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important for us to do that is certainly, number one, this is an obligation that schools face that they must pay. There is not really any other...any way to avoid it. Secondly, failing to reimburse schools causes equity issues between schools. We brought up the discussion about magnet schools for certain special education programs and so on. Third, there was the argument made about our budget situation and the need for us to move stuff or to move expenditures out of the out biennium and into the current biennium. The pay now or pay later argument--and that's what we face with special ed because, to the extent we don't fund it at the state level currently, it shows up in a higher state aid bill two years down the road--if we have the money to do that then we ought to do it now. It makes good fiscal sense as well as good school policy sense from the standpoint of covering this needed expenditure. The Appropriations Committee recommendation was for a 3 percent increase in the funding base. The funding base this year is \$161 million and some. The Appropriations Committee recommended a 3 percent increase in that funding base for each of the next...or each of the two years in the biennium that we're now budgeting. Our history, in fact even through the toughest times that we've gone through fiscally, our history has been to fund special ed at the rate of 5 percent, a 5 percent increase in the base. And you'll remember the discussion that even at a 5 percent increase in the base, the percentage of special ed expenditures that schools have...are reimbursed for has consistently gone down. So what we were proposing on the General...in the General File discussion on that amendment was to increase the funding from 3 percent, as recommended by the Appropriations Committee, to 5 percent. The amount required to do that for the biennium is \$10 million. I am coming to you now with a request for that \$10 million of funding, except that we have made a change, which I will describe. Again, the focus remains special education, but there are two parts to it. One is a reimbursement for the immediate expenses that schools face in their special ed program. The second part is an address of the longer-term issue with special education, as well as other educational issues, and that is increased support for the early childhood education program. Now, I'm going to go through the specifics, but I will tell you at this point, everything I am suggesting to you here is, number one, consistent with the