

PENNSYLVANIA SCHOOL FUNDING CAMPAIGN
Successful Schools . . . Successful Children . . . Successful Communities

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**EDUCATION, ADVOCACY GROUPS JOIN FORCES
FOR FAIR AND ADEQUATE SCHOOL FUNDING**

Harrisburg, Pa. (January 23, 2008) – Earlier today the newly formed Pennsylvania School Funding Campaign, a first-time statewide coalition of broad-based education and advocacy organizations, called on Governor Rendell and the General Assembly to fundamentally reform Pennsylvania’s outdated and broken school-funding formula.

Members of the Campaign stressed that if all students are to meet Pennsylvania’s academic standards, the state must not only do its share to provide the necessary resources -- as determined by the 2007 Costing-Out Study authorized and paid for by the General Assembly -- but also revise the way funds are distributed.

The Campaign urged, as part of the upcoming 2008-2009 state budget, the enactment of a comprehensive school funding formula and for a significant down payment - at least \$1 billion - toward full implementation over five years of the monies needed for all students to reach the state’s academic standards.

“Our organizations represent a dedicated and mobilized effort in support of comprehensive school funding reform in order to ensure every student in every district has the opportunity to meet state academic standards,” said Ron Cowell, president of The Education Policy and Leadership Center.

The Costing-Out Study found that an average of \$11,926 per pupil is needed to ensure that students are provided with the resources needed to meet state standards of achievement. However, the study found that Pennsylvania actually spends only \$9,512 per pupil. Those findings translate to 471 of 501 school districts being underfunded by a total of more than \$4 billion.

Because the state provides only 36 percent of the cost of public education (compared to a national average close to 50 percent), Pennsylvania’s public education funding system is excessively dependent upon local wealth – primarily property taxes – and is therefore very unequal in terms of resources and opportunities for students across 501 school districts. In order to maximize efficiency and accountability for the success of Pennsylvania’s children, the Campaign believes it is essential that both the state and the local community share in the fundamental responsibility to fund an effective public education for every child.

“Change is necessary because state law expects every student to be held accountable to demonstrate proficiency in key academic subjects, yet opportunities for students to learn depend on the wealth of the community in which they live,” said Tim Allwein, assistant executive director of the Pennsylvania School Boards Association. In order to accomplish change, the Campaign has developed a funding proposal to address these inequities - the Adequacy in School Spending and Equity in Taxation (ASSET) proposal.

The ASSET proposal accomplishes five key principles of school funding reform - adequacy, equity, efficiency, accountability and predictability. ASSET starts with the adequacy spending amount for each district as determined in the Costing-Out Study and establishes the state share by using the school district’s Market Value/Personal Income Aid Ratio (the state’s measure of the relative wealth of a district based on its market value per student and its personal income per student compared to the state average). In order to reduce the current over-reliance on local taxes, predominantly property taxes, ASSET caps the local share on the basis of the personal income of the residents. The proposal also enables more than 300 school districts to reduce property taxes over the five years by more than \$1 billion statewide.

“We know what it takes for our schools and our kids to be successful – examples of success are supported by well-regarded academic research, and demonstrated by school districts within our own state,” said Cowell. “The Costing-Out Study ordered by the General Assembly tells us what it will cost. Therefore, this is now an issue of political will to provide the capacity for all students to achieve success and the Campaign is committed to build the political will necessary to accomplish this reform.”

For more information about the Campaign and the numerous organizations and associations involved, visit the Campaign’s website: www.paschoolfunding.org

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