

PENNSYLVANIA SCHOOL FUNDING CAMPAIGN
Successful Schools . . . Successful Children . . . Successful Communities

Comments by Tim Allwein
January 23, 2008 Press Conference

Good morning, my name is Tim Allwein and I am the Assistant Executive Director for Government and Member Relations for the Pennsylvania School Boards Association. Thank you for attending today's press conference.

Over the last three decades, PSBA and many of the other organizations that are represented here today have made numerous calls to Governors and to the General Assembly to reform how the commonwealth funds its public schools. In most cases, those calls have gone unheeded or have been conditioned on factors that were unacceptable to some or all of us. Part of the problem was self inflicted -- , historically, we all have had different ideas about what is important or how it should be done so, except for a few exceptions, it has been difficult for the education community to come together to support a common funding goal. It has also been difficult for us to frame what was needed and why.

With the completion of the state's first Costing Out Study, however, many of those factors that have frustrated us in the past have been removed. For the first time, education advocates have sound research to back up their requests for appropriate funding and improvements to how those funds could be distributed more fairly. In addition, there are state and federal systems of accountability that clearly identify expectations and standards for Pennsylvania's public schools. Because this study was approved by the General Assembly and the accountability system whose costs it measures has been put into place by the Legislature and the State Board of Education, we recognize that the Governor and General Assembly have an opportunity and responsibility to act now on behalf of our children to create a school funding system that removes all unfairness and inequity. This is an opportunity and responsibility that they must not ignore.

We're here today to announce that over a dozen organizations representing parents of students, child advocates, school administrators, teachers, school board members, religious leaders and others have come together to form the Pennsylvania School Funding Campaign to advocate for fundamental reform of the Commonwealth's system of public education funding. The funding proposal that we will be addressing in a few moments would fully fund what is needed to ensure every child has an equal opportunity to become proficient in the state

academic standards. The proposal is nothing more than an attempt to put into law what the Costing Out Study has concluded, that school districts are woefully underfunded to meet the demands of the current state and federal accountability systems. This effort marks the first time that such a diverse group of education stakeholders has come together to support a single funding proposal.

Today, the campaign calls upon the Governor and the General Assembly to enact the necessary statutory changes to implement and fully finance by 2013 – including appropriate annual adjustments – our funding proposal. This plan represents comprehensive, systemic and sustainable education funding reform based on five essential principles that all of us have long held as necessary in any new funding system: equity, adequacy, efficiency, accountability and predictability.

The Campaign urges the Governor and the General Assembly to support a significant down payment in the 2008-2009 fiscal year – at least \$1 billion – towards fully funding the proposal.

We are indeed fortunate to have the best minds in the state working on this proposal for us. They include Dr. Robert Feir, former Executive Director of the Senate Education Committee, former Executive Director of the State Board of Education and now a consultant for several different education organizations; Dr. Joe Bard, former Commissioner of Elementary and Secondary Education for the Pennsylvania Department of Education, and now the Executive Director of the Pennsylvania Association of Rural and Small Schools; Dr. Eric Elliott, Assistant Director of Research for PSEA, who has more than a decade of experience working on education funding issues, Michael Churchill, an attorney with The Public Interest Law Center of Philadelphia, who has handled school funding litigation for the Center and the School District of Philadelphia; and the Honorable Jane Carroll former Secretary of Education and Chief of the department's Division of Subsidy Data and Administration and now a Senior Fellow with The Education Policy and Leadership Center. Mrs. Carroll will now give an overview of the Campaign's subsidy proposal.

As I mentioned earlier, this is a historic gathering of organizations dedicated to changing the way our public education system is funded. We are proud to be working with and to have as one of our members, the largest statewide organization that represents the parents of our students. Here to speak on their

behalf and to address the funding issue from the parents' perspective is Caroline Allen, the President of the Pennsylvania PTA.

As we continue our work on this very important policy issue, it is crucial to have the input of those who work at the ground level in our public schools, especially those who work in the state's classrooms to help our children reach their full potential. Their input is important because they see first hand the results of inequitable funding and feel the frustration, perhaps more than anyone else, when the lack of resources and the lack of a district's capacity results in fewer opportunities to provide students with the services they need to be successful.

As I mentioned earlier, this effort is a campaign. It will not end with the presentation of this proposal, or with the presentation of the Governor's budget or enactment of the state budget for the 2008-09 fiscal year. We are in it for the long run and will continue to pursue funding reform for as long as it takes to enact and fully implement effective change. We are fortunate to have as one of the campaign's members Ron Cowell, the former chairman of the House Education Committee and for the past nine years President of The Education Policy and Leadership Center in Harrisburg. Ron's experiences have given him an excellent overall view of the state of public education in Pennsylvania.

Thank you once again for attending and providing coverage. We will now take your questions.