

Pennsylvania School Funding Campaign

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

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Student Achievement Gains at Risk

PA School Funding Campaign Releases Survey of School District Finances

(HARRISBURG, PA) June 7, 2010 - The Pennsylvania School Funding Campaign released a new report today highlighting dramatic drops in local revenue, potential staff reductions and program cuts for school districts statewide. "Student Achievement Gains at Risk: Schools Cutting Staff and Programs as Revenues Decline," is the result of a recent survey of 51 percent of school districts across the Commonwealth coordinated by the Pennsylvania Association of School Business Officials (PASBO) and the Pennsylvania Association of School Administrators (PASA).

At a news conference in the Capitol Rotunda to unveil the new report, school leaders addressed the challenges districts are facing as they prepare their 2010-11 budgets and the heightened importance of enacting the governor's proposed \$354.8 million increase for basic education to avert deeper cuts.

The survey findings indicate significant shortfalls in local school tax revenues and interest earnings of \$343 million this year including a collective drop in Earned Income Tax revenue by almost \$50 million, a \$75 million loss in Realty Transfer Taxes and a decline of interest earnings of \$220 million.

"The consequences of the nation's economic woes have not been more evident than at 500 school board meetings last month where board members and school administrators were forced to make the most painful budget cutting decisions in two decades," said Jay Himes, Executive Director of the Pennsylvania Association of School Business Officials (PASBO). "More than two-thirds of the survey respondents indicated their local revenues fell last year. Even with budget adjustments for this year, more than four in 10 districts will suffer a shortfall in local school revenues."

"Two-thirds of school districts report they will cut instructional staff - teachers and classroom aides - and one-third will cut instructional programs in 2010-11. This will mean increased class sizes and cuts in foreign language instruction, tutoring programs

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for struggling students, Advanced Placement courses, and music programs, business education, literacy programs and more,” said Dr. Fred Johnson, President, Pennsylvania Association of School Administrators and Superintendent, Selinsgrove Area School District, who spoke at the press conference. “Without the additional \$354.8 million in state funding next year, these districts will need to make even deeper cuts and many districts that previously did not need to cut programs or staff will need to do so.”

Jim Vaughan, Assistant Executive Director, Government Relations at the Pennsylvania State Education Association, said insufficient state funding for public schools will result in fewer teachers, fewer aides, fewer math and reading coaches as well as a loss of music and art classes. “It will halt our students’ progress, and put achievement at risk. PSEA appreciates the work of our school business officials, and joins them and our other Campaign partners in calling on the General Assembly to appropriate the additional \$354.8 million in state funding for next fiscal year,” Vaughan said.

School boards around the state are making extremely difficult decisions over their budgets for the upcoming fiscal year. “Hundreds of school districts are cutting programs and laying off educators due to the extraordinary financial pressures districts are facing,” said Roberta Marcus, School Director, Parkland School District and President, Pennsylvania School Boards Association. “For most of us, these decisions are the toughest we’ve made in our careers as school directors. We always knew a day like this could come, but it is impossible to fathom what it will mean if we also need to face passage of a state budget that doesn’t include the governor’s proposal to increase school funding by \$354.8 million.”

More information may be obtained by contacting Ron Cowell, PA School Funding Campaign, (717) 260-9900 or Kathy Geller Myers at PPC, (717) 236-5680. For a copy of the report, visit www.paschoolfunding.org.

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