

Legislators should start now to repair five years of state cuts

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It's spring, and for Colorado's students that means state testing. This year, the same is true at the State Capitol where legislators, too, are facing a particularly high-stakes test.

The key question for them: when is the right time to start repairing the damage caused by the five years of state cuts?

Three answers to that question are circulating in the Capitol:

A) Never. The current level of education spending—\$1 billion below inflation and growth—is the “new normal.”

B) Not yet. If we increase spending significantly now, a future economic downturn could require us to cut again in the future.

C) Now. Revenues are recovering, and the future well-being of our students, families, communities and economy all depend on investing well and wisely in education.

Which bubble should the legislature fill in? Let's take the options one by one, starting with the first response: that schools and students should get used to the way things are now, because it's the best we can do.

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