

STUDENT LEARNING CERTIFICATES:

If a student is not obtaining and demonstrating acquisition of key competencies by specific times then we should permit that parent to remove their child from the public school and receive a certificate equivalent to the PPOR for that student. The certificate could be used at any other public or private school chosen by the parent, within the district geographic boundary or beyond it. We are not saying whether failure is the fault of the parent, student, teacher or school--just that whatever the cause, whatever the combination of causes-- we must have alternatives which will work.

A student who cannot read at the third grade level upon completion of the third grade would be permitted a state and locally funded full PPOR certificate to take to another learning center. Likewise, students who do not meet specific standards by stated times would also be able to obtain this certificate and enroll in a different public or private school. Students who have dropped out, or been expelled from a school would also have the PPOR be made available to them to use in another learning environment. The pro-rated amount for that semester and year would also travel with them. (The argument that the school has already staffed for that child is bogus. They know that a certain percentage always leave and should budget for the lower number expected for the full year).

The marketplace which exists will expand to add these students, and new learning academies will be created using multiple teaching methods and tools to bring these students to age appropriate levels of learning, and through high school graduation standards.

A provision could be added that any 'private or alternative academy' which does not bring that student up to the appropriate level of competency would then not be eligible for funding from, and for, that student beyond a three year effort to get the student to the appropriate level of skill and competency demonstration of state content standards.

The state Department of Education would receive a small percentage of the funds shifted in this manner for administration of the program, including appropriate assessment measurement and reporting. Ideally this assessment system would be a statewide measurement using the latest in NAEP and international examinations and portfolio demonstrations.

BENEFIT:

Failure is a result of both the student's behavior, and the system's inability to find the method of learning which would work for that student. Schools will develop more alternatives for non-performing students if they fear losing money. The private sector will expand working programs, and create new programs as people can pay for them. It is like giving the public schools the right of first refusal on a contract. The certificate does not exist unless the system is failing to help the learner learn at a normal or expanded pace.

Presently we have the opposite incentive for public schools. They get funded for each student whether the student does well, does poorly, or drops out. Schools even get to keep the funds for drop-outs after the student leaves. Schools actually can make more money if students take longer in school. Also we pay several times for some learners when we pay for their public school, and then pay again for their remediation in the higher education system, or welfare, or prison.

We need a funding system which provides incentives for success, rewards effectiveness, and punishes the system and its professionals for failure not just the student.