

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

Comments by Jim Testerman
January 23, 2008 Press Conference

First, let me say that I am very proud to stand here shoulder to shoulder with my colleagues and fellow advocates for children and public education as I represent the more than 185,000 members of the Pennsylvania State Education Association.

The visionary citizens of Pennsylvania mandated compulsory education while Pennsylvania was still a colony. The General Assembly is the only entity that has the authority and the constitutional responsibility to determine how we provide public education in Pennsylvania. In fact it was Ben Franklin who said, "An investment in knowledge pays the best dividend."

We know what it takes to make our students successful - academic research only confirms what teachers and education support professionals already know. For our students to be successful, we must do the following:

- § Provide high-quality early childhood education to improve social and academic opportunities for children and reduce disparities in student learning that often begin well before kindergarten.
- § Provide an environment where students are safe... safe physically, emotionally and academically.
- § Reduce class sizes, especially for younger ethnic and minority students, students from low-income families, and other students who are at risk. Class size reduction improves student achievement. Teachers can individualize instruction and address learning problems more efficiently, resulting in higher test scores, fewer behavior problems and a lower dropout rate.
- § Offer high quality and meaningful professional development, including effective mentoring programs for new teachers. Earning a teaching certificate in Pennsylvania means meeting higher standards than ever before, but many leave the profession in the first five years, frustrated by a lack of resources, respect and influence over key classroom decisions.
- § Finally, we must continue to involve parents in student learning. We know that parents are a child's first and most influential teachers. The most accurate predictor of student academic achievement is family encouragement of learning.

PSEA members proudly add our voices to Ben Franklin's and urge the General Assembly to fundamentally reform Pennsylvania's school financing system and fully fund the findings of the costing-out study. We must act now and make the necessary investment in Pennsylvania's children and Pennsylvania's future.

Thank you.