



Rendell's education proposal pushed

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Under Gov. Ed Rendell's education funding plan, the Scranton School District could receive an additional \$24 million from the state over the next six years.

If the same amount were funded by the local tax base, it would amount to a 75 percent increase in local property taxes.

The governor's plan "will give our city schools the funding needed in order to make real gains and to meet the high expectations of leaving 'No Child Left Behind' by the year 2014," School Board Director Brian Jeffers told a crowd of 100 students, educators and city officials outside Scranton High School on Monday.

Across the state Monday and today, city, business and education leaders are holding rallies to gain support and call on legislators to enact the governor's school funding formula, which invests at least \$2.6 billion over the next six years to help close the school funding shortfall identified in the General Assembly's costing-out report released last year.

The formula would invest money in education while taking pressure off local taxpayers. Over the years, taxpayers have picked up more of the burden of funding public schools.

"The current system ... is grossly inequitable and clearly inadequate," said William King, who was named acting superintendent Monday night.

According to the costing-out study, in the 2005-2006 school year, only 27 of the state's 501 school districts spent enough to ensure students met the standards of No Child Left Behind.

Overall, spending on public school education statewide was at least \$4.8 billion short of the \$22 billion ideal for the year.

The Scranton School District was \$2,771 short in spending per pupil. About 35 percent of the district's \$106 million budget comes from the state, Mr. Jeffers said.

"To invest in education now prevents problems later," said Scranton Mayor Chris Doherty, adding that the quality of education in a city affects its crime rate, jobs and growth.

While the Scranton School District has generally outperformed other urban school districts, more funding is needed, Mr. King said.

On June 10, a group of representatives from the school district will travel to a rally in Harrisburg to support the governor's plan.

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