

Pennsylvania School Funding Campaign

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

Talking Points - FY08-09 State Budget

- The time is NOW to fix Pennsylvania's inequitable and broken public education funding system that is unfair to kids.
- The system should be reformed based on the results of the General Assembly's 2007 "Costing-Out Study," which identified the cost of educating every student so he or she can meet the state's academic standards.
- The solution to ensure all children receive the education they deserve does exist and the Governor's 2008-2009 basic education budget proposal - with the Campaign's recommendations - is a critical first step.

- The Pennsylvania School Funding Campaign is a broad-based coalition of more than two dozen organizations representing parents, advocates, school board members, administrators and teachers focused on comprehensive, systemic reform of Pennsylvania's public education funding system.
- The Campaign urges the General Assembly and Governor Rendell to fix Pennsylvania's broken and unfair public education finance system beginning with the 2008-2009 state budget. When fully funded, the new system should be adequate, equitable, efficient, accountable and predictable.
- The "fix" for the system should be a multi-year effort to implement the results of the General Assembly's 2007 Costing-Out Study and designed to support what it costs for all students in Pennsylvania public schools – no matter where they live – to receive a quality education allowing them to meet state standards for academic achievement.
- The valid, evidence-based Costing-Out Study found that Pennsylvania is underfunding basic education by more than \$4 billion (or shortchanging - on average -each student by more than \$2,400). The study also confirmed what we all know - that Pennsylvania's education system relies too heavily on local property taxes to fund the schools.
- If Pennsylvania is to improve public education for children AND reduce the current over-reliance on local property taxes, the *state share* of public education funding must be increased. According to a 2007 Center for Opinion Research Survey, 85% of Pennsylvanians support increasing the state share of education funding.

➤ The Campaign supports the Governor's proposal because it provides an historic investment in the state share of public education and is a critical first step toward a multi-year effort for reforming the funding system. The Campaign also supports the following four recommendations so that the Governor's proposal aligns more closely with the Campaign's goals and principles:

1) Recognize disparities of local wealth -

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

2) Special education -

Begin to address special education students and funding for their programs 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 in his basic education proposal, however.

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. Based on historical precedent, many districts based their preliminary budgets in December on a presumption of a 2 percent increase.

4) Accountability -

Apply new accountability provisions only to school districts not making Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP).