



GOP plan doesn't offer equitable school funding

by James P. Testerman

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Imagine your boss telling you that he/she was reducing your paycheck, but giving you a gift card for Starbucks and telling you that counts as a raise. You might not want or need anything from Starbucks, but you need the money from your paycheck for rent and groceries and medicine. That is how the Republicans in the General Assembly are treating education funding in the state budget.

Their proposal reduces state funding to 2005-06 levels, and backfills using federal money intended for increases. They count federal Title I and special education stimulus funds as increases, but in reality they are substantially restricted and only available to help educate certain students. As a result, the great majority of students will be left behind.

Nearly a third of all Pennsylvania students attend schools where Title I funds cannot be used. Ten percent of all districts receive no Title I stimulus funds. One in four schools (enrolling 495,000 students) are not eligible to receive Title I funds.

Pennsylvania needs to support public schools and sustain progress on implementing the fair and predictable funding formula adopted last year.

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