

A Policy Maker's Guide to "The 65% Solution" Proposals

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

by

**Gerald W. Bracey
Independent Researcher**

Education Policy Research Unit (EPRU)
Education Policy Studies Laboratory
College of Education
Division of Educational Leadership and Policy Studies
Box 872411
Arizona State University
Tempe, AZ 85287-2411

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Through executive orders, legislative initiatives, referenda or constitutional amendments a number of states have proposed measures to require school districts to spend at least 65 percent of their operational budgets on “in class instruction.” The current national average for such expenditures, using accounting categories from the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES), is 61.4 percent and increasing the proportion to 65 percent would shift \$13 billion currently spent outside of the classroom without the need to raise new money. Two states, Texas and Georgia, have enacted the proposal and 18 other states and the District of Columbia are considering it.

The proposal suffers logical and definitional confusions. More importantly, it was developed in hopes of producing political gains, not in hopes of stimulating pedagogical improvements. The benefits listed by the proposal’s developers are political, not educational. In addition, the existing empirical data do not support the contention that the proposed shift would improve school performance.

It is therefore recommended that:

1. Schools and school districts decide what outcomes they would consider improved performance, examine the research literature to determine what practices have been empirically linked to changes in those outcomes, and reallocate funds to attain the improvements; and
2. Allocation of new funds or reallocation of existing funds occur at the school level, with district oversight.