

Anastasios Koularmanis
EDU 5741

Picus, L.O. and Odden, A.R. (2011). Reinventing School Finance: Falling Forward.
Peabody Journal of Education

As the economy continues to hurt every school district in some way will feel the fiscal pressure in its' classrooms. More and more funding to schools across our nation will dwindle directly affecting student performance and educational programs currently in schools. In "Reinventing School Finance: Falling Forward" Lawrence Picus and Allan Odden make many suggestions for ways districts can cut back on spending while preserving student performance.

Picus and Odden offer several solutions/recommendations that one can consider for ways to focus on student learning and performance even though cuts are being made. The main priority for schools should be in the core subjects such as math, English, science and history. To obtain success in these areas they identify three critical resource needs:

- Certified teacher tutors who provide extra help, or Tier 2 interventions in the Response to Intervention framework, to struggling students in groups of one to five students.
- Time during the regular school day for collaborative teach work on curriculum and instructional issues.
- Instructional coaches to work with teachers in collaborative groups as they engage in formative student performance data analysis and discover the implications of those data for instructional change.

Although all three are "costly" resources but can often come about by restructuring the organization of instruction inside schools and freeing up resources for these key purposes (Odden & Picus, 2010).

The eight specific strategies that school districts can use to cope with funding shortfalls and reduce revenue expectations.

- Salary freezes
- Class size formulas
- Electives
- School schedules
- Professional development
- Paraprofessionals
- Technology
- Cutbacks on the basis of effectiveness and not seniority

For the most part, Oden and Picus' suggestions are very relevant and on the minds of many administrators today. One should never place a price tag on any program that

enhances student and learning and performance. However, we are all aware of our current economic situation and the struggles just to keep schools running. Since the nation is struggling economically, we must all understand the importance of reallocating funds in our educational system while at the same time improving student performance. Many if not all of the suggestions made in this article seem on target with what we must in order to achieve student success. The issues we will face however, is getting everyone on board.

One cannot help but look at the recommendations as a temporary solution to the greater problem at hand. We have spent billions of dollars only to now erase programs and ideas that were implemented to eliminate gaps in student achievement. Picus and Odden in their article inform us that student achievement can be reached without all of these items. Are we just going in circles? It seems as if education has become just trial and error. It is very unfortunate that spending was never monitored and the children of today will have to pay the price of errors that were made by previous generations.

As a private school administrator it is very difficult for me to accept the predicament our educational system has found itself to be in. For many years private institutions have survived on the breadcrumbs left from the public schools. These schools have done without the programs mentioned in this article, yet they have continued to excel in student performance. Is spending monies inappropriately our only problem or is it that we still cannot figure out what students need to succeed in school? All of the eight strategies discussed in the article were created because someone assumed that each one would solve a major weakness in the system. Everyone was aware of the amount of funding necessary to create smaller classroom sizes and we understood that maintaining such an idea would be very difficult, yet we now find ourselves