

## Why launch a new campaign? What happened to the Campaign for Fair Education Funding?

- *PA Schools Work* has the same ultimate goal: making sure schools are adequately and equitably funded so every child has the educational resources they need to succeed. Its focus is on translating how the level of investment by state government into public schools affects what happens for students in the classroom.
- Pennsylvania's schools work when they have the necessary resources to educate students to meet academic standards and be prepared with 21<sup>st</sup> century skills.
- But 429 of Pennsylvania's 500 school districts do not get their fair share of funding from the state; 227 districts are forced to spend less than what is needed to educate their students while many districts are forced to make up the state's shortfall by increasing local property taxes.
- So *PA Schools Work* is calling for increasing the basic education funding line item in the state budget, but its focus goes beyond that, encompassing other classroom needs like special education and career and technical education.
- One in six students in public schools receive special education, and thousands more seek the skills to enter the workforce immediately after high school and to continue their education.
- If the goal is preparing *every* student to succeed, that must be part of the equation as well.
- That is why our first action under this new banner is calling on the legislature to adopt the governor's proposed increases in basic, special and career and technical education.

## Does PA School Works support Equity First? How are you different?

- *Pennsylvania has one of the widest gaps between the highest and lowest spending school districts of any state in the country, meaning that the educational opportunities available to a student depend largely on where that student lives.*
- *Some groups have proposed solutions to this inequity that are based on the false assumption that redistributing existing state dollars will solve the problem. They propose running all basic education money through the state's funding formula – either immediately or over a short period of time – but not increasing the state's investment.*
- *That has the effect of redirecting funds from about 350 school districts across the state, some with the lowest available resources for students, to 150 other school districts.*
- *This shifts the harm but doesn't solve the problem, like taking from the hungry to give to the starving.*
- *It's a faulty approach because how the state distributes its funding for schools is only part of the problem; how much it distributes must be addressed as well.*
- *Lawmakers must recognize that if the state is to both fund all schools adequately and eliminate funding disparities across school districts, the state must significantly increase its investment in public schools. Here's why:*
- *Pennsylvania ranks 47<sup>th</sup> in the country in the state's share of funding for public schools. Only about 37 percent of the costs of public education is covered by the state.*
- *The result: 429 of Pennsylvania's 500 school districts do not get their fair share from the state; 227 districts are forced to spend less than what is needed to educate their students while many districts make up for the state's shortfall by increasing local property taxes.*
- *Worsening this imbalance is the state's failure to keep pace with the rising cost of special education services for children with disabilities, which has increased by \$1.6 billion over the last decade. Over that period, the state's share of support for special education declined from more than 36 percent of the costs to less than 25 percent.*
- *The same trends exist for career and technical education. The state subsidy to support Career and Technical Education (CTE) has fallen to less than eight percent of CTE costs after eight years of stagnant funding.*

- The way to truly solve the state's inadequate and inequitable school funding is by:
  - Increasing basic education funding by at least \$3 billion, with the increases running through the state's fair funding formula
  - Raising, over the next five years, the state's share of special education funding back up to 35 percent of costs so all special education students get the high-quality, inclusive services they need and deserve
  - Ensuring that funding for career and technical education is adequate and distributed equitably so that every student who chooses to pursue CTE can get learning opportunities that allow them to progress towards an industry-based credential in their chosen career.
  
- *The PA School Works approach tackles the entire problem without pitting school districts against each other and forcing districts to fight over slices of a pie that can't satisfy their needs in the first place.*
  
- *That is why our first action under this new banner is calling on the legislature to adopt the governor's proposed increases in basic, special and career and technical education.*