



Contact



Calendar



Facebook



Twitter



Staff



Partners



Publications



Videos



Awards

[Return to Headlines](#)

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In this issue:

- The Secret Formula
- D.C. or Bust
- Granted
- No Time To Hibernate
- CASB Advocacy Tools



The Secret Formula

What do Forrest Gump, The Lion King and the birth of Justin Bieber have in common? They all happened in 1994. 1994 was also the year that Colorado adopted the current school finance formula. While there is a fair amount of debate about how well Forrest Gump and Justin Bieber have aged, there is little debate that the Colorado school finance formula has not aged well.

[House Bill 1232](#) seeks to correct the problems associated with the current formula. The bill, sponsored by Representative Dave Young (D), Senators Don Coram (R) and Andy Kerr (D), was

developed by school district superintendents who understand the cost to educate students is not a single number. The formula is intended to ensure greater equity for all students while recognizing that some students require more resources if they are to reach their full potential.

On Wednesday, February 7, 2018, Colorado education leaders gathered to introduce the bill. Walt Cooper, superintendent, Cheyenne Mountain School District, summed up the challenge of using a 1994 formula to educate students in 2018 by stating, "Our needs are different now and we need a new approach." The photo above is Englewood Schools Superintendent Wendy Rubin introducing House Bill 1232 to rewrite Colorado school finance.

The bill is just the beginning of a long overdue conversation regarding K-12 education funding in Colorado. HB-1232 does not outline a revenue source to fund the formula. In fact, the bill has language that the formula does not take effect unless voters approve a new funding source.

It is critical for school board members to educate themselves on the bill in order to help their communities understand the importance of this issue. The CASB advocacy team will be following HB-1232's progress and bringing our members the latest information.



D.C. or Bust

The CASB Federal Relations Network made their annual trip to Washington, D.C. to meet with members of the Colorado Congressional delegation. You may recall several scenes in Forrest Gump where Forrest visits the nation's capital at different points in history. If Forrest were to pop up in Washington, D.C. today, he would find a political atmosphere that is unrecognizable. There are deep divisions among the parties, with neither side inclined to give any leeway to the other.

So, where does that leave education? There are huge education issues to be dealt with and few paths available for solutions. It seemed to the consensus of Colorado federal lawmakers that not much is going to happen until after the November elections. The President and Congress will find a way to keep the government open and limping along but not much else.

The news is not all bad for Colorado school board members. It appears that Secure Rural Schools (SRS) funding, as well as Federal Impact Funds, will continue without any new reductions. These funds are tremendously important to school districts with federal lands within their boundaries, as they help to make up for lost local revenue. There is bipartisan work occurring in order to find a way to ensure Colorado rural communities receive broadband network support and are not isolated by the digital divide.

Colorado's U.S. Senators and Representatives are scheduled to be back in the state for March and April. This would be a great time for school board members to contact their U.S. Senators and Representatives and ask them to keep working towards solutions that will benefit Colorado students.



Granted

During the 2017 legislative session, the Colorado General Assembly passed [HB17-1082](#) to add technology as a top priority for the Building Excellent Schools Today (BEST) grant program. The bill was sponsored by Representative Dan Pabon (D) and Senator Jack Tate (R). Like most things related to education in Colorado, the BEST program has a limited number of dollars available to serve a large group of worthy recipients. The BEST program provides grants for technology, new construction, health and safety issues, and emergencies for items not covered under normal circumstances. As you can imagine, these choices are not easy with so many needs to address and not nearly enough funding to cover them all.

However, as the saying goes, "A closed mouth doesn't get fed." It's time to speak up. If your school district has a need, the deadline to apply for all BEST grants is February 23, 2018. [Click here](#) to view the complete details.



No Time to Hibernate

There is no lack of important legislative issues, both locally and at the federal level, that CASB members need to be up to speed on. Do not miss the CASB Winter Legislative Conference on Thursday, March 1st and Friday, March 2nd. The conference offers CASB members a tremendous opportunity to meet and discuss issues with Colorado Representatives and Senators, as well as fellow board members.

[Click here](#) for more information and to register today!



CASB Advocacy Tools

[CASB Bill Tracker](#) – Track the latest education news from the Capitol.

The School Board Advocate – Published on the 2nd and 4th Friday of the month during the legislative session. In months when the Colorado General Assembly is not in session, we publish on the 4th Friday of the month. The School Board Advocate is not published in July and December.

[CASB Legislative Conference Calls](#) - Use the web link to join the meeting. The next meeting will be Friday, February 23, 2018, at 8:00 am. Meetings are held the 4th Friday of each month during the legislative session.

[CASB Days at the Capitol](#) – Join CASB, fellow board members and students at the Capitol! Our Days at the Capitol events run March through April and give school board members—from rural districts tucked away in the mountains and plains, to large districts neighboring the state capitol—a chance to experience the legislative process firsthand and help strengthen the voice of school boards.

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