



PRESS RELEASE: Stand for Children Arizona Condemns Superintendent Horne’s Baseless Attack on English Language Learner Students at State Board Meeting

(PHOENIX, AZ) – Stand for Children Arizona strongly condemns State Superintendent Tom Horne’s latest unwarranted and illegal attacks on Arizona’s English Learner Programming.

Well over three years ago, the State Board of Education exercised the power that Arizona’s voters granted it under Proposition 203 by approving the 50-50, or “dual language” instruction model as a means to teach the English to non-English speaking students (English Learners) who had yet to master the language. This action did not violate any laws, including Prop 203, in that the English Immersion portion of the day exceeded the English only requirements in that law. In fact, dual language programs are proven to be the most effective at teaching English to English Learners. Research consistently demonstrates that bilingual education enhances cognitive abilities, linguistic proficiency, and future employability.

Despite these significant benefits, Superintendent Horne issued an empty and mistaken statement on June 19 that he believes that the “dual language” instruction model may violate Proposition 203. His statement was not true and ignores his lack of authority to modify or delete instruction models. Proposition 203 vests the State Board of Education—and only the State Board of Education—with authority to approve, modify, and delete instruction models. *See A.R.S. § 15-756.01(A), (G)*. As a result, Superintendent Horne’s stated beliefs about the models are simply irrelevant. He cannot exercise power that voters saw fit to deny him.

But Superintendent Horne didn’t stop there. On June 20, the Department of Education—which is conducted under Superintendent Horne’s “control,” *see A.R.S. § 15-231(D)*—issued its own statement purporting to “eliminate” the “dual language” instruction model for English Learners, effective immediately. This, too, flouts the limits on the Department of Education’s authority. Again, Arizona’s voters made clear that the State Board of Education—and only the State Board of Education—may approve, modify, and delete instruction models for English Learners. *See A.R.S. § 15-756.01(A), (G)*. The Department of Education’s decision to prohibit English Learners from dual language instructional models is nothing more than an unlawful power-grab. In addition, research conducted by Stand for Children three years ago, and updated this spring, proves that Horne’s statement that the model violates Proposition 203 is false.

On Monday, June 26, Stand for Children Arizona and a group of education advocates, including State Rep. Jennifer Pawlik and State Rep. Melody Hernandez, as well as representatives of the Arizona Dual Language Immersion Network attended the Arizona State Board of Education’s regular board meeting to share their concerns and remind the State Board of their authority on this issue, urging them to reinstate the 50-50 or Dual Language model as an approved structured English immersion program for English Learners.

“We call on the Arizona State Board of Education to reinstate the dual language model for English Learners and confirm for school districts that they can move forward without fear of reprisals from the Department of Education. We hope that going forward Superintendent Horne will engage in transparent and inclusive discussions with all members of the State Board of Education about these issues. It is essential that decisions of this magnitude are made collectively and thoughtfully – not unilaterally by a corrupt politician like Tom Horne,” states Rebecca Gau, Executive Director of Stand for Children Arizona.

Gau continued, “We reject statements by the State Board of Education suggesting that the use of a waiver process is under the purview of ADE, absolving them of responsibility. The State Board approved the 50-50 or dual language model specifically for English Learners to learn English. It makes absolutely no sense to then say students cannot use that model unless they use a cumbersome waiver process that few English Learner children will qualify for. The State Board needs to do its job and insist that the model they approved to teach English Learners is actually accessible to English Learners.”

Stand for Children Arizona is a nonprofit advocacy organization that focuses on empowering and educating parents, teachers, and community members to become active leaders and serve as a voice for children at the state and local level. Our mission is simple: to ensure that all children, regardless of their background, graduate from high school prepared for, and with access to, a college education. For more information, visit www.stand.org/arizona

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