



News for Immediate Release

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Governor Rendell's Education Budget Continues Strategic Investments to Ensure an Educated, Prepared Workforce

Additional \$354 million Investment in Basic Education will Help Continue Academic Gains, Ease Burden of Local Property Taxes

Harrisburg – Citing the academic gains Pennsylvania students have made because of the state's continued investments in quality education, Governor Edward G. Rendell today called for a \$354.8 million increase in the state's basic education funding to ensure every student in every school has the necessary resources to learn.

The increase will bring to \$5.9 billion the state's total commitment to basic education and mark the third year of a multi-year commitment by the Governor and the General Assembly to increase the state's share of education funding.

"We know what works to increase student achievement: targeted classroom investments and the vision to build on those investments even in the toughest economic times," Governor Rendell said.

Today, nearly three-quarters of Pennsylvania's students are testing on grade level in reading and math, compared to slightly more than half who were performing on grade level in 2002. This marked academic progress has been driven by school districts that have received the most significant increases in state resources since 2002. These districts have seen an average 37 percent increase in the proportion of students performing at grade level in reading and math.

In the past seven years, Governor Rendell has made education a top priority for Pennsylvania, championing new investment and greater accountability as critical to the commonwealth's economic development strategy. Working with the General Assembly, he has built the nation's best early childhood infrastructure, enacted a school funding formula based on reaching funding adequacy in every district and helped districts raise student achievement with targeted investments in proven classroom initiatives.

As a result, Pennsylvania is now a real investor in the state's public schools, Education Secretary Gerald L. Zahorchak said.

"Pennsylvania's unwavering commitment to adequately funding our schools has had a dramatic impact on student achievement, helping us earn the distinction of being the only state in the nation to show sustained improvement in reading and math at every grade level since 2002," Zahorchak said.

The budget includes a funding formula for basic education subsidies that compares each district's adequacy target as identified by the General Assembly's costing out study to its actual spending. The difference between these two figures is the district's "adequacy gap."

The funding formula, first used in fiscal 2008-09, will phase in \$2.6 billion in new state funding to help fill the adequacy gap, with an emphasis on aiding school districts that have the highest local tax levels and the greatest needs. The 2010-11 investment of \$354.8 million will enable the state to reach 41 percent of its adequacy funding target.

The pressures faced by school districts will result in local property tax hikes unless the state continues its commitment to close the adequacy gap, the Governor said.

"On average, it would take a 40-percent increase in local property taxes to generate the same investment as the state will contribute over the course of our multi-year funding formula," the Governor said. "When the state pays its fair share, school districts can keep property tax increases to a bare minimum."

The property tax burden is further alleviated through the relief provided by gaming revenues, which have generated sufficient revenue to provide \$1.7 billion in property tax relief since 2008. In fiscal 2010-11, an additional \$613.7 million in state revenues will go to relieve citizens of a portion of their local school property tax burden.

In addition to increases in the basic education subsidy, the Governor and the General Assembly have targeted an additional \$2.5 billion over the past seven years in funds for specific targeted programs, including Pre-K Counts, Accountability Block Grants, Educational Assistance Program and Dual Enrollment. The 2010-11 budget proposal continues funding these initiatives.

"While my budget plan reflects the difficult choices that must be made in a tough economy, it also recognizes that a quality public education system is a fundamental tool for economic development," Governor Rendell said. "The young people we teach today will be the workforce that sustains and strengthens Pennsylvania in the years ahead."

Early Childhood Education

Over the past seven years, Pennsylvania has built a world-class system of early childhood education resources. This effort stems from the recognition that investments made in the earliest years of a child's development have immense educational, social and economic benefits over the course of the child's life.

The 2010-11 education budget continues Pennsylvania's commitment to providing affordable, high-quality early childhood learning opportunities.

Pennsylvania Pre-K Counts will receive \$85.9 million to enable approximately 11,800 3- and 4-year-olds to reap the proven benefits of quality pre-kindergarten programs and allow more families to have access to full-day programs.

The budget also provides \$38.7 million in state supplemental assistance for federally funded Head Start programs, allowing 5,743 children who are most at risk of academic failure to benefit from comprehensive early learning services.

Higher Education

Governor Rendell said Pennsylvania also must sustain its commitment to higher education in a struggling economy, noting the nation's fiscal crisis has made it even more difficult for families to afford college tuition.

"The more we can do to adequately fund our public colleges and universities, the less likely those institutions will have to resort to tuition increases," the Governor said.

His 2010-11 budget for higher education provides:

- \$282 million for Pennsylvania's 14 community colleges;
- \$503 million for the 14 universities in the State System of Higher Education; and
- \$688 million for the four state-related universities - Penn State University, the University of Pittsburgh, Temple University and Lincoln University.

Teacher Professional Development and Supports

Governor Rendell's education budget recognizes the importance of quality teaching in student achievement, providing \$30 million in high-quality tools and supports for teachers, including:

- \$7 million for coaches to help teachers use technology to bring instruction to life in the classroom;
- \$13.5 million for "Science: It's Elementary" to train teachers to prepare the scientists of the future;
- \$4.5 million for online model curriculum, including research-proven instructional strategies and lesson plans; and
- \$5 million for tools to help teachers identify and help struggling students.

Zahorchak said the Governor's ongoing commitment to adequately funding education at all levels will ensure Pennsylvania's students continue to have solid opportunities for learning at every level - from the first day of pre-kindergarten to the day they earn their college degrees.

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