

The Power of a Great Education

PSEA's 20/20 Vision

Strong public schools, successful children, and vibrant communities

Imagine a Commonwealth where all children learn and achieve to their fullest potential and pursue lifelong learning opportunities within a quality public school system. Educators are valued, respected, and prepared to provide students with the academic tools they need to be successful citizens. Learning and teaching are supported by parents, families and communities. And, as a result, all communities thrive. *This* is PSEA's vision for great public education.

Politically and demographically, Pennsylvania is a diverse state. But we all share a vision of strong schools, successful children, and vibrant communities. And we know that a strong public school system is a key to making this vision a reality.

Pennsylvanians want a strong public school system, and we know how to achieve this goal. PSEA's 20/20 Vision outlines clear, comprehensive strategies for moving our Commonwealth further along the path to student success and viable local communities. Our Vision focuses on four core components – full and fair state funding for public education; proven, research-based strategies for increasing student achievement; teaching and learning conditions that make student achievement possible; and supporting and respecting education professionals in order to recruit and retain a quality workforce into the future.

The Commonwealth's ability to ensure that all students have the opportunity to meet their full potential, regardless of the wealth of their communities, depends upon a foundation of an equitable school funding structure. Unfortunately, due to decades of insufficient and inequitable *state* funding, Pennsylvania has not had such a structure in place. As a result, public schools have been forced to rely too heavily on local property taxes to sustain operations necessary to meet state and federal academic standards.

Pennsylvania needs a school funding formula that provides full and fair state funding and guarantees efficiency, predictability and accountability for public schools and state and local

The Power of a Great Education: *PSEA's 20/20 Vision for the Future*

taxpayers. In the past several years, Pennsylvania has made significant and, at times, laudable progress toward these goals. Now, we must continue this long-awaited success and continue to prioritize investments in public education so that all students have the opportunity to succeed in school and all communities can meet their full economic potential. These investments will pay dividends in the future.

We know that these investments make a difference. We have seen the evidence in our students' dramatic gains on multiple measures. Continued increases in state funding coupled with the extraordinary training and talents of Pennsylvania's teachers and support professionals will continue to yield dividends for our students, for their communities, and for our Commonwealth.

At the same time, research and common sense tell us that there are many factors that affect child development – such as socio-economic status, parental involvement, community support, school climate, and physical and mental well-being. As a result of issues relating to these factors, some children come to school without eating well-balanced meals. Others watch television and play video games more than they read or exercise. Still others don't have safe homes for sleeping or don't get enough sleep. The existence of these challenges only underscores the need for policies that support quality education professionals. State education policies will be most effective when they incorporate and respect the talent, service and ideas of the educators and school employees who help children to learn despite such difficulties. Some of our recommendations include quality instructional leadership and mentoring, safe and secure teaching and learning conditions, competitive compensation and benefits, and the protection of fundamental labor and employment rights.

For nearly 160 years, PSEA has been a tireless advocate not only for a great public education for every student, but also for the public school employees who deliver the power of a great education. PSEA's 20/20 Vision is a comprehensive, strategic approach to state public education policy that is intended to open a serious discussion about future investments. We look forward to working with policymakers as we continue our rich history of advocacy over the next decade and beyond.

The class of 2022 entered kindergarten this fall. PSEA believes that by enacting the comprehensive solutions contained within our 20/20 Vision, these students will enjoy a more challenging and exciting academic experience and be productive, informed, engaged citizens in 2022 and beyond.

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