



**National Association for  
College Admission Counseling**

*Guiding the way to higher education*

## NACAC Policy Brief: The “65% Solution”

A movement is afoot in the states to require state education funding to designate at least 65% of school funds for “classroom instruction.” The so-called “65% Solution” would limit every activity and service that occurs outside the classroom, including those of college counselors, school social workers, nurses, librarians, administrators, bus drivers, food service, maintenance, et cetera to 35% of the school budget.

There have been rumors that this initiative has its roots in the No Child Left Behind law. However no such provision, requirement or suggestion exists in NCLB, and the 65% solution would only apply to state expenditures on elementary and secondary schools. The proposal is popular with the business community, which tends to support school reform over increased taxes for school financing. The non-profit group First Class Education is a major supporter of the 65% solution and will be pursuing multi-million dollar campaigns to push the idea through state legislatures nationwide.

According to the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES), classroom instruction currently accounts for about 52% of school expenditures. The NCES definition of “classroom instruction” includes salaries for teachers and aides and supplies like textbooks and computers, plus expenses associated with extra curricular activities. It does not include salaries and expenses associated with school administrators, school maintenance, counselors, librarians, teacher training, food service or transportation. It is unclear how each state or school district will define “classroom instruction.” Critics of the proposal say the 65% is an arbitrary limit, it encroaches on local authority, and disregards essentials like computer labs, school buses, libraries and college counseling, as well as discounts differences between school districts.

### **Current Programs**

This issue has been introduced in the legislatures of nine states: Arizona, Colorado, Georgia, Oregon, Kansas, Texas, Louisiana, North Carolina, Illinois, and Michigan. Additionally, efforts to place this issue on the ballot are underway in Arizona, Colorado, Oregon, Washington, Florida, Ohio, Missouri, Indiana, Nevada, Oklahoma, and Michigan. The group First Class Education, backed by Overstock.com President Patrick Byrne, counts the 65% solution as it’s only issue. First Class Education hopes that every state and the District of Columbia will have the 65% requirement in place by 2008.

Standard & Poor’s issued an analysis of the proposal in the fall of 2005. The report revealed that student achievement was not linked to any particular spending level and that higher allocations to classroom spending was not consistently linked to higher achievement levels. The report concluded that monitoring the spending levels of school districts was a useful tool but that a minimum requirement was unnecessary and ineffective.

### **NACAC Member Priorities**

As professionals dedicated to helping students prepare for the transition to postsecondary education, NACAC members know the crucial role they play in college access and success for all students. NACAC opposes the idea of a mandatory 65% expenditure on “classroom instruction,” especially if college counseling and preparatory activities are not included in the definition of classroom instruction. Regardless, the designation is arbitrary and is founded on political rather than academic grounds. Since this movement is at the state level, NACAC is working with its state and regional affiliates to combat the proposals as they arise in state legislatures, and to connect NACAC members in the states with other professionals that will be affected by this proposal.

### **2006 Outlook**

So far the “solution” has been implemented in Texas by executive order. Kansas and Louisiana have passed resolutions to pursue the 65% solution, and legislation to implement the plan is pending in Georgia, and is expected in Ohio, Minnesota, Illinois and Florida in 2006. Colorado, Washington, and Arizona are expected to include the issue as ballot measures in 2006. Working to defeat these proposals may be difficult, since the First Class Education organization has extensive financial resources to dedicate to the issue, and because it is popular with business leaders as a way to avoid higher taxes. Although the proposal may lack real educational benefits, its appeal as a “common sense” solution to school funding may make it popular with voters as well.

### **Our Partners**

NACAC is coordinating efforts at the state level with the following national organizations:

- American Counseling Association (<http://www.counseling.org>)
- National Education Association (<http://www.nea.org>)
- School Social Work Association of America (<http://www.sswaa.org>)
- American Speech-Language-Hearing Association (<http://www.asha.org>)