

# *Pennsylvania School Funding Campaign*

*Successful Schools...Successful Children...Successful Communities*

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**There is no more important priority this spring than for the Pennsylvania General Assembly to enact a permanent school funding formula and fully fund it with at least \$2.6 billion in additional state funds in no more than six years.**

- Action on school funding should be guided by the General Assembly's 2007 "Costing-Out Study" which provides the evidence and information needed to determine what it costs to educate *every* student so he or she can meet the state's academic standards. *There is no time to waste.*
- The Pennsylvania School Funding Campaign supports the Governor's 2008-2009 basic education budget proposal because it makes the critical step to fix our education finance system and fund it with at least \$2.6 billion in additional state funds in six years. *The state has no greater responsibility than to assure that every child has a high quality public education.*
- The Pennsylvania School Funding Campaign recommends that the Governor's proposal be strengthened by: paying a higher state share of funding per pupil to districts with limited local wealth; including a plan to address special education; assuring transition funding for all districts of 2%; and applying additional accountability provisions only to districts that fail to make adequate yearly progress.

The Pennsylvania School Funding Campaign is a statewide coalition of individuals and organizations representing hundreds of thousands of parents, students, educators, school board members, administrators and other concerned citizens advocating for comprehensive, systemic reform of Pennsylvania's public education funding system.

The Costing-Out Study found that Pennsylvania is under-funding basic education by more than \$4 billion. The study confirmed that Pennsylvania's education system relies too heavily on local property taxes to support our schools, causing widespread inequities in educational opportunities for our children.

Pennsylvania voters feel the time has come to change how we fund public education. According to a 2007 Center for Opinion Research Survey, 85% of Pennsylvanians support increasing the state share of education funding.

The Pennsylvania School Funding Campaign supports the Governor's proposal because it takes the critical first step toward a multi-year effort to reform education funding and provides a historic investment in the state share of public education.

The Pennsylvania School Funding Campaign believes that the Governor's proposal can be strengthened by the four additions which align with our principles of adequacy, equity, efficiency, accountability and predictability:

1) State share and recognizing disparities of local wealth -

Base the state share of each school district's new funding on its aid ratio, which measures the local wealth of the district so that those with fewer local resources receive greater state assistance.

2) Special education -

Begin to address special education students of all exceptionalities, including gifted, consistent with the Costing-Out Study. The Study identified the "adequate" amount of funding needed to educate a child in Pennsylvania to meet the state's academic standards by 2014 as well as the additional amount needed for special education students to receive the educational services they need. This was not incorporated into the Governor's "adequacy" figure, and the Campaign believes that some framework for addressing this issue in future years must be included in the 2008-2009 funding legislation.

3) Transition funding -

As the state moves to restore a funding formula that is both adequate and equitable, it is essential that districts receive transitional basic education funding of 2 percent in the 2008-2009 final state budget. School districts are required under Act 1 to develop preliminary budgets in December and most have already conservatively estimated a 2 percent increase based on historical precedent.

4) Accountability -

The Campaign supports accountability for using public resources to help students achieve the state's academic standards. The Governor's proposal, however, includes new accountability provisions that are based on fiscal matters and not student achievement. The new accountability provisions would apply to a large number of school districts that are currently making Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) simply because they receive a basic education increase above the Act 1 index of 4.4 percent. New accountability requirements should apply only to school districts not making AYP.