

THE URGENT NECESSITY FOR DEVELOPING AND ADOPTING STANDARDS OF EDUCATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES for Ohio's School Children



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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

A critical and urgent issue in the Ohio school funding case is whether standards of opportunity, as represented by the resources which have been identified as essential for student learning (inputs), should be adopted for schools and used as a basis for determining the cost of an adequate education. This fundamental question concerns the relationship between the availability of learning resources and academic performance of students. Stated another way, do students in school districts having more of the resources identified as essential to learning outcomes achieve at higher levels than those districts having fewer resources to draw upon for instructional purposes? The Ohio Coalition for Equity & Adequacy of School Funding (E & A Coalition) is convinced that such a relationship does exist. This report presents the finding of a study carried out for the purpose of testing this assumption.

Since the 1997 decision by the Ohio Supreme Court finding the state's school funding system unconstitutional, the E & A Coalition has urged policymakers to address the fundamental question of what resources are essential for an adequate educational program. Policymakers have ignored not only the E & A Coalition's advice in this regard, but that of the Ohio Supreme Court, the recommendations of the State Board of Education, a mounting national body of research and the recommendations of the National Conference of State Legislatures, of which Ohio is a member. The latter body recommended in 1998 that policymakers follow a five-step procedure in building an adequate school finance system. Those steps include (1) providing clear measurable goals expected of students; (2) identifying those conditions and tools (capacity) that enable schools to provide every student a reasonable opportunity to achieve expected educational goals; (3) ensuring sufficient funding to establish and maintain the identified capacity (conditions and tools) that is essential to provide every student a reasonable opportunity to achieve expected educational goals; (4) identifying and providing sufficient funding for state-level capacity that is necessary to support the establishment and maintenance in all schools of the conditions and tools that are identified as effective and essential to student learning; and (5) establishing a system of accountability.

In the absence of any serious effort by policymakers to engage the question of the resources needed to meet the standard of a "thorough and efficient" system of common schools, the E & A Coalition undertook the challenge of identifying those basic learning resources which should be available to every Ohio student regardless of place of residence or circumstance. Over a period of several months, in a process involving thousands of members of the general public in town meetings, educators and educational experts, the learning resources essential for an adequate educational program were identified. They were published in 1999 in a document titled **Basket of Essential Learning Resources for the 21st Century (Basket)**. Taken collectively, the elements of the essential learning resources in the **Basket** represent **Standards of Opportunity** which should be available to every school child in Ohio.

The Survey

In view of the compelling evidence that every child should have access to the kinds of learning resources identified in the **Basket**, and Ohio courts' documentation that such resources were missing or were inadequate in many of Ohio's schools, the E & A Coalition undertook a study to assess the extent of learning resource inequities that exists among the state's school districts. During the summer months of 2000, surveys were conducted in 27 high-ranking and 29 low-ranking Ohio school districts to assess the extent to which the learning resources available in these districts corresponded to those identified in the **Basket**. (Note: 30 districts were identified in each category but only 56 were included in the study because of scheduling constraints).

The school districts were identified by Murray State University President Dr. Kern Alexander, a nationally

recognized school finance expert, and his colleagues, consultants to the E & A Coalition. They used a cluster analysis technique to rank all Ohio school districts (except 11 urban and island ones) on a scale from those closest to those farthest from a hypothetical school district possessing all of the elements contained in the **Basket of Essential Learning Resources**. Five variables were used in the ranking process, two which were inputs (teacher pupil ratios and number of advanced placement courses weighted by level and percent of students enrolled in post-secondary option) and three which were outputs (percent of all students passing the 4th grade, 6th grade and 12th grade proficiency tests). It is significant to note that school districts ranked using the cluster method corresponded fairly closely to the 1999 Ohio Department of Education's (ODE) Report Card ranking of the districts.

The survey instrument consisted of the 183 resource elements which were identified in the **Basket of Essential Learning Resources**. Six former school superintendents conducted the surveys utilizing either personal visits to school districts or telephone interviews. The survey respondents (school superintendents, sometimes accompanied by members of their staff) were asked whether the resources as listed on the survey form were adequate in their respective school districts at that point in time. The responses were recorded as "yes" (adequate), "no" (not adequate) or "not applicable." Some of the survey items required professional judgments on the part of the respondents (for example, whether their science or reading programs were adequate) while other responses were based on quantified data (such as whether the high school curriculum contained advanced placement courses in four core subject areas).

The Findings

The differences in the percent of "yes" responses by superintendents in the 27 highest- and 29 lowest-ranking school districts regarding the adequacy of educational resources in their respective districts are dramatic, but not really surprising to those who are knowledgeable about the continuing vast inequities in educational opportunities available to Ohio's children and youth. The following findings reveal these inequities.

PERCENT OF "YES" RESPONSES REGARDING THE ADEQUACY OF LEARNING RESOURCES GROUPED BY CATEGORY

Learning Resources	Lowest-ranking Districts	Highest-ranking Districts	Difference
Curriculum	49.7	84.0	34.3
Programs & Services	48.8	87.2	38.4
Facilities	42.0	82.8	40.8
Equipment & Materials	41.7	75.9	34.2
District-wide Programs	41.2	76.2	35.0
Staffing	43.8	75.6	31.8
All Resources	43.9	79.7	35.8

What Does this Study Say to Ohioans: The Policymakers, the Citizens of the State, and Especially the School Children?

There are a number of conclusions of major proportions which follow from this study comparing the **Standards of Opportunity** (learning resources) available to students in low- and high-ranking Ohio school districts.

First, the data support and reaffirm the findings of other studies showing a relationship between student achievement and the availability of educational resources critical to learning. Students do have higher achievement in schools which can provide adequate curricula; where the facilities support the educational programs needed by diverse student populations; where there are the materials and equipment essential for instruction; and where those who teach and those support teaching are well prepared and teacher-pupil ratios are lower.

Second, the study has demonstrated that the E & A Coalition has developed a workable and reasonable definition of a "thorough and efficient" educational system through its identification of the resources which are essential for effective learning outcomes for all of Ohio's school children. The **Basket of Essential Learning Resources** is the only comprehensive statement in Ohio that delineates the tools and conditions necessary to ensure for all students the opportunity for an education of high quality. As such, the **Basket** represents the logical base document for discussions by policymakers as they consider the resources which must be provided for a constitutional system of education in Ohio. Building a system of public education funding which recognizes and incorporates the inputs identified in the **Basket** will ensure **Standards of Opportunity** for all of Ohio's students.

Third, the study illustrates the fact, once again, that a system of education is composed of a set of elements or subsystems, such as was identified by the National Conference of State Legislatures, which are interrelated to form a functioning whole. The Ohio Supreme Court has ruled that it is the system which must be fixed. Attempts to date by policymakers to "tweak" or fix only a piece of the total system (such as mandating

accountability measures) do not address the Court's directive of a "complete, systematic overhaul.

Fourth, perhaps the most fundamental conclusion of the study is that most, if not all, of the conditions which have led to the Supreme Court's two previous findings of an unconstitutional school funding system in Ohio are still present in many school districts today. One can only assume that the inequities found in the study have been with us for decades, if not generations, and that untold numbers of the state's children and youth, through no fault of their own, have been denied the learning opportunities which were rightfully theirs. The impact of these disparities upon individual lives and upon the collective well being of our society is immeasurable. The refusal by policymakers to consider and enact **Standards of Opportunity** ensuring appropriate learning resources for all students throughout Ohio is no longer defensible. Policies which foster the underdevelopment of a significant portion of the state's human resources chart a course which no state can afford if it expects to be a vibrant economy and an enduring society which places high value on the quality of life for its citizens.

Recommendations

1. The State of Ohio should adhere to the recommendations of the National Conference of State Legislatures, which are consistent with the recommendations of the E & A Coalition, in developing a thorough and efficient system of common schools that would provide an adequate education to all school children.
2. The State of Ohio should develop and adopt **Standards of Opportunity** to be used as a basis for school programming and for determining the cost of adequacy.

INTRODUCTION

The Ohio Supreme Court ruled on March 24, 1997 that Ohio's elementary and secondary schools are

neither "thorough nor efficient" and that the system of school funding must undergo a "complete systematic overhaul." In its May 11, 2000 decision the court ruled that the standard of "thorough and efficient" still had not been met by the State Defendants and that the complete systematic overhaul had not been accomplished.

So, now, how should the State Defendants approach the task of developing a funding system that would support a thorough and efficient system of common public schools? The National Conference of State Legislatures, (of which Ohio is a member) has provided sound, logical advice to states in its 1998 publication entitled *Educational Adequacy: Building an Adequate School Finance System*. This body recommends the following to accomplish an adequate school finance system:

1. That state policymakers and courts apply the test of "adequacy" as a primary criterion in examining the effectiveness of any existing or proposed state school finance system.
2. That an adequate state finance system be defined as one that will provide and ensure the use of sufficient funds necessary to develop and maintain the needed capacity to provide every student a reasonable opportunity to accomplish clearly articulated and measurable educational objectives.
3. Use of the word capacity is a pivotal element in constructing an adequate school finance system, insomuch as capacity must support student educational objectives while, in turn, it is supported by sufficient funding.
4. ***We recommend that policymakers use the following five steps as building blocks to accomplish an adequate school finance system:*** (Emphasis added.)
 - a. Provide clear and measurable goals or objectives expected of students as the basis for an adequate school finance system.
 - b. Identify those conditions and tools (capacity) that enable schools to provide every student a reasonable opportunity to achieve expected educational goals or objectives.
 - c. Ensure that sufficient funding is provided to establish and maintain the identified capacity that is essential for schools to provide every student a reasonable opportunity to achieve expected educational goals or objectives.
 - d. Identify and provide sufficient funding for state-level capacity that is necessary to support the establishment and maintenance in all schools of the conditions and tools that are identified as effective and essential to student learning.
 - e. Establish a system of accountability that will provide policymakers with:
 - ☞ Comprehensive, accurate and timely information concerning the use of all public funds for the public education system.
 - ☞ The status in every school of those conditions and tools determined to be effective and essential for student learning, and
 - ☞ The performance of students relative to expected educational goals or objectives.

How have the State Defendants responded in terms of the five-step process recommended by the National Conference of State Legislatures?

Ohio still does not have "clear, measurable educational goals or objectives expected of students." The ODE, in concert with the Ohio Board of Regents, is currently in the process of developing **Academic Content Standards** for what all Ohio students should know and be able to do progressing from elementary school through high school in the core academic subject areas: art, English language arts, mathematics, science, social studies and world languages. The State Board of Education is expected to promulgate these standards sometime in 2001. Also, on **December 14, 2000, the Governor's Commission on Student Success** issued a report of recommendations on what is expected of students and how to measure student outcomes.

Despite the recommendations of the National Conference of State Legislatures and the E & A Coalition, however, the state has adamantly resisted the critical step of identifying "those conditions and tools (capacity) that enable schools to provide every student a reasonable opportunity to achieve expected educational goals or objectives." While the State Board of Education has adopted **Operating Standards** for Ohio's schools (to update those adopted in 1983), these operating standards, consisting primarily of statements of general principles, do not address the specific essential learning resources, or "conditions and tools," which must be provided in order to assure a "thorough and efficient" or high quality educational program for all of Ohio's public school pupils.

The E & A Coalition regards the identification and adoption of these essential learning resources as the **Standards of Opportunity** which give concrete meaning to academic and operating standards and provide the basis for a "complete systematic overhaul" of Ohio's school funding system. Rhetoric dealing with taxation and funding levels of support before the resources required for a "thorough and efficient" system of education are established is putting the proverbial cart before the horse.

It was within the context of the state's refusal to address the basic question of what resources are required to provide every public school child with a high quality education that the E & A Coalition undertook the task of identifying those basic, essential resources. Over a period of several months, involving thousands of members of the general public in town meetings, educators and educational experts, the learning resources essential for an adequate program were identified. The E & A Coalition's perception of a thorough and efficient system of education was published on October 26, 1999 in the document titled **Basket of Essential Learning Resources for the 21st Century**.

The **Basket** contains three separate but equally important and interrelated components: accountability; programs, curriculum and services; and delivery systems. It sets forth the basic elements of an educational program which, in the view of the E & A Coalition, should be available to every child in Ohio. The **Basket** reflects the plaintiffs' arguments over the years that a "thorough and efficient" system of common schools sets a high standard for Ohio's schools, not a minimal floor. Taken collectively, the elements of essential learning resources in the **Basket** represent **Standards of Opportunity** which should be available to every public school student regardless of where he or she might live.

Is the **Basket of Essential Learning Resources** a reasonable definition of a "thorough and efficient" educational program or a "pie-in-the-sky" proposal far beyond what is needed to educate Ohio's students? The E & A Coalition determined to test the validity of the **Basket** by conducting a limited survey of Ohio's high- and low-ranking school districts to see how the resources available for their respective schools

compared with the contents of the **Basket of Essential Learning Resources**. It was assumed at the outset that the learning resources available to the high-ranking school districts would correspond much more closely with those in the **Basket** than would the resources available to the low-ranking districts. This assumption was found to be true. There are significant differences between the high and low districts! This report contains the detailed results of the survey as well as presenting additional research which confirms the findings that the **Standards of Opportunity**, which should undergird school programs for all of Ohio's pupils, are much more likely to be found only in wealthier districts where student performance, accordingly, is high.

THE CASE FOR ADEQUATE RESOURCES

The evidence continues to accumulate that there is a strong relationship between the educational resources that are available to students and how much they learn. Documentation for this conclusion resides in many sources, five of which will be cited in this section of the report: findings from the Ohio Supreme Court in the *DeRolph* case, recommendations to states from the National Conference of State Legislatures on building an adequate school finance system, the State Board of Education resolution supporting the Resource and Accountability Model for determining a basic aid foundation level, a recent study by the Rand Corporation dealing with the effects and cost effectiveness of educational resource allocation and an analysis by the E & A Coalition of the relationships between the presence of certain resources in Ohio school districts and the districts' rankings as measured by two input and three output variables. (A detailed report of inequities of essential learning resources among Ohio's high- and low-ranking school districts is presented in a later section of this report.)

What the Ohio Supreme Court Said:

The absence of adequate resources throughout Ohio's public schools was central to the Ohio Supreme Court's findings (*DeRolph I* and *DeRolph II*) that the state's public education system did not meet the "thorough and efficient" constitutional requirement and thus was unconstitutional. The Court's findings in this regard were recorded in a variety of ways which included the following statements:

"A thorough system could not mean one in which part or any number of the school districts of the state were starved for funds. An efficient system could not mean one in which part or any number of school districts of the state lacked teachers, buildings or equipment." (*DeRolph I* at 204, quoting *Miller v. Korns*).

"A system without basic instructional materials and supplies can hardly constitute a thorough and efficient system of common schools throughout the state as mandated by our Constitution." (*DeRolph* at 208).

"A thorough and efficient system of common schools includes facilities in good repair and the supplies, materials, and funds necessary to maintain these facilities in a safe manner, in compliance with all local, state, and federal mandates." (*DeRolph* at 213).

"Even though remedying the scheme for school funding is not an end unto itself, it is an important step in establishing the type of school system that the Constitution requires. No one can ensure that adequate facilities and educational opportunities will lead to the success of students of this state. One thing that is apparent, though, is that substandard facilities and inadequate resources and opportunities for any of those students are a sure formula for failure." (*DeRolph II* at 11).

What the National Conference of State Legislatures Said:

They (policymakers) must attempt to ensure that every school in every school district has the capacity to give every student the opportunity to succeed. Without this capacity, it is meaningless to impose expectations on students. The elements of capacity which the Conference identifies include: safe, habitable, wired-for-technology school buildings; cohesive and comprehensive curriculum; updated textbooks, computers, interactive software, and library materials; and laboratory equipment. Other elements include: early intervention and kindergarten programs, health care and nutrition programs, smaller class sizes for younger students, advanced placement courses for secondary students and orderly classrooms for all. Finally, the Conference recommends that policymakers examine the value to students of qualified teachers, principals and other staff.

What the State Board of Education Recommends:

The State Board of Education, a defendant in the *DeRolph* case, supports the Resource and Accountability Model which combines both inputs and outputs for determining a basic aid foundation level. In its presentation to the Committee to Reexamine the Cost of an Adequate Education, the ODE cited the recently published Rand Report detailing the importance of teacher quality and accountability for the improvement of student performance. The ODE also stated that “Senate Bill 55 supports the notion that accountability and resources are necessary to the improvement of student performance.” In making the case for including resources in its model, the ODE states “it is important that most people recognize the inputs as important to ensuring academic success.” The ODE chose three input criteria it believes deals with teacher quality and the intent of Senate Bill 55. They are:

Teacher Staff: The ODE recognizes that the number of teachers is a required base investment and a major component of building a local school budget. Their Resource and Accountability Model uses a K-12 pupil/teacher ratio of less than 21-to-1, although the 1999 ratio was 18.8-to-1. The ODE notes that some research shows that lower pupil/teacher ratios at primary grades lead to higher academic performance, especially in lower socioeconomic schools.

Teacher Quality: The ODE states that teacher quality is an important component of providing an adequate education and cites that the best measure available to the ODE is the experience of the teaching staff. The standard which it adopted in the Resource and Accountability Model was the inclusion of school districts in which 80 percent of the teachers had five years or more of teaching experience. In 1999, the state average percent of teachers with five years or more of experience was 77.1 percent.

Breadth of Program: The ODE notes that Senate Bill 55 clearly raised the standards for course offerings at the secondary level and that increased graduation requirements necessitates more course offerings at that level. The ODE acknowledges that it is difficult to measure district ability to meet the new graduation requirements because the Educational Management Information System (EMIS) does not capture the necessary data to make such an analysis. Thus, the ODE concludes that if a district offers advanced placement courses in at least one subject area it is an indication of an acceptable breadth of program and such districts would be included in the model.

As outputs for the State Board of Education Resources and Accountability Model, the ODE has used districts meeting 20, or 75 percent, of the current 27 state performance standards. The Department argues that, by most standards, “75 percent is a passing grade.”

What the Rand Corporation Found in its Study of the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) Scores:

Other things being equal, NAEP scores are higher in states that have:

- ? higher per-pupil expenditures,
- ? lower teacher pupil ratios in the lower grades,
- ? higher percentage of teachers reporting adequate resources for teaching,
- ? more children in public prekindergarten programs, and
- ? lower teacher turnover.

What the E & A Coalition Found in its Study:

The purpose of this statistical investigation was to determine if the presence of essential learning resources in school districts, as measured by the E & A Coalition's field survey, was consistent with traditional measures of school district demographics as contained in the ODE EMIS. Fifty-six school districts, identified by the E & A Coalition's national school finance expert, Dr. Kern Alexander, were surveyed. The 56 districts included 21 districts which had been identified by the state as "Effective."

For the entire group of 56 districts, the following 14 EMIS variables were statistically significant (at the 95 percent level using Pearson Product Moment correlations) with the percentage of essential learning resources present in the district:

The higher the percent of essential learning resources present in school districts, the higher:

Average income per capita	.530	Property valuation per pupil	.589
Total revenue per pupil	.689	Local revenue per pupil	.735
Expenditure per pupil	.703	Effective mills levied	.371
Average teacher salary	.731	Pupil attendance rate	.464
Percent College Preparation Graduates	.404	Percent of graduates	.284

Conversely, the higher the percent of essential learning resources, the lower:

State revenue per pupil	-0.625
Basic Average Daily membership/ regular teachers	-0.562

Total average daily membership/classroom teachers	-.385
Total average daily membership/staff	-.437
Percent of dropouts	-.494

These findings indicate that, in general, where pupil-teacher/staff ratios and dropouts are low, the percent of essential learning resources is high. In other words, where these conditions are present, there are more resources (**Standards of Opportunity**) present. Where incomes, property wealth, tax millage, revenues, expenditures, salaries and attendance rates are high, the percent of essential learning resources is also high.

In summary: An editorial in *The New York Times* (September 12, 2000) sums up succinctly the case for adequate resources in our schools when it states:

“Having raised the education bar higher and higher... the states now face the burden of insuring that every child has modern textbooks, a competent teacher and a clean, safe place to sit.”

The writer also observed in the same column that there is a *“disturbing hypocrisy among state officials, who trumpet the need for high standards but have tended to defend mediocrity and inequality in court when their systems are challenged.”*

THE SURVEY OF ESSENTIAL LEARNING RESOURCES IN OHIO’S HIGHER AND LOWER PERFORMING SCHOOL DISTRICTS

Background of the Basket of Essential Learning Resources

The **Basket of Essential Learning Resources** was developed out of the conviction that the definition of a "thorough and efficient" system of education required much more than general statements of principle of what an educational program **should** be. Since state policymakers refused repeatedly to undertake the critical step of identifying the learning resources essential for a "thorough and efficient" system of education, the E & A Coalition over a period of nearly two years engaged thousands of Ohioans through town meetings and two special statewide conferences in this process. These deliberations, published in October 1999 in a document titled **Basket of Essential Learning Resources for the 21st Century**, identify in comprehensive detail the resources which the E & A Coalition believes would establish **Standards of Opportunity** for all of Ohio's public school students. The E & A Coalition also believed that a survey of high- and low-ranking districts in Ohio would show empirically the great differences in the availability of essential learning resources with which schools are currently able to address their missions.

The Survey Process

The survey process involved at the outset the identification of Ohio school districts to participate in the study. Using five variables based on ODE data to predict school performance, Dr. Kern Alexander and his colleagues used a cluster analysis technique to rank all school districts from the closest to the farthest from a hypothetical school district representing the best possible district measures on the variables included in the analysis. Six hundred of the 611 school districts in the state were thus ranked. (The eight large city and

four island school districts, statistical outliers, were not included in the rankings). The five variables making up the statistical cluster analysis model were as follows:

1. Pupil-teacher ratios.
2. Percent of students passing all sections of the 4th grade proficiency tests.
3. Percent of students passing all sections of the 6th grade proficiency tests.
4. Percent of 12th grade students passing all sections of the 12th grade proficiency tests.
5. Number of advanced placement courses weighted by level and percent of students enrolled in post-secondary option.

The 30 highest-ranked* and 30 lowest-ranked** school districts were selected for inclusion in the survey in order to compare and contrast their respective resources with the contents of the **Basket of Essential Learning Resources**. Due to scheduling problems, surveys were actually conducted in 29 of the lower-ranked and 27 of the higher-ranked districts. (These 56 school districts are identified as "Cluster Model Districts" throughout the report.)

Table 1 presents comparative data for the 27 highest-ranking and the 29 lowest-ranking school districts on each of the five cluster variables used to rank order the 600 Ohio school districts.¹ The data show, as would be expected, great differences between the two categories of districts on all five variables. The percent of students passing all sections of the 4th and 6th grade proficiency tests was essentially three times greater in high-ranking districts than in the lower ranking ones, and twice that for the 12th grade proficiency tests. On average, teachers in the higher ranking school districts had over five (5.1) fewer students per class than did teachers in lower ranking school districts. This difference must be regarded as of great magnitude.

TABLE 1

COMPARISON OF HIGHEST- AND LOWEST-RANKING
SCHOOL DISTRICTS ON FIVE CLUSTER VARIABLES

Variable	27 Highest-Ranking Districts	29 Lowest-Ranking Districts
Pupil-teacher ratio	15.9	21.0

*19 of these 30 districts are labeled by the state as being Effective.

**13 of these districts are labeled by the state as being Academic Emergency.

¹ The 1999 ODE Report Card classifications for the school districts included in the survey were: 27 high-ranking districts - 15 effective and 12 continuous improvement; 29 low-ranking districts - 13 academic emergency, 14 academic watch and 2 continuous improvement.

Percent students passing All sections of 4 th grade Proficiency tests	58.99	21.04
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Percent students passing All sections of 6 th grade Proficiency tests	60.39	19.43
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Percent students passing All sections of 12 th grade Proficiency tests	63.31	32.62
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Average number of advanced placement courses weighted by level and percent of students enrolled in Post Secondary Option	39.04	4.93
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The survey instrument was taken from Appendix A of the **Basket of Essential Learning Resources**. The survey form (shown in its entirety in Appendix A) included 183 items organized according to the following broad categories:

- I. Curriculum (Grades PreK-3, Grades 4-8 and Grades 9-12)
- ~~II. Programs and Services (such as special education, library services, social services, proficiency intervention services, etc.)~~
- III. Delivery systems (Facilities, equipment, materials, staff development, evaluation resources, staffing, district leadership/supervisory personnel, supplementary delivery systems and district-wide programming.)

Since the purpose of the **Basket** was to define an adequate or "thorough and efficient" system of common schools, the survey respondents (school superintendents, sometimes accompanied by members of their staffs) were asked whether the contents of the **Basket** as listed on the survey form were adequate in their respective school districts at that point in time.

The responses were recorded as "Yes" (adequate), "No" (not adequate) or "Not Applicable." Some of the survey items required professional judgments on the part of the respondents, for example, whether their science programs (PreK-3, 4-8, 9-12) met the test of adequacy in their school districts. Responses for other survey items were based on quantified data, such as whether the high school curriculum included at least one advanced placement course each in mathematics, social science, science, and English. "Not Applicable" was a frequent response to the question asking if services were available for students for whom English is a second language.

Six former school superintendents conducted the surveys utilizing either personal visits to school districts or telephone interviews during the summer of 2000. The interviews required a minimum of one hour to complete. Responding superintendents were assured that, while their school districts would be identified

in the report, their responses to all survey items would remain confidential. The school districts represented in the Survey are listed by category in Appendix B.

FINDINGS OF THE SURVEY

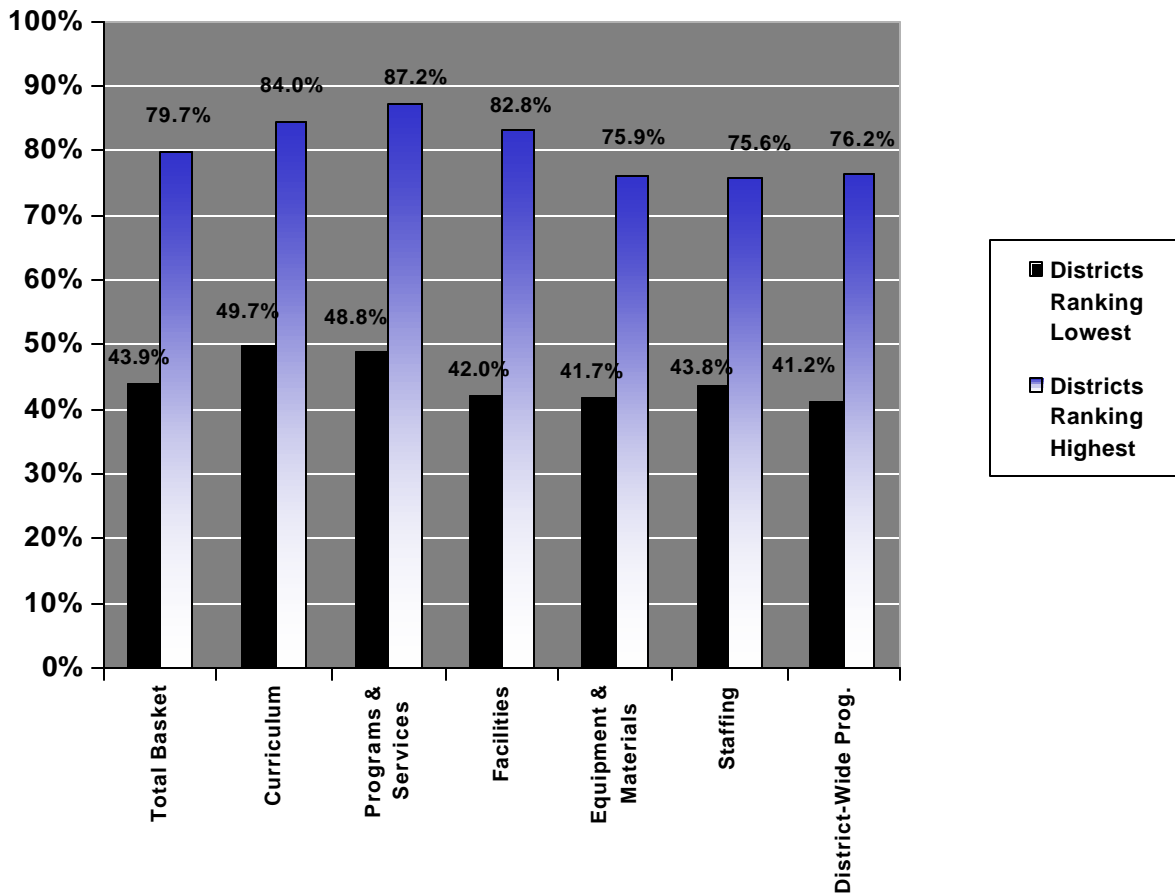
A preliminary analysis of the survey data indicated that a presentation of the findings by grouping related survey items would accurately reflect the differences and similarities among the high- and low-ranked districts and, at the same time, facilitate the reader's understanding of the findings. The results of the survey are presented primarily in percentages in bar graph and tabular formats.

Figure 1 summarizes the "Yes" responses of superintendents in the 27 highest- and 29 lowest-ranking school districts concerning the adequacy of all elements contained in the **Basket of Essential Learning Resources** and their responses by the major categories of the **Basket**. A consistent pattern is revealed throughout the Cluster Model Districts. Those districts ranking high on the five variables (pupil-teacher ratios, success rates on the 4th, 6th and 12th grade proficiency tests, and number of advanced placement course offerings weighted by level and percent of students enrolled in post-secondary option) reported significantly more elements of the **Basket** than did the lowest ranking districts. For the total **Basket**, superintendents of high-ranking districts said "Yes" as to the adequacy of the essential elements in their districts

nearly twice as often (79.7 percent) as did the lower ranking school districts. (43.9 percent).

FIGURE 1

PERCENT OF "YES" RESPONSES CONCERNING THE ADEQUACY OF THE BASKET OF ESSENTIAL LEARNING RESOURCES IN DISTRICTS GROUPED BY THE CLUSTER ANALYSIS TECHNIQUE

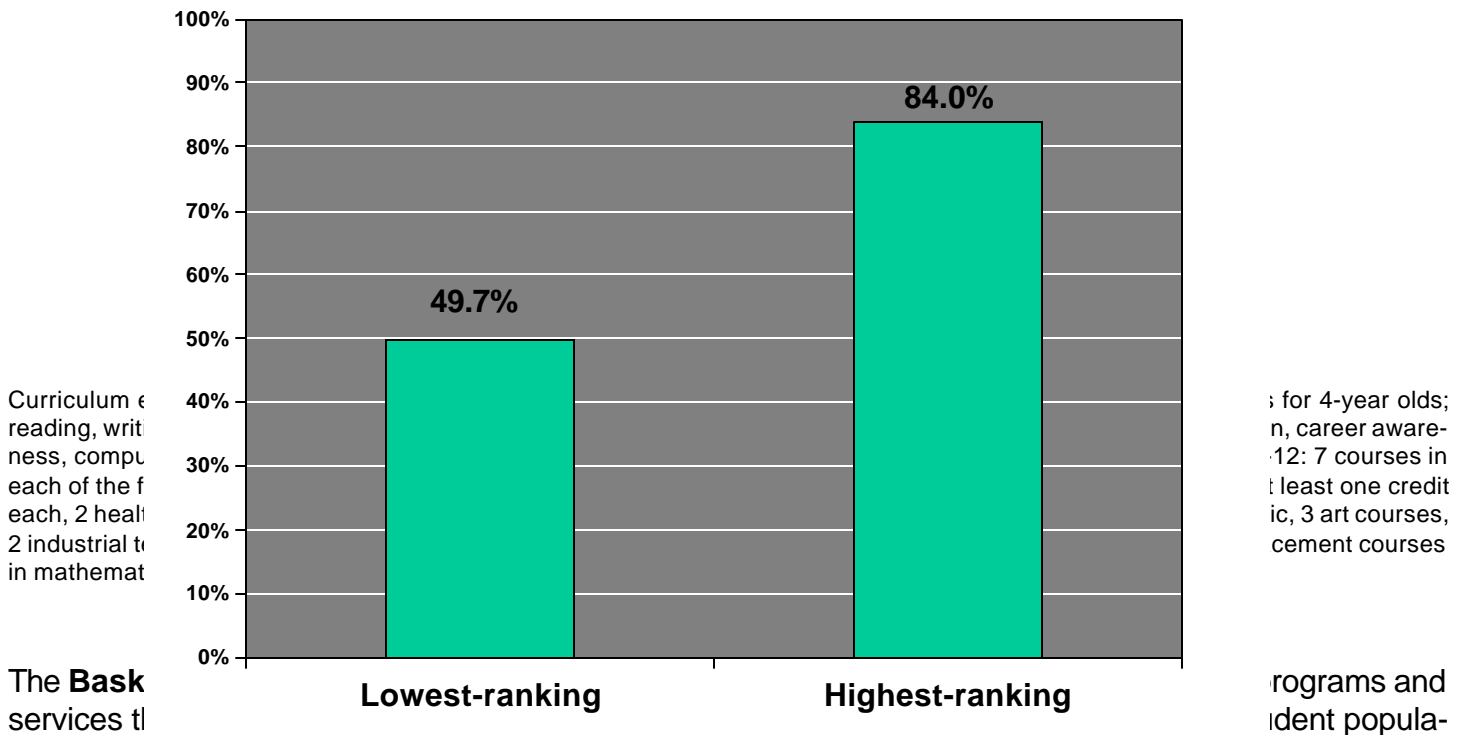


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FIGURE 2

PERCENT OF "YES" RESPONSES CONCERNING THE ADEQUACY OF CURRICULUM RESOURCES IN DISTRICTS GROUPED BY THE CLUSTER ANALYSIS TECHNIQUE



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tions and their school and community constituents. These programs and services range, for example, from serving students with special education and gifted education needs, attending to children with such problems as hearing and vision loss, providing safe transportation and secure schools, and making facilities available for community use. Figure 3 shows the percent of "Yes" responses of school superintendents regarding the adequacy of the **Basket's** programs and services in districts ranked highest and lowest according to the five cluster analysis variables. The data clearly show, again, a preponderance of "Yes" responses in the top-ranked districts (87.2 percent) over the low-ranked districts (48.8 percent).

FIGURE 3

PERCENT OF "YES" RESPONSES CONCERNING THE ADEQUACY OF PROGRAMS AND SERVICES RESOURCES IN DISTRICTS GROUPED BY THE CLUSTER ANALYSIS TECHNIQUE

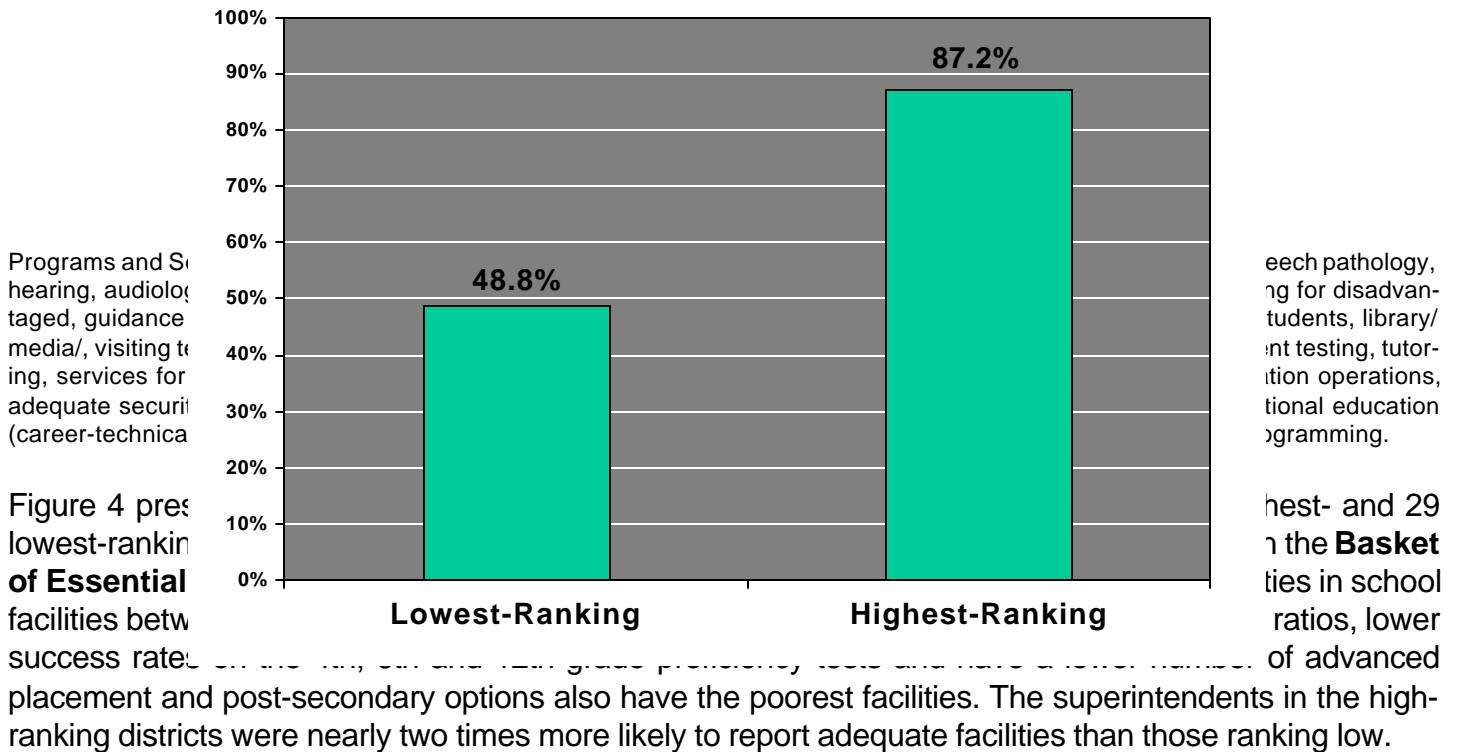


FIGURE 4

PERCENT OF "YES" RESPONSES CONCERNING THE ADEQUACY OF FACILITIES IN

DISTRICTS GROUPED BY THE CLUSTER ANALYSIS TECHNIQUE

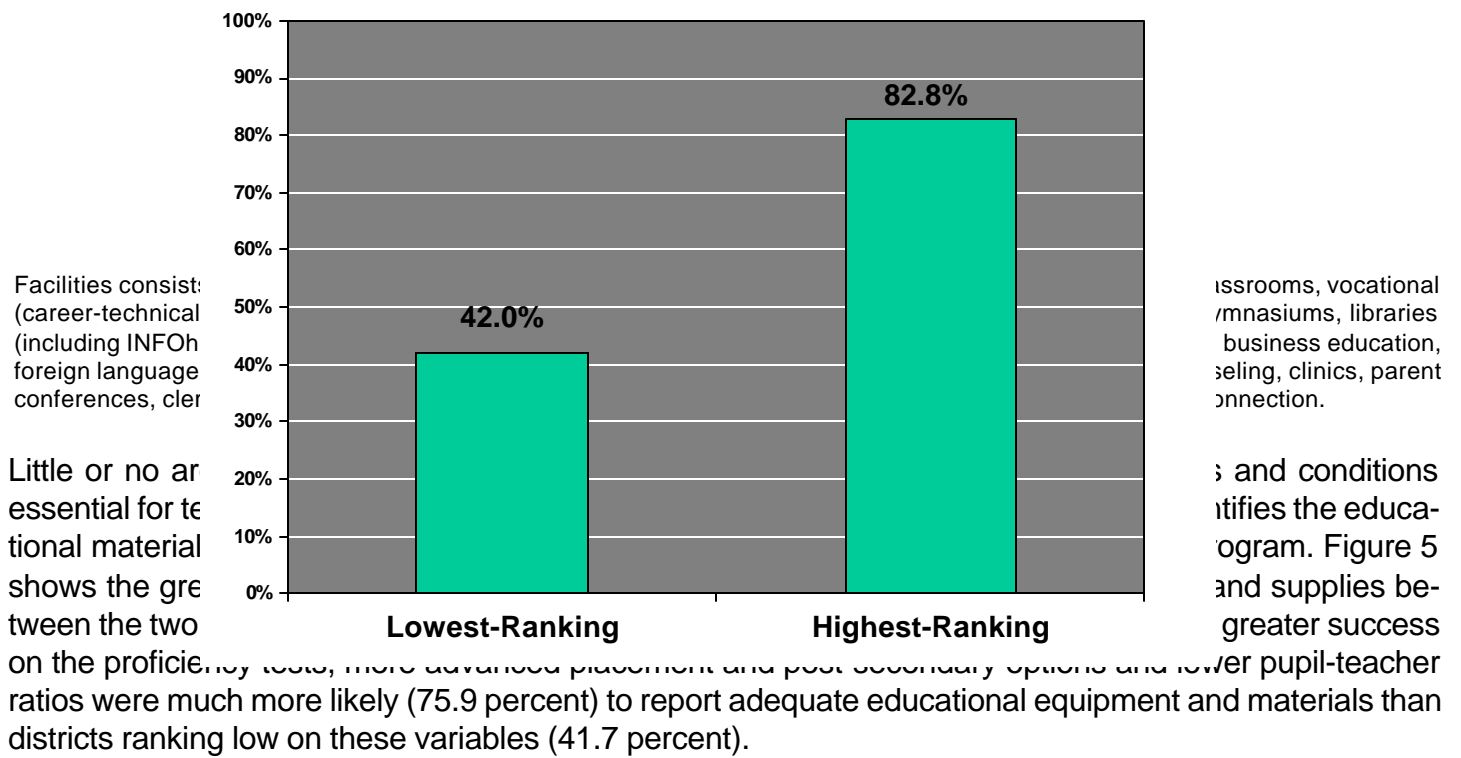


FIGURE 5

PERCENT OF "YES" RESPONSES CONCERNING THE ADEQUACY OF EDUCATIONAL

EQUIPMENT AND MATERIALS RESOURCES IN DISTRICTS GROUPED BY THE CLUSTER ANALYSIS TECHNIQUE

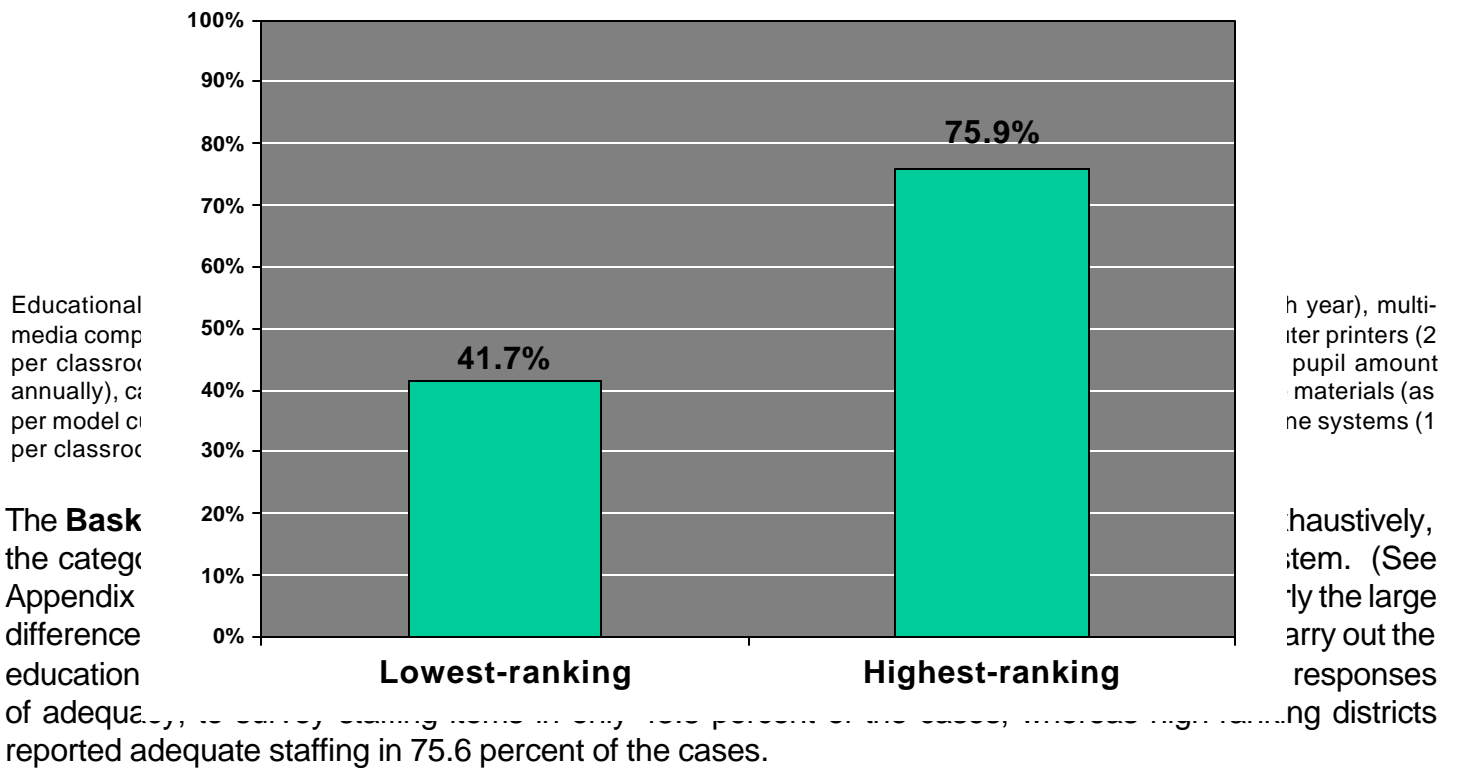


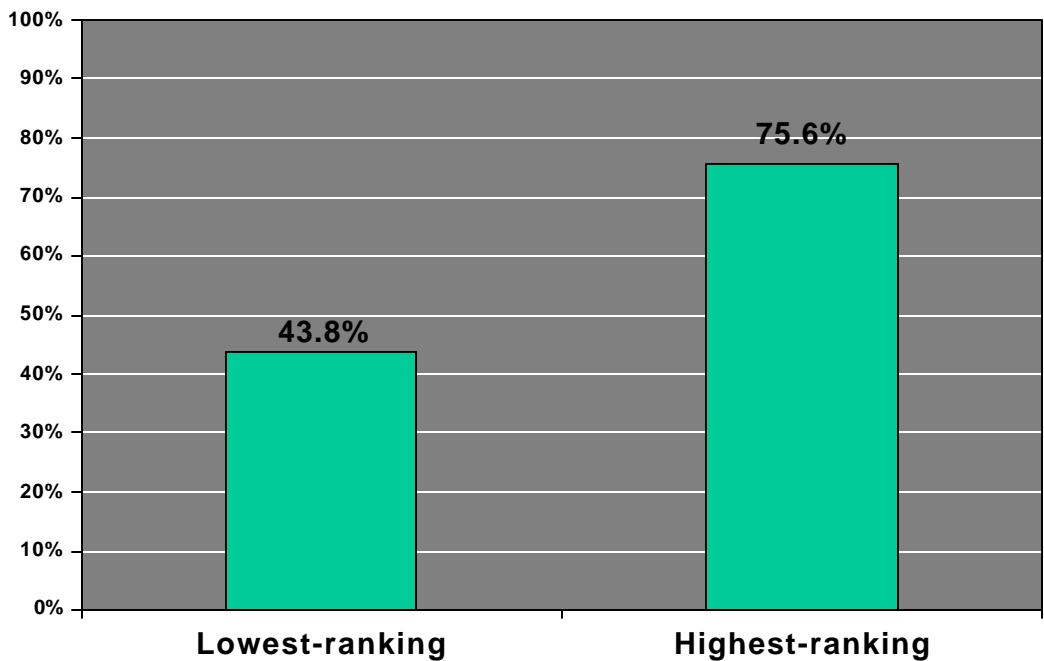
FIGURE 6

PERCENT OF "YES" RESPONSES CONCERNING THE ADEQUACY OF STAFFING IN DISTRICTS GROUPED BY THE CLUSTER ANALYSIS TECHNIQUE

Staffing, as defined by intermediate, junior and coordinators; Specialized therapy; Specialized psychologists, technology coordinators, principals and personnel, as appropriate.

Table 2 summarizes school district resources and differences

are very large between the high- and low-ranking districts in every category of resources (over 30 percent in every case), with facilities being reported as adequate almost twice as often in the high-ranking districts. But perhaps the most significant finding shown in Table 2 is that all 183 of the learning resources making up the five categories of the **Basket** were reported as adequate by nearly 80 percent (79.7 percent) of the superintendents in the high-ranking districts while only 43.9 percent of the respondents in low-ranking districts reported these resources as adequate.



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low-ranking districts. The earning restricts. The

TABLE 2

DIFFERENCES IN PERCENT OF "YES" RESPONSES BY SUPERINTENDENTS IN THE 27 HIGHEST- AND 29 LOWEST-RANKING SCHOOL DISTRICTS REGARDING THE ADEQUACY OF THE TOTAL BASKET OF ESSENTIAL LEARNING RESOURCES IN THEIR DISTRICTS

	Percent of "Yes" Responses Essential Learning Resources		
	Lowest-ranking	Highest-ranking	Difference
Curriculum	49.7	84.0	34.3
Programs & Services	48.8	87.2	38.4
Facilities	42.0	82.8	40.8
Equipment & Materials	41.7	75.9	34.2
District-wide Programs	41.2	76.2	35.0
Staffing	43.8	75.6	31.8
Total Basket of Essential Learning Resources	43.9	79.7	35.8

SUMMARY OF THE FINDINGS

The Supreme Court of Ohio has found on two separate occasions (March 1997 and May 2000) that the funding system for Ohio's schools does not meet the constitutional test of "thorough and efficient," that is, the state does not provide an adequate education for all school children in Ohio. The **Basket of Essential Learning Resources**, developed with the involvement of several thousand Ohioans, incorporates the basic elements which the E & A Coalition believes are essential to meet the test of "thorough and efficient" and assure high standards of equal opportunity for all of Ohio's young citizens. The E & A Coalition believes that "thorough and efficient" sets high standards for education and the **Basket of Essential Learning Resources for the 21st Century** reflects that belief.

It was an assumption of the E & A Coalition that the learning resources included in the **Basket** correspond favorably to the opportunities already being provided to some of Ohio's students, but which are all too frequently unavailable to many others. The purpose of the survey was to test both the validity of that assumption and the **Basket of Essential Learning Resources** as a reasonable definition of a "thorough and efficient" educational system. This was done by conducting a survey in 56 school districts in Ohio to assess the extent to which the elements in the **Basket** were present in the districts' educational programs. A cluster analysis of five variables was used to rank order 600 Ohio districts; the 27 highest- and 29 lowest-ranking school districts were included in the survey. This section of the report identifies the key findings of the study and the conclusions which follow from those findings.

1. Nearly 90 percent of the high-ranking districts included in the survey adequately met over 70 percent of the items in the survey.

2. Districts which had lower pupil-teacher ratios, higher success rates on the 4th, 6th, and 12th grade proficiency tests and more advanced placement courses weighed by level and percentage of students enrolled in post-secondary option were predominantly wealthy, suburban school districts. Conversely, those districts ranking low were likely to be located in rural areas and in small towns or cities with significantly lower funding levels.
3. When the responses to all 183 items in the survey (the total **Basket of Essential Learning Resources**) were combined and analyzed, superintendents in high-ranking districts were nearly twice as likely as superintendents in low-ranking districts to report their learning resources as adequate.
4. Large, significant differences between high- and low-ranking districts were also reported for each of the five separate resource categories (curriculum, programs and services, facilities, equipment and materials, staffing and district-wide programs) comprising the **Basket of Essential Learning Resources**.
5. In the low-ranking districts, superintendents reported their facilities, equipment and materials and district-wide programs as adequate about one-half as often as superintendents in the high-ranking districts.
6. The findings of the survey are consistent with the Rand Corporation study of National Assessment of Educational Progress which found that NAEP scores were higher in states that have higher per-pupil expenditures, lower teacher pupil ratios in the lower grades, a higher percentage of teachers reporting adequate resources for teaching and more children in public prekindergarten programs.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

There are several conclusions of major proportions that may be drawn from this study. The survey confirms, yet again, the continuing unconstitutionality of the state's educational system. One can only assume that the inequities and inadequacies found in this study have been with us for decades, if not generations and that untold numbers of Ohio's children and youth have been denied the learning opportunities which rightfully should have been theirs. The impact of these disparities upon individual lives and upon the collective well-being of our society is immeasurable.

First: That the relationship between student achievement and the availability within school districts of essential learning resources, as defined in the **Basket of Essential Learning Resources**, has been affirmed. Students have higher achievement in schools that have a comprehensive set of learning resources which includes more adequate curricula, facilities, programs and services, equipment and materials, staffing and district-wide programs.

Second: That an adequate educational system is composed of a comprehensive set of subsystems (curricula, facilities, staffing, etc.) and that attempts by policymakers to "tweak" or fix a piece of the educational system (such as mandating accountability measures) do not address the Supreme Court's directive of a "complete systematic overhaul."

Third: That most, if not all, of the basic conditions leading to the Supreme Court's decision that Ohio's school funding system is unconstitutional are still present in many of Ohio's school districts.

Fourth: That the real tragedy of Ohio's inequitable and inadequate system of education is the harm that is

being inflicted upon hundreds of thousands of individual boys and girls through no fault of their own. The refusal by policymakers to consider and enact **Standards of Opportunity** ensuring appropriate learning resources for all students throughout Ohio is no longer defensible. Policies which foster the underdevelopment of a significant portion of the state's human resources is a direction which no state can afford if it expects to be a vibrant economy and an enduring society noted for its quality of life.

Fifth: That the E & A Coalition has developed a workable and reasonable definition of a "thorough and efficient" educational system through its identification of the resources which are essential for more effective learning outcomes for all of Ohio's school children. The **Basket of Essential Learning Resources for the 21st Century** is the only comprehensive statement in Ohio that delineates the resources which are required to ensure an adequate education of high quality for all children. As such, the **Basket** represents the logical base document for discussions by policymakers as they discuss the resources which must be funded for a constitutional system of education in Ohio. Building a system of public education funding which recognizes and incorporates the inputs identified in the **Basket** will ensure the **Standards of Opportunity** for all of Ohio's students.

Recommendations

1. The State of Ohio should adhere to the recommendations of the National Conference of State Legislatures, which are consistent with the recommendations of the E & A Coalition, in developing a thorough and efficient system of common schools that would provide an adequate education to all school children.
2. The State of Ohio should develop and adopt **Standards of Opportunity** to be used as a basis for school programming and for determining the cost of adequacy.

REFERENCES

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Grissmer, D., Flanagan A., Kawata, J., & Williamson, S. (2000) Improving student achievement: What NAEP state test scores tell us. Rand Corporation (Document MR-924-EDU, 2000).

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The New York Times (September 12, 2000) The fight for a sound education (Editorial). New York City, New York.

Appendices

Appendix A Survey Form: Basket of Essential Learning Resources Grid

Appendix B School Districts Included in the Survey

Appendix C Principles of a Public School Funding System that will Support a Thorough and Efficient System of Common Schools