



State of Arizona
Department of Education
Office of Diane M. Douglas
Superintendent of Public Instruction

Dear Administrator,

I am writing you today in regards to the initial FY18 state budget recommendation released Friday, January 13.

As the Superintendent of Public Instruction for Arizona and an advocate for education in this state, I am compelled to tell you of an aspect of the budget that could have an adverse impact on our schools. In this original version of the budget, absolutely no funds were allocated to the IT budget of the Arizona Department of Education (ADE).

Payments to LEAs totaling more than \$5 billion are processed on ADE's IT system. If ADE does not have any funds for IT employees or its systems, schools will not be able to receive their state aid payments.

ADE has requested \$17 million for the maintenance of the current system and to design and incorporate updated school payments. Without a single dollar in the budget, the current systems that support the state will collapse.

The student data will be inaccessible. A 1990's method of paper submissions will return for state payments, programs will lose the ability to apply for federal funding and no LEA will be able to use the myriad of applications that provide a collection of cost benefits to schools.

Not only will the \$38 million of state money invested into ADE IT systems over the past few years go completely to waste, but the future work on payment applications and infrastructure that protects student data will also go unfinished.

I am extremely supportive of making education the top priority of the budget. We have discussed the issue with the Governor's Office and both members and staff at the Legislature, and I have every confidence that together we will ensure that our Department has the resources it needs to continue funding our schools. We cannot afford to jeopardize all of the work that has been done to create this state-of-the-art system, and we cannot leave our schools without the money they need to educate students.

While I am confident that our IT budget will ultimately be funded in the near future, it is my duty to every person involved in Arizona education to call attention to this issue, and I'm committed to full transparency in all issues.

If the IT budget is not fully maintained, schools will feel the effects to their funding as early as March, but no later than July 1. Our IT staff will not be reassured about their employment, so we may begin to lose them permanently to other employers, which will cause the performance of the applications they maintain to decline.

Ensuring that our IT department is solvent financially so that schools are paid properly and on time is a top priority. I will keep you apprised of any changes regarding the current budget proposal.

Sincerely,

Diane M. Douglas
Superintendent of Public Instruction

