil-weighted lump sum
- Require state and local dollars to be allocated to schools
- Eliminate strings on expenditures

State needs to play new roles

- Analyze expenditure and outcome data by school and district
- Inform districts about highly effective options
- Fund experiments with tech, new uses of staff
- Put pressure on school boards in districts that stagnate, ignore options