

Title Page & Abstract

An Interview with Benjamin (Ben) Boer

Part of the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library
Illinois Public School Funding Oral History project

Interview # EF-A-L-2019-017

Benjamin Boer, Deputy of Research for Advance Illinois in the lead-up to school funding reform in 2017, was interviewed on the date listed below as part of the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library's *Illinois Public School Funding* Oral History project.

Interview dates & location:

Date: Apr 29, 2019 Location: Chicago, Illinois

Interview Format: Digital audio

Interviewer: Philip Pogue, ALPL volunteer

Transcription by: _____

Edited by: _____

Interview being
processed

Total Pages: _____ Total Time: 1:28 / 1.47 hrs.

Accessioned into the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library Archives on November 13, 2019.

The interview is archived at the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library in Springfield, Illinois.

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Abstract

Benjamin Boer, *Public School Funding*, EF-A-L-2019-017

Biographical Information/Overview of Interview: Ben Boer was born in the Netherlands on June 14, 1974. He attended school both in the Netherlands and the United States, eventually going to a boarding high school at The Lawrenceville School in Lawrenceville, New Jersey while his parents still lived in the Netherlands. In high school, Ben participated in soccer and theatre. Ben then attended Brown University in Providence, Rhode Island, earning both a BA and MA in computer science. He did web consulting both as a college student and following graduation. In 1999, he formed his own company, working on software and in data collection. He then worked for Schoolnet Education and later joined the Obama for America campaign. After the Presidential election of 2008, he joined Advance Illinois as a policy director. Ben also earned a MA in Public Policy from the University of Chicago (2010).

This interview covers the important years from 2008-2018 as the question of public school funding became a hot statewide topic due to the growing inequity in funds available per student. Boer discussed the non-partisan Advance Illinois, which was formed in 2008 with the goal of having all children receive a quality education from the earliest years to adulthood. The organization also wanted to promote educational equity, workforce and college readiness, and student completion. Boer talked about the Race to the Top initiative advocated for better teacher and principal evaluations, stronger learner standards, the creation of stronger and varied student assessments, increased transparency through the publication of Illinois State Report Cards (fall), and the need for better equity in public school funding. He looked at the role of the Education Funding Advisory Board, the growing public awareness of school funding problems, and the negative impact pro-rating state school funding had on the poorest school districts. He discussed the Senate Advisory Council, the Vision 20/20 proposal submitted by school management groups, Fix the Formula drive, the legislative school funding bills from 2014-17 and the Legislative Commission of 2016-17. He also talked about the Chicago Public Schools Block Grant and pension questions which also impacted legislative debate.

Subject Headings/Key Words: Advance Illinois (2008); Illinois school budgeting; Fix the Formula organizations; Race to the Top (educational initiative); Senate Advisory Council on education; evidence based funding model; Governor Rauner's School Funding Commission, 2016-17; Every Student Succeeds Act; Senate Bill 1; House Bill 1947

Notes to the Reader: Readers of the oral history memoir should bear in mind that this is a transcript of the spoken word, and that the interviewer, interviewee and editor sought to preserve the informal, conversational style that is inherent in such historical sources. The Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library is not responsible for the factual accuracy of the memoir, nor for the views expressed therein. We leave these for the reader to judge.B

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