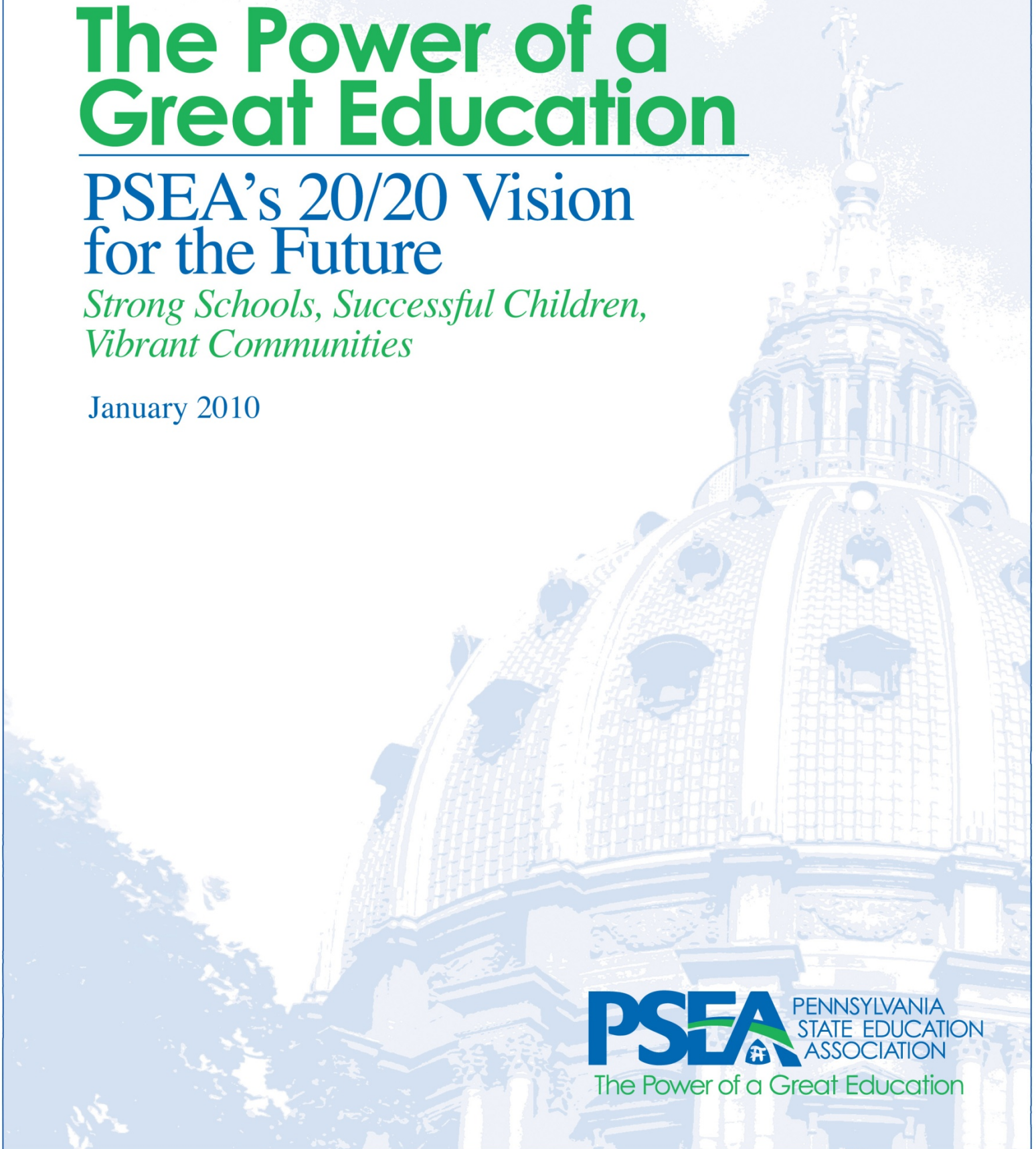
The Power of a Great Education

PSEA's 20/20 Vision for the Future

Strong Schools, Successful Children, Vibrant Communities

January 2010



PSEA PENNSYLVANIA STATE EDUCATION ASSOCIATION

The Power of a Great Education

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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

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.

(01/10)

We are PSEA

The 191,000 members of the Pennsylvania State Education Association are dedicated to children and public education. PSEA members work in service to Pennsylvania's students to help enrich their lives and reach their full potential through the opportunity and power of education.

We teach in classrooms and university halls, counsel adolescents, help students determine career aspirations, coach sports, lead extracurricular programs, transport and feed students, keep records and provide virtually every professional service necessary to benefit students and keep Pennsylvania's schools operating.

PSEA members know policy decisions made at the federal, state, and local levels have a direct impact on our ability to deliver a quality education for the 1.5 million students in Pennsylvania. That is why - in large numbers - we make an effort to be active in civic issues and involved in campaigns at all levels. It is also why we are interested in working with candidates and policymakers to make this vision reality.

2009 PSEA Board of Directors

What you should know about PSEA

PSEA advocates for quality public education and for our members – more than 191,000 education professionals through collective action. We are the preeminent voice for education and a leading force for labor in Pennsylvania. PSEA defends and protects members in all aspects of their working lives, including the areas of compensation, working conditions, and professional development. We are also partners with policymakers, elected officials, school districts, parents, and communities in ensuring that Pennsylvania has strong, effective public schools and the ability to deliver the power of a great education for each student.

PSEA leadership

PSEA is a member-driven organization, headed by elected officers, an executive director and a board of directors.

James P. Testerman, President

James P. Testerman began serving as president of PSEA in 2007. He previously served as treasurer from 1999-2003 and vice president from 2003-2007 after serving on the PSEA Board for the previous five years. While vice president, Testerman provided testimony on issues such as pensions, professional development to train educators to prevent and reduce child abuse, and the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA), otherwise known as "No Child Left Behind" (NCLB). During this time, he led PSEA's strategic planning efforts and state and national ESEA reauthorization activities.

Before coming to the PSEA Board, Testerman served in many capacities in his local, the Central York Education Association. As a member of the Central York Education Association, Testerman served as a building representative, PACE chairperson, Meet & Discuss chairperson, grievance chairperson, negotiations chairperson, and two terms as local president. In addition to being active in his local, Testerman served on the NEA Human and Civil Rights Committee for six years, and has served on PSEA's Constitution and Bylaws Committee, Human and Civil Rights Committee, Property Committee, and Budget Committee.

Testerman received his Bachelor of Science degree in biology from Elizabethtown College and his Master of Education degree in counseling from Millersville University. Prior to taking leave to serve as a PSEA officer, he spent 16 years teaching a variety of biology-related subjects. Most recently, he taught 7th grade life science as part of a middle school team. In addition to his responsibilities as a classroom teacher, he served as team leader and technology coordinator for the Central York Middle School.

Testerman has earned a reputation throughout PSEA and NEA as a skilled presenter in the areas of diversity, the Elementary and Secondary Education Act and the importance of bipartisanship and political action.

Michael J. Crossey, Vice President

Michael J. Crossey began a two-year term as vice president of PSEA on Sept. 1, 2007. Previously, Crossey served as Western Region Vice President. He has more than 20 years experience as a local association president, most recently with the Keystone Oaks Education

Association. Additionally, Crossey served his local as grievance chair, chief negotiator, board member of the PSEA Political Action Committee for Education (PACE), and the PSEA State Legislative Committee, serving as committee chair for several years.

Crossey graduated from Duquesne University and went on to earn two Master's degrees and a reading specialist certificate. He has earned seven areas of certification and taught at all levels in the school district, most often serving as the high school emotional support program teacher. In addition to his teaching and association involvement, Crossey has a history of involvement in the community having been an elected official on the local and county levels, including Allegheny County Councilman.

W. Gerard Oleksiak, Treasurer

Gerard "Jerry" Oleksiak began a two-year elected term as treasurer of PSEA on September 1, 2007, and was re-elected to a second two-year term which began on September 1, 2009. Previously, Oleksiak served on the PSEA Board of Directors as president of PSEA's Mideastern Region, representing Bucks and Montgomery counties. He has been a classroom teacher for more than 30 years, most of that time spent as a special education teacher in the Upper Merion Area School District.

Oleksiak's Association work is long and extensive. At the region level, in addition to serving as President, he served in many capacities, including Region Secretary, Vice President, and President Elect; Chair of the Coordinated Bargaining Committee; Region PACE Team; Council for the Advancement of Public Schools (CAPS) Workgroup; Chair of the region's Public Education Celebration (2001-2004); and Region Representative to the Steering Committee for Together Organized for Public Schools (TOPS). Oleksiak also has extensive leadership experience on the local level serving a variety of positions for his local association, the UpperMerion Area Education Association, and for the Montgomery County Intermediate Education Association and Bucks County Intermediate Unit Education Association.

Born and raised in Philadelphia, Oleksiak graduated from Saint Joseph's University (then called St. Joseph's College) in 1974 with a Bachelor's Degree in International Relations. He also earned his teaching certificate in social studies and a Master's Degree in Education from Saint Joseph's, and his special education certification through LaSalle University. While working with the Montgomery County Intermediate Unit, he also earned certification as an intermediate unit program specialist.

John F. Springer, Executive Director

John F. Springer has served as PSEA's executive director since June, 2008. A member of PSEA's senior management team for more than 20 years, Springer served as PSEA's Assistant Executive Director for Administrative Services from 1992-2008. In that position, he was responsible for PSEA's information technology, membership records, accounting, payroll, financial reporting, treasury management, risk management, property management, printing and distribution, the PSEA Health and Welfare Fund, and PSEA Member Benefits.

As Assistant Executive Director, Springer designed a successful strategic planning and budgeting process for PSEA. He oversaw and monitored the Association's operational and capital budget. He managed the Association's region service center building projects, and redesigned the Member Benefits program. He directed major information technology development initiatives, designed service delivery plans, and conducted operational assessments. He also advised several PSEA committees and boards.

From 1985-92, he served as PSEA's Health and Welfare Fund manager, and served as assistant director for financial management from 1979-1985. Prior to his employment at PSEA, he was an accountant at Peat, Marwick, Mitchell & Company from 1977-79.

Springer has an M.B.A. from Lebanon Valley College, and a B.S. from Elizabethtown College. He is a certified public accountant and has completed advanced education programs as a certified financial planner and as a certified employee benefit specialist.

PSEA structure

PSEA's membership is extensive, representing a wide range of professionals in various settings and institutions, including 483 of Pennsylvania's 500 school districts. PSEA members belong to:

- **A local association.** There are 1,199 PSEA local associations which deal with issues that directly affect school quality, employment, compensation, working conditions and professional development. Locals bargain contracts with employers and carry out a broad range of professional and community relations programs.
- **A PSEA region.** Although our Education Support Professionals comprise one statewide region, all other PSEA members belong to one of 11 geographic regions. Regions are divided into groups of local associations for representation, collective bargaining, coordination and other purposes. PSEA staff in the region offices provide bargaining, communications, legal, member rights, professional development, and political action

services to local members through UniServ representatives, communications and organizing specialists, and region attorneys.

- **PSEA, the state-level association.** PSEA represents and advocates on behalf of our members statewide through our leaders and staff, based in PSEA's Harrisburg headquarters, in a variety of areas including government relations, communications, research, and legal services.
- **The National Education Association.** The NEA, based in Washington, D.C., has more than 3.2 million members who work at every level of education, from pre-school to university graduate programs. The NEA, governed through an elected Representative Assembly, provides national research and bargaining support, legal support, political action and lobbying services, and other services on professional and educational issues.
- **Chapters.** This designation is reserved for our Student PSEA members who belong to chapters at their college or university, and for our retired members who belong to their county chapters.

PSEA policy

PSEA members decide policy and the organization's direction through a PSEA Board of Directors and PSEA House of Delegates. The Board of Directors is composed of members from throughout the state elected by their colleagues. The Board meets several times a year. The House of Delegates meets twice a year. Approximately 1,000 members elected by colleagues vote on policy issues that set the organization's course.

PSEA staff

PSEA employs approximately 250 staff persons statewide. Approximately one-half are located throughout our 11 region offices while the remaining one-half is based in PSEA's Harrisburg headquarters. PSEA enjoys a national reputation for cutting-edge initiatives and ideas and is respected as an authority on education and labor issues. This is due in no small part to our highly qualified and dedicated staff, which includes researchers, education policy experts, labor relations experts, communications staff, organizers, lobbyists, attorneys and UniServ representatives (the lead contacts with local associations for member rights and contract negotiations).

(01/10)

PSEA PENNSYLVANIA STATE EDUCATION ASSOCIATION

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Good news about Pennsylvania public schools

Pennsylvania has long recognized the importance of public education. Opportunity, democracy and progress are all outgrowths of a strong public education system. The citizens of Pennsylvania value public education and its importance to students, families, communities, the economy and the future. While challenges remain to fulfilling PSEA's Vision for public education, we can proudly point to a record of achievement in Pennsylvania.

In fact, according to a wide variety of research-based indicators, Pennsylvania's public schools are among the best in the nation, and student achievement continues to improve. As we digest the studies and scores that illustrate these significant achievements, it is important to continue to examine them in an effort to determine the underpinnings of these successes. As always, our goal should be to invest in and support programs that are working in our schools.

Certainly, the well-trained, dedicated and professional teachers of Pennsylvania have been central to these achievements. In addition to the high quality of our teachers, recent investments in public education programs that have provided critical teaching resources contributed greatly to this success. Continuing and expanding investments in small class size programs, early childhood education, individualized supports for students at risk of academic failure, encouraging parental engagement (and other programs identified in the Student Achievement and Teaching and Learning Conditions sections of this document) is essential. It is equally important to maintain the Commonwealth's commitment to Act 61 of 2008, which created an adequate, equitable, and predictable basic education funding formula for the first time in nearly two decades.

While recent research demonstrates much success, it is always important to understand exactly what each test utilized to gauge success is designed to measure and how the information gathered can be utilized as part of a total picture. Knowledge of what each test strives to measure and how the results are intended to be utilized allows everyone to make honest interpretations and wisely utilize the knowledge of both results and implications.

This section of PSEA's 20/20 Vision for the Future provides information on accomplishments of note and shares research information necessary to fully understand the results and their meaning.

Here are just a few highlights of the good news, facts, and successes that help demonstrate the remarkable ability of Pennsylvania's public schools to provide students with high quality education.

National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) Indicators of Success

Pennsylvania's reading scores are among the nation's best:[1]

- Only 2 states have statistically significant higher ***4th grade*** reading scores than PA.
- Only 3 states have statistically significant higher ***8th grade*** reading scores than PA.

Pennsylvania's math scores are among the nation's best:[2]

- Only 4 states have statistically significant higher ***4th grade*** math scores than PA.
- Only 7 states have statistically significant higher ***8th grade*** math scores than PA.

- Researchers from The American Institutes for Research (AIR) performed a study that statistically linked state performance on the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) 8th grade mathematics and science tests with international performance on the Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study (TIMSS) 8th grade mathematics and science tests.[3] The AIR researchers found that Pennsylvania's NAEP performance projected on the TIMSS scale would rank it above the U.S. TIMSS average and the averages of 36 of the 48 countries in math. It ranked below only that of five Asian jurisdictions (Singapore, Hong Kong, Korea, Chinese Taipei, and Japan).[4] (Pennsylvania did not participate in the TIMSS Science tests.)[5]

Reading scores are up:[6]

- The proportion of Pennsylvania public school ***4th graders*** who scored at the highest two levels in reading in the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) has increased by 21 percent since 2003.
- The proportion of Pennsylvania public school ***8th graders*** who scored at the highest two levels in reading in the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) has increased by 13 percent since 2003.

Math scores are up:[7]

- The proportion of Pennsylvania public school ***4th graders*** who scored at the highest two levels in mathematics in the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) has increased by 31 percent since 2003.
- The proportion of Pennsylvania public school ***8th graders*** who scored at the highest two levels in mathematics in the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) has increased by 27 percent since 2003.

The ***National Assessment of Educational Progress*** (NAEP) is the most appropriate test for use in comparing performance among states. In 1988, Congress created the National Assessment Governing Board (NAGB) to devise procedures for interstate comparisons of test scores. For example, unlike Student Achievement Test (SAT) data, NAEP procedures require a scientifically valid sampling plan whereby 100 schools are randomly selected to represent all public schools in the state.

While the NAEP tests are a valid manner in which to compare *relative* academic performance by students in different states, it is important to remember that states still differ in the characteristics of their populations. Some states have many more students from urban areas, those who have lower socio-economic status, and lower levels of parental education than do other states. *So while we can use the NAEP tests as an accurate barometer of student performance, the question remains as to what meaning to give to any observed differences between the states.*

Watch out for misleading labels. While NAEP is considered the best test for comparing student performance across states and over time, no system of measurement is perfect. Several studies have questioned the meaning of the misleading performance labels – Advanced, Proficient, Basic, and Below Basic– that are utilized in NAEP. Gerald Bracey noted that the NAEP performance labels and their apparent meanings have been rejected by the Government Accountability Office; the National Academy of Sciences; the National Academy of Education; and the Center for Research on Evaluation, Student Standards and Testing.[8] Rothstein et. al. note that "recent NAEP reports include a caution, buried in the text, defending the use of achievement levels only for observing trends, i.e., changes in the percent of students who achieve proficiency over time, but not for validating the percentages at any given point in time."

Pennsylvania System of School Assessment (PSSA) Indicators of Success

PSSA reading scores are up: [9]

- The proportion of Pennsylvania public school ***5th graders*** who are proficient or higher in reading in the state assessment test (PSSA) has increased by 14 percent since 2002.
  - In 2002, 57 percent were proficient or advanced. In 2009, 65 percent were proficient or advanced.
- The proportion of Pennsylvania public school ***8th graders*** who are proficient or higher in reading in the state assessment test (PSSA) has increased by 37 percent since 2002.
  - In 2002, 59 percent were proficient or advanced. In 2009, 81 percent were proficient or advanced.
- The proportion of Pennsylvania public school ***11th graders*** who are proficient or higher in reading in the state assessment test (PSSA) has increased by 10 percent since 2002.
  - In 2002, 59 percent were proficient or advanced. In 2009, 65 percent were proficient or advanced.

PSSA math scores are up:[10]

- The proportion of Pennsylvania public school ***5th graders*** who are proficient or higher in math in the state proficiency test (PSSA) has increased by 40 percent since 2002.
  - In 2002, 53 percent were proficient or advanced. In 2009, 74 percent were proficient or advanced.
- The proportion of Pennsylvania public school ***8th graders*** who are proficient or higher in math in the state proficiency test (PSSA) has increased by 37 percent since 2002.
  - In 2002, 52 percent were proficient or advanced. In 2009, 71 percent were proficient or advanced.
- The proportion of Pennsylvania public school ***11th graders*** who are proficient or higher in math in the state proficiency test (PSSA) has increased by 12 percent since 2002.
  - In 2002, 50 percent were proficient or advanced. In 2009, 56 percent were proficient or advanced.

The PSSA indicators make repeated references to the categories of "Proficient" and "Advanced." Like the identically-named NAEP performance categories, the PSSA performance levels must also be interpreted with caution. The cut scores for these performance levels have not been externally validated. Such evidence that exists suggests that many students who score below proficient still are able to enroll in non-remedial college courses in the same subject area.[11]

Other Performance Indicators

Among the best Advanced Placement (AP) scores in the nation: Pennsylvania is among the top 11 states in the percentage of public high school students who score high enough on AP exams to qualify for college credit when taking the exam.[12]

More students participating in AP Courses: The number of Pennsylvania public high school students taking and testing in an Advanced Placement course has increased 37 percent since 2002.[13]

More students planning to go to college than ever before: More than seven out of 10 Pennsylvania high school graduates plan to continue their education after high school — the highest number ever. [14]

Among the best in the nation of students performing in college: Pennsylvania ranks 7th in the nation in the percentage of full-time college students who complete their bachelor's degree.[15]

Student Achievement Tests (SATs): Pennsylvania ranks 9th in the proportion of students who take the SAT, and 43rd on the average SAT scores. Inasmuch as Pennsylvania has one of the highest proportions of students taking the SATs, an overall lower ranking among states is not unexpected.

- In 2007, across all states there was nearly an inverse relationship between participation rates and SAT scores, i.e., the greater the percentage taking the test, the lower the score. The SAT is an inappropriate measure to compare states.[16]
- The College Board, the organization that sponsors the SATs, says it is invalid to use the SAT to compare states.
- Statisticians from Education Testing Service (ETS), the organization that produces the SATs, have written extensively about why the SAT is an invalid measure for ranking states that cannot be statistically rehabilitated.

The following is a quotation from the College Board:

> However, it is important to note that many College Board tests are taken only by particular groups of self-selected students. Therefore, aggregate results of their performance on these tests usually do not reflect the educational attainment of all students in a school, district, or state.[17]

Useful comparisons of students' performance are possible only if all students take the same test. *Average SAT scores are not appropriate for state comparisons because the percentage of SAT takers varies widely among states*. In some states, a very small percentage of the college-bound seniors take the SAT. Typically, these students have strong academic backgrounds and are applicants to the nation's most selective colleges and scholarship programs. Therefore, it is expected that the SAT verbal and mathematical averages reported for these states will be higher than the national average. In states where a greater proportion of students with a wide range of academic backgrounds take the SAT, and where most colleges in the state require the test for admission, the scores are closer to the national average.

Quote from the College Board:

> **A word about comparing states and schools**
>
> Media and others often rank states, districts, and schools on the basis of SAT scores despite repeated warnings that such rankings are invalid. The SAT is a strong indicator of trends in the college-bound population, but it should never be used alone for such comparisons because demographics and other non-school factors can have a strong effect on scores. If ranked, schools and states that encourage students to apply to college may be penalized because scores tend to decline with a rise in percentage of test takers.[18]

The same organization that produces the SAT produces the NAEP

Both the SAT and the NAEP tests are produced by Education Testing Services (ETS). ETS specifically warns against using the SAT to compare states and has developed the NAEP tests expressly for the purpose of comparing states. Why should we ignore the advice of the test manufacturer regarding which of the two instruments to use in comparing states? How can Pennsylvania perform well on the NAEP and poorly on the SAT? The fact is there is no correlation between SAT and NAEP performance because the SAT is a poor measure of state performance. Those who cite the SAT as an indicator of education performance are at best uninformed, or, at worst deceptive.

(01/10)

[1] National Center for Education Statistics. Nation's Report Card: Reading 2007. (2007). http://nces.ed.gov/pubsearch/pubsinfo.asp?pubid=2007496.

[2] National Center for Education Statistics. Nation's Report Card: Mathematics 2009. (2009). http://nces.ed.gov/nationsreportcard/pdf/main2009/2010451.pdf.

[3] Citation: Phillips, G. (2007). "Chance Favors the Prepared Mind: mathematics and science indicators for comparing states and nations." American Institutes for Research: Washington, DC.

[4] Ibid.

[5] Ibid.

[6] National Center for Education Statistics. "Nation's Report Card: Reading 2007." (2007). http://nces.ed.gov/pubsearch/pubsinfo.asp?pubid=2007496.

[7] National Center for Education Statistics. "Nation's Report Card: Mathematics 2009." (2009). http://nces.ed.gov/nationsreportcard/pdf/main2009/2010451.pdf.

[8] For an excellent history of these studies, see "Proficiency for All' – An Oxymoron" by Richard Rothstein, Rebecca Jacobson, and Tamara Wilder; see also "A Test Everyone Will Fail" by Gerald W. Bracey, *The Washington Post*, (May 3, 2007).

[9] Pennsylvania Department of Education. The 2008-09 PSSA and AYP Results. http://www.pde.state.pa.us/a_and_t/cwp/view.asp?A=3&Q=150034.

[10] Pennsylvania Department of Education. The 2008-09 PSSA and AYP Results. http://www.pde.state.pa.us/a_and_t/cwp/view.asp?A=3&Q=150034.

[11] Sinclair, A.L. and Thacker, A.A. (2005). "Relationships Among Pennsylvania System of School Assessment (PSSA) Scores, University Proficiency Exam Scores, and College Course Grades in English and Math." (HumRRO Report FR-05-55) (Louisville, KY: Human Resources Research Organization). http://www.pde.state.pa.us/stateboard_ed/lib/stateboard_ed/HumRROPSSAUniv.ProficiencyTestReport.pdf.

[12] College Board. National Report. (2009). http://professionals.collegeboard.com/profdownload/school-report-11th-12th-09.xls\.

[13] College Board. 2007 Pennsylvania Report. http://www.collegeboard.com/html/aprtn/pdf/ap_report_to_the_nation_raw_numbers_app_c.pdf.

[14] Pennsylvania Department of Education. (2009). "Public Schools: High School Graduates 2007-2008." http://www.pde.state.pa.us/k12statistics/lib/k12statistics/Graduates_Public__2007-08.pdf.

[15] National Center for Public Policy and Higher Education. "Measuring Up 2006: The State-by-State Report Card for Higher Education." (2006). [Most recent report available]. http://measuringup.highereducation.org/.

[16] The correlation between the proportion of students in a state taking the SAT and the state average SAT Critical Reading score was -.90. The correlation between participation rates and SAT Math scores was -.86.

[17] http://professionals.collegeboard.com/data-reports-research/sat/cb-seniors-2009/aggregate-scores.

[18] http://www.collegeboard.com/about/news_info/cbsenior/yr2004/related.html#caution.

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Pennsylvania's Public School Funding: The foundation of the Commonwealth

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For Pennsylvania to compete effectively in a 21st century economy, it must enable all of its citizens to develop their creative and productive abilities to their fullest. Studies have shown the significant contribution of education to individual growth, social progress and economic prosperity.[1] In the global, knowledge-based economy, it is critical for every community in the Commonwealth to have top-notch public schools in order to compete for business investments and prepare their children to be successful individuals. It is also essential that state and local taxpayers are treated fairly, with their tax rates based on their real abilities to pay.

Pennsylvania students' dramatic gains in a whole range of standardized test scores is further evidence of the impact public education funding can have on student learning. When highly skilled and talented educators, like PSEA's members, have appropriate resources in the classroom, they can provide the Commonwealth's students with the skills they need to fuel local, state, and national economic growth.

Pennsylvania must invest in the entire spectrum of public education services to provide economic prosperity for individuals and for the Commonwealth as a whole. Policymakers must commit to working with school districts, educators, parents, local communities, and other advocates to provide high-quality educational opportunities to every child in the Commonwealth, regardless of family background, economic status or the neighborhood in which they reside. *Full and fair state funding is absolutely essential to ensure these goals are met.*

After largely ignoring this essential objective for over a decade, the Commonwealth has made significant strides in the past several years. Investments in programs that are proven to work, like small class size, full-day kindergarten and pre-kindergarten, have produced results. Even more important, the enactment of Act 61 of 2008, which for the first time since 1991 includes a statewide basic education funding formula, will make funding for public education in Pennsylvania more adequate, equitable, and predictable.

Now, the challenge is to sustain those achievements, fund them appropriately and maintain the fiscal discipline necessary to make them work for our students. PSEA envisions a public school funding system that continues and expands upon these essential proven investments. Fulfilling that vision will provide our teachers with the tools they need to educate our next generation of leaders, will promote the economic development of our communities, and will ensure that

Pennsylvania's state and local taxpayers are treated fairly and taxed based on their relative abilities to pay.

PSEA Recommendations

Make full and fair state funding a priority, so that:

- Every child has an opportunity to achieve academic success through a quality, public education regardless of the wealth of his or her community.
- Every public school employee has fair and adequate compensation and appropriate working conditions.
- Every taxpayer has reasonable, equitable, and transparent local and state taxes.
- School district officials may rely on a predictable statewide funding formula that allows for long-term planning and multi-year budgeting.

In order to accomplish these objectives, policymakers must base state school funding on the following five key principles:

- **Adequacy:** Ensure that all schools have the educational resources they need to provide every student with the opportunity to at least meet statewide academic standards.
- **Equity:** Ensure that state funds are distributed so that every district can achieve adequate spending levels based upon the Costing Out Study[2] with reasonable local tax efforts.
- **Efficiency:** Utilize state and local resources appropriately and effectively toward student achievement.
- **Accountability:** Provide the necessary financial resources and technical assistance for educators to fulfill their obligations to students and for school districts to achieve desired student outcomes through effective stewardship of taxpayer funds.
- **Predictability:** Provide state funding in a manner that allows school districts to plan their budgets and programs to maximize learning opportunities.

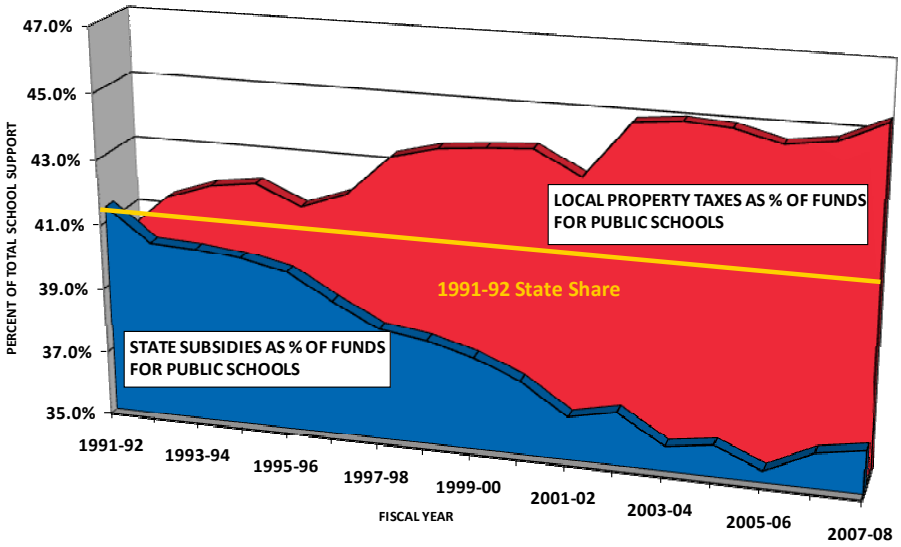
Specifically, PSEA recommends the following to ensure full and fair state funding in Pennsylvania and that schools have the tools they need to provide all students the opportunity for meeting their academic potential:

- Continue to implement the new Basic Education funding formula as established under Act 61 of 2008, which makes significant progress toward implementing the principles above.
- Improve the efficiency of state funding for education by including successful categorical aid (for example: Accountability Block Grant, Dual Enrollment, Education Assistance Program, Science: It's Elementary, etc.) in the Basic Education funding formula.

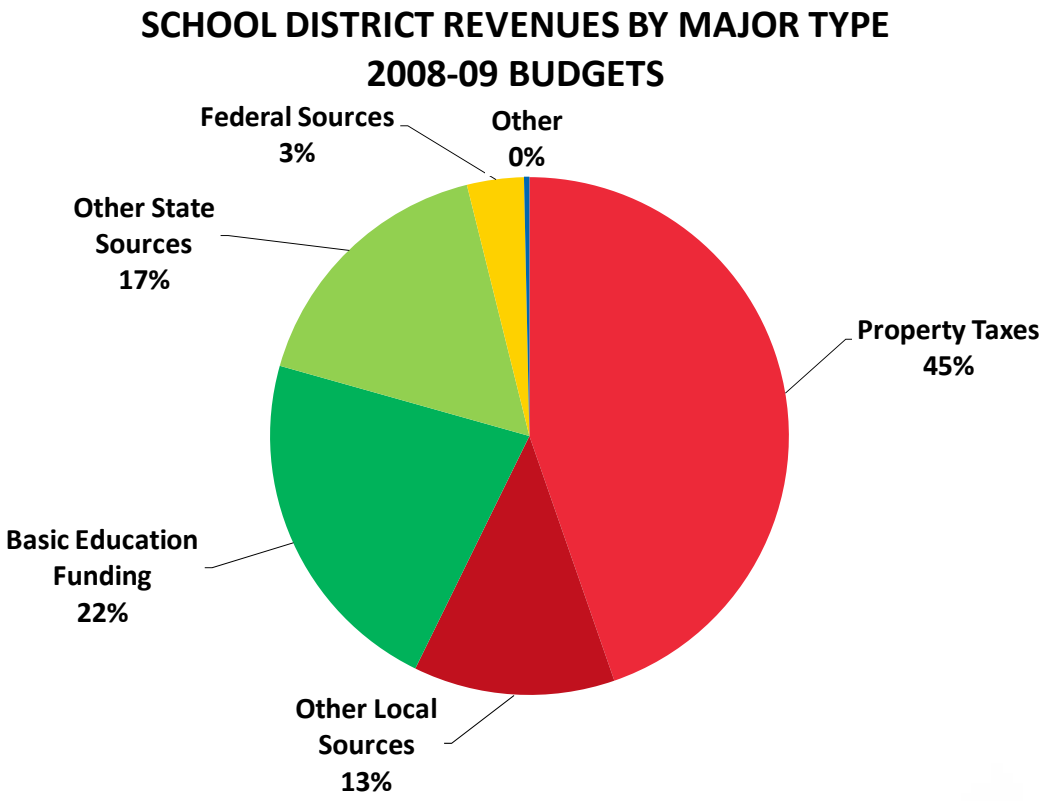
- Identify methods for continuing to improve the equitable distribution of state funds by assuring local tax efforts considered for state funding are commensurate with the local community's ability to pay them.
- Identify mechanisms for improving local tax fairness to individual taxpayers through property assessment reforms and re-evaluating how a local's "fair share" of funding is determined (currently, the state determines a locality's ability to pay "fair share" via the aid ratio which is based on market value but another option would be to determine "aid ratio" by personal income or personal wealth of individuals within the school district).
- Continue funding investments in early childhood care and education.
- Fully fund the state's share of special education costs as identified in the Costing Out Study and distribute those funds in accordance with the Act 61 funding formula.
- Fully fund the state's share of career and technical education according to the existing funding formula.
- Increase the accountability of charter and cyber charter school funding.

The Pennsylvania Constitution calls for a "thorough and efficient system of public education" (Article 3.B). Pennsylvania, however, has fallen short of this constitutional requirement. Decades of insufficient and inequitable state funding have forced Pennsylvania public school districts to a system of choices – either fail to make key educational resources available to their students *or* seek significant property tax increases to provide the appropriate education for the children of their communities. This lack of state support and over-reliance on local property taxes for funding, particularly in those school districts with the least amount of local resources, creates inequitable academic opportunities for students and undermines the ability of local communities to meet their full economic potential because of higher local taxes and, at times, struggling public schools.

***SHIFTING THE LOAD SINCE THE EARLY 90's*:**
$9.9 BILLION FROM STATE TO LOCAL PROPERTY TAXPAYERS



Despite claims to the contrary, money *matters* in determining the quality of a child's education. The Campaign for Fiscal Equity, Inc., provides an extensive review of research on the link between school spending and student performance.[3] For example, Hedges, Laine, and Greenwald analyzed the results of several prior studies and found that spending and performance were positively correlated.[4] A subsequent study by Wenglingsky specifically demonstrated that higher per pupil expenditures were correlated with higher measures of student performance when those expenditures reduced teacher-student ratios.[5] Pennsylvania's Costing Out Study, however, found that in 2005-06 Pennsylvania's schools spent $4.5 billion *less* than needed to meet state and federal standards. [6]



PSEA believes that if Pennsylvania is to improve public education for children and reduce the current over-reliance on local property taxes, education funding must increase and the *state share* of that funding must be increased as well. Recent polls indicate that 85 percent of Pennsylvanians support increasing the state share of education funding, and that a majority support increasing state taxes to sustain increases in funding for education.[7]

There is also evidence to demonstrate that when individuals are educated, there is a decreased need or reliance on other public funds such as drug treatment, corrections, subsidized health care, and income assistance.[8] In order for this wise and prudent investment in public education to be sustainable, policymakers must evaluate and reform the current tax structure for Pennsylvania.

The Commonwealth needs to develop a tax system that provides sufficient revenue growth to meet its constitutional obligations. The current tax structure is overly burdensome on those households least able to afford to pay, eroding the state's capacity for sustained investments in public services necessary to promote equitable economic growth.[9] Broadening the tax base, closing loopholes, and examining the widespread use of tax credits that hamper both the state's level of revenue and the overall fairness of the system are essential public policy changes needed in Pennsylvania.[10]

Act 61: A research-based approach to school funding

For the first time ever in Pennsylvania, Act 61 of 2008 established a school funding formula actually based on the costs of providing students the necessary instructional resources for meeting state academic goals. In addition, the formula accounted for various factors such as student poverty, English proficiency of the student, school district size, and geographic location.

The Act 61 formula is rooted in the research-based findings of the Costing Out Study, commissioned by the General Assembly in Act 114 in 2006, overseen by the State Board of Education, and released in 2007.

The Study combined four different methods for measuring adequate resources in schools – a successful school district analysis, a professional judgment analysis, an evidence-based analysis, and a cost function analysis. In terms of "adequacy" – or the level of funding needed by school districts to provide the opportunity for students to meet academic goals – the study concluded that Pennsylvania school districts required an additional *$4.3 billion* for students to meet these goals. The study included means for calculating *adequacy targets* for spending for each school district based on student needs. This was a critical component of the study and is a key element of the Act 61 formula.[11] The authors of the study also concluded that the adequacy shortfalls are greatest in those districts least able to raise resources locally – precisely the situation the state's funding system must be designed to avoid.

The Basic Education subsidy formula contained in Act 61 includes computations aimed at achieving these adequacy targets in each school district over a period of years. The General Assembly made significant appropriations to fund this progression in FY 2008-2009 and FY 2009-2010. In 2008-09, the state required districts to use increases above inflation under the new formula on innovations to improve student performance of proven value. As a result, following the first year of implementation of Act 61:

- An additional 46,000 students statewide received tutoring or other programs to extend classroom time;
- Nearly 300,000 students benefited from further professional development opportunities for their teachers;
- 312,000 students enrolled in new courses such as foreign language and advanced math and science, receiving the most up-to-date curriculum and hands-on learning;
- Nearly 2,000 additional children attended pre-kindergarten or full-day kindergarten; and
- 6,300 additional students learned in smaller classes.

Continuing to phase-in the state share outlined in Act 61 of the school districts' adequacy targets is essential to begin to repair decades of inequity in the educational opportunities afforded students across the state, to prepare a workforce capable of competing in a knowledge-based global economy, and to improve living standards for everyone.

(01/10)

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School funding – appendix: definitions

Aid Ratio (Market Value/Personal Income Aid Ratio – MV/PIAR) is the state's measure of the relative wealth of a school district based on a district's market value and personal income wealth per pupil compared to the per pupil values for the state as a whole. In theory, it is the percentage of a district's Actual Instructional Expense per pupil (AIE/WADM) that should be reimbursed by its Basic Education Funding (Subsidy) to the district.

AIE (Actual Instruction Expense) is an official state measure, calculated by the Pennsylvania Department of Education, to reflect classroom expenditures by school districts not reimbursed by subsidies other than Basic Education Funding.

Assessed Value is the total value of property, as determined by the county, upon which the district levied property taxes in the current year.

ADM (Average Daily Membership) is the mean number of pupils attending classes in the district in a day.

Local Tax Effort is calculated by dividing the total taxes collected by the market value, and multiplying the result by 1,000. The resulting figure is total local taxes in terms of "equalized mills" on market value.

Market Value is estimated by the State Tax Equalization Board (STEB) for every school district and certified each June 30. STEB adjusts market value in odd years (e.g. 2001, 2003) only for changes in the tax rolls, while in even years (e.g., 2002, 2004) it adjusts Market Value to reflect change in real estate values (inflation).

MV/WADM (Market Value per WADM) The district's Market Value per Weighted Average Daily Membership (WADM) is calculated by dividing the school district's market value of taxable real property (as certified by the State Tax Equalization Board, or "STEB"), by the district's WADM. This figure is used to calculate the district's market value aid ratio (MV/PI Aid Ratio).

PI/WADM (Personal Income Per WADM) The Personal Income per WADM is calculated by dividing the personal income for the school district, certified by the Pennsylvania Department of Revenue, by the WADM. The figure is used to calculate the personal income aid ratio. As of 1988, the personal income used in the Personal Income per WADM computation does not include income earned by Pennsylvania residents in another state.

WADM (Weighted Average Daily Membership) is the daily count of pupils (weighted by grade level) divided by 180 days. For each 180 days membership, secondary students (grades 7-12) are counted as 1.36; elementary pupils (grades 1-6) are counted as 1.00; and one-half time kindergarten students are counted as 0.50.

Support policies that improve Student Achievement

- **Invest in early childhood care and education**
- **Reduce class sizes**
- **Provide individualized supports for students at risk of academic failure**
- **Encourage parental engagement**
- **Implement transition programs for middle school and 9th grade**
- **Support effective curriculum and instruction**
- **Reduce the high school dropout rate**
- **Maximize instructional time**
- **Improve student assessment measures**
- **Improve programs and funding for Special Education**
- **Address educational needs of English Language Learners (ELL)**
- **Enhance career and technical education**
- **Improve out-of-school learning opportunities**
- **Expand post-secondary education opportunities for students**

Support policies that improve Student Achievement

PSEA envisions schools with comprehensive supports for children with special emotional, physical, and academic needs. We support expansions in learning opportunities with ties to real-world careers, and classrooms where learning is differentiated using well-developed diagnostic tools that inform instruction. We envision a time when every student has access to technology that is up-to-date and appropriately complements classroom learning.

From pre-k through their post-secondary years, Pennsylvania's students learn in some of the finest public schools in the nation. Educators are well-trained and highly motivated. Curriculum is strong, and achievement – measured by multiple indicators – is high and growing higher. But, as every educator knows, there is always room for improvement.

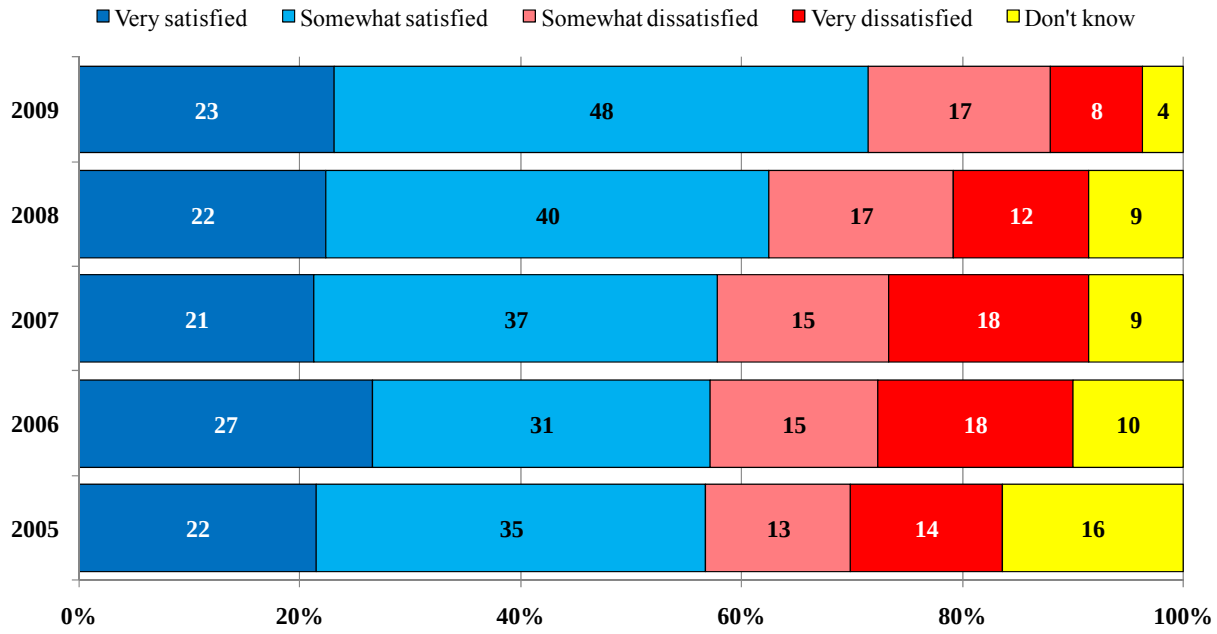
PSEA supports policies that will build on a foundation of successful teaching and learning in the Commonwealth's public schools, where *students are making progress*.

- A report released in August by the Center on Education Policy shows Pennsylvania students were the only students in the nation to make gains in all academic categories from 2002-2008.
- On National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) tests, Pennsylvania's students' reading and math scores are among the nation's best for fourth and eighth grades (the two years in which they are tested).
- More students plan to go to college than ever before – 70 percent of high school graduates plan to continue their education.

Nearly every one of Pennsylvania's 500 school districts now has at least one full-day kindergarten class, which research has shown to significantly boost achievement in higher grades. More students in more districts should have access to this opportunity. State

investments in smaller class sizes have meant that more than 6,000 students are in classes where educators can more closely focus on their learning needs. More children in more districts should have the opportunity for smaller classes.

Pennsylvanians are increasingly satisfied with the public schools in their communities.



Source: 2005 – 2009 Terry Madonna Omnibus Polls

Pennsylvanians appreciate their schools' progress. A recent Omnibus Public Opinion Poll by Terry Madonna Opinion Research found a 71 percent public approval rating for public schools. This is a 14 percent increase over 2005 results. Still, with increased supports and research-based policies, we can do even better.

The comprehensive recommendations on the following pages provide a sound approach for implementing best practices and strategies to turn PSEA's vision into a reality.

(01/10)

Invest in early childhood care and education

The knowledge and experiences students bring to kindergarten matters deeply; every person's capacity for future learning depends on past learning. Knowing this, high-quality early care and education is clearly a winning proposition for the children of Pennsylvania and their families, for our businesses and industries, for our k-12 public schools, and for all Pennsylvanians.

Pennsylvania is a relative newcomer to public investment in early childhood education; traditionally, Pennsylvanians have viewed early learning as a privately-funded, parental responsibility. In recent years, the Commonwealth has acknowledged the importance of early childhood education through the development of several integrated programs to increase the quality and quantity of early childhood education services. These services are overseen by the Office of Child Development and Early Learning (OCDEL), an innovative collaboration between the Pennsylvania Department of Education (PDE) and the Pennsylvania Department of Public Welfare (DPW). Over the last few years, OCDEL has overseen the expansion of the Keystone Stars child care quality rating program; subsidized childcare services; a supplemental assistance program for Head Start; data collection and analysis about program characteristics and student results; and Pre-K Counts, a public-private partnership to expand pre-kindergarten learning opportunities. PDE also has provided school districts with Accountability Block Grants that are used by many districts to provide pre-kindergarten or full-day kindergarten programs to young children. All of these programs have contributed to higher levels of readiness when students enter kindergarten, and early results suggest that these programs may be able to reduce the need for special education services for some students.

PSEA Recommendations

- Increase funding for high-quality early childhood education. High-quality early childhood education is a worthy investment and saves taxpayer money over the long-term; and the economic and social benefits far outweigh the up-front costs of early childhood education. There are few better investments than early childhood education. Since 2004-2005, the Commonwealth has made promising investments in the quality and quantity of early learning across the state, including investments in the Accountability Block Grant, Pre-K Counts, and Head Start Supplemental Assistance. The momentum built through these investments must be sustained.

- Spend resources on students most in need. When the funding for early childhood education is scarce, it is appropriate to provide public funding to those children who would benefit most from a high-quality early learning experience. However, public funds should cover the cost of early learning for all children who qualify. Currently this is not the case; for example, Head Start funds fail to cover one-third of eligible children.[1]

- Insist that all early childhood education personnel are certified and earn a professional wage. The Pennsylvania Pre-K Counts program has taken a leadership role in strongly encouraging professional wages and benefits for participating teachers.

Investments in early childhood are down-payments on future success

There is a growing consensus that early childhood education is critical to economic growth. Many of our nation's economic competitors realize this; Belgium, France, Germany, Italy, and the United Kingdom already have universal or nearly universal preschool enrollment. More than 75 percent of Mexican children over the age of three are enrolled in early childhood education, as are 40 percent of young Chinese children. India also is in the process of expanding its early childhood programs.[2] These countries demonstrate their recognition that knowledge development breeds competitive advantage. American economic researchers and policymakers increasingly agree that investing in the intellectual and social development of children is one of the most promising ways to strengthen our nation's economy.[3] Business leaders also believe that investing in early childhood education makes good sense. In a recent survey, 81 percent of business leaders said that public funding of voluntary pre-kindergarten programs would improve the nation's workforce.[4]

Furthermore, public and private returns on early childhood education far exceed the cost of supporting high-quality preschool programs. For example, the RAND Corporation reports that each dollar invested in high-quality early childhood education returns to society somewhere between $1.80 and $17, depending on the nature of the early childhood program.[5]

The rationale for high-quality early childhood education extends beyond economic arguments. High-quality early childhood education improves the social and academic lives of children. Some comprehensive preschool programs have demonstrated that at-risk students who attended preschool are less likely to engage in criminal behavior as teenagers or adults.[6] Other studies have demonstrated that at-risk students who attend high-quality preschools are less likely to demonstrate antisocial behavior later in school; less likely to receive social services as adults; less likely to become parents as teenagers; and less likely to engage in high-risk health behaviors such as using "soft" drugs or smoking.[7] In follow-up studies of one high-quality program, teachers rated at-risk children who participated in preschool as less obstinate, less impulsive, less

disruptive, and less likely to be involved in fights than a similar group of students who did not receive high-quality early childhood education services.[8]

A three-year independent study of 10,000 at-risk Pennsylvania pre-school children found:

- High-risk preschool children beat the odds and succeeded in Pre-K Counts by gaining early learning competencies; at-risk or delayed 3-year-olds at entry improved toward typical rates of development at exit; and
- Children in Pre-K Counts programs beat local and national norms to achieve success at kindergarten transition; and Pre-K Counts children dramatically reduced the historical special education placement rates in their school districts.[9]

Finally, early childhood education is critical to closing student achievement gaps because disparities in student learning begin well before kindergarten. Students from advantaged families tend to arrive at school with substantially higher levels of school readiness, advanced social skills, and a more positive approach to learning. Conversely, students entering kindergarten from low-income families demonstrate knowledge in reading, mathematics, and general knowledge that is as much as 60 percent lower than students from wealthier families.[10] Early intervention to close these gaps will save money in the long-term and increase opportunity for student success.[11] Both grade retention and special education referral rates are consistently and significantly lower among at-risk students who attended high quality pre-kindergarten programs than among those who did not.[12] Two states with widely available public preschool programs, Oklahoma and Georgia, have confirmed that students participating in the programs have made gains on almost every academic measure.[13]

Standards

Currently, in order to provide early childhood education, programs in Pennsylvania need to meet relatively few standards related to the quality of teaching and learning. Pennsylvania has developed a set of voluntary standards for early childhood education programs, and the National Association for the Education of Young Children has established a similar set of standards for early childhood education programs. A large body of research also defines characteristics of early childhood education programs that help all students achieve in school. Currently, many elements of high-quality early childhood education remain voluntary, particularly for providers other than the public school system.

Preparation, certification, and compensation

Currently, early learning teachers employed by public school systems must be fully certified in their teaching assignment area, and recipients of Pre-K Counts funds are required to move toward early childhood certification for all Pre-K Counts classroom teachers. Many other early learning settings are not required to hire fully certified early childhood education teachers. Advocates of high-quality early learning believe that all teachers should be properly certified. Low wages for early childhood professionals is a major reason for high turnover and low levels of experience in the field.[14] State efforts to improve the quality of early childhood education programs must continue to emphasize consistent professional standards in the field; undergraduate preparation, early childhood certification, and adequate compensation, which are the cornerstones of teacher professionalism.

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Reduce class sizes

More than a decade of research has consistently confirmed the impact of small class size on student achievement. This is particularly true for younger racial and ethnic minority students, students from low income families, and other students who are at risk of failure. Class size matters. Teachers have made this point for decades. The voices of teachers have recently been joined by others: the U.S. Department of Education, The Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching, the National Association of Elementary School Principals, and the National Science Teachers' Association have all encouraged states and districts to configure schools so that classes have about 15 to 18 students, particularly in the early elementary years and in schools and classrooms that serve large numbers of at-risk students. Class size reduction has become an important part of efforts to close student achievement gaps.

PSEA Recommendations

- Expand efforts to reduce class size. Toward this end, the state should ensure that schools continue to receive targeted state investments through programs such as Accountability Block Grants and the Act 61 Basic Education funding formula.
- Establish class size maximums based on research. Class size research suggests that students in kindergarten through grade 3 benefit from a class size of about 15, and students in late elementary school should be in classes of 18 or fewer. PSEA believes that secondary students should be instructed in classes no larger than 20. When appropriate, weighted class size formulas should be implemented to reflect the inclusion of students with special needs.

How smaller class sizes improve achievement

Class size reduction improves student achievement in several ways. First, smaller classes allow teachers to individualize instruction and recognize and intervene with student learning problems more effectively.[1] Consequently, smaller class sizes provide opportunities for high-quality teaching and learning, leading to higher student test scores. The impact is particularly clear among African American students and students living in poverty. One study found that reducing classes from 22 to 15 students in the early elementary years could reduce the black/white test score gap by 38 percent.[2]

Research also has found that when compared to students in average-sized classes, students in smaller classes in the early years take more advanced courses in high school and are more likely to graduate in the top 10 percent of their class.[3] Another study found that African American students who attended small classes in the early elementary years were more likely to take the SAT and ACT in high school. This study estimated that smaller elementary class sizes alone could reduce the black/white gap in SAT and ACT participation by 60 percent.[4]

Smaller class sizes also have other, more subtle, positive impacts on a school's learning environment:

- Earlier, more accurate identification of student learning disabilities;
- Improved student behavior resulting in less vandalism,[5] fewer suspensions and expulsions, and fewer classroom disruptions;
- Fewer student retentions in the early elementary grades;[6]
- Fewer high school dropouts. Low income students who attended small classes in the first four years of elementary school are 18 percent more likely to graduate from high school than low-income students who attended average-sized classes in early elementary school; [7,8] and
- Higher teacher satisfaction due to smaller class size may translate into higher rates of attendance, reduced substitute costs, and less teacher attrition.[9]

Smaller class sizes makes economic sense

Class size reduction is not just good for students: it is cost-effective, good for communities, and good for the Commonwealth. One recent study found that reducing class size in the early elementary grades results in a net cost savings to society of almost $170,000 per high school graduate. For low-income students, the cost savings per high school graduate are more than $195,000.[10] In a different analysis, the Economic Policy Institute found that every dollar invested in smaller class size yields about two dollars in economic benefits.[11]

Measure class sizes by individual classes, not buildings

Some researchers have studied the relationship between "student:teacher ratio" and student achievement and have come up empty-handed. Critics of class size reduction efforts use these studies to assert that reducing class size does not improve student achievement. But a "student:teacher ratio" compares the number of students in a school to the number of certified professionals, including librarians, school counselors, special education teachers, and others. For obvious reasons, this calculation does not reflect the actual classroom experience of students or their teachers. As a matter of fact, estimates are that average class size is usually about nine or 10 students larger than the "student:teacher ratio." In other words, if a school has a "student:teacher ratio" of 15 to 1, the average class size is closer to 25. Understanding this important distinction, there is no evidence to suggest that reducing the "student:teacher ratio" improves student achievement, while some evidence suggests that reducing the ratio of students to teachers within individual classrooms does.

Making the case for smaller classes in high school

Research establishes a clear link between class size in the early elementary years and student achievement across the k-12 continuum and beyond. Newer research also demonstrates the explicit educational value of reducing class size in secondary schools, particularly in classes with high proportions of low-attaining students.[12] As in elementary schools, smaller class size allows high school teachers to individualize instruction more effectively, develop higher quality assignments for all students, and improve classroom management and safety.

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Provide individualized supports for students at risk of academic failure

Every year, hundreds of thousands of children are at risk of school failure in Pennsylvania. Students are considered "at risk" for several reasons, including: low levels of academic achievement; truancy; disability (particularly emotional and behavioral); poverty; substance abuse and dependency; or family and home instability. In 2008, 33 percent of Pennsylvania children lived in a home where neither parent had full-time, year-round employment. More than 40,000 Pennsylvanians aged 10 to 18 had a juvenile court delinquency disposition, 15 percent of all students were diagnosed with a disability, 15 percent of children lived in homes subsisting at or below the federal poverty level, 17 percent of children were born to mothers without a high school degree, and more than 20,000 children were living in foster care.[1] Overall, 22 states score higher than Pennsylvania on composite indicators of child well-being.[2] PSEA members know that students' needs derive from many aspects of their lives inside and outside school. Meeting the complex needs of individual "at-risk" students must be a coordinated effort across multiple agencies.

PSEA Recommendations

Develop or expand programs and policies that build individualized interventions for students at risk of school failure, including:

- Programs for at-risk youth that adopt a comprehensive case management approach to planning and providing student support;
- Community schools that bring family counseling, substance-abuse treatment, legal aid, family health services, childcare and other services into the school setting to meet the comprehensive needs of students and to facilitate individual case-management;
- Mentoring programs, small school communities and other school reforms designed to develop meaningful relationships for every student with at least one adult;
- Coordinating state and federal funding to encourage integrated services for at-risk youth at the local level;
- Response to Instruction and Intervention (RTII) models that develop specific interventions targeted to a student's level and type of need; and
- Integrated systems of program delivery and evaluation that link school success to community and economic development efforts.

Individualized interventions make a difference

Within a school context, students at risk of school failure often benefit from individual or small group instruction, service-learning and community-based curricula, and work-related training. Some students need flexible scheduling, credit recovery assistance, and tutoring in order to stay on track toward graduation. Students at risk of school failure often have multiple needs and interrelated problem behaviors that are not addressed by one institution or a stand-alone program that meets only one set of closely-related needs. Consequently, there is widespread interest in developing community-based models of service integration and delivery. These models are designed to address a wide range of needs in a case-management framework. [3]

The most successful intervention model for at-risk youth links the services of multiple agencies; integrates family, friends, and the community into service provision; provides meaningful opportunities for adult and youth interaction; and, encourages youths to engage in community- and service-learning projects.[4] Effective programs for at-risk youth usually adopt several general principles. These programs:

- Recognize different student needs, learning styles, and stages of development, and integrate the child's education with physical and mental health services, employment assistance, career and technical training, childcare, and/or substance abuse services, based upon the individualized needs of each at-risk child. Schools and teachers become one of many entities engaged in supporting at-risk youth.
- Engage various agencies and organizations – such as community-based organizations; social, physical and mental health service providers; workforce investment boards; and juvenile justice agencies - in partnership with certified school staff to provide support.
- Consider the strengths and risk-factors inherent in a child's community, as well as inherent in the child.
- Build structured relationships between adults and youth. These options may include mentoring programs, job placements, and service learning opportunities.
- Provide access to relationships within the "real world" of work, allowing students to develop relationships with working adults, and giving them practical skills with clear application, motivating them to achieve.
- Shift away from traditional remediation to an emphasis on prevention and resiliency in children.
- Tailor services to meet the individual needs of every student; adapt the program to fit the needs of the child.
- Include individual academic tutoring, where necessary, that is based upon frequent diagnostic and prescriptive exchanges between the student and the teacher.

Educators who work with at-risk children and youth need specific time and resources to develop educational experiences that meet the individual needs of the learner. They also need time to coordinate with other service providers and to develop work-based and service-learning-based instruction for individual students. Finally, educators who work with "at-risk" youth need to have sufficiently small class sizes and low student assignment levels to be able to build meaningful relationships with the at-risk youth in their care.

(01/10)

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Encourage parental engagement

The research is clear and consistent: parent, family, and community involvement in education has an effect on both academic performance and school improvement. Strong school-family-community partnerships foster higher educational aspirations and more motivated students.[1]

PSEA Recommendations

- Establish policies to assist and encourage parents, families, and communities to be actively involved and engaged in their public schools, including training and networking opportunities for targeted schools.
- Fund professional development programs that give educators the communications skills and knowledge needed to engage parents, families, and other caregivers in students' learning.
- Adopt state standards on parent engagement that are based on those endorsed by the Pennsylvania PTA, including standards on effective parent-community-school partnerships, and that are linked to school improvement goals.
- Provide staff development on diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds and on how to communicate with all families.
- Encourage employers through incentives to allow parents to take a reasonable amount of leave to participate in school activities or other education-related activities.
- Develop school district and building-level needs assessment tools for districts that choose to use them.
- Promote exemplary models such as the federally funded Parent Information Resource Centers (PIRCs) for the benefit of school districts, Intermediate Units, Career and Technical Schools, Charter Schools, and Approved Private Schools.

Parent engagement has significant impact on student achievement

In the past, parent engagement was characterized by volunteers - mostly mothers - assisting in the classroom, chaperoning students, and fundraising. Today, that model has been replaced with a much more inclusive approach: school-family-community partnerships include mothers and fathers, stepparents, grandparents, foster parents, other relatives and caregivers, business leaders and community groups – all participating in goal-oriented activities, at each grade level, linked to student achievement and school success.

When schools, families and communities work together to support learning, students tend to earn higher grades, attend school more regularly, stay in school longer, and enroll in higher-level programs. The evidence holds true for students at both the elementary and secondary level, regardless of their parents' education level, family income, or background – and the research shows parent involvement affects minority students' academic achievement across all races.[2]

Unfortunately, parental involvement tends to decline as students get older, with a dramatic drop once students reach middle school. We must work to maintain strong parental engagement at all age levels. The lack of parental involvement is viewed by teachers, administrators, the public, and even parents of school-age children, as one of the biggest problems facing our nation's schools.[3] As one researcher notes, even the most promising reforms can be "reversed by family, negated by neighborhoods, and might well be subverted or minimized by what happens to children outside of school."[4]

The good news is that parents respond to encouragement from teachers. The best predictor of parent involvement is what the school does to promote it, making statewide support for parental involvement in schools a valuable investment.[5]

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Implement transition programs for middle school and 9th grade

Transitioning into and out of middle school can be difficult for many students, and as a result, many students are retained, particularly in the 9th grade. Ninth grade retention strongly correlates with dropping out of high school. There are examples across the country of successful "transition" programs that help at-risk students move into and succeed in 9th grade. The Commonwealth would benefit from program funding and evaluation to improve support for students during critical transition years.

PSEA Recommendations

Enable Pennsylvania schools to implement strong transition programs for students moving from elementary to middle school, and from middle school to high school by:

- Funding evidence-based programs to support student transition to high school;
- Ensuring that schools gather and analyze data on school climate. These data should be gathered from students and school personnel; and
- Establishing a data and monitoring system to diagnose which students are likely to struggle during the transition to high school. Smaller districts also will need technical assistance and support to run the data, interpret the results, and build programs that target supports to individual students.

Lower dropout rates, improve academics, and reduce risk behaviors

Those moving from elementary to middle or from middle school to high school are at particular risk for declines in well-being and academic performance.[1] Student grades tend to decline during the first year of high school, attendance drops upon entry to high school, and student engagement in schooling decreases.[2] One study of youth in New Mexico found that between 8th and 10th grade, the prevalence of smoking among students increased by 50 percent, marijuana use increased by 58 percent, and alcohol use increased by 25 percent.[3] Students who do not transition well – meaning that they develop behavior problems, do not do well in their classes, or tend to be absent more than average – are at a dramatically higher risk of dropping out or failing to graduate on time.[4]

Transitions into high school often are unnecessarily difficult for students. The good news, however, is that evidence-based strategies and programs have been able to reduce the negative impacts of transition and help more students succeed in 9th grade and beyond. These programs focus on supporting students' academic needs as they transition to a more complex school structure and are expected to work independently. These strategies and programs also build relationships between students and adults in the school, which is important because 9th graders who disengage from school often believe no one cares about their attendance, attitude and ultimate success.

Successful programs vary in structure, but they share certain criteria:

- Core content area teachers work in teams with one group of students assigned to them and utilize shared planning time to strategize about how to meet specific student needs;
- Many ninth grade transition programs physically segregate freshmen into their own building or wing of the high school, with their own principal and other staff;
- Scheduling is flexible, according to student needs;
- Highly-experienced teachers are assigned to teach 9th grade courses;
- Connections are made with the community, employers, and institutions of higher education;
- Teachers receive specific training and support to recognize and meet the specific needs of 9th grade students; and
- Extra help and time are provided to students who perform below grade level, and extra help is flexibly administered, as student needs emerge over the academic year.

(01/10)

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Support effective curriculum and instruction

Curriculum and instruction are essential vehicles in delivering knowledge to students. While Pennsylvania has established standards of learning, the determination of curriculum utilization has, rightly, remained a local act. With input from administrators and teachers within their buildings, school boards select a curriculum they believe will best serve the needs of their students.

PSEA Recommendations

Provide guidance to local school districts, according to the following principles:

- All students should have access to a challenging and comprehensive curriculum that prepares them for full participation in a 21st century global society and a broad range of postsecondary options;
- At least one percent of each school entity budget should be designated for curriculum and instructional improvement such that instructional materials and equipment are provided in sufficient variety and quantity to serve all students;
- All curriculum development must be in collaboration with professional educators who take a primary role in designing, implementing, and assessing all instruction;
- Offer a voluntary model curriculum for school districts; and
- Stop all efforts to narrow students' curriculum and focus only or primarily on those subjects tested on standardized tests.

Educators should have input into curriculum

PSEA believes that teachers are best suited to develop and deliver appropriate instructional programs that are consistent with state curriculum standards. Direct observation of students and analysis of data by the teachers who work with the students must guide instructional decisions, and all educators and the members of the community – including students – must continuously evaluate their curriculum, keeping it ever sensitive to the development of basic skills and to the current and future needs of students. While programs such as focusing on scripted learning or pacing charts can serve as viable frames of reference, it is still incumbent on the teachers who work with the student to evaluate the efficacy of all instructional programs and to modify such programs when necessary in order to address the needs and facilitate the success of each student.

Each school entity should have a basic program of curriculum research and development with a significant amount, at least 1 percent, of its budget designated for curriculum and instructional improvement. Unfortunately, not all school districts have the resources available to them to create or deliver a comprehensive aligned curriculum for their students. For this reason, PSEA is supportive of the state's creation of a *voluntary* model curriculum available to all school districts across the Commonwealth. This model curriculum, currently being developed by the Pennsylvania Department of Education, will ensure that school boards, administrators and teachers have access to a curriculum that is aligned to state standards and provides the necessary materials for instruction to support student success.

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Reduce the high school dropout rate

Decades of research make it clear that dropping out of high school is a very serious issue for students, for the community, for our state, and for the nation. School dropouts only earn half as much annual income as high school graduates; half of our prison populations are dropouts, and half of the heads of households on welfare are high school dropouts. High school dropouts are three times more likely than high school graduates who do not attend college to be welfare recipients.[1] While this does not mean that dropping out of school *causes* these negative outcomes, or that a high school diploma is a complete solution, the data implies that students at risk of dropping out are a high-risk population that warrants specific programmatic interventions aimed at increasing the likelihood of success in high school.

Estimates of the size of the dropout problem vary, depending upon which measure of dropout or school completion is used. Based upon these measures, it is estimated that there are from one in 10 to one in five Pennsylvania students who do not graduate within four years.[2,3] Regardless of the exact number of dropouts, however, we must all be united in the belief that we need to do better.

PSEA Recommendations

- Fund and encourage evidence-based programs to identify students at risk of dropping out and intervene to reduce the likelihood of dropout. Intervention programs should meet the curricular, logistic, and interpersonal needs of students at risk of dropping out, and include flexible scheduling to accommodate relevant work.
- Develop data systems to track dropout prevention program implementation and program outcomes.
- Encourage school districts to adopt models that preserve comprehensive student legal rights, particularly for students with disabilities, by serving them within the k-12 public system.
- Invest in reducing class size and student:counselor ratios to develop meaningful student relationships with adults in the school.

Keep students in school

Decades of research show us that the dropout rate is the result of student, family, and school factors that collectively disengage students from formal education. The most effective prevention programs address all three areas to re-engage students in learning. The following are several research-based approaches that significantly reduce dropout rates.

- **Invest in early childhood education.** Dropping out of school is a long-term process of disengagement that can be observed as early as elementary school.[4] In fact, for at least two decades now, research has indicated that, "we intervene too late in the course of a student's development, [and] that certain parts of the profile of a dropout-prone student may be visible as early as the 3rd grade."[5] When students enter school without the required knowledge and skills to succeed, they start the race a lap behind and never catch up. Investments in high-quality early childhood programs that support the emotional, cognitive, and social development of children and provide parent support programs have demonstrated a clear and consistent ability to significantly reduce dropout rates in the later years.[6] Early childhood and full-day kindergarten programs in the Commonwealth are investments that are critical to reducing high school dropout.
- **Build information systems that can pinpoint at-risk students**. Students who come from low-income families, have low academic skills, have parents who are not high school graduates, have disabilities, speak English as a second language, are children of single parents, are pregnant or parenting teens, have a pattern of disciplinary problems or poor socio-emotional development, have been held back, or who have a history of inconsistent school attendance are all particularly at risk of dropping out.[7] Prevention programs can be constructed to enrich the school experience for these at-risk students early in their school careers. Districts, however, need a consistent way to find students who would most benefit from prevention programs and to target specific interventions for students with specific needs. Pennsylvania could develop data systems to pinpoint students who can benefit from prevention programming.
- **Build and support student transition programs for the middle years.** Transitioning into and out of middle school can be difficult for many students, and as a result, many students are retained, particularly in the 9th grade.[8] Ninth-grade retention strongly correlates with dropping out of high school. There are examples across the country of successful transition programs that help "at-risk" students move into and succeed in 9th grade. The Commonwealth would benefit from ongoing funding and program evaluation to improve support for students during critical transition years.
- **Support a strong, individualized curriculum with a career-learning component for all students.** Contrary to popular belief, many students do not leave school because too much is expected of them. Some of the most successful dropout prevention programs focus on providing high-level academic curricula that are connected to the real world through out-of-school experiences such as service learning and hands-on learning in business and industry settings. Unfortunately, the scripted curricula and testing culture found in many schools today do not support the kinds of teaching and learning that we know are most effective at engaging "at-risk" youth. We need to work together to resist the temptation to become test preparation institutions that deliver one-size-fits all scripted

curricula and, instead, maintain our focus on high-quality teaching and learning that may not be easily encapsulated in a multiple choice test question.

- **Ensure that all students have meaningful relationships with adults at school.** Students who leave school prematurely often do so because they feel alienated from others and disconnected from the school experience. One highly effective strategy to reduce dropout rates is to build environments in which all students can benefit from high-quality sustained relationships with school staff. Recent efforts to build small, intimate learning communities are a step in the right direction. Currently, high school teachers may see 150 or more students each day and many counselors may serve 500 or more students, more than twice the number recommended by the American School Counselor Association.[9]
- **Help districts develop and advertise individualized, non-traditional high school options.** Evidence suggests that building the kinds of comprehensive student supports mentioned above will go a long way to substantially reduce the dropout rate in the Commonwealth. However, for students who continue to fall through the cracks, non-traditional school settings should be available. These options may include online and in-person opportunities such as intensive tutoring programs, accelerated graduation programs, credit recovery programs, and community college campus-based programs. Although these programs may be offered in collaboration with several education, workforce development, and social service agencies, it is important to continue to serve as many students as possible through the k-12 public school system. This is particularly important for students with disabilities, who are twice as likely to drop out as students without disabilities.[10] Students with disabilities who drop out of their public high school and attend a dropout re-engagement program sponsored by an entity other than the public school lose many of their rights to free services under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA).

While teachers and support professionals of this Commonwealth want to do whatever they can to help all students succeed in school and in life, they need help. Help comes in the form of comprehensive support systems for students across the k-12 continuum, smaller class sizes, opportunities to enrich curricula and build real-world learning experiences for youth, early learning experiences that help all children arrive at school ready to learn age-appropriate content, and data systems designed to pinpoint those students who need our constant support and encouragement to stay in school.

(01/10)

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Maximize instructional time

Maximizing academic learning time is a critical tool which is needed to improve student achievement and requires multiple policies and programs to support great teaching and learning. School districts around the state and country are looking for ways to improve student achievement by increasing instructional time, because simply increasing the school day or year does not guarantee increased academic learning time. In fact, doing so may actually create unintended negative consequences.

PSEA Recommendations

Implement targeted policies and programs to increase academic learning time. The most effective policies and programs may not necessarily require changes to the length of school day or year, but may involve changes in instruction and in allocation of time within the school day. Where changes to the school day or year are contemplated, the process needs to be addressed through the local collective bargaining agreement. Regardless of the length of the day or year, there are many ways to support maximizing academic learning time.

- Provide the resources teachers need to engage students in meaningful, appropriately-leveled learning during the traditional school day. These resources may include smaller classes, engaging model curricula, and models of successful programs that relate learning to real-life situations.
- Support the adoption and implementation of comprehensive school-wide positive behavior support and behavior management programs to minimize the amount of instructional time that is disrupted when school employees need to address behavior management issues.
- Provide sufficient funds for before- and after-school learning experiences, staffed by fully-certified and well-compensated teachers, to targeted students who need them most.
- Ensure that all teachers have sufficient planning time to develop engaging, differentiated instruction for all students in all classes.
- Alter the templates for school improvement planning that are required of districts that have not met federal student achievement requirements; include an examination of the use of allocated school time as it relates to student achievement.
- Where an extended school day and/or year are supported by the local community, ensure that the extended time is collectively bargained, that educators receive appropriate compensation for their work, and that the extended hours of instruction are utilized in a manner that extends learning time, not just time in school.

Effective use of academic time is proven to work

Some strategies for increasing academic time include extending the school day, extending the school year, reducing recess, and re-allocating instructional time from non-tested to tested subjects. Schools have also developed a range of before- and after-school instructional options, including the supplemental educational services required by the federal Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA), commonly known as No Child Left Behind (NCLB).

Increasing instructional time is appealing in part because it is easy to measure, and in part because of a straightforward assumption that instructional time and learning are directly related. But the relationship between time and learning is complicated; research suggests that the quality of instructional time is at least as important as the quantity of instructional time, and increases in high-quality instructional time benefit certain groups of students more than others.[1]

What the research says about instructional time

Not all time is equal. Time in school can be categorized into four different types:

- *Allocated time* includes all of the hours a child attends school.
- *Allocated class time* is a subcategory of allocated time that counts all of the time a child is in class (excluding recess, lunch, time transferring classes, etc.).
- *Instructional time* counts the amount of the allocated class time that is used for instruction (excluding instructional disruptions related to discipline, record-keeping, etc.).
- *Academic learning time* is the portion of instructional time in which a student is paying attention, receiving instruction that is appropriately leveled, and learning is taking place.

What matters for learning is ***maximizing academic learning time***. Increasing the time ***available*** for learning (by increasing the length of the school day or year) is not likely to be productive unless the time is used to engage students productively in learning.[2]

The impact of more instructional time on different students is not equal. Under the right conditions, maximizing academic learning time (rather than allocated or instructional time) is related to increases in student achievement.[3] However, extended academic learning time, under the right conditions, has a greater impact on student achievement in schools that serve low-performing students.[4]

Maximizing the use of school time requires attention to other reforms. Schools that have seen positive results through the use of extended learning time often have paired increases in

learning time with other reforms to maximize the use of the new time. These reforms create the conditions for the best use of time and include efforts to build stronger leadership, differentiated and engaging teaching, high academic expectations among students, frequent performance monitoring, and a safe, supportive school environment. Overall, it is an oversimplification to expect that merely increasing time will enhance learning.

Simply increasing time can have unintended negative consequences. For example, Edison Schools, a for-profit education management firm, used to operate schools with a substantially longer day and year, but found that schools experienced more student absenteeism during the four additional weeks of school they had scheduled into the academic year. Eventually, Edison backed off of its commitment to a longer school year but retained the longer school day model. Still, academic results from the Edison model with a longer school day are mixed.[5] Another experiment in extending the school day did not increase student achievement and two-thirds of staff reported tired children, "burned out" teachers, and several other reasons why they believed the experiment should be discontinued.[6] Simply increasing time, without paying attention to other organizational needs, may create unintended consequences without producing the intended outcomes.

Extending the school day or year alone, without ensuring more academic learning time, may not be an efficient use of resources. Researchers have found, based on cost-benefit analyses, that extended day and year programs are tremendously costly but with little benefit or increase in student achievement. One study that examined extended time in relation to computer-aided instruction, class-size reduction, and cross age tutoring found that increasing allocated time returned the smallest benefit per dollar of investment.[7] Others have concluded that relatively large and very costly increases in allocated time in school would be necessary in order to develop small changes in academic achievement.[8]

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Improve student assessment measures

Today's students are put through an unprecedented and confusing myriad of tests and other assessment measures. While assessment is generally identified as the key purpose for today's extensive testing systems, the reality is far more complicated, often leaving students, parents, educators, and policymakers confused and frustrated.

Educators know the importance of student assessment, which is why PSEA supports tests that measure what is being taught and that identify where students need additional instruction or assistance. PSEA supports high standards that clearly define what students should know and be able to do.

It's often said that tests should be used as a stethoscope, not a hammer. The advent of high stakes testing – using only the scores resulting from one test on one particular day, to judge, label or determine important decisions – is destructive and counterproductive. Tests can and should provide useful and valuable information about what students are learning, but it is not helpful to use them to punish or stigmatize students, teachers, or schools.

Greater understanding of the wide range of tests and assessment measures that are mandated and used for Pennsylvania's students – both federally and by the Commonwealth – will enhance our collective ability to make better choices for students and public education.

Pennsylvania System of School Assessments (PSSAs)

The Pennsylvania System of School Assessments, also known as PSSAs, is a series of tests given to students in grades three through eight and grade 11. The assessments are in math, reading, writing, and science. The PSSA tests are designed to determine what students know and are able to do compared to the Pennsylvania Academic standards for each grade level. The tests are standardized, combining multiple choice and constructed response questions. Nearly a decade after the introduction of the PSSAs, the Pennsylvania Department of Education (PDE) undertook a performance standards-setting process in order to change the reporting of PSSA results from a norm-referenced to a criterion-referenced system. Consequently, instead of reporting scaled scores or percentages scoring in each quartile of the performance distribution, the main reporting of PSSA results was subsequently referenced to four descriptions of performance (with respect to Pennsylvania's academic standards): Advanced, Proficient, Basic, and Below-Basic. After passage of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA), federal legislation commonly known as No Child Left Behind (NCLB), the PSSA tests primarily have been used to determine whether a child is at, above, or below the proficient standard for that grade's PSSA exam.

The math and reading assessments are generally seen as high-stakes assessments for schools and districts in that the results are used to determine whether the federally-mandated adequate yearly progress (AYP) is made under NCLB. The science and writing assessments are not used to calculate AYP.

AYP is determined by the percent of students scoring Proficient or Advanced as determined by the "cut scores" (e.g., the score separating Proficient from Basic performance) for each assessment.

The PSSA testing program has undergone a steady evolution since its inception in 1992 as a school-level evaluation model. More recent changes, accelerated by the adoption of The Pennsylvania Academic Standards for Reading, Writing, Speaking and Listening and Mathematics in 1999 and passage of the NCLB in 2001 have moved the PSSA increasingly in the direction of individual student assessment.[1]

PSEA believes that strategic planning and meaningful evaluation are essential to the role of PSSAs in public education. Without them, the use of these standardized tests could actually have a negative impact on teaching and learning in the Commonwealth.

PSEA Recommendations

- Require that PDE explicitly state the purpose(s) of all standardized tests and fully validate the tests for each purpose (Content, Criterion, and Consequential validity should all be addressed). This should be done by expert outside researchers at five to 10 year intervals.

- Reset all PSSA cut scores for passing and other categories independent of the existing scores in a manner consistent with the highest standards of the educational measurement profession. These cut scores should also be subject to criterion and content validation.

Given the increasing consequences that have been attached to the PSSA tests and the greater ones that will be attached to the forthcoming Keystone Exams, it is essential that the performance levels on all exams be evaluated, validated, and if indicated, adjusted after comparing test performance data with other measures of educational outcomes such as postsecondary educational achievement or labor market attainment. It would be arbitrary and illogical to maintain cut scores at levels that prove to have little meaning with respect to the ultimate educational outcomes we hope to promote.

High stakes impact of current use of PSSAs

The accountability measures in ESEA/NCLB (public school choice, private management, conversion to charter schools, and dismissal of staff) all are activated based on the failure of Local Educational Agencies (LEAs) to make AYP by moving toward having all students reach the designated proficient level on their respective state's assessment. Under ESEA/NCLB, states must have at least 95 percent of enrolled students participate in their testing program. This requirement can place a particularly high burden on LEAs that serve unusually high proportions of at-risk or special needs students.

Pennsylvania has, by design, set relatively, if not artificially high performance standards and cut scores needed to reach the proficient level.[2] Most of the cut scores recommended through the initial standards-setting process were arbitrarily raised by a quarter of a standard deviation upon the recommendation of the PDE to the State Board of Education. In practical terms, PDE staff who oversaw the initial development of the PSSA math and reading performance levels indicated they intended that a proficient scorer on the 11th grade exams would be able to undertake college level work without remediation, which is more than a year prior to that point in a student's education.

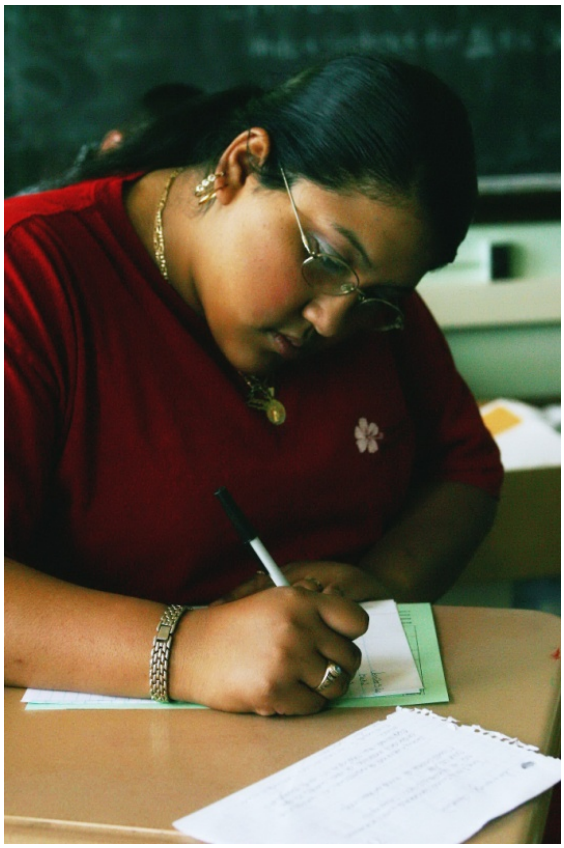
It is important that high-stakes policy benchmarks be set at challenging – but realistic – levels. Unfortunately, benchmarks set for AYP overlook important factors, and unintentionally raise the stakes for students who confront the most significant obstacles to learning. Under the ESEA/NCLB regulations, the US Department of Education (USDoE) arbitrarily decided that only one percent of all students (those with the most severe cognitive disabilities) could have

their advanced or proficient scores on alternative assessments (in Pennsylvania, the PSSA) count towards AYP. An additional two percent can have their advanced or proficient scores on a modified assessment, PSSA-M, (same grade level standards) count towards AYP. It is noteworthy that in 2007, 0.6 percent of all 11th graders taking the PSSA were classified as having mental retardation.[3] That does not include the much higher proportion whose IQs are close to that category but must take the PSSAs. One should keep this in mind when considering that testing proponents frequently express the goal to have these tests reflect college readiness which is often and controversially equated with career readiness.

Dr. Ronald Hambleton, an internationally renowned expert on testing and standard-setting who was a member of the Technical Advisory Oversight Committee that provided ongoing advice to both PDE and the State Board of Education (State Board) throughout the initial PSSA performance level setting process in 2001, has offered 20 criteria by which standard setting should be evaluated. His seventh criterion highlights the obvious problem with the adoption of the PSSA proficiency cut score for NCLB or other accountability purposes:

> …Were panelists explained the purposes of the educational assessment and the uses of the test scores at the beginning of the standard-setting meeting? …(A briefing on the uses of the assessment scores and the assessment itself and scoring is fundamental for panelists to set appropriate performance standards. Very different standards may result depending on the purpose of the assessment. For example, were the purpose of the assessment principally diagnostic, panelists might be expected to set fairly high standards to maximize the number of examinees who might receive assistance. A very different set of performance standards would result if the same test were being used to award high school diplomas.)[4]

It would have been impossible for the original standards setting advisory committees (Bookmark and Borderline Groups) as well as PDE, or the members of the State Board to have known the NCLB uses of the PSSA cut scores, because the NCLB Act was passed nearly eight months after the State Board adopted these regulations. In fact, PSEA possesses anecdotal evidence that Bookmark panelists understood that Basic achievement would be considered the minimum passing score, which in fact turned out to be the case under Act 16 of 2000, the Education Empowerment Act. The Secretary of Education at the time later confirmed this was the Department's view.[5]



According to a wide variety of research-based indicators, Pennsylvania's public schools are among the best in the nation, and student achievement continues to improve. As we digest the studies and scores that illustrate these significant achievements, it is important to continue to examine them in an effort to determine the underpinnings of these successes. As always, our goal should be to invest in and support programs that are working in our schools.

Certainly, the well-trained, dedicated and professional teachers of Pennsylvania have been central to these achievements. In addition to the high quality of our teachers, recent investments in public education programs that have provided critical teaching resources contributed greatly to this success. Continuing and expanding investments in small class size programs, early childhood education, parental engagement (and other programs identified in this document) is essential. It is equally important to maintain the Commonwealth's commitment to Act 61 of 2008, which created an adequate, equitable, and predictable basic education funding formula for the first time in nearly two decades.

The key problematic result is that these performance level cut scores became the anchors for the subsequent standards setting exercise in 2005 (which is why the contractor Data Recognition Corporation refers to its adjustment process as performance level validation as opposed to standards setting). Interestingly, in all but a couple of instances, the new panelists recommended substantial decreases in the cut scores for the 3rd, 5th, 8th, and 11th grade PSSA math and reading tests. However, under direction from PDE, the score adjustments could not exceed one standard deviation from the original cut point even if that was the recommendation of the panelists. PSEA is concerned that when the new Keystone Exams are created, the performance levels will again be politically constrained by consideration of the percentages of students who currently fall within the performance categories of the 11th grade PSSA tests. Given the lineage of the PSSA and the fact that the Keystone Exams (unlike the PSSAs) are intended as exit exams which students must pass before they can graduate, this would be inappropriate as well as harmful.

Almost as soon as ESEA/NCLB was passed, researchers asserted what is now conventional wisdom; that is: the goal requiring all students to reach the NAEP or equivalently demanding

state assessment proficient level is unattainable.[6] This prediction is now coming true as LEAs approach the Act's 2014 deadline for 100 percent proficiency and more and more schools are unable to make AYP.

Value-Added Measurement (VAM)

PSEA believes that effective teacher evaluation is important to ensure quality education, but the use of achievement tests to measure the value teachers add to the education of their students is fraught with problems.[7] Studies of this practice, commonly known as value-added measurement, are critical of its effectiveness because current methods simply cannot isolate the influence of teachers, or measure such influence in a valid or reliable fashion. Current value-added methods cannot establish a causal relationship between individual teachers and the changes in their students' test scores.[8] Moreover, the "growth in achievement of a teacher's students" is not a direct measure of the behavior of teachers. In fact, given the changes in topics tested across years within the same general subject areas, value-added methods do not measure student academic growth with respect to specific academic content standards.[9] Using algebra scores from one year and geometry from the next would be analogous to measuring a student's height in one year and their weight in another and asking, how much did the student grow?

The PSSA tests have not been validated for evaluating teacher performance.[10] However, many have proposed using them for this purpose despite the fact that nationally recognized professional and technical standards require validation of tests for all of their intended uses. It also is important to note that due to the design limitations of the PSSA achievement tests, value-added methods cannot be applied to PSSA results at the academic standard level, thus providing little if any information to help teachers make improvements in instruction.

PSEA is concerned that despite all the unresolved methodological concerns surrounding value-added measurement, the measures resulting from their impenetrably complex quantitative calculations will be given undue weight in all evaluation processes. Regrettably, to many individuals, value-added results will simply, but inaccurately appear objective and scientific.

The use of a value-added model for any screening or signaling purpose should be subject to full, independent, peer review. Because small errors in calculation can lead to large consequences, we do not believe that the proprietary status of any aspect of a system used to measure academic performance should preclude outside review of data, models, computational algorithms, results and reporting. The testing and measurement processes must be fully validated for all their intended uses. With such complex and opaque measurement systems, policymakers, students and their families, administrators, educators, and the public already are being asked to take a great deal on simple faith rather than sound practice or research.

Students with disabilities

Due to a lack of appropriate accommodations, special education students are often prevented from demonstrating what they know when taking the PSSA, which leads to the inappropriate identification of school entities for sanctions under NCLB.

Because it is impossible for the state to identify every permissible and appropriate accommodation, the PDE Accommodations Guidelines must be revised to authorize the use of non-standard accommodations which do not compromise the validity of the test. State officials who are experts in the use of test accommodations must also provide direct and on-going training to those responsible for administering the test, particularly to those responsible for designing or providing accommodation to students with Specific Learning Disabilities or Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD).

PSEA believes that the Individualized Educational Plan (IEP) team should dictate which required state and local assessments are appropriate for students with exceptionalities and allow for exclusions and/or alternative forms of assessment.

Keystone Exams – a new test on the horizon

Recently, the State Board enacted regulations establishing a new set of state standardized exams to be known as Keystone Exams.

Beginning with the class of 2014-15, students will have to demonstrate proficiency in the following subjects by passing each course with either a validated local assessment (final exam) or a Keystone Exam as the final exam that is worth one-third of the course grade for: English composition and literature; algebra I; and biology.

Beginning with the class of 2016-17, students will also have to show proficiency in history, civics and government via "validated" local assessments or Keystone Exams. Students in districts that use Keystone Exams will have to pass the following courses, with each Keystone Exam counting for at least one-third of the final course grade:

- English composition and literature;
- Two of the following math subjects -- algebra I, geometry, algebra II;
- One of the following sciences – biology, chemistry; and
- One of the following social studies – American history, civics and government, world history.

These requirements will apply to students in public school districts, charter schools, Area Vocational Technical Schools, and Career and Technical Centers.

PDE will ask the U.S. Department of Education to approve the algebra I, English composition and literature, and biology Keystone Exams as replacements for the 11th grade PSSA. If approved, these three Keystone Exams will be mandated and the 11th grade PSSA will be discontinued. Students will take each Keystone Exam at the end of each respective course in the grade they take the course (that is, they would *not* all be taken in 11th grade.)

Although PSEA did not support the final regulatory package that established this system of Keystone Exams and "validated" local assessments, we did not oppose it. PSEA worked closely with the State Board of Education and PDE to extensively revise the original proposal that called for 10 paper and pencil exit exams – students would have been denied high school diplomas if they did not score proficient on at least six of the 10 tests.

> ***A report released in August by the Center on Education Policy shows Pennsylvania students were the only students in the nation to make gains in all academic categories from 2002-2008.***

Implementation of Keystone Exams

Pennsylvania's education leaders now need to turn attention to ensuring that the new regulations are implemented effectively and fairly. PDE will be establishing three statewide committees to work on different aspects of the new regulations: the Advisory Committee for the development of performance level descriptors and cut scores; the State Assessment Validation Advisory Committee; and the Local Assessment Validation Advisory Committee.

Each of these Committees will have some public representation. Legitimate input from a broad cross-section of the public must be obtained, in order to ensure broad support to effectively implement that work product.

Perhaps the single most important task to be undertaken by a committee will be consequential validation to be performed on the statewide assessments. That is, validity studies of the Keystone Exams will be performed at least every five years to determine the degree to which the Keystone Exams and performance level cut scores are valid for the purposes for which they are used, and predict college and career success. Pennsylvania and other states have gone quite far down the road of reliance on standardized, paper-and-pencil tests, without checking to see whether a student's score category on such tests actually is a valid, precise, or reliable predictor of whether he or she does well in college and career. That data will now have to be collected and

studied; if we do not determine whether these test score categories are accurate predictors, students are vulnerable to unfair stigmatization about their preparation for college and career. That has ramifications for students and for their schools.

PDE and the State Assessment Validation Committee will investigate and make a recommendation on the use of a certificate based on industry approved standards and performance on a National Occupational Competency Testing Institute (NOCTI) as an alternative pathway to graduation. This recommendation is due to the State Board of Education within one year of the effective date of the regulation. It is critically important to Pennsylvania's career and technical education students that this report be full and fair and that, if it is warranted, the NOCTIs be added as an alternative way for career and technical education students who have used their high school careers to prepare themselves for their post-graduation careers to meet graduation requirements.

The state has committed to pay one-half the costs of local assessment validation. Each school district will have to pay the other half of these costs. We all have to work to make sure the local assessment validation process is a productive, useful process that results in improved local assessments in places where improvement is needed. The end goal should be to produce richer, more effective local assessments so that students benefit from the new regulations.

At the same time assessment work is proceeding, the very best contribution Pennsylvania's leaders can make is to keep attention on funding and on implementing education initiatives that are proven to improve student achievement. Educators will be eager to work with policy leaders to implement these programs.

Multiple measures

Student performance is much more than a test score on a particular day under a particular set of circumstances. It's a simple fact of life that human performance is multi-dimensional and varies over time. We would think it absurd to judge sports teams on the basis of a single game rather than on team performance over the course of a season. It doesn't make any more sense to determine the fate of a student, or the livelihood of a public school professional employee, based on a snapshot from a single test.

We think there is a better way. There are a variety of measures that, in concert with test scores, would provide a much more accurate picture of school performance, including: graduation rates of at-risk students; Advanced Placement (AP) participation rates and AP scores; the percentage of students continuing their education and training beyond high school; achievement of goals set by school employees, whether these pertain to reduction of dropout rates, the successful completion of a portfolio of course work or a culminating course project; the successful completion of parental/community involvement programs; and/or the successful implementation of a new curriculum. The state should provide a comprehensive list of possible indicators of performance, but the schools should focus on those indicators that are most relevant to their goals.

(01/10)

[1] Data Recognition Corporation. (2005). Performance Levels Validation Report.
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[7] For a comprehensive discussion of the issues with using Value Added Assessment Models, see Pennsylvania State Education Association. (2009). "Getting on the Right Track: Using Race to the Top Funds to Support Research Reforms," pp. 10-18.
[8] Braun, H. and Wainer, H. (2007). "Value-added modeling." In C.R. Rao and S. Sinharay (Eds.), Handbook of Statistics, Vol. 26, (Elsevier), pp. 867-892.
[9] Martineau, J. (2006). "Distorting value added: The use of longitudinal, vertically scaled student achievement data for growth-based, value-added accountability." Journal of Educational and Behavioral Statistics. Vol.31, No. 1. Braun, H. and Wainer, H. (2007). "Value-added modeling." In C.R. Rao and S. Sinharay (Eds.), Handbook of Statistics, Vol. 26, (Elsevier), pp. 867-892.
[10] American Educational Research Association (AERA), American Psychological Association (APA), & National Council on Measurement in Education (NCME). (1999). "Standards for Educational and Psychological Testing." Washington, D.C.: American Psychological Association.

PSEA PENNSYLVANIA STATE EDUCATION ASSOCIATION

The Power of a Great Education

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Improve programs and funding for Special Education

The promise of a free, quality public education for *all* students – including students with disabilities – is a core principle for PSEA. PSEA supports the full continuum of services for students identified as having a disability and the need for specially designed instruction for these students so they can become productive members of society and reach their full potential. In fact, over the last several years Pennsylvania has seen an increase in the number of students with special needs graduate from high school as well as an increase in those who gain entry into post-secondary education. This is an accomplishment of which we can be proud.

Since 1975 with the adoption of the landmark federal legislation, Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), PSEA members have worked with state and federal government, school districts, and parents to protect the right of students with mental, physical, and emotional disabilities to a free and appropriate public education (FAPE). In the 2007-2008 school year, Pennsylvania's public schools served more than 270,000 special needs students and each of these students has a highly-tailored Individualized Education Plan (IEP).

PSEA recognizes that a quality education for children with special needs is critical for supporting their well-being and for supporting the well-being of their families and their communities. While the number of legal requirements which govern the provision of special education services can prove, at times, daunting, it is our nation's and state's dedication to all students that sets us apart from much of the world.

PSEA Recommendations

- Utilize the IEP as the key determining factor for the way in which student performance is evaluated and for developing educational programs for individual students.
- Expand the accommodations for special education students taking the PSSA exams.
- Increase federal and state funding for special education and base funding on the actual costs incurred by school districts.
- Adjust the schedules of professional employees to permit adequate collaboration between special education and regular education instructional, related service, and support staff and to maximize staff contact with students.

Standards-based approach

Pennsylvania has established rigorous grade level academic standards for all students. Due to their diagnosed and identified delays, however, certain special education students do not have the ability to perform on grade level.[1]

Recently, the Pennsylvania Department of Education (PDE) required the inclusion of special education students in the standards-based approach to learning, meaning that the programs for these students must be designed for their grade level, not for their ability level. This approach is sound only for students who are at, or slightly below, grade level. When students are performing more than a grade level below in content areas, setting goals at grade level falsely raise the expectations of parents. In addition, the student is often unable to achieve the goals within the school year, and consequently, the IEP team must consider the student eligible for Extended School Year services that are not necessary or appropriate. Finally, it is likely that unrealistic standards based goals will result in an increased number of due process hearings because of heightened parental expectations.

The standards-based approach to IEP development should be adjusted to reflect the following:

- IEP teams should be free to develop goals at instructional level and should not be compelled to develop goals at grade level for students who perform significantly below grade level;
- In developing and evaluating IEP goals, IEP teams should not be required to focus on PSSA scores. Rather, teams should have the authority to base goals upon the individual needs and instructional level of each student; and
- As had been the case for over 30 years, the IEP should be the key determining factor for the way in which student performance is evaluated and for developing educational programs for individual students.

Accommodations

IEPs often include accommodations which enable students to participate in the general curriculum without unnecessary barriers. Yet when it comes to the PSSA, these accommodations cannot be used. Consequently, special education students struggle to demonstrate their knowledge when the accommodations they have used all year are not available to them during PSSA test administration. Students are unable to demonstrate what they know or the progress they have made without appropriate accommodations such as reminders to stay on task, to listen to the entire question, to provide one of the available answers, and adjustments to vocabulary in questions which enable students to understand what is being asked. This is a critical factor as it relates to statewide assessments that are utilized to determine school district and state accountability. It is for these reasons that PSEA supports expanding the utilization of accommodations in standardized testing.

Funding

PSEA supports changes to the manner in which school districts are funded for special education. Currently, special education funding is based on statewide averages of student populations in special education, rather than upon costs actually incurred by school districts to meet IEPs. The net result is insufficient funds for many school districts with a higher than average percentage of special education students or a higher than average cost for special education programs due to the severity of the disabilities of some of their students. State funding must be based on the actual costs of providing the services these students deserve and are entitled to receive.

IDEA included a federal commitment to pay 40 percent of the average per student cost for every student with disabilities, yet, the promise of funding made over 30 years ago remains unfulfilled. Because of inadequate federal and state support, schools must reduce spending in other critical areas or raise local taxes to fund mandated IDEA services.

In addition to these shortfalls, additional emphasis must be placed upon increasing funding for early intervention. PSEA can provide data indicating that the severity (and, therefore, cost) of student learning problems can be reduced or eliminated when at-risk students receive appropriate services at a younger age.

Staff Time

Special Education staff needs time to collaborate with general education staff and related service providers in order to more adequately address student needs. IDEA's emphasis on inclusion means that special education programs must involve a coordinated series of supports addressing lesson delivery, accommodations and modifications to the curriculum, assessment, data collection, review of behavior supports, and integrating therapies. Therefore, staff must have sufficient planning time to work together on these activities.

Most importantly, student and special education teacher schedules must be developed with consideration for student contact time, delivery of specialized services, and data collection. Unfortunately, current trends shortchange class coverage by special educators with special education teachers sometimes having little or no contact with a portion of their caseload. In addition, due to the increasing number of special education students, Itinerant Support Special Education teachers are often unable to support their caseload when students are scheduled with multiple general education classrooms in the same period.

In the highly prescriptive environment of special education, there are substantial reporting and paperwork requirements to ensure accountability. Unfortunately, these requirements result in a virtual mountain of paperwork which ultimately takes away from actual student learning. That is why PSEA supports relieving some of the paperwork requirements for special education staff so they can spend more time supporting students. Paperwork issues in special education have been exacerbated by the actions of the Pennsylvania State Board of Education and PDE in adding new lengthy requirements regarding data reporting on behavior that results in the use of restraints.

Response to Instruction and Intervention

A recent development in special education has been the introduction of a new program meant to streamline and improve services. Specifically, federal legislation established the Response to Instruction and Intervention (RTII) model in 2004 and authorized the use of RTII for the identification of students with specific learning disabilities. RTII is a data-driven view of student learning in which educators use research-based practices for instruction and intervention, targeting reading, math, and behavior. Pennsylvania has developed a pilot program at the elementary level to gain a better understanding of how this systems-based approach could benefit all students. RTII remains a voluntary program, but the state is now moving the pilot to the secondary level starting with middle schools.

As the program continues to expand, educational entities should adopt the following recommendations to increase the effectiveness of RTII:

- Ensure that training in RTII and development of the plan includes building administrators, content area teachers, special education teachers, related service providers, and specialists.
- Allot time for RTII planning purposes to address the major change in teacher and student schedules, data collection, analysis and refining of the system.
- Purchase curriculum materials in reading that are acknowledged as scientifically based, to support the program implementation.
- Provide staff development in new curriculum materials, assessments, interventions, data systems, and analysis of data.
- Maintain Child Find[2] and use the data derived from RTII as part of the student evaluation process to determine if a student has a disability and is in need of specially designed instruction.

In addition, PDE should:

- Maintain the fidelity of the RTII process and review school district programs; and
- Maintain and carefully monitor the application process for using RTII for the purpose of identification of students with specific learning disabilities.

Paraprofessionals

Paraprofessionals are employees of the public school entity who work with students with disabilities. These individuals may have different titles including aide, assistant, paraprofessional, personal care assistant, one-on-one aide, or support staff. The work performed by paraprofessionals is critically important as these individuals reinforce the instruction, assist in collecting data, support behavior plans, and assist in maintaining the health and well-being of the student. Recent changes in PDE's special education regulations require that paraprofessionals meet rigorous standards by 2010 and obtain 20 hours of training-per-year to maintain employment.

PSEA believes that legislative changes are needed to ensure that paraprofessionals who play a critical role in addressing the needs of special education students have the training and employment protections they deserve. Specifically, we believe the following changes are needed:

- Employers of special education paraprofessionals must provide the 20 hours of training these employees are required to obtain each year.
- The General Assembly must amend the Public School Code to extend to paraprofessionals the protections currently provided to teachers working in programs or classes that have transferred from one educational entity to another entity (also referred to as "transfer between entity" protections).

Safety concerns

A number of issues are presented by special education students who exhibit disability related behaviors which affect the health and well-being of other students and staff. School employees have a continuing need for training in de-escalation, behavior management, and appropriate restraint techniques. In addition, school entities and employees need ready access to community resources. Finally, school employees continue to need to have access to a full continuum of placement options and supports for special education students who exhibit violent and disruptive behavior in school.

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[1] It has been common practice for educational policymakers and commentators to reference the percentages of students "performing at grade level" in a particular subject. When doing so they mean the percentage of students scoring proficient or advanced on a particular test. More typically, psychometricians define "grade level" as the median score in a distribution of achievement test scores for the norming group for that grade and test. NAEP and most states assessments set proficiency at very different level from the median. The confusion between the two was noted by David Hoff in his Education Week blog when asking, can all students reach proficiency?

> That question would be a lot easier to answer if everyone knew what proficiency means. As I reported last year, nobody can agree on the definition. [U.S.] Secretary of Education Margaret Spellings says that it means students achieving at grade level, as she repeated again at the National Press Club last week (Hoff D. J. (2008). "NCLB II: The latest news on the reauthorization of the No Child Left Behind Act." edweek.org (January 15, 2008) Retrieved at: http://blogs.edweek.org/edweek/NCLB-ActII/2008/01/nclb_and_the_meaning_of_profic_1.html.)

Former Secretary Spellings apparently was unaware the National Assessment Governing Board (NAGB), which oversees NAEP policies, stated, "In particular, it is important to understand clearly that the Proficient level does not refer to 'at grade' performance"...students who may be considered proficient in a subject, given the common usage of the term, might not satisfy the requirements for performance at the NAEP achievement level" (Loomis and Bourque, 2001 quoted in Hull, J. (2008). "The proficiency debate: A guide to NAEP achievement levels." The Center for Public Education. National School Board Association. Retrieved at: http://www.centerforpubliceducation.org/site/c.kjJXJ5MPIwE/b.4175355/k.9E78/The_proficiency_debate_A_guide_to_NAEP_achievement_levels.htm.
(PDE defines grade level as proficient with respect to the academic standards for a particular subject and grade. Here we are using the PDE definition.)

[2] IDEA requires all states to have a "comprehensive Child Find system" to assure that all children who are in need of early intervention or special education services are located, identified, and referred. http://www.childfindidea.org/overview.html.

Address educational needs of English Language Learners

English Language Learners (ELL) students come from more than 400 different language and cultural backgrounds – some districts have more than 100 different language groups – but most ELL students are born in this country. ELL students are the fastest growing segment of the public school population and every school district, whether suburban, urban or rural, is affected. Over the past 15 years, the number of ELL students in the United States has nearly doubled—to about five million, with projections showing that by 2015, ELL enrollment will double again to 10 million. As of 2005-06, the most recent year for which data is available, Pennsylvania schools enrolled nearly 46,000 ELL students.[1]

PSEA Recommendations

Implement and fund policies that support school districts' efforts to:

- Provide English as a Second Language (ESL) and bilingual education according to students' educational needs;
- Diagnose ELL students' learning needs, support their learning, and assess their progress;
- Provide ELL students who are eligible for special education with appropriate services; and
- Provide resources for improving accommodations for ELL students.

Teach ESL according to educational need

The research[2] indicates that learning English (or any language) is a long-term process. PSEA believes there should be ESL and bilingual education according to educational need. The main goal of these programs should be to achieve English proficiency, as well as provide support in content areas and other disciplines for ELL and students with Limited English Proficiency (LEP). Further, PSEA believes that educators must be involved in the development and implementation of programs to ensure the successful pursuit of the education of students, regardless of their native language; and also must have the support and resources needed from both state and local entities.

PSEA recognizes that to close the achievement gap between ELL students and their peers, the education system needs to do a better job of diagnosing their learning needs, supporting their learning, and assessing their progress. We support providing higher-quality professional development and in-service training on addressing, diagnosing, and teaching ELL students.

Additionally, PSEA supports comprehensive accommodations that allow ELL students to demonstrate their academic knowledge. PSEA does not support relying on a single measure of academic achievement for making decisions about any student, especially ELL students. Standardized tests generally are not valid for ELL students, because they were constructed and normed for native language speakers and may not accurately gauge what ELL students know and are able to do.

(01/10)

[1] www.pde.state.pa.us
[2] Genesee, F., Lindholm-Leary, C., Saunders, W.M. and Christian, D. (Eds.). (2006). Educating English Language Learners: A Synthesis of Research Evidence. New York: Cambridge University Press.

Enhance career and technical education

The Pennsylvania Department of Education (PDE) currently is implementing a five-year plan designed to revitalize Career and Technical Education (CTE) and comply with federal regulations. A key component of the new 21st Century program is a shift in focus from *training a student for a job* to *educating individuals for careers and lifelong mobility and advancement.* CTE focuses on a mix of career skills, academics and real-world application. The goal is to provide students with a full range of options, whether they choose working right after high school, going directly to college, or working followed by college at a later date. Whatever the choice, CTE students will be prepared.

PSEA Recommendations

Support the positive strides made in the area of CTE by:

- Fully funding the state's share of Pennsylvania's Career and Technical Education according to the existing funding formula;
- Continuing implementation of the current Pennsylvania Department of Education five-year plan;
- Expanding articulation agreements with post-secondary institutions;
- Continuing to support and fund Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math (STEM) Initiatives;
- Continuing and expanding workforce partnerships;
- Continuing and expanding professional development initiatives;
- Allowing CTE students to take the National Occupational Competency Testing Institute (NOCTI) tests as part of an alternative pathway for graduation requirements; and
- Supporting PDE efforts to educate school districts on their mandated role in supporting special education students in career and technical education programs.

Career and Technical Education in Pennsylvania

CTE has a long and rich history in the United States. Today's CTE has evolved from a limited number of vocational programs available at the conclusion of the 20th century into a broad 21st century workforce system that encompasses a variety of challenging fields in diverse subject areas that are constantly evolving due to the changing global economy.

Today's CTE provides students:

- Academic subject matter taught with relevance to the real world;
- Employability skills, from job-related skills to workplace ethics;
- Career pathways that link secondary and postsecondary education;
- Second-chance education and training; and
- Education for additional training and degrees, especially related to workplace training, skills upgrades and career advancement.

Some facts about Pennsylvania CTE students:

- Students can attend one of 81 Area Vocational Technical Schools (AVTSs), also called Career and Technology Centers (CTC's) or Technical Schools. In addition, 15 AVTSs/CTCs offer comprehensive full-time programs where students receive both basic and career and technical education. There also are many CTE programs that are delivered in high schools, such as Business Education and Agriculture Education.
- According to 2006-2007 data from the U.S. Department of Education (the latest numbers publicly available), there are more than 200,000 CTE students in Pennsylvania.
- In 2006-2007, 5,418 CTE students earned Industry Approved Certifications.

Funding is declining. PSEA is very concerned that, in the last decade, the state subsidy for vocational education has dramatically declined. In the 2009-2010 school year, Pennsylvania CTE will receive a subsidy allocation that is 70 percent less than is needed to fully fund the vocational subsidy formula, resulting in districts receiving only a percentage of the funds necessary to run these programs. With each year of decline, the extra financial burden further constricts the state's ability to meet the needs of these students. Funding must start to increase, or CTE schools and programs will be faced with cutbacks in program offerings, materials, tools and supplies, which will have a devastating effect on classroom instruction.

PSEA supports expanding effective programs that focus on real-world needs such as those that:

- Combine at least two years of secondary education in a state-approved CTC with the equivalent of two years of postsecondary education (associates degree) or less (certificate program).
- Align with Pennsylvania Department of Labor and Industry-recognized high priority occupations that are in demand by employers, have higher skill needs, and are most likely to provide family sustaining wages (currently $27,000 for two adults). [1]

- Expand STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Math) Initiative opportunities. Pennsylvania and five other states (Colorado, Hawaii, Minnesota, Ohio, and Virginia) have joined forces with the National Girls Collaborative Project. The goal of this program is to increase opportunities for women, minorities and underdeveloped groups to enter career fields represented by STEM. It partners state agencies, businesses, secondary education and higher education to provide students with an opportunity to work with mentors in the business community on real-world problems.
- Include professional development for staff, such as:
    - The Career and Technical Distinguished School Leader Program, which uses retired educators and administrators as coaches to provide targeted assistance to the Career and Technical Centers to improve student achievement on the 11th grade PSSA math/reading assessment and to improve student achievement on end-of-course occupational assessments.
    - Training to meet needs of special student populations. PDE estimates that 30 percent of CTE students have IEPs or are from low-income families. A recent change to Chapter 49 – Teacher Certification regulations of the State Board of Education will require all CTE teacher certification programs to include three credits focused on diverse/English language learners and six credits focused on special needs instruction.
    - Technical Centers That Work (TCTW) – this program is based on a product of the Southern Regional Education Board (SREB) High Schools That Work. A program that has been in existence since 1987, this model is based on 10 research-based practices that are proven effective.
    - MAX (Motivation, Acquisition and eXtension) Teaching with Reading and Writing – like TCTW, this is not a new program. With this process, the teacher facilitates the learning with students being active, rather than passive participants in the classroom. The students read, think, discuss, and write about the content reinforcing their learning as the teacher guides them through the process.

Some CTE students need alternative pathways to graduation

While all of Pennsylvania's students have been taking part in the PSSA assessments as required in part by the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA), CTE students have also been required by The Carl D. Perkins Vocational and Technical Education Act to take a CTE occupational/skills assessment test. This test, originally contracted to the National Occupational Competency Testing Institute (NOCTI) is administered to students who are soon to complete their individual CTE program curriculum. The test is a combination of written and practical

(hands on) assessments. The purpose of the test is to evaluate students' levels of competency in their areas of study (such as electrical and drafting).

Now that Pennsylvania has adopted regulations to allow two routes for students to demonstrate educational competency – Keystone Exams or validated local assessments – PSEA believes that the NOCTI exam should be an additional route for CTE students. Most CTE students concentrate nearly 50 percent of their 10th to 12th grade instructional time in their chosen CTE curriculum. CTE's students' scores on their CTE skills assessments (NOCTI tests) demonstrate their readiness for the careers for which they have prepared. PSEA believes those NOCTI scores should be recognized as an appropriate pathway to graduation for CTE students. If the purpose of the Keystone Exams is to assist in gauging a student's readiness, then the NOCTI exams are the appropriate alternative pathway for CTE students.

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Improve out-of-school learning opportunities

Student achievement gaps are more than academic. They are rooted in wealth gaps, safety gaps, and experience gaps that transcend schools. Gaps in out-of-school learning opportunities are another key determinant of student academic outcomes. Some children leave school for a quiet place to study, shelves full of books, a computer fully loaded with up-to-date software, and parents who are ready and able to review the day's learning and provide homework support. Other children live in homes that are chaotic and poorly equipped to support learning, or homes where no adult is able to help with homework.

During the summer, these differences in out-of-school experiences are exacerbated by the sheer amount of time students have to fill; some students attend high-quality summer camps, visit zoos, museums, and libraries, and take several family vacations, while other children spend the summer months largely alone, indoors, watching television. Children who rely on free or reduced-price lunches during the school year often find their access to well-balanced meals disappears during the summer. These differences in out-of-school experiences matter, particularly for low-income children who are least likely to have access to enriching out-of-school experiences.

PSEA Recommendations

- Provide funding and programmatic support to align out-of-school opportunities with the academic school day.
- Ensure that all students have access to academically enriching out-of-school programs, including safe, reliable transportation.
- Provide adequate funding for individualized, data-based and curricular-aligned instructional support to students who are struggling in school.
- Staff out-of-school programs with certified teachers and trained youth development workers.
- Adopt standards that include evaluation of program performance on a variety of academic, social, and developmental measures.

The case for out-of-school programming

Research is increasingly clear that persistent achievement gaps between students from high-and low-income families are substantially linked to unequal learning opportunities out of school, in students' homes and communities.[1] Evidence suggests that — far from creating achievement gaps —schools do a tremendous job of equalizing learning across high-and low-income students during the school year, but this is still not sufficient to offset the unequal learning opportunities during a child's out-of-school time.[2] One study found that about one-third of achievement test score differences between low- and high-income students could be traced to academic differences that existed prior to starting 1st grade, and the other two-thirds of test score differences could be traced to summer learning differences through elementary school.[3] Estimates are that students from low-income families lose more than two months of reading achievement during the summer, while middle-class students continue to make slight gains in reading during their months out of school.[4]

Research clearly shows that *out-of-school learning matters*, particularly for students from low-income families. Participation in high-quality before and after-school programs and summer programs is associated with several positive outcomes that can help counterbalance the impact of poverty on student achievement. Organized out-of-school programs for children and youth have achieved several positive outcomes:

- Higher levels of academic achievement, including higher achievement test scores, less school absences and tardiness, lower dropout rates, higher rates of grade promotion, higher rates of homework completion, and more engagement in learning;[5]
- Better social and developmental outcomes, including fewer behavioral problems, greater self-confidence, more initiative, better attitudes toward self and school, improved relationships with others, and enhanced social and communication skills;[6] and
- Fewer risky activities among youth, including avoidance of drugs and alcohol, reduction in juvenile crime, delinquency, and violent behavior, and avoidance of sexual activity.[7]

High-quality out-of-school programs designed to help students achieve academically, socially, and developmentally share several characteristics.

- **Academically aligned with the school day.**[8] This does not mean that out-of-school programs are simply extended school. Out-of-school programs should provide academic tutoring and homework help that extends and supports individual student learning. But other out-of-school activities, including games and field trips, can and should also be scheduled into children's out of school time and used to support the academic curriculum. This coordination requires detailed and structured communication between the school and the out-of-school program provider.
- **Designed to maximize student participation and attendance.**[9] Many factors affect student participation and attendance in out-of-school programs, including "location, transportation, timing, length, program offerings, and frequency of services."[10] High-quality programs pay attention to access and convenience, and they also ensure that their services are attractive to youth and parents and provide services and features the local community wants.
- **Provide one-on-one tutoring to students who need specific academic support.**[11] One-on-one tutoring provides students with the individualized attention they need and also provides the time and focus students need to engage in continuous progress assessment and instructional planning.

- **Balance formal academic support with fun, hands-on educational experiences and physical activity.**[12] Out-of-school programs are voluntary, and students are often fatigued after a long school day or year. This means that programs must be particularly engaging to attract and retain students, and they need to recognize multiple student needs, such as exercise, nutrition, social learning, and engagement in hands-on activities.
- **Staffed by certified teachers and trained youth workers.** These programs need to be professionally staffed by individuals who are trained to meet the academic, social, and developmental needs of children and youth. This includes full certification for academic staff, and youth development training and credentials for other program workers. Hiring and retaining professional staff may require out-of-school programs to provide substantially higher salaries to professional employees.

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Expand post-secondary education opportunities for more students

Post-secondary education is more important than ever in today's global economy, but it is increasingly out of reach for young Americans. Each year, more than 400,000 qualified high school graduates do not go on to college because neither they nor their families can afford the cost.[1] This is an unfortunate trend that also affects Pennsylvania.

PSEA believes that students should have the opportunity to take part in post-secondary education and supports efforts to evaluate existing programs aimed at helping low-income students afford postsecondary education.

PSEA Recommendation

Implement improved efforts to:

- Increase college accessibility through grants and loan forgiveness programs; and
- Ensure fair and equitable state funding for Pennsylvania's State System of Higher Education and the state's community colleges.

Cost is too often a barrier

Over the last quarter century, the burden of financing higher education has shifted from the state to the student. At the same time, college tuition and fees have risen faster than personal income, consumer prices, and even health insurance. Tuition and associated fees at Pennsylvania's State System of Higher Education averaged more than $8,000 in the 2008-09 school year.[2]

Students and families who can afford it the least are the hardest hit. The Pell Grant program, an important source of financial aid for the poorest students, covered 32 percent of the cost of a public, four-year college in the 2007-08 school year.[3] When the program was created in the 1970s, it covered up to 84 percent of the cost of a public four-year college.

In addition to financial barriers, many low-income and minority students need a range of support programs, starting as early as middle school, to encourage them to attend college, help them prepare for it, and provide support so they complete their degrees and graduate.

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Teaching and Learning Conditions: Great public schools for every student

- **Provide a positive and safe school climate**
- **Nourish student health and wellness**
- **Hire strong leaders in every school in every district**
- **Support quality teacher preparation**
- **Improve new teacher induction and mentoring**
- **Use research-based teacher evaluation**
- **Encourage comprehensive professional development**
- **Strengthen link between technology and student achievement**

Teaching and Learning Conditions: Great public schools for every student

Strong academic programs are enhanced by environments that support quality teaching and learning, such as positive school climate, student-oriented staff development, and stable leadership. All are contributing factors to the success of students and staff.

PSEA members work with elected officials to contribute ideas, provide support, and help guide the creative energies that will create great public schools for every student. We work to create learning environments where students are valued and where educators have freedom to develop expertise and provide input into the curriculum.

Legislators, state officials, executives, school boards, state commissions, educators, practitioners, parents, students, and members of the community have a role and responsibility within the educational system. It is not possible for an effective system of accountability to operate if any of the parties do not meet their responsibilities.

The best learning partnerships include community and leader support for educators. While educators communicate directly with students and have the most worthwhile and profound effects upon what and how children learn, it is community support and the value the community places on education that can help children strive to meet their full potential.

PSEA's 20/20 Vision for schools will guide policymakers as they create strong partnerships between school officials, employees, students, and their communities.

Provide a positive and safe school climate

Students learn best and achieve their full potential when they are physically, socially, emotionally, and academically safe – in safe and orderly classrooms.[1] PSEA supports comprehensive, evidence-based efforts to increase student achievement by establishing a positive school climate as reflected in the character and quality of school life. School climate reflects multiple aspects of people's experience of school life, including: norms, goals, values, and interpersonal relationships.[2]

PSEA Recommendations

- Build a system of standards and accountability that takes account of school climate measures. This includes adopting statewide, evidence-based standards for school climate, developing tools to help measure school climate, creating accountability expectations that extend beyond academics to account for all the needs of children, and provide resources and technical assistance to help all schools achieve the school climate standards. Within this structure of standards and accountability, schools should be required to ensure that professionals also are safe. Staff should have a constant communications device while teaching, a system to locate students who are in the school building but not attending class, security cameras, and other appropriate safety equipment where necessary.

- Support and disseminate evidence-based models of school practice. Schools need to ensure every student will have a supportive relationship with at least one adult in school; design academic and extracurricular programs with the specific goal of providing adult role-models; provide students with the tools and resources to know how to communicate with adults about rumors, threats, or abusive behavior; and ensure that all students and staff know how to identify and respond to potentially violent students. Schools also need successful models to create pro-active partnerships with law-enforcement and social-service agencies, including deliberate strategies to prevent bullying, gang activity, and other issues that put students at risk.

- Provide funding to ensure adequate staffing. Ensure that all schools have a sufficient number of clearly identified security guards and that security staff receive adequate training and supervision from trained professionals.[3] Schools also require resources to expand access to counseling, anger management, and peer mediation services.[4]

- Require that schools plan for a safe, positive school climate. Require that each public school establish a Safety Committee to bring staff, students, administrators, and parents together in a cooperative effort to maximize safety in each school building.[5] Ensure that schools engage in planning and professional development and have adequate resources to address safe school issues.[6]

- Enact a legislative package that addresses gaps in current statute, such as: establishing a Safe Schools Advocate for urban school districts which traditionally have a higher number of violent incidents;[7] provide civil and criminal immunity to school employees when they exercise in loco parentis ("in the place of parents") authority in disciplining students; and requiring every school vehicle and school bus to be outfitted with backup warning devices to provide additional safety protections for students and staff on and around school property.

- Establish policies, such as placement in an alternative school, for students who place other students or staff at risk for serious bodily injury or who are habitually disruptive. Require that all districts establish alternative schools and provide training to teachers assigned to those schools (alternative schools are often best suited to meet the needs of students who are violent or disruptive because they are designed to address behavioral and mental health issues).[8]

Safe school climate indicators are directly linked to student academic performance,[9] and a positive school climate is key to fostering healthy child development and high-level learning and is directly linked to student academic performance.[10] A positive school climate also is associated with fewer student behavioral and emotional problems.[11] Research examining the impact of school climate in high-risk urban environments finds that a safe, supportive school climate can have a particularly strong impact on the academic success experienced by urban students.[12] Finally, a positive school climate is associated with greater job satisfaction among school staff[13] and higher rates of staff retention.[14]

To support safe and productive learning environments, schools can engage in several evidence-based, targeted strategies to improve school climate. Efforts should be:[15]

- Relationship-focused: Connect every student to at least one caring adult;
- Curricular-based: Ensure that curriculum promotes social, emotional, and civic competencies along with content-area competencies;[16]
- School-wide focus: Adopt community-wide practices to build character and support appropriate student behavior;

- Emphasize Resiliency: Help at-risk students use school and community-based supports to build upon their unique strengths;
- Response to Intervention model: Use diverse and increasingly intensive approaches to support students academically;
- Data-driven: Track and analyze school data that goes beyond test scores and includes perceptions of key school climate indicators; and
- Coordinated: Build systems to link educators, students, parents and caregivers, and the community to create schools that are safe and caring.

(01/10)

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Nourish student health and wellness

Experts agree: the academic success of America's youth is strongly linked to health. For many, school is the only way to get essential health services. As studies of school breakfast programs have shown, students who eat breakfast have lower rates of absenteeism and tardiness, need less attention from school nurses, are less obese, and are less likely to have disciplinary, behavioral, and psychological problems.[1] It is important to note that health services such as routine hearing, dental, and vision screenings are critical to students' ability to attend school and give their best efforts toward learning. In addition, early detection and treatment of emotional/mental health issues for students is critical.

PSEA Recommendations

Policymakers should insist on policies that help students and families to be healthy:

- Fund and build upon successes of "Community Schools," which bring family counseling, substance-abuse treatment, legal aid, family health services, childcare, and other services into the school setting to meet the comprehensive needs of students and to facilitate individual case-management.
- Formalize inter-agency collaboration (similar to the newly created inter-agency Office of Child Development and Early Learning) within state government in a comprehensive approach to improve academic learning by supporting student wellness.
- Encourage use of research-based anti-bullying programs.
- Encourage schools to consistently provide time for recess or some time to be active.
- Encourage schools to continue or expand health and physical education classes at all grade levels.
- Track data with academic indicators to identify areas in need of targeted programs.
- Require school districts to hire the appropriate number of certified pupil services professionals including school nurses, school psychologists, school counselors, home and school visitors, school social workers, and school dental hygienists.

Indicators of child health and well-being

Children with untreated, chronic health problems are frequently absent from school and can have trouble concentrating. Public school accountability proposals often confuse symptoms with diagnosis. There is considerable evidence to suggest that student low achievement is a symptom of deeper issues related to student health and well-being. In other words, policymakers may need to consider the idea that academic achievement problems may not be in the academic content instruction. For example, the following issues outline just a few of the many indicators of child health and well-being that affect student learning.

Physical health conditions affect academic achievement

- Absenteeism related to juvenile diabetes correlates with lower scores on reading, spelling, and mathematics measures.[2]
- Among chronic illnesses, asthma is responsible for the greatest number of student absences in this country. Each year, students with asthma miss approximately 14 million days of school as a result of their illnesses.[3] When students are absent, they miss assignments, fall behind in their coursework, and can develop knowledge gaps that are hard to overcome.
- The number of obese school-age children has tripled in 30 years. One in five is now overweight or obese.[4] Child obesity and low levels of activity are related to lower math and reading achievement.[5] Yet, estimates are that as many as one-third of elementary schools do not schedule recess on a regular basis,[6] and Pennsylvania does not mandate any specific time for recess during the school day.[7]
- After equalizing schools on socioeconomic and other demographic indicators, schools with higher percentages of students engaged in physical activity and higher percentages of students eating nutritiously have higher achievement and greater year-to-year test gains than other schools.[8]

Child dental health affects academic achievement

- Tooth decay is the single most common chronic childhood disease in America.[9]
- More than one out of four early elementary students has untreated dental cavities.[10]
- Children in America lose more than 51 million school hours each year to dental-related illness, and when children are not in school, they are not likely to be learning academic content.[11]

- Poor children have twice as many cavities as other children; fewer than three in 10 children in poverty receive preventive dental services.[12]

Mental health conditions affect academic achievement

- Every year, more than one in five children between the ages of nine and 17 experience the signs and symptoms of a Diagnostic Statistical Manual-IV psychiatric disorder;[13] but only 20 percent of children and youth who need mental health services actually receive them.[14]

- As many as one in eight adolescents struggle with clinical depression.[15] About 1,900 will commit suicide this year,[16] and for every child who commits suicide, as many as 25 others have tried.[17]

Safety conditions affect academic achievement

- African American males aged 15 to 19 are 16 times more likely to be victims of homicide than white teenage males.[18] Exposure to violence-related trauma places children at substantial risk for mental illness.[19]

- Children who are suspected victims of abuse or neglect come to the attention of child welfare authorities and are often removed from their natural family settings and placed in foster care. By its nature, entry into the foster system often implies fundamental safety concerns about a child. African American children make up about 45 percent of the children in public foster care and more than half of all children waiting to be adopted.[20]

Teen pregnancy remains a chronic risk factor for adolescent girls

- Every day, more than 1,100 teenage girls give birth in America. The teen birth rate in the U. S. is the highest among all industrialized countries.[21]

- In Pennsylvania, 16.5 percent of our African American teenage girls become pregnant, 3 percent higher than the national average.

- Parenthood is the leading cause of school dropout among teenage girls.[22]

As educators, policymakers and other education stakeholders try to meet the accountability demands placed on public schools, it is important to understand that rigorous academic standards, improved curricula, innovative pedagogy and other purely academic practices are only a part of the picture. Psychologist Abraham Maslow was correct, almost 70 years ago, when he insisted that people cannot focus on creativity, problem solving, and understanding of facts unless their more fundamental needs for physiological comfort, safety, and belonging are already

met. Policies that focus exclusively on increasing student achievement as measured by standardized test scores are certain to leave many students behind. Comprehensive policies to support student achievement cannot ignore the comprehensive health and well-being needs of students. Nor can accountability policies hold educators and administrators accountable for the impact of unmet health needs on student achievement.

Certified pupil services staff have a positive effect on children with physical and mental health challenges. These staff persons identify health challenges, develop solutions, and work with parents and students to help children succeed and be healthy.

(01/10)

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Hire strong leaders in every school in every district

School leadership matters, because school leaders have the power to substantially influence teaching quality and student learning.[1] Studies show school and district leadership account for about a quarter of total school effects,[2] second only to teaching among school related factors.[3] In schools and districts struggling to increase student achievement, the effects of high quality school and district leadership are even greater. The evidence is clear: it is virtually impossible to "turnaround" a struggling school or district without a powerful and effective leader.[4]

PSEA believes that school improvement across the Commonwealth requires a strong and sustained commitment to recruiting, developing, and maintaining an excellent cadre of school leaders for every school and district.

PSEA Recommendations

Engage in actions to improve the quality and stability of school leaders.

- Conduct a statewide working conditions study as a first-step in addressing the reasons school leaders leave the profession.
- Examine national models of principal evaluation and develop a standards-based evaluation system that examines professional, evidence-based leadership behaviors, rather than simply accountability for student test results. This evaluation system should ensure that principals and other leaders support teachers and respond to circumstances that impede teachers from improving their practice or increasing student learning.
- Develop models of distributed and shared leadership that build collegiality within the school and district, allow instructional leadership to be shared among administrators and content teachers, and engage all educational professionals in the process of culture change and school improvement.

Grow great leaders

National studies, such as the Schools and Staffing Survey from The U.S. Department of Education National Center for Education Statistics, have found that teachers who leave the profession as a result of job dissatisfaction often report a *lack of administrative support* as one reason for their departure. Teachers working in high minority and high poverty schools are even more likely than other teachers to report that the *lack of administrative support* led them to leave teaching.

The quality of school and district leadership directly affects the quality of teaching in schools in many ways.[5] In fact, it is the work that school and district leaders do that enables teachers to be effective. Teacher effectiveness is not simply a factor of the traits of teachers, but also of their ability to apply their knowledge and skills in a high-functioning organization, designed for student success. The leader builds the organization and recruits, retains, and develops staff to maintain it.[6]

Policies and programs need to pay attention to the particular needs of urban and rural schools. In many urban and rural districts nationwide, the turnover rate among principals is as high as 20 percent annually.[7] This is troubling because true systemic change rarely takes fewer than five years,[8] and many major changes can take as many as 10 years to fully implement.[9] When a principal leaves, research confirms that urban and rural districts face a particularly limited supply of high-quality principal candidates.[10] Urban and rural communities often pay lower salaries and offer fewer benefits than other districts, and as a result they receive significantly fewer applicants for open positions.[11] Consequently, urban and rural schools, often with comparatively low levels of student achievement, are more likely to be forced to choose among a small number of inexperienced principal and assistant principal candidates.[12] This is not fundamentally the result of a "shortage" of school leaders, but it is a shortage of school leaders who are willing to accept pay and working conditions that are substantially lower than other, more prosperous, districts.[13]

Policies and programs need to recognize the link between stable school leadership, teacher stability, and student achievement. Principal and superintendent turnover is not only a problem because of challenges in recruiting new candidates. Evidence is growing that rapid turnover among school leaders may have a negative impact on teacher retention and student achievement. One study in Texas found that, after controlling for teacher and school characteristics, teachers were about 20 percent more likely to stay at the same school for at least five years if the same principal remained at the school over the same time. The same researcher found that, after controlling for student, teacher, and school characteristics, schools operated by the same principal over time had greater gains in student achievement than other schools.[14]

Another study found that teachers who say their principals treat them as educational professionals are at least 50 percent more likely to stay at the same school than other teachers.[15]

Policies and programs need to measure and improve the working conditions of school leaders. Principals overwhelmingly report that the level of education, energy, and stress inherent in the job are not commensurate with the salary.[16] Several states have begun detailed examinations of principal working conditions and the impact of those conditions on employment decisions as well as on student achievement. For example, one study found that principal retention rates are strongly influenced by student achievement during the principal's first year of employment and the percentage of economic disadvantage in the school; more than 20 percent of secondary school principals in the lowest achieving schools or highest-poverty schools leave the job after one year.[17]

Improving the working conditions of school leaders will require the Commonwealth to re-examine those conditions in detail, determine the leading causes of administrator dissatisfaction, and modify the work of administrators in ways that make them more satisfied and effective.

Build a system of effective principal accountability, evaluation, and professional development. Any formal accountability, professional development, or evaluation program needs to be based on standards, including a shared understanding of what it means to build a constructive learning environment, and require the leader to develop a system of professional support that enhances teachers' knowledge and skills. Pennsylvania has started to build a standards-based system of school leadership in the development of the Pennsylvania Inspired

Leadership Initiative and the passage of Act 45 of 2007; however, this system has yet to develop evaluation procedures to examine the work of school leaders in relation to standards and pinpoint leaders' specific professional development needs. Professional development is most effective when it is individualized and based upon comprehensive professional evaluation**.**

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Support quality teacher preparation

Teacher preparation programs are the first critical link in building a quality teacher workforce.[1] Ideological debate persists about the components of effective teacher preparation. However, research defines several components of high quality teacher preparation.

PSEA Recommendations

PSEA believes that policies and programs in Pennsylvania need to ensure that all new teachers are prepared in high-quality, university-based comprehensive teacher preparation programs that are designed by colleges and universities to ensure all teacher candidates meet the standards delineated in the Pennsylvania Department of Education's Program Approval Guidelines. In order to increase the likelihood that all students will be taught by teachers prepared in excellent preparation programs, lawmakers and policymakers in the Commonwealth should support the following initiatives.

- Insist on curricular balance within preparation programs among content knowledge, pedagogical knowledge, and monitored clinical experience.
- Create incentives for institutions of higher education to build training for teaching in urban and rural areas into the preparation program.
- Provide incentives for "grow your own" programs that link institutions of higher education with hard-to-staff districts to encourage local residents to enter teaching.
- Extend teacher preparation into the first years of teaching with high-quality, state-funded new teacher induction programs that include links to the teacher preparation institution.
- Resist "fast-track" programs such as Teach for America, the American Board for Certification of Teacher Excellence, and other programs that fail to ensure full participation of teacher candidates.

High-quality teacher preparation

High-quality teacher preparation programs include study of academic content and pedagogy paired with significant monitored clinical experience. Critics of traditional teacher preparation programs have suggested that individuals with academic content make good teachers. Research does demonstrate a correlation between teachers' academic preparation and their impact on student achievement. But higher levels of teacher pedagogical knowledge also correlate with higher levels of student achievement. Consequently, relying solely upon evidence of an academic major or related work experience as a proxy for teacher content knowledge may not represent all of the knowledge and skills new teachers require. Effective teacher preparation programs insist that candidates combine academic content knowledge with pedagogical expertise and significant clinical practice.[2]

High-quality teacher preparation provides focused, well-structured clinical experience. Clinical experience is no substitute for academic preparation. However, when teacher candidates' clinical in-classroom experiences dovetail with academic preparation, clinical practice is one of the most powerful elements of a comprehensive teacher education.[3]

High-quality teacher preparation programs are comprehensive, which means they usually take time. Alternative preparation programs that "fast-track" candidates into the profession often have several unintended negative consequences. For example, one study in New York City concluded that graduates of college-based comprehensive teacher preparation programs were significantly more effective math teachers than teachers lacking full certification, including teachers from Teach for America.[4] In Houston, teachers who entered teaching as temporary or emergency hires or via alternate routes were less effective than fully-prepared beginning teachers.[5] Finally, a survey examining three alternative programs (Troops to Teachers, the New Teacher Project, and Teach for America) found that only half of the alternate route teachers felt prepared for their first year of teaching, compared to eight out of 10 teachers prepared in traditional university-based programs.[6]

High-quality teacher preparation programs are designed to prepare teachers to work where they are most needed. Teacher shortages in Pennsylvania are neither chronic nor widespread. Rather, teacher shortages are specific and targeted. Urban districts find it particularly difficult to attract graduates from high-quality, comprehensive teacher preparation programs. In Pennsylvania, where many public institutions of higher education are located in rural areas and small towns, preparing teacher candidates for positions in the schools that need them most can be particularly challenging.

Comprehensive teacher preparation should be a priority

High quality, comprehensive teacher preparation reduces teacher attrition. Attrition rates among beginning teachers who have not attended a comprehensive preparation program are twice as high as among teachers with extensive preparation (18 percent versus 9 percent), after controlling for confounding variables.[7] National data show that 49 percent of uncertified or fast-track entrants left teaching after five years, compared to only 14 percent of those who entered teaching fully prepared.[8] State policies requiring extensive teacher preparation rather than fast-track programs clearly contribute to the continuity of instructional programs and avoid the persistent and high costs incurred by districts forced to replace teachers who leave.

Graduates from comprehensive teacher preparation programs achieve higher student outcomes than graduates from fast-track programs. Research confirms that graduates of comprehensive university-based teacher preparation programs are significantly more effective than teachers lacking certification or graduates of many alternative, fast-track teacher preparation programs.[9] A comprehensive analysis of 57 studies found consistent positive relationships between comprehensive teacher preparation and teacher effectiveness.[10]

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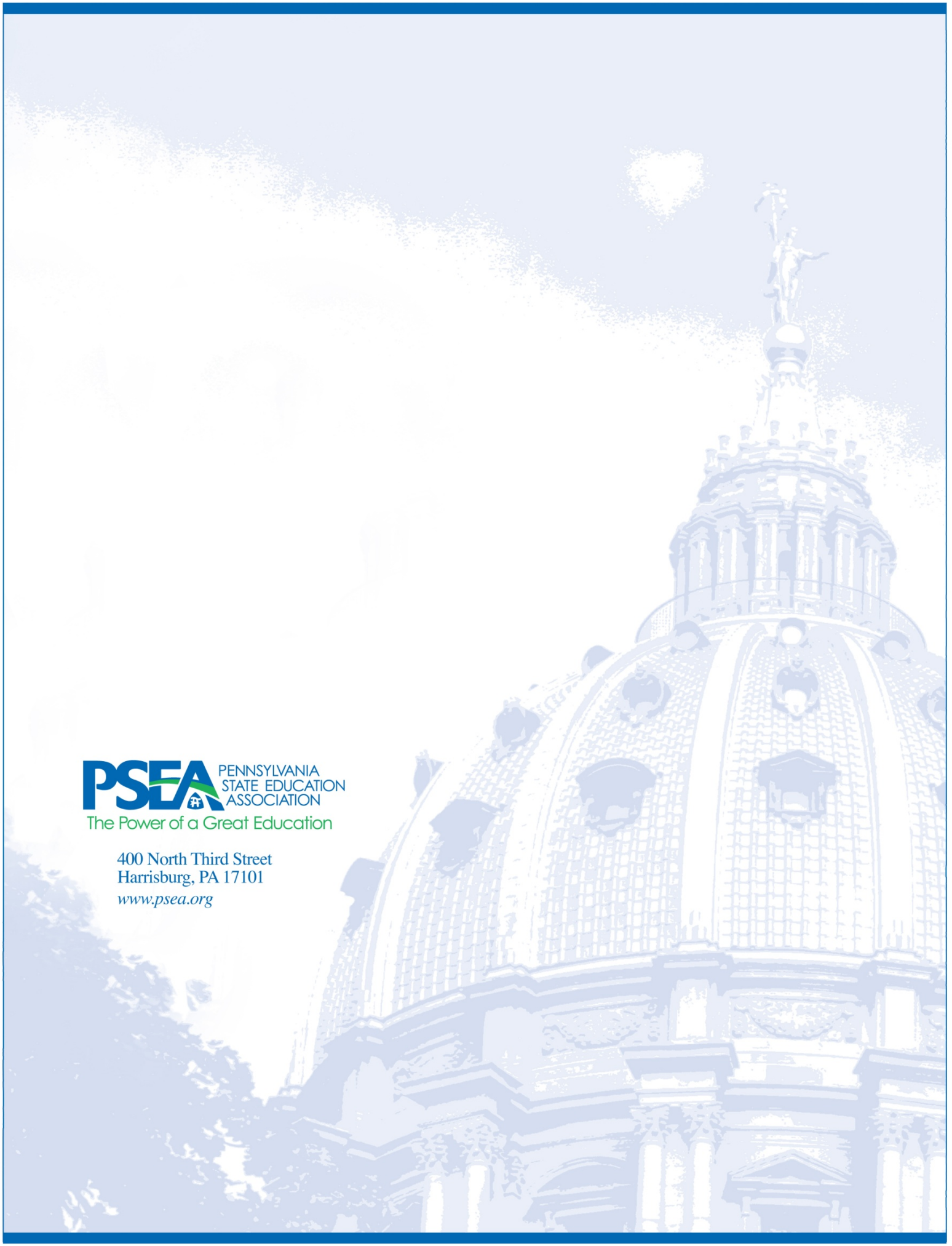

PSEA PENNSYLVANIA STATE EDUCATION ASSOCIATION

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Improve new teacher induction and mentoring

Pennsylvania is experiencing a major demographic shift in the educator labor force. As large numbers of newer teachers enter the profession, the need for strong mentoring and induction programs is evident in order to keep quality educators in the profession and grow the leaders of the future. All new teachers would benefit from these programs. Good professional support improves the likelihood that new teachers will stay in the field, and lack of professional support is associated with higher levels of teacher attrition.[1] Good professional support also allows promising professionals to stay in teaching and fully develop their expertise.

PSEA Recommendations

The Commonwealth should support the creation and expansion of comprehensive induction and mentoring programs for new teachers:

- Develop statewide policies that are based on best practices and require, guide, and finance any kind of new teacher induction; and
- Identify funds to pay mentors, including release time for mentors and those being mentored, and financial incentives for districts to design innovative programs.

Multiple measures

Effective support for new teachers includes comprehensive induction and mentoring, and can cut attrition rates in half.[2] Research has defined what constitutes effective new teacher induction. It includes:

- more than one year of developmentally appropriate professional support;
- a rigorous program to train and support experienced mentors, who (a) work in the same content area as the new teacher, (b) are compensated for their mentoring work, and (c) have release time to work with a new teacher in the classroom during school time;
- standards-based formative feedback to new teachers, in an environment that is meant to support professional growth rather than evaluate for tenure and/or job-security; and
- professional development opportunities that are job-embedded and targeted specifically to the needs of new teachers.

Retaining teachers makes economic sense for districts. Keeping energetic, promising professionals in our schools is not just wise for our students. It also is wise for district budgets. According to the Alliance for Education, "Induction has shown to create a payoff of $1.37 for every $1 invested."[3] Money spent constantly recruiting new teachers could be better spent on long-term investments in teacher retention and quality rather than on replacing large numbers of new teachers who enter and exit districts in a short period of time. Retaining teachers also is an important way to improve student achievement, since research consistently demonstrates that teachers with five or more years of experience achieve better student learning outcomes than newer teachers.[4]

In a report providing best practices for teacher induction, The National Commission on Teaching and America's Future shows that state induction and mentoring policies are fiscally prudent. The Commission says that while many states require teacher induction programs, only a few finance these programs. "Wong and Breaux estimate that each teacher who leaves the profession during the induction years costs taxpayers more than $50,000. Using other industry model estimates, the Texas Center for Educational Research found that the cost of teacher turnover in Texas is $329 million per year, if conservative numbers are used. Alternate industry models for these costs yield a far higher price tag: as high as $2.1 billion each year for teacher turnover in Texas alone."[5]

PSEA believes these programs are very worthy investments.

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Use research-based teacher evaluation

PSEA supports professional evaluation systems that are based upon clear standards, encourage professional growth across a teaching career, take account of organizational supports and barriers to effective teaching, empower teachers to examine their work, and are based upon multiple sources of evidence and linked to teacher professional development.

PSEA Recommendation

- Develop statewide teacher evaluation policies that are evidence-based, supported by research, and use multiple measures.
- Ensure that teachers have an opportunity to provide meaningful input into the evaluation process.
- Ensure that the evaluation system is designed to improve practice.

Use multiple measures

The art and science of teaching are both complex and multifaceted. As researchers develop a clearer understanding of the many components of effective teaching, experts also have examined research about professional evaluation to make traditional teacher evaluation systems more effective. Current research has defined several components of effective professional evaluation systems that can be applied to teachers.

A set of challenging standards to define appropriate practice. When professional standards form the basis of an evaluation system, administrators know what to measure and teachers know what to demonstrate. Both teachers and administrators are able to reflect on good practice, and teachers are able to revise their work with a clear goal in mind. Consequently, tying evaluation to professional standards produces more positive change than simply evaluating teachers on test score results.[1]

The flexibility to relate the teaching standards to local organizational goals. Within the context of statewide standards, effective teacher evaluation systems allow schools and districts to prioritize specific teacher behaviors, knowledge, and skills. These specific teacher characteristics may correspond with district priorities in terms of curriculum and instruction, or may be the result of changing student demographics or policy directives. In evaluation terms, these desired teacher behaviors need to be clearly defined, and teachers need specific supports to help them develop knowledge and skills specific to local needs.

Different expectations for professionals, based upon career stage and the purpose of the evaluation. Effective evaluation systems help professionals grow through the course of their career. This means that effective teacher evaluation systems should hold somewhat different expectations for teachers at the time of licensure and hiring, at the time tenure is granted, and at various points throughout an educator's career depending on the individual's professional development needs.

An understanding of organizational supports and barriers to effective job performance. All professionals require specific supports; a doctor needs access to medicine and a lawyer needs access to evidence. Teachers, too, need resources and materials in order to be most effective. These include instructional materials, small classes, appropriate professional development, effective instructional leadership, and low levels of class disruptions, absenteeism, and discipline challenges. Effective evaluation systems have the capacity to link teacher performance to school climate, materials, the contribution of the principal as an instructional leader, and professional development.[2]

Employee engagement, self-appraisal and feedback. When employees participate in their own evaluations, the quality and quantity of information increases, and ratings become more accurate and valid.[3] Employees frequently set higher goals for performance than managers when employees are also given the requisite autonomy, authority, and resources to improve their work.[4] Inviting employees into the evaluation process generates higher levels of employee cooperation, encourages the development of coaching relationships, and reduces defensive behavior.[5] Self appraisal increases the extent to which an employee feels prepared for the evaluation meeting, increases the employee's overall satisfaction, and increases the employee's perception of the fairness of the evaluation.[6]

A strong and diverse body of evidence. Teaching is multifaceted, and the greatest amount of work is often the intellectual planning that leads to a particular teacher behavior or instructional event. Consequently, the evaluation of educators' work needs to sufficiently capture the complexity of the work. In teacher evaluation, this means examining how instructional strategies apply to the curricular content, goals, and student needs as well as examining evidence of planning, parent and student engagement, student work, and other records of teacher work, including multiple measures of student learning.

Link to professional development. The goal of any well-structured evaluation system is to improve professional practice, not simply to punish its absence. Consequently, an evaluation system is only useful to the extent that it can produce actionable, evidence-based suggestions for professional learning. Research has found that when teachers can examine specific data about student achievement and compare these to constructive, detailed, and evidence-based feedback

about their instruction, professional practice can improve substantially.[7] Most teacher evaluation systems fall short, in large part because principals do not value the evaluation instruments and are prone to inflating the results.[8] Regular staff development that is directly related to a teacher's job, driven by clear goals, and based on appropriate data and teacher input, is a powerful way to improve teacher effectiveness. The role of evaluation in this system cannot be overstated.[9]

Barriers to comprehensive teacher evaluation in Pennsylvania

The false promise of test score accountability. Some advocates of teacher evaluation reform suggest that student test scores are an appropriate measure of teacher quality. But student performance and teacher performance are not the same thing. The fact that client outcomes and professional practice are related only indirectly has been accepted in other professions: patients' health outcomes may not reflect a doctor's performance; nor can the size of a tax rebate say much about the quality of an accountant. Suggesting that one person's job performance is causally responsible for another person's outcome requires stronger inferences and evidence. This evidence has not been produced to date, nor is it likely to be produced.

Using student outcomes to measure teacher practice is problematic for several reasons: (1) it assumes that the teacher controls all student behaviors that impact achievement, such as attendance, studying, eating well, sleeping well, and not abusing drugs or alcohol; (2) since the focus is on student, rather than teacher, performance, it provides no clear information about ways teachers can improve their practice; and (3) student outcomes may identify teachers who generate a particular test score, but they cannot be used to develop higher levels of effectiveness among ***all*** teachers. The purpose of any effective evaluation system should be to improve practice, not simply to measure its outcomes.

Lack of resources to support comprehensive evaluation. Effective evaluation requires time and expertise. This means that both teachers and evaluators need to know the evaluation criteria and develop a shared understanding of what proficiency looks like. They need training in how to recognize the standards in practice. Administrators need time to gather and analyze comprehensive information about a teacher's work, and teachers need time to gather evidence of their work to share with administrators. Both teachers and administrators need time to discuss teaching and learning issues that arise during the evaluation process.

Teacher evaluation has not always been effective. For teachers and administrators, the evaluation process is often formulaic. In many cases, the process design maintains the status quo rather than improving it. Most of the time, teacher evaluations are too infrequent to improve teacher effectiveness, and when evaluations do occur, they may be too superficial to lead to

meaningful improvement.[10] Few principals are trained to effectively use evaluations to improve teacher performance, and even fewer principals have time to evaluate every teacher thoroughly.[11]

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Encourage comprehensive professional development

Teachers continue to develop their skills and knowledge throughout their entire careers and must complete additional coursework and requirements to maintain their certification/licensure. Individual teachers undertake many professional development courses and activities and also participate in school district sponsored professional development activities. The result is that traditional professional development happens after school, on in-service days or during the summer, which gives educators little opportunity to apply their learning. It also does little to encourage educators to learn from each other's practice and makes it hard for professional development to be a sustained experience when in-service days and after school workshops are short and scattered through the school year. In short, "the kind of high-intensity, job-embedded collaborative learning that is most effective is not a common feature of professional development across most states, districts, and schools in the United States."[1]

PSEA Recommendations

- PSEA encourages continuing professional development of all educators, including certificated substitutes. Educators must have release time to participate in professional education programs. It must be the responsibility of the school entity and the state to provide for and finance these programs.

- In terms of professional development, building a supportive system means *removing obstacles* to implementing effective professional development (such as costs and schedules). It also means *building supports* for effective professional development. Effective professional development is supported by a strong school vision and related goals, standards for professional development, a process for measuring progress, and an organizational culture that supports learning.

Meaningful professional development

There is simply no substitute for finding time during the day for educators to collaborate, apply new ideas, and share their learning. Evidence shows that effective professional development needs to be seen as a regular, on-going part of school life and "suggest[s] that the development of opportunities for long-term teacher collaborative interactions is an important and effective professional learning option."[2] Research has found that when teachers can examine specific data

about student achievement and compare these to constructive, detailed and evidence-based information about curriculum and instruction, student achievement can improve. Focused, rich and sustained professional development matters.[3]

Training needs to be accompanied by coaching during the school day, and educators need to have opportunities to share experiences and learn from each other. In order to accomplish this, school leaders must develop systems to allow educators to observe and collaborate, alter scheduling so that key groups of teachers can have shared planning time, provide early-release days so that teachers can work together during afternoons, and use existing meeting time in new ways to foster professional collaboration.

Another way to embed professional development in the work of educators is to provide frequent opportunities to study student work. Studying student work is an important way to share understandings about student learning, discuss instructional ideas to intervene for struggling learners, consider enrichment activities for advanced learners, and discuss real student work in relation to state and local standards. Research has shown that regular study of student work is one of the most effective ways to improve student learning.[4] "Nothing motivates and engages teachers more than examining student work and engaging in conversation with other teachers about how that work was achieved."[5]

For teachers in particular, professional development needs to deal with deep and useful content knowledge that educators can use in their instruction. There is a strong relationship between teacher content knowledge and effective instruction. "Teachers with a deep, conceptual understanding of their subject ask a greater number of high-level questions, encourage students to apply and transfer knowledge, help students see and understand relationships between and among ideas and concepts, and make other choices in their instruction that engage students and challenge them to learn.[6]

High-quality professional development is built on collegiality and collaboration among school staff to solve important problems. Efforts to reform professional development often fail because the system is not structured to support the intended reform. For example, educators may try to find time to study and compare student work, but scheduling often makes it hard for staff to meet together during the day. In some countries, teachers have 10 or more hours a week to work together on instructional issues; teachers in the U.S. report having less than an hour a week to examine instructional issues together. Nevertheless, evidence is growing that working collaboratively is important: when educators work collectively, they are more likely to believe that what they do has a positive effect on students. This belief changes behavior in important ways and improves student achievement.[7] Because of the link between collegiality and student achievement, successful professional development helps educators think about their practice in

the context of a professional community. It also gives educators opportunities to use their collective expertise and support to make decisions about instruction.[8]

Educators also may want to examine student assessment data together to consider appropriate curriculum changes, but there is no coordinated local assessment system to provide the kinds of data they would need to make judgments about the curriculum. Fundamentally, professional development does not exist in a vacuum; schedules, curriculum, student and teacher evaluations, school mission, goals, and expectations must all be aligned with professional development in a coordinated system.

Michael Fullan explained the importance of the whole system by pointing out that the infrastructure of reform—that is, the layer above whatever layer is being targeted for reform—often conflicts with the intended change or is too weak to support it.[9] When schools and districts give attention to a reform without also paying attention to the surrounding infrastructure to support the reform, the reform is likely to fail.

(01/10)

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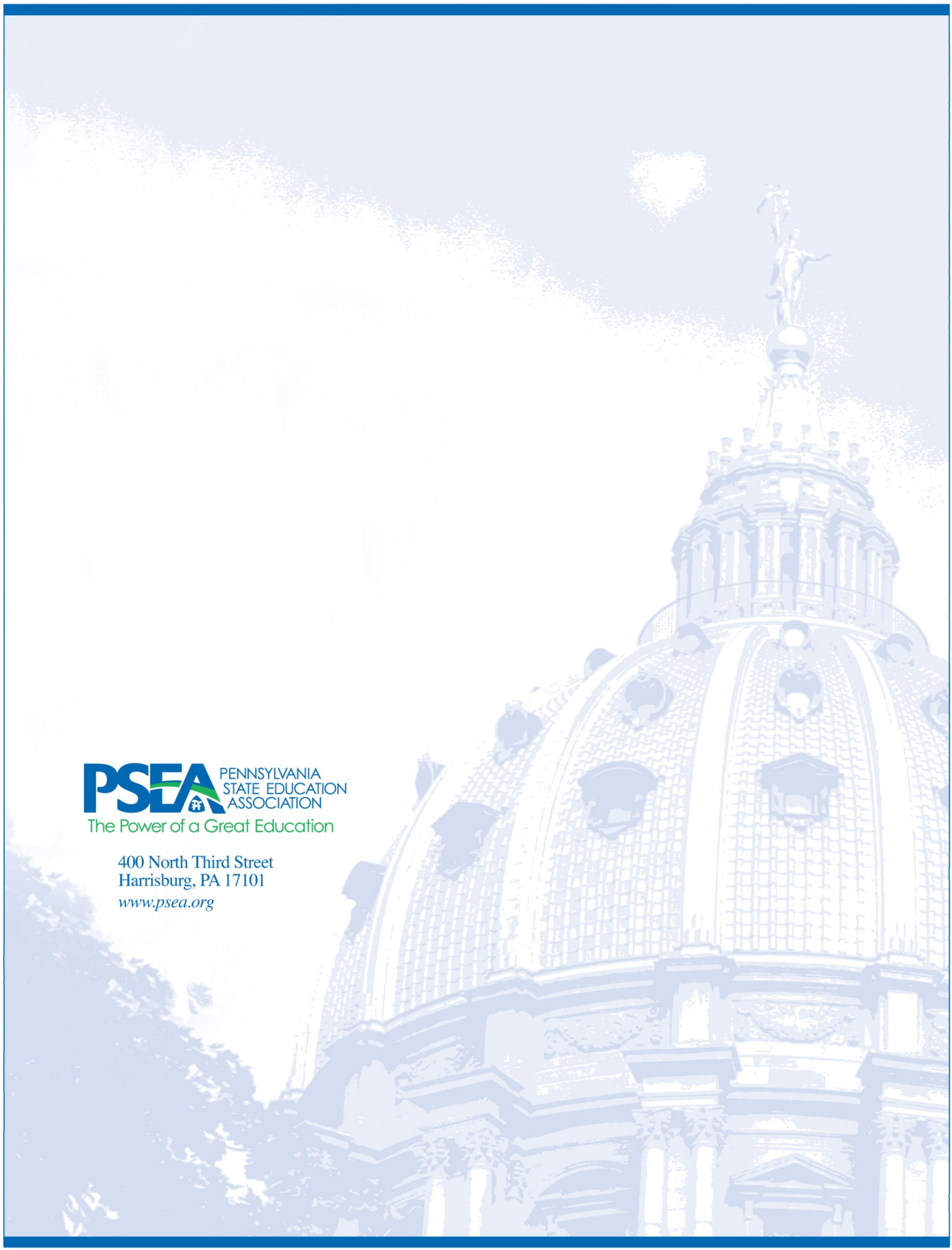

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Strengthen link between technology and student achievement

Educators and policymakers who advocate the learning of skills relevant to the 21st century strongly argue that literacy in information and communications technology (ICT) – which relies on skills such as thinking and problem solving, communicating effectively, self-direction and productivity – requires fully integrating technology with classroom learning.[1]

Many districts that are engaging their students with a multitude of technology-enriched curricula and instruction are demonstrating positive links to student achievement in a variety of subjects.[2] In fact, researchers are finding a clear link between technology, achievement, and motivation.

PSEA Recommendations

Improve access to technology. Educators have been remarkably creative with limited computer access, but if technology is to be integrated into instruction, more computers must be made available for students' use, through stand-alone computers or portable and wireless technologies.

- Increase Internet access, address software issues, and expand technical support. Efforts should address any equity issues related to Internet access, software, and technical support.
- Expand professional development in technology. Technology training, most commonly offered for administration, communications, and research, should focus more on applications for instruction. Those entering the profession, as well as experienced educators, should have access to high-quality professional development in technology.
- Capitalize on teachers' and students' enthusiasm about technology. The Commonwealth should help districts seek more ways to use technology for the greatest gain in student achievement, particularly in urban and rural/small-town schools.
- Identify funding for Classrooms for the Future, or a similar program.

Technology helps achievement

Most experts engaged in the technology debate agree that students and teachers tend to be more engaged and interested when technology is an integral part of teaching and learning. Most educators agree that technology improves student learning, but the vast majority also believe their students enjoy learning more with technology. Urban educators are particularly strong in their belief that technology has a positive impact on their students.[3]

Enthusiasm for technology has led many school districts to successfully alter not only the curriculum but also the way the curriculum is delivered. By recent counts, at least 23 states are now operating virtual schools where students can receive instruction online.[4] In Pennsylvania, PA Learners Online serves students in kindergarten through 12th grade and is managed by the Allegheny Intermediate Unit. Any student between the ages of five and 21 who is a resident of Pennsylvania may apply to enroll. The school is chartered by several western Pennsylvania school districts, including Allegheny Valley, Baldwin Whitehall, Bethel Park, Chartiers Valley, Deer Lakes, Moon Area, Shaler Area, South Allegheny, West Allegheny and Woodland Hills.

Technology also has a significant effect on the quality of the work experience for classroom teachers. While teachers are generally positive about technology, newer teachers are even more enthusiastic. More of them are satisfied with their general knowledge of technology and see it as improving their job effectiveness. Studies show that when educators use technology they feel they are able to do their job more effectively.[5] Also, while most educators agree that technology is essential to teaching and learning, educators in urban and rural/small town schools are more likely to agree strongly about the value of technology for them and their students.[6] Perhaps the value of technology in urban and rural schools rests mostly with its usefulness as an engaging, assistive-learning tool, particularly since students in lower income urban and rural areas have less access to technology outside of school.

Maintenance support for computers must also be adequate to ensure that computers function properly and reliably. Quality technical support for computers and other technologies should be available in every school. Particular attention should be given to schools located in urban areas, where maintenance and technical support are less likely to be provided. Another important point is separating the instructional support role of paraprofessionals from that of providing maintenance and technical support.

Classrooms For the Future is an initiative that attempted to integrate technology into the curriculum and improve teaching and learning in designated content areas of English, math, science, and social studies by providing enhanced technology resources such as laptops and other resources. It also sought to transform the role of teachers from that of instructors to facilitators, and that of students to co-explorers. In 2008-2009, the initiative served 453 schools and 490,000 students. For the 2009-2010 fiscal year, the Governor requested funding to expand the effort to reach 545,000 students, but this line item was eliminated in the final budget. This or a similar program should be resumed.

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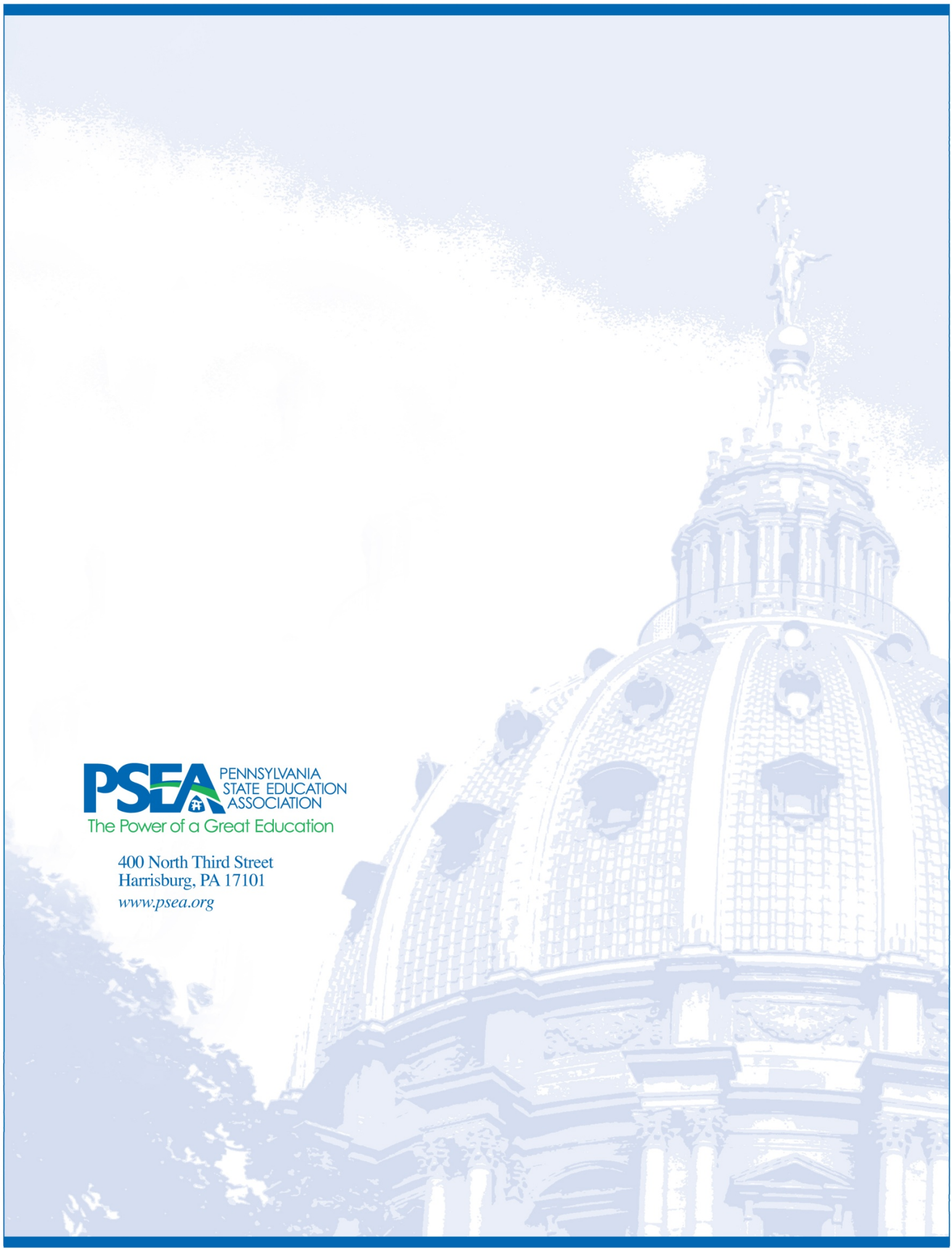

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Support and respect for education professionals

- **Preserve collective bargaining**
- **Pay competitive salaries to attract and retain education professionals**
- **Consolidate health care benefits for school employees**
- **Respect education support professionals**
- **Safeguard the promise of a secure pension system**
- **Protect school employees' right to strike**
- **Charter and Cyber Charter Schools**
- **Salary facts**

Support and respect for education professionals

From cafeteria workers and bus drivers to school nurses and teachers in classrooms, Pennsylvania public school professionals' top priority is helping our children succeed. Gains in multiple indicators show that their efforts have been successful.

However, while learning always is their main focus, the job of school employees is not solely focused on academics. Education professionals also function as caregivers, sociologists, psychologists, confidants, and a multitude of other roles. They show their never-ending dedication to children by instilling confidence in those who face various adversities in life, searching for new and creative ways to meet students' differentiated academic challenges, and by keeping up-to-date on best practices.

The 191,000 members of PSEA believe that respect for the professional application of these human skills and their public service should result in professional salaries and fair benefits, including health care and a secure retirement.

Yet over the last decade, average educator salaries have not kept pace with inflation. In fact, the cost of salaries and benefits – as a total percentage of district budgets – has declined. The pension system into which professionals have faithfully contributed has been harmed by artificially low employer contributions. Action on a statewide healthcare plan that would reduce costs and ease contract negotiations has stalled in the General Assembly.

Academic progress will not continue without a high-quality, stable, professional workforce. Any long-term erosion of educator salaries and benefits could devastate the profession. Benefit reductions, long hours, low status, and unprofessional working conditions will send warning signals to prospective educator candidates and halt Pennsylvania's progress in its tracks. That is why PSEA members are counting on elected officials and policymakers to show how much they value education professionals by supporting the working conditions necessary to recruit, attract, and retain the best educators in the nation.

Preserve collective bargaining

Unions give people dignity, fairness, and a voice in the workplace. In Pennsylvania, contracts are negotiated through the collective bargaining process as set forth in Act 195 of 1970 and Act 88 of 1992. Through this process, PSEA members work together with their school districts to support quality education activities and to negotiate fair contracts.

PSEA's goals within this process focus on factors proven to positively affect student achievement while also meeting members' salary and benefit needs. Goals include seeking language that: guarantees class size/work load maximums; encourages staff development; provides teacher input into education materials, textbooks, and technology; ensures a safe, nonviolent, clean and healthy working environment; and provides competitive salaries and benefits designed to attract and retain the highest quality educators.

PSEA Recommendation

- Preserve Pennsylvania's Collective Bargaining Law.

Framework to meet student needs

Collective bargaining provides a foundation and security for public school employees upon which they build policies that enable them to meet the needs of the students they serve. It is this foundation that helps to attract the best and brightest minds into the teaching profession and to retain those individuals in the Commonwealth rather than having them leave Pennsylvania to find employment in other states or other professions. It also is through collective bargaining that teachers have a voice in improving the educational outcomes of their students.

Pennsylvania's Collective Bargaining Law provides a mechanism for resolving disputes between public employers and employees. The law: (1) grants public employees the right to organize and choose employee representatives; (2) requires public employers to bargain with those representatives; and (3) establishes procedures to protect the rights of all parties, including the public.

National research has shown that in addition to improved compensation and security for teachers, such union involvement in school districts improves student outcomes. For example, unionized districts are more likely to have smaller class sizes and more instructional preparation time. Several studies also have found math, economics, and SAT scores in unionized schools

improved more than in non-unionized schools; increases in unionization led to increases in state SAT, ACT, and NAEP scores and improved graduation rates.[1]

Grimes and Register analyzed data from 2,000 high school seniors in 61 districts nationwide. The data, from the National Assessment of Economic Education survey, showed black students who attend unionized schools scored 13 percent above black students in non-unionized districts, all else equal.[2] Eberts and Stone measured a three percent union productivity advantage in a sample of 14,000 fourth graders in 328 elementary schools nationwide.

Even researchers who typically are at odds with the positions of teachers' unions have found that the supposed restrictions collective bargaining places on school district discretion are overstated. Analyzing collective bargaining in 40 Massachusetts school districts for the conservative Pioneer Institute for Public Policy Research, Dale Ballou found:

> [T]wo things stand out. First is the variation among contracts. It is certainly not the case that all contracts are essentially alike. On virtually every issue of personnel policy there are contracts that grant administrators managerial prerogatives they are commonly thought to lack. There are many school systems where transfers and layoffs are not determined by strict seniority. In some districts administrators enjoy wide latitude to evaluate teachers on the basis of informal observation and discreet data collection. Not all contracts establish a just cause standard for teacher discipline. Many contracts place fairly strict limits on bumping and recall rights. Many impose no limits on class size. And so forth.
>
> With only 40 districts in the sample, generalization is hazardous. It would appear that the simplest, least restrictive contracts are found in the more affluent small towns and the outer suburbs of Boston. In the larger urban districts and less affluent towns, contracts tend to be more restrictive. Larger systems are more bureaucratic and rule-bound.[3]

This is consistent with the more recent conclusion of the conservative American Enterprise Institute's Frederick Hess and his co-author.

> Union critics have suggested that teachers unions in states with mandatory collective bargaining laws often help to write school district policy, that collective bargaining agreements *[sic]* are highly prescriptive, and that school boards and school leaders find themselves excessively constrained by contract provisions. However, our examination of collective bargaining processes and contracts suggests that such claims are at best an incomplete account, and at worst a misleading characterization of how collective bargaining affects district management.[4]

In his review of research by the Education Policy Studies Laboratory at Arizona State University, Robert Carini recommended that districts "should view teacher unions more as collaborators than as adversaries," noting that "Given the empirical evidence, unions have a solid track record of supporting policies that boost achievement for most students."[5]

There are many theories on why districts with collectively bargained contracts exhibit these positive indicators. Two strong theories point to the quality of educators and their ability to influence district policy. The working conditions in districts where contracts are collectively bargained give them an advantage over other districts in attracting highest-quality professionals. In addition, the collective bargaining process allows educators to have a voice in district policy, providing a means for them to clearly define conditions under which teaching and learning are most likely to succeed.

The well-defined grievance process that guides districts and employees not only helps in conflict resolution, it also can save money. There are efficiencies when employers negotiate with a single representative instead of hundreds of individuals. Channeling grievances to arbitration instead of the court system is an advantage for the teacher as well as the school district. It is a less costly process for both parties and, in most cases, a faster process. Employees and employers must work through the process and work to find solutions.

But the greatest value to the employer may be in the logic to the findings in the "exit-voice" literature as explained by Harvard economists Freeman and Medoff: when workers have access to a grievance process, they are less likely to exercise dissatisfaction by quitting their jobs; they have a voice in the process.[6]

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[1] EPSL summary of a "Teacher Unions and Student Achievement," a chapter by Robert Carini in the book, School Reform Proposals: The Research Evidence (Information Age Publishing, 2002), edited by Alex Molnar.
[2] Grimes, W. P. and Register, C. A. (1991) "Teacher Unions and Black Students' Scores on College Entrance Exams," Industrial Relations, p. 492-500.
[3] Ballou, D. (2000). "Teacher Contracts in Massachusetts" Pioneer Institute for Public Policy Research.
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Pay competitive salaries to attract and retain education professionals

PSEA members support the development of compensation systems, within the collective bargaining process, that allow for appropriate local decision making and that encourage and enable improved educational outcomes. PSEA's recommendations for compensation are based on decades of research investigating the educational strategies that improve educational outcomes and how compensation systems align with successful educational strategies.

PSEA Recommendations

- Reform compensation to reward professional educators for the professional development and mastery of teaching associated with National Board for Professional Teaching Standards Certification.
- Reform compensation to reward professional educators for obtaining professional development appropriate either for their current subject areas or subject areas in which they seek to teach.
- Identify programs that reform compensation to reward professional educators for undertaking additional duties and responsibilities associated with school-wide or district-wide educational improvement goals.
- Reform compensation to reward professional educators, under particular conditions, for electing to teach in hard-to-staff schools.

Reward experience and hard work

Reform compensation to reward professional educators for the professional development and mastery of teaching associated with National Board Certification. The National Board for Professional Teaching Standards (NBPTS) has developed a certification process designed to be attained by only a small percentage of all professional educators. It is the explicit goal of the National Board to only certify professional educators who exhibit remarkably high levels of knowledge, skill, and practice. [1] The advantages of providing additional compensation for National Board Certification are self-evident. Research has shown that educators' level of knowledge and experience are good predictors of the quality of their teaching, so it is appropriate

to provide financial incentives for the higher levels of mastery that teachers obtain as they gain experience. In many school districts in Pennsylvania, teachers are being rewarded for successfully completing this arduous national certification process.

Unfortunately, in most cases the additional compensation does not reflect the appropriate value of teachers holding a National Board Certificate. The application process for National Board Certification takes approximately 400 hours to complete, the equivalent of 10 full-time, labor-intensive work weeks while the applicants continue to hold their full-time teaching positions. The fact that teachers are motivated to complete this process for minimal additional compensation shows their work ethic. PSEA supports using federal funds to provide $5,000 annual incentives to teachers who achieve National Board Certification.

Reform compensation to reward professional educators for obtaining professional development appropriate either for their current subject areas or subject areas in which they seek to teach. Research shows that high-quality professional development can have a significant impact on student achievement. Teacher compensation reform should encourage professional educators to achieve additional, appropriate knowledge and skills and compensate them for bringing the additional knowledge and skill into the classroom. The single salary schedule, used properly, already provides the framework for this reform. If anything, a significant problem in Pennsylvania is that the current levels of additional compensation for additional knowledge and skills are too low.

Identify programs that reform compensation to reward professional educators for undertaking additional duties and responsibilities associated with school-wide or district-wide educational improvement goals. Compensation strategies for professional educators need to align compensation with the extra duties associated with school-wide and district-wide educational improvement goals. Additional duties and responsibilities require additional effort and time. Mentoring is one example. Mentoring is especially important now in Pennsylvania as we are experiencing a major demographic shift in the teacher labor force as teachers hired in the 1970's retire and are replaced by less experienced teachers.

Reform compensation to reward professional educators, under particular conditions, for electing to teach in hard-to-staff schools. PSEA recognizes that certain schools are harder to staff for a variety of reasons. However, the evidence is far from clear about what level of compensation and what types of contractual commitments from both schools and teachers would be necessary to attract and retain a sufficient number of high-quality candidates who are not otherwise predisposed to desire the challenges of teaching in hard-to-staff schools. One potential solution for high-poverty/hard-to-staff schools is to require a five-year commitment from those provided additional pay to work in hard-to-staff schools and a five-year commitment from the school district to continue to provide additional pay. PSEA believes the decision to provide additional pay for hard-to-staff schools should be made through the collective bargaining process. These teacher pay reform strategies are best made within the context of a single salary schedule.

How to use the federal incentive program funds such as the Race to the Top (RTTT) initiative. From a policy perspective, it would be beneficial to use some RTTT funds to design scientifically valid pilot programs in districts with the intent of measuring the effect of teacher pay reform in comparison to other reforms that have been proven to work, such as smaller class sizes and parental involvement. The information gleaned from this approach would have a significant long-term impact by providing sufficient data for significant research on the changes that have the greatest effects on student learning.

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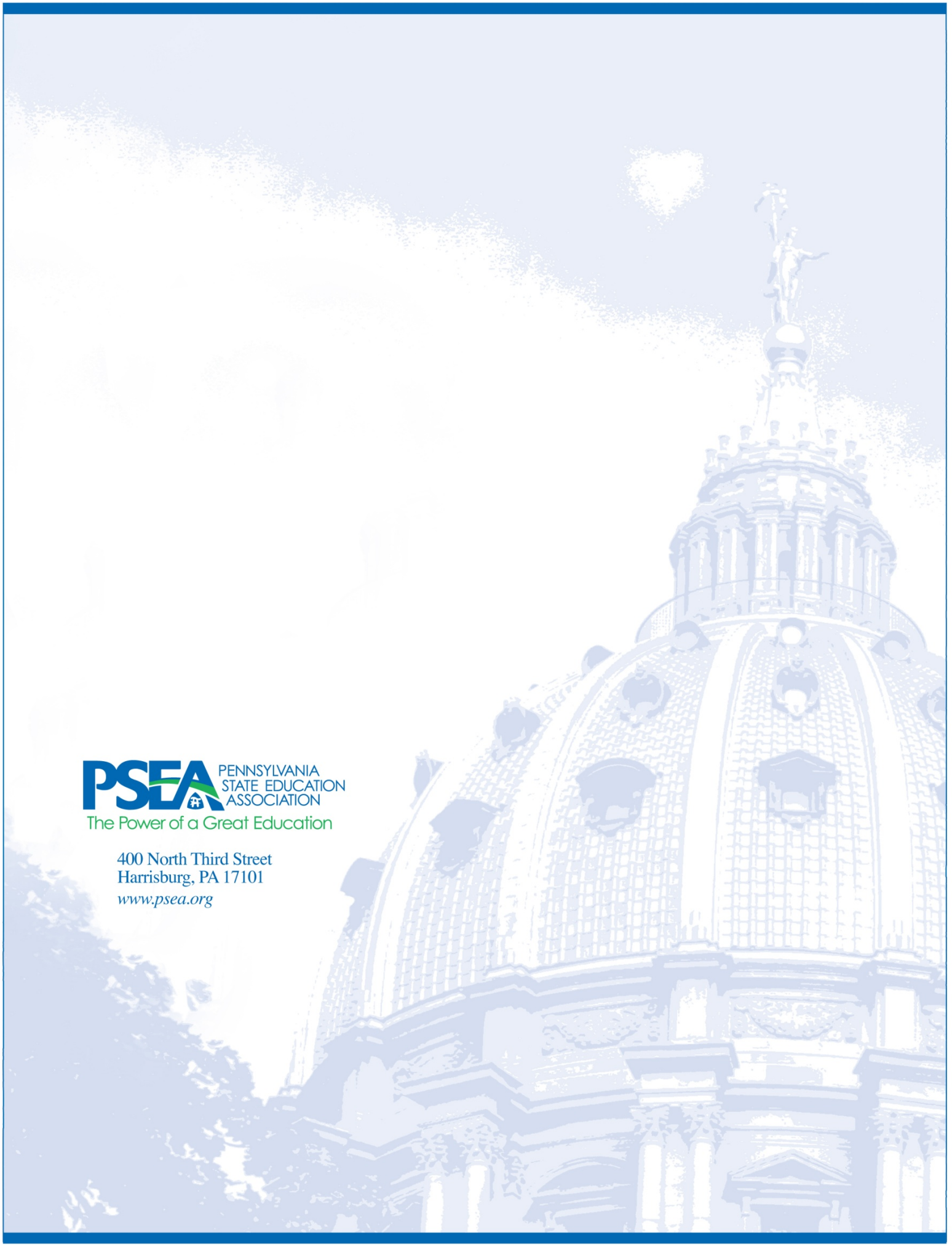
[1] For a comprehensive review of the research on the effectiveness of teachers certified by the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards see Hakel, M., Koenig, J, and Elliot, S. (2009) Assessing Accomplished Teaching: Advanced Level Certification Programs. Washington D.C.: The National Research Council of the National Academies.



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Consolidate health care benefits for school employees

Providing quality health care benefits is a necessary tool for recruiting and retaining the best and brightest into public education. PSEA believes a well-constructed statewide health care plan covering all school employees would protect this essential recruitment and retention tool, yield tremendous cost savings to the state and school districts, and remove a contentious issue from the bargaining table which would likely make contract negotiations easier to resolve in the future.

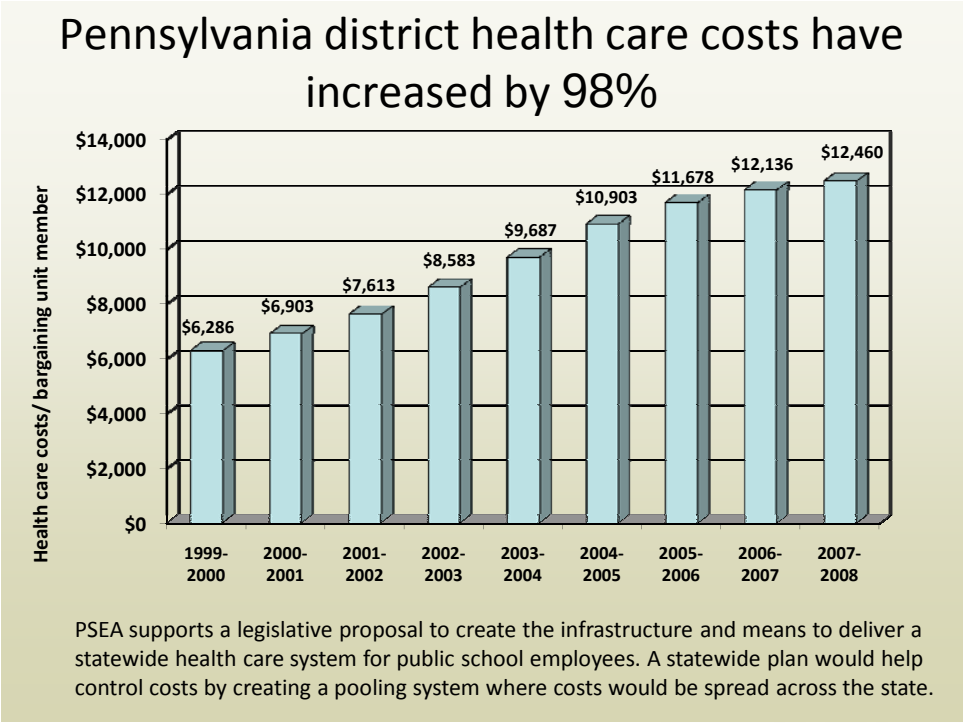
PSEA Recommendation

- Enact legislation that creates a solid framework for the development of a statewide health care plan for public school employees:[1]
    - Establish a Board comprised of representatives from state government, school boards, and school employees to oversee the development of a standard statewide benefits program;
    - Ensure that the Board's critical decisions, such as those dealing with plan design and employee cost sharing, are shared equally by employer and employee representatives; and
    - Base the development of the plan on a feasibility study that mandates participation of all school districts and insurance plans throughout Pennsylvania to ensure accurate data.

The complexity of today's health care industry and the power of the health care insurance industry put both public school employers and employees at a tremendous disadvantage. The redundancy of administrative fees, the costs of consultants, and the overall lack of power or leverage in the marketplace all contribute to the inefficiencies of trying to deal with today's health care insurance problems on a district-by-district basis. A well-designed statewide plan represents the best solution for addressing these inefficiencies and slowing the growth of health care costs for local school districts and Pennsylvania's taxpayers.

The Commonwealth of Pennsylvania has created efficiencies with state employees by pooling the health care for all of its state employees in the Pennsylvania Employees Benefit Trust Fund (PEBTF). This fund covers approximately 84,000 eligible Commonwealth of Pennsylvania employees and their dependents and 60,000 retirees and their dependents as well as additional employer groups. The PEBTF is governed by a Board of Trustees comprised of both

Commonwealth and Union representatives. Between the years 2003 and 2005, health care premiums for PEBTF rose an average 5.6 percent. By comparison in those same years, health care premiums for school districts rose an average of 24 percent.[2]



Similar to the PEBTF, the enactment of a statewide health care plan for public school employees would allow the Commonwealth and school districts to take advantage of several significant cost saving measures that are inherent in pooling the approximate 300,000 school employees into one group. First and foremost, the creation of a large risk pool will stabilize health care claims. Large pools will reduce the cost of the risk premiums assigned to cover volatile healthcare claims that are inherent in smaller risk pools. Second, by stabilizing the amount and type of health care claims, it would allow for a dramatic decrease, or elimination, of stop-loss premiums. Ultimately, it would be most beneficial to transition the many fully insured plans throughout the state to a single statewide self-insured plan.

Again, a large risk pool would eliminate the need for fully insured plans, which have risk costs, profit margins, and broker fees included in the premium price. When reviewing these and other factors, PSEA research estimates that it would be possible to cut anywhere from 15 to 25 percent in health care costs over the long term with initial savings in the 7-20 percent range.[3] Furthermore, PSEA believes these savings can be accomplished while maintaining quality health care benefits for public school employees.

A statewide health care plan would:

- **Remove a contentious issue from the collective bargaining table.** A major cause of many of the public school employee strikes in Pennsylvania is health care benefits. Statewide health care will help to reduce and control costs for the taxpayers of Pennsylvania while ensuring access to quality health care for the employees who support and serve Pennsylvania's children in public schools thereby, removing this issue from contract negotiations.

- **Create initial cost savings of millions of dollars for school districts.** Research estimates initial savings ranging from a seven to 20 percent reduction in current health care expenditures for school employees due to the elimination of redundant administrative costs and increased size of the risk pool with potential long-term savings in the 15 to 25 percent range.

- **Establish predictability and cost containment for Pennsylvania taxpayers, school districts, and employees.** The Task Force on School Cost Reduction created by Act 1 (the Taxpayer Relief Act) released its report in 2007 citing statewide health care as a key recommendation for reducing school costs. Establishing a statewide risk pool increases the buying power of the state. Enhanced health management, high level of health care planning and utilization expertise, and consolidated claims administration help keep costs low. Removing responsibility for managing health care benefits from school administrators and employees will allow them to focus on educating students, their primary responsibility.

PSEA firmly believes that a statewide plan would continue to provide quality health care coverage to school employees and their families while slowing the growth of health care costs for local districts and taxpayers. As the state budget continues to face increased pressure and public scrutiny, PSEA strongly recommends that Pennsylvania take advantage of this opportunity to establish efficiencies and cost-containment in the provision of quality health care benefits for public school employees. (01/10)

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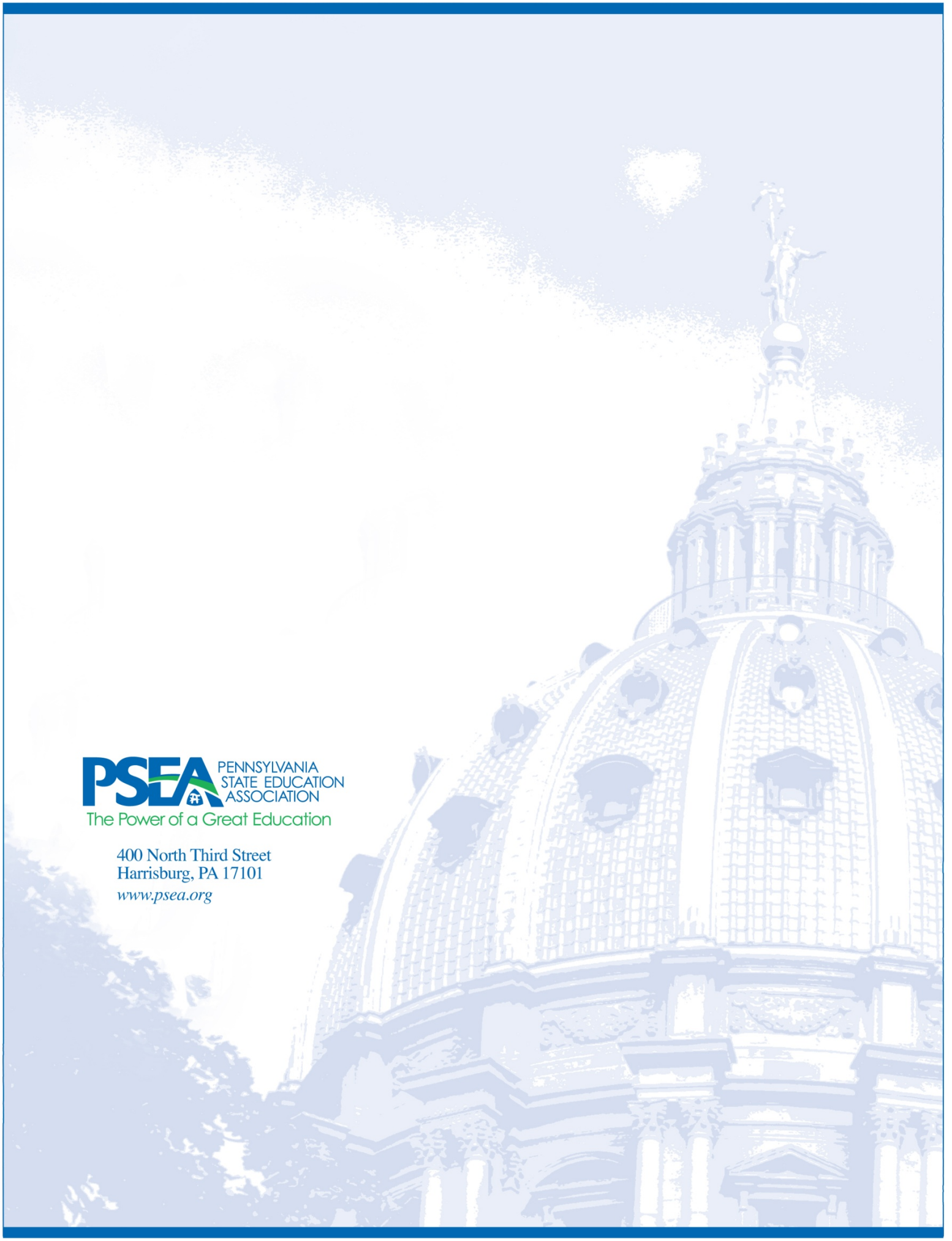
[1] PSEA supports House Bill 1881, introduced July 2009, which establishes the Public School Employees' Benefit Board.
[2] Pennsylvania's Task Force on School Cost Reduction Report - "Driving More Dollars Into the Classroom" http://www.able.state.pa.us/k12_finances/lib/k12_finances/TFSCRFinalReport.pdf.
[3] PSEA Research based on school district Annual Financial Reports submitted to PA Department of Education; this is not data based on the now-disputed "Hay" Report – The Feasibility of Placing Public School Employees Under the Commonwealth's Jurisdiction for the Purpose of Providing Health Benefits" – Legislative Budget and Finance Committee, February 2004 – http://lbfc.legis.state.pa.us; the "Hay" Report (named that because LBFC contracted with the Hay Group to conduct the study) was not accurate in its finding due to limitations of limited data as all school districts and insurance companies were not *required* to submit data. That would be rectified under the legislation PSEA supports to establish statewide health care for school employees.



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Respect Education Support Professionals

PSEA represents the largest number of education support professionals (ESP) of any union in Pennsylvania with more than 37,000 individuals who serve Pennsylvania public students as classroom aides, secretaries, bus drivers, cafeteria workers, maintenance workers, mechanics, and others. Our ESP members are the backbone of our school communities.

PSEA Recommendations

- Protect the safety of Pennsylvania school children by enacting legislation and other policies to establish a safe school climate.
- Protect the stability of services offered by ESP members to students and the school community by establishing accountability around subcontracting of services by school districts and providing ESP members with living wages.
- Enact model legislation (see Illinois Public Act 095-0241 – House Bill 1347[1]) that would establish accountability and transparency around the efforts of school districts to privatize the work traditionally performed by school district employees – i.e. providing student transportation, cooking and serving meals to students, cleaning and maintaining school buildings and grounds.

Background on subcontracting or privatization of services

Privatizing jobs held by public school employees is often presented as a way for school districts to reduce costs and ease the burden for busy school administrators. Contracting commonly replaces public school employees with for-profit employees in providing pupil services such as transportation, food service, and building maintenance. However, savings rarely occur; administrative tasks simply change; and public accountability can be lost. New issues are created for school boards, who remain legally responsible for providing a variety of vital public functions, but who have relinquished much of their control to the entity now providing those services.

Privatization costs communities more. It is difficult for districts to anticipate all the costs which will be incurred when private contractors are hired. As a result, administrators and school boards are frequently disappointed to discover that contracted services actually cost much more than anticipated. Too often, cost overruns, contract language loopholes, penalty payments for additional levels of service, or changes to the service itself cost more than the districted budgeted for the contracted service.

Contract renewals often add costs too. Private contractors, like other for-profit companies seeking business, often "low-ball" the original bid to obtain the first contract, then raise prices – sometimes significantly – when the contract is up for renewal. In the case of the largest contractors, there is little economic pressure from competitors. Contracting for services does not save districts the costs of maintaining equipment and facilities, providing cleaning services and products, and paying attorney fees.

Privatization changes the dynamics between the schools and the community. America's public education system is based on the principle of local control of school systems. Introducing large — in some cases, even multinational — corporations into the mix changes the dynamics in a negative way. The overwhelming majority of support professionals live in the school district where they work and often have children attending those same schools. Incorporating a contractor from outside the school district disrupts the sense of community. Support professionals are very likely to live in the district where they work. Contractors are rarely required to hire all the workers who previously performed the work. They will bring in workers from other cities, and maybe even other states, to do the work previously performed by district residents. In addition, labor relations are removed from the district's control, which is neither good for the district, its employees, or the students they serve. Private sector workers are not subject to the same strong requirements as are public sector employees.

Privatization leads to loss of flexibility. When citizens complain about a contracted service, the district becomes only a "middleman" who can only complain to the contractor or enter into costly contract renegotiations or lengthy termination proceedings. Most privatization contracts contain additional charges for any change or addition – and some will even require continued payment for a discontinued service.

Privatization leads to loss of accountability. Public officials are less accountable when services are privatized. They are still responsible for providing the service, but less able to meet their responsibility. As more public services are shifted to the private sector, districts move from an open and accountable system to one that is further removed from public scrutiny.

Privatization may reduce direct costs to a single district by shifting costs to taxpayers outside of the district. This is immediately apparent in the case of transportation. Districts receive an additional state subsidy if they contract out their transportation service, shifting the cost of providing transportation in their district to residents across the Commonwealth. Contractors are rarely required to hire all qualified employees who apply, leaving any employees they do not hire as unemployed. Districts will pay the unemployment compensation premiums for the first 26 weeks, but after that the district where the employee worked only pays half the cost of benefits, again shifting the cost outside the district. This is exacerbated if any of those workers are eligible for public assistance programs.

Background on the need for a living wage

Education Support Professionals keep school buildings and equipment functioning and students safe and healthy. As committed and caring members of a school community, they impact the lives of students every day. Yet ESPs are woefully underpaid, often barely able to afford to live in the communities they serve. In many parts of the state, school support professionals work two or even three jobs to feed and shelter their families, or earn so little that they qualify for government assistance.

The term living wage describes efforts by workers to increase their compensation to a level above the poverty line. Generally, a living wage means a wage rate sufficient to pay for basic necessities in a given community. The guiding principle is that people who work a full-time job should not have to live below the poverty line. A living wage would be sufficient to pay for rent, food, utilities, taxes, health care, transportation, and childcare.

A community's tax revenues, which are used to pay the wages of public school employees, should not create nor perpetuate poverty. When public sector employers – including school districts –pay wages to working families at a level that results in their employees being eligible for public assistance, the employer is not paying a living wage but rather is shifting costs to taxpayers statewide for the public assistance programs the employees may need to provide food, health care, transportation, and other essentials. In addition, poor pay drives employee turnover, which erodes workplace efficiency and the institutional memory of the school community. But when school districts – often times one of the largest employers in the community – pay more, their employees spend more, driving the local economy and spurring economic development.

(01/10)

[1] In 2007, Illinois enacted legislation that required third-party vendors to demonstrate the following prior to a school district entering into a contract: capacity for liability coverage, benefit packages for third-party employees comparable to the package provided to school employees currently providing the services, minimum 3-year cost projection based on generally accepted accounting principles and not subject to change, and criminal background information regarding private employees. The school district must also provide a cost comparison of every expenditure category based on continuing to provide services in-house or privatizing services. Review and consideration of all bids must be sunshined to the public and occur during a school board meeting.

Safeguard the promise of a secure pension system

Retirement benefits that provide education employees with post-employment income security are critical to the growth and maintenance of a well-trained and stable workforce in public education. To support this objective, PSEA urges the Commonwealth to continue to maintain a traditional defined benefit plan, as presently administered by the Public School Employees' Retirement System (PSERS).

PSEA Recommendations

- Maintain the present defined benefit pension system for current and future school employees.
- Work with the General Assembly to get an affordable funding plan under which the employer pension rate will increase to traditional levels.
- Support the PSERS Board in adopting a more conservative earnings assumption that will help to stabilize the employer pension rate in future years.
- Work to get Pennsylvania back on track by granting periodic cost-of-living adjustments (COLAs) to help protect the incomes of PSERS retirees.

The PSERS benefit plan encourages individuals to become and remain educators, thereby ensuring a stable and highly qualified workforce in our public schools. It promises public school employees a secure and predictable lifetime annuity in retirement that is based on their salary and years of service.

Funding for PSERS comes from three sources: (1) employers, as represented by the Commonwealth and school districts, (2) school employees, and (3) earnings on investments. Prior to 2001, the Commonwealth, school districts, and employees each picked up about one-third of the cost. The combined employer pension rate averaged 12.67 percent between 1960 and 2001; and, the employee rate prior to 2001 was 6.25 percent.

The system was working well and the Legislature was even able to grant periodic cost-of-living adjustments to retirees, as well as a series of "30 and out" early retirement windows.

During the late 1990's, PSERS had average earnings of 15 percent each year over a five year period. This resulted in the system becoming 123 percent funded and a falling employer pension

rate. The employee rate was increased to 7.5 percent in 2001 to cover the ongoing cost of an increase in pension benefits, while the employer pension rate for 2001-2002 was allowed to drop to zero percent.

An economic downturn in the early years of the decade and investment losses threatened to push the employer pension rate back up to its previous levels. However, the Legislature in 2002 and then again in 2003 passed legislation to push off paying pension liabilities in order to maintain an artificially low employer pension rate.

The Joint State Government Commission indicated in 2004 that without contributions set at a rate to cover normal costs, funding pressures would increase. Despite the warning, the employer pension rate has averaged 3.53 percent from 2001 to today. As a result, the PSERS funding level has dropped from 123 percent to less than 80 percent, as employers have continued on a "pension holiday," and there were no reserves built up to help sustain the system during the recent market crash.

School employees have been contributing their fair share of retirement contributions during this entire period of time. In fact, over the last decade, school employees have contributed twice as much as the Commonwealth and the districts combined.

Pennsylvania's elected officials need to demonstrate their commitment to a long-term, secure funding plan for PSERS. We learn from history or we ignore it at our peril. PSERS history shows that PSERS is most financially sound when districts, the state and public school employees are equal contributing partners. At the very least, the employer should pay the cost of benefits accrued each year, rather than employing funding gimmicks. Consistency is the path to solvency for the pension fund and retirement security for hundreds of thousands of public school employees.

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Protect school employees' right to strike

The issue of strikes has come under increased scrutiny in recent years and certain policymakers have taken a renewed interest in the issue. PSEA believes that, while they are unfortunate and should be minimized, strikes have a critical role in the collective bargaining process.

PSEA Recommendation

- Preserve the current right for school employees to strike as outlined by Act 88 of 1992.

Impact of Work Stoppages

Regardless of the fact that they are rare, strikes are particularly difficult for everyone involved, and neither teachers nor support staff have ever gone on strike without serious and often painful considerations. Yet, PSEA believes strikes are necessary as a last resort when all other efforts to produce a fair settlement have failed.

Often the two most referenced issues cited as cause for a strike are compensation and working conditions. Succinctly stated, compensation is a teacher quality issue. PSEA is willing to participate in discussions on a wide array of issues that affect teacher quality – such as recruitment, preparation, and continuing education. However, salaries for teachers and other education employees must be part of that discussion. Pennsylvania needs compensation that attracts and retains the kind of people students need and parents want. Why should people believe the laws of supply and demand end at the schoolhouse door? There is a relationship between salary and quality. It is clear that collective bargaining and the right to strike raise teachers' salaries.

Ultimately, the best negotiated settlement is one that the parties work out themselves through discussion, joint problem solving, and compromise. For 90 to 95 percent of Pennsylvania school districts, this time-tested process works and has actually improved labor relations, as indicated by the drop in strikes during the past two decades, particularly since the enactment of Act 88 in 1992.[1]

Act 88, although not perfect, has established a balanced system for protecting the rights of educators and other school employees during contract negotiations. Changes to the system that have been proposed by critics of school strikes would tip the balance decisively *against* educators and school employees and without clear, research-based evidence to do so.

There are some who opine that it is the teachers' unions who hold students hostage for exorbitant salaries, or use the threat of a strike to their advantage. An examination of actual evidence illustrates a different reality. Current teachers' salaries account for a smaller portion of total school district budgets today than at any other time in recent history. Between 1986 and 2007, salaries as a percent of total district expenditures fell, while at the same time, bargaining unit sizes increased by more than 26 percent.

When benefits are added to the equation, the same holds true. Peaking in the mid-1990s at just under 57 percent of total school district budgets, salaries and benefits now account for less than 50 percent of all costs. This bears some emphasis. Although the number of teachers and other bargaining unit members has *increased* by more than 26 percent, the share of district budgets devoted to educators' compensation has declined substantially.

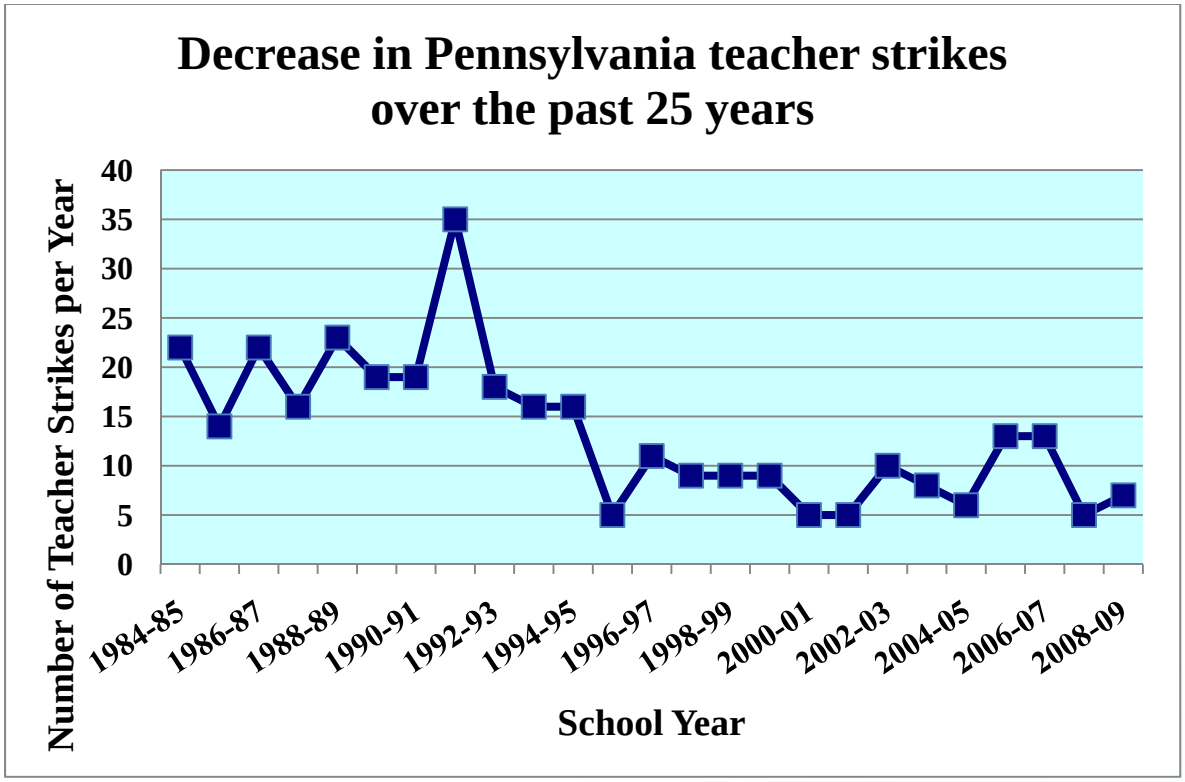
Critics of school strikes will also claim that strikes have a directly adverse impact on student achievement. In reality this is not the case. It is important to note that Act 88 ensures that students' instructional time cannot be affected. Since the passage of Act 88, no strike has prevented a school district from delivering the mandatory 180 days of instruction to students.

In addition, from an empirical standpoint, there is no evidence to support the claim that teacher strikes adversely harm student learning. In response to continued public discussion of the impact of teacher strikes, PSEA Assistant Director of Research Dr. Harris Zwerling conducted a study of the potential academic effects of strikes, using Pennsylvania System of School Assessment (PSSA) test scores from 2003-2004 to 2006-2007 and several different statistical models.[2] The validity of this research study has been confirmed by peer-review, which is considered a gold standard for meaningful research.

Dr. Zwerling was unable to find any statistical relationship between the incidence of teacher strikes and their duration and district level student performance on 46 different PSSA tests. This supports prior research in finding that Pennsylvania teacher strikes are not associated with negative academic outcomes, measured by district level PSSA test performance, attendance and graduation rates.

Dr. Zwerling also examined PSSA scores, graduation rates and attendance data of school districts that had teacher strikes between 1992-1993 and 2006-2007 and compared those districts to school districts that had not experienced strikes during the same period. His conclusion was that "…Pennsylvania teacher's strikes are not associated with negative academic outcomes, measured here by district level PSSA test performance, attendance and graduation rates."

Strikes are difficult and unpleasant experiences, and will continue to be a last resort for our members when negotiations fail to reach a settlement. But the research demonstrates that having the right to strike does not have a negative impact on school district budgets, or on the academic performance of students.



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[1] Act 88 of 1992 updated procedures and schedules for the collective bargaining process. The Act requires 48-hours notice before a strike begins; advisory arbitration is mandatory when a strike will prevent the school entity from providing 180 days of instruction before June 15 or the last day of the scheduled school year, whichever comes first; Strikes must cease when the parties submit to arbitration and may not resume until one of the parties has rejected the arbitration award; selective strikes are banned; allows teachers to strike twice in a school year; allows either party to request "fact finding" - which must be granted by the PA Labor Relations Board; employer may not use strikebreakers during the first strike who have not been employed by the district during the preceding twelve (12) months during the first strike; if a strike resumes after the arbitration award is rejected, the district may hire strikebreakers; the PA Secretary of Education may seek an injunction when the local has been on strike long enough that the district will not be able to provide 180 days by June 30.

[2] Zwerling, H. (2008). "Pennsylvania Teachers' Strikes and Academic Performance." Journal of Collective Negotiations. 32(2): 151-172.

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Charter and Cyber Charter Schools

Charter schools are independent public schools that operate under a contract or a "charter" and function with freedom from many of the policies and regulations affecting traditional public schools. While PSEA supports efforts to provide diverse learning opportunities within the public education system, we have concerns about: the method by which these schools are funded; their economic impact on traditional public school districts; their ability to hire uncertified teachers; and the high rate of employee turnover. All of these factors affect student learning.

PSEA Recommendations

- Create a rational and equitable system for funding charter and cyber charter schools.
    - Establish a uniform cyber charter school tuition rate that more closely reflects the actual expenses these schools incur to educate a student, using as a benchmark the actual expenditures of cyber charter schools that have historically both met adequate yearly progress targets with the most efficient expenditures.[1]
    - Cap charter and cyber charter schools' unreserved, undesignated fund balances in the same way that traditional school districts' balances are capped.
    - Remove legal barriers that prevent district officials from considering cost implications and the economic impact of new charters when deciding whether or not to approve them.
- Ensure that all students in all public schools – including charters and cyber charters – are taught by certified teachers. Charter and cyber charter schools should no longer be permitted to hire teachers who are not certified.
- Directly engage public school employees in the design, implementation, and governance of charter and cyber charter schools and programs.
- Enhance teacher compensation and working conditions in charter and cyber charter schools to attract and retain quality educators. Currently, fewer experienced and certified teachers work in charters and cyber charters than comparable traditional public school districts, and pay scales and relative teacher salaries are considerably lower at charter and cyber charter schools than in similar traditional public school districts.[2]
- Align Pennsylvania's charter and cyber charter school curricula with Pennsylvania's academic standards.

- Determine appropriateness of charter education for students with specific disabilities or learning needs.

Background on Charters and Cyber Charters

Since the 2002 authorization of charter schools and cyber charter schools in Pennsylvania,[3] the number of these schools has significantly grown. According to data from the Pennsylvania Department of Education (PDE), the Commonwealth has approximately 130 charter schools with enrollments totaling more than 73,000 students (including 11 cyber charter schools with approximately 17,000 students).

The national movement to create charter and cyber charter schools began in the early 1990's with the intent of increased academic opportunities for students, "choice" for parents and students within the public school system, enhanced accountability, and the creation of laboratories of innovation for traditional public schools to model. However, the existing body of research on charter schools does not show that they are meeting these objectives.

Academic Performance

Overall, the evidence of charter school performance is mixed. While some charters do better than nearby public schools with similar student populations, most do about the same and many do worse. The following highlights some of the most salient and recent research on the topic:

- A recent study of charter performance in 16 states reveals that only 17 percent of charter schools provide superior education opportunities for students. The study did show, however, that nearly half of charter schools have results that are *no different* from local public schools and over a third deliver learning results that are significantly *worse* than students would have realized if they had remained in traditional public schools.[4]

- A recent RAND study of charters in eight states found that in five out of seven locales, non-primary charter schools are producing achievement gains that are, on average, neither substantially better nor substantially worse than those of regular public schools in the area. The study found no evidence that charter school performance varies by grade level.[5]

- Martin Carnoy of Stanford University and his co-authors examined the evidence from studies of charter schools across the nation and reached the following important conclusions: (1) charter schools do not differ from regular public schools in average student achievement; (2) they have not improved the educational performance of urban,

low-income, minority children; and (3) competition from charters has not improved public school performance.[6]

- A study by Lubienski and Lubienski looked at mathematics results from the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) and found charter schools scored a significant 4.4 points lower than non-charter public schools in 4th grade, but scored 2.4 points higher in 8th grade (not a significant difference).[7]

We emphasize that research comparing charter and traditional public schools is complicated by selection biases that result from the self-selection of students into charters (generally parents choosing charters are more involved in their children's education) and the selection or counseling of students from charters. Both forms of selection favor charters in performance comparisons with traditional public schools, which must accept all students and have limited options for expelling disruptive students. Even a recent, highly publicized study of New York City charter schools which relied largely on lotteries for their student admissions, turns out to have had several methodological flaws that may have negated the claimed randomization of selection. This highlights the difficulty in making valid performance comparisons.[8]

Research also is important before policymakers decide to replicate programs that appear to be successful. For example, two charter school organizations, KIPP (Knowledge is Power Program) and the Harlem Children's Zone have been highly touted as success stories, leading some to advocate for their expansion. However, more detailed study of both programs is needed before one can reach firm conclusions regarding the performance of the programs, the reasons underlying it, or the wisdom of generalizing the models they use.

A recent review of the research on KIPP suggests that selection effects (e.g., departure of poorer students, unmeasured motivation of enrollees, dropping of lower performing schools) may enhance the apparent success among KIPP charter schools.[9] In addition, the demands of the KIPP model on children, parents, and staff may limit its scalability. Another recent study of the Harlem Children's Zone suggests that creating charters alone, without an extensive investment in community support services for students and their families, will be insufficient to achieve positive results[10].

Fiscal concerns related to cyber charter schools

PSEA has significant concerns about the funding structure and insufficient accountability for cyber charter schools. Despite dramatically different cost structures, cyber charter schools are funded in the same manner as "brick and mortar" charter schools, with the Commonwealth providing up to 30 percent of tuition and students' home districts paying the remainder. Districts' payments are based on what they spend to educate their students, which often is significantly more than it costs to run a cyber charter school. Nevertheless, cyber charters receive amounts as high as brick and mortar charters receive. This funding structure raises concerns that these schools are benefiting from payments that are higher than what they spend, with insufficient accountability for the excess.

Pennsylvania's cyber charter schools have amassed large fund balances (for example, in 2005-06 cyber charter schools had a cumulative unreserved fund balance of $28 million – or 26 percent of their annual expenditures – compared to the 12 percent unreserved fund balance limit for traditional public school districts as required by Act 48 of 2003). Such large fund balances are not efficient uses of limited education funds.

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[1] The Task Force on School Cost Reduction, established by Special Session Act 1 of 2006, found "establishing a single statewide tuition rate will enable all school districts to pay an equitable share of the costs to support the cyber charter school that the resident student chooses to attend … Setting a single tuition rate is a critical component of allocating public resources efficiently," http://www.pde.state.pa.us/k12_finances/cwp/view.asp?a=305&q=123154.

[2] Strengthening Pennsylvania's Charter School Reform; Miron, Nelson, Risley – The Evaluation Center, Western Michigan University – 2002 study - http://www.wmich.edu/evalctr/charter/pa_5year/.

[3] Act 22 of 1997; Act 88 of 2002.

[4] CREDO. (2009). "Multiple choice: Charter school performance in 16 states," Stanford, CA: CREDO, Stanford University.

[5] Zimmer, R., Gill, Booker, K., Lavertu, S., Sass, T.R. & Witte, J. (2009). "Charter schools in eight states: Effects on achievement, attainment, integration, and competition," The RAND Corporation.

[6] Carnoy, M., Jacobsen, R. Mishel, L. & Rothstein, R. (2005). "The Charter School Dust-Up: Examining the Evidence on Enrollment and Achievement," Economic Policy Institute and Teachers College Press.

[7] Lubienski, C., & Lubienski, S.T. (2006). "Charter, private, public schools and academic achievement: New evidence from NAEP mathematics data," Occasional Paper No. 111, National Center for the Study of Privatization in Education.

[8] Reardon, S.F. (2009) "Review of 'How New York City's Charter Schools Affect Achievement,'" Boulder and Tempe: Education and the Public Interest Center & Education Policy Research Unit. Retrieved from: http://epicpolicy.org/thinktank/review-How-New-York-City-Charter.

[9] Henig, J. (2008). "What do we know about the outcomes of KIPP schools? Boulder and Tempe: Education and the Public Interest Center & Education Policy Research Unit," Retrieved from http://epicpolicy.org/publication/outcomes-of-kipp-schools.

[10] According to Dobbie and Fryer:

> HCZ has over 20 programs designed to help and empower individuals in their 97 blocks. These investments include early childhood programs (Head Start, e.g.), public elementary-, middle- and high-school programs (i.e. karate, dance, after-school tutoring), a college-success office, family, community and health programs, foster-care prevention services, and so on (2009: 5).

Dobbie, W. and Fryer, Jr., R.G. (2009). "Are high-quality schools enough to close the achievement gap? Evidence from a bold social experiment in Harlem." (Unpublished paper.)

Support and Respect - Appendix
Salary Facts

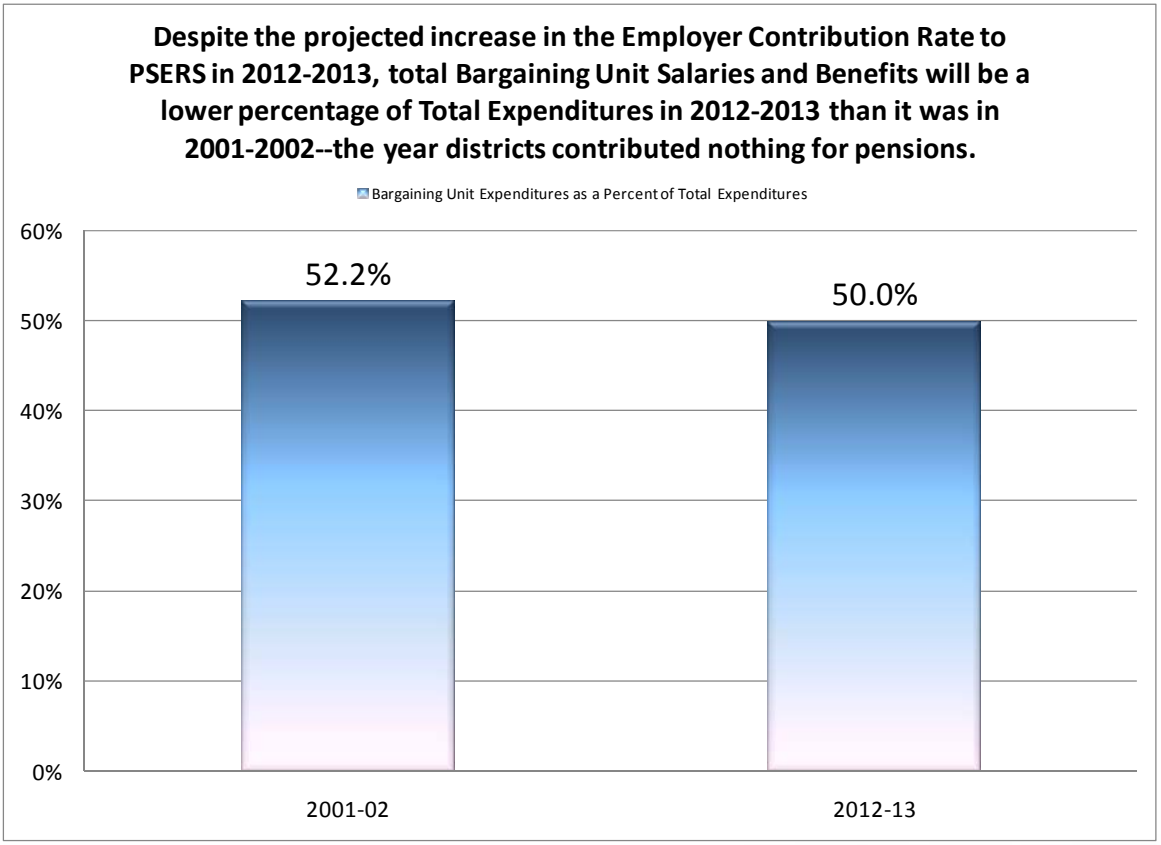
- In 2008-2009, Pennsylvania's teachers, on average, earned $56,092 and had 13.5 years of service. Approximately half of Pennsylvania's teachers had earned a Master's degree.

- Pennsylvania's average starting teaching salary is $39,286.

- Relative to the price of goods and service, PA's average teacher salary decreased over the past decade. Even without adjusting for inflation, PA's average teacher salary has only marginally increased at a rate of 1.8 percent per year.[1]

- Increasing average salaries are not the main driver of increased costs in education. Between 1986 and 2008, despite an increase in bargaining unit sizes, salaries as a percent of total district expenditures fell by over 26 percent. When benefits are added to the equation, the same holds true. Peaking in the mid-1990s at just under 57 percent of total school district budgets, salaries and benefits now account for less than 50 percent of all costs. This bears some emphasis. Although the number of teachers and other bargaining unit members has increased by more than 26 percent, this during a period of rapidly rising health care costs, the share of district budgets devoted to educators' compensation has declined substantially.

- Even with the projected increase in the Employer Contribution Rate to the PSERS pension system for 2012-2013, total Bargaining Unit Salaries and Benefits will only represent 50 percent of total expenditures by the average school district.[2] The total Bargaining Unit Salaries and Benefits were 52.2 percent of Total Expenditures by school districts in 2001-2002: the year that districts contributed nothing (0.00 percent) for pensions.



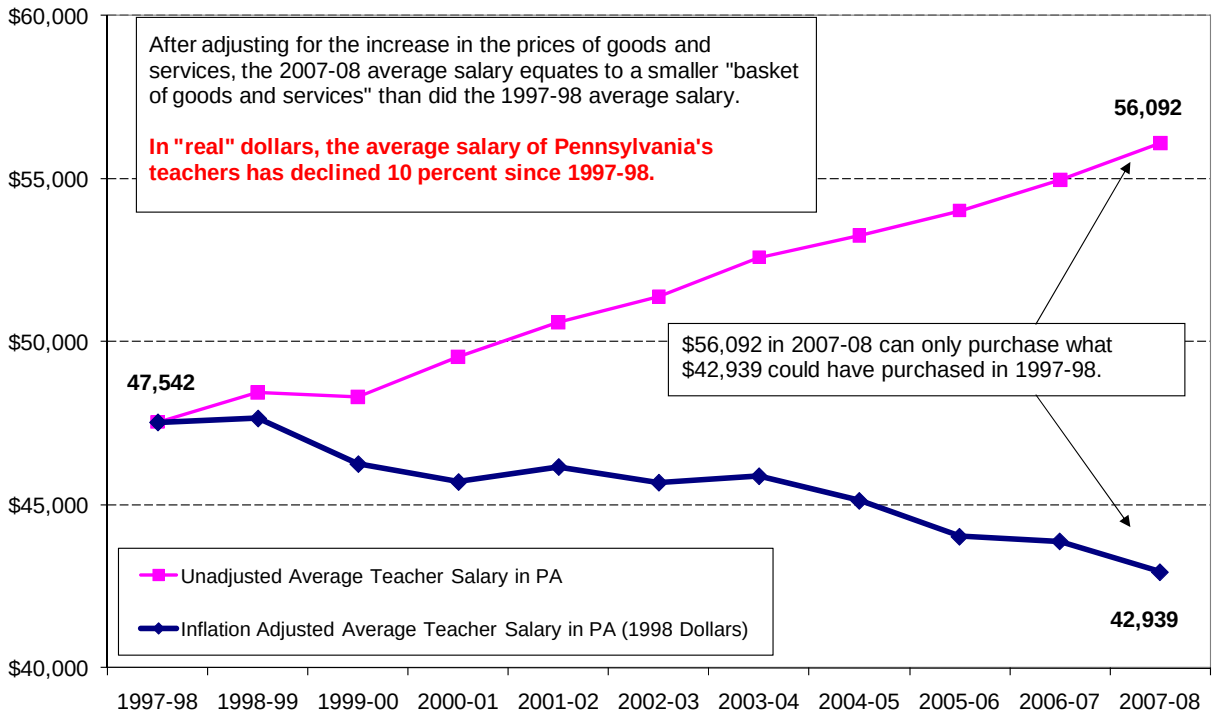
- In addition, starting and career salaries, those paid to beginning and experienced teachers, have struggled or failed to keep up with inflation. From 1999 to 2009, the Consumer Price Index (which measures the prices of goods and services) increased 28.5 percent, while the average starting salary increased by 28.3 percent and the average career rate increased only 26.1 percent.

- Even accounting for healthier benefits, Pennsylvania's teachers have a 15 percent weekly wage disadvantage relative to similarly educated Pennsylvanians.

- Pennsylvania's teachers earn less than similarly educated Pennsylvanians. Pennsylvania's teachers have a weekly wage disadvantage of 18 percent relative to the wages of similarly educated college graduates in Pennsylvania.[3]

Nationally, the teacher benefit "bias" for health care, pension, etc. is only 2.8 percent (state-level data is not available).[4]

The Declining Average Teacher Salary in Pennsylvania



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[1] Salary Data: Pennsylvania Department of Education. Inflation Data: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics.

[2] PSEA projections are based on data from the Pennsylvania Department of Education and the PSERS. Projections for Bargaining Unit (BU) salaries, BU non-pension benefits, and non-BU expenditures were made by increasing these line items each year by their average annual changes from 1999-2000 through 2007-2008. Projections for BU Pension contributions were made by multiplying the projected BU salaries by the "Preliminary Employer Pension Rate" projected by PSERS.

[3] Allegretto, S.A., Corcoran, S. P., and Mishel, L. (2008). "The Teaching Penalty: Teacher Pay Losing Ground." Washington, DC: Economic Policy Institute.

[4] Ibid.

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False promises vs. What really works

- **The ShamWows® of educational policy:**
  Don't believe the claims!

- **What really works**

False promises vs. What really works

"*It's like a rag*." This is the first reaction of a *Consumer Reports* staff member in her video-review of claims that ShamWow® "*makes you say wow*" when cleaning spills. She rebuts ShamWow®'s promises that "*It's like a chamois! It's like a towel! It's like a sponge!*" because it "*holds 20 times its weight in liquid*" and "*does all the work!*"[1] She then catalogs how ShamWow®'s absorption claims were lowered once, then again, until the final claims made by advertisers were only half of initial claims. (Nevertheless, ShamWow's official website continues to promote a higher amount than was verified by Consumer Reports, but lower than the initial claims.)[2] In the end, she reports that a ShamWow® absorbs an amount equivalent to a sponge. Sponges, however, cost significantly less and have a long history of being able to do the work.

The ShamWows® of educational policy: Don't believe the claims!

It is hard not to think of this video report when reading certain ideas that have been mistakenly promoted as educational "reforms" with claims of significant student success. This section critiques several such "reforms," many of which have been tried and have failed repeatedly for significant reasons. The claims of proponents that these "reforms" can deliver much greater results than the past are not only unsubstantiated, but may also generate significant negative impacts on educational outcomes.

While policymakers often search for an educational ShamWow® that will make teachers say "wow" and students achieve, the fact is that the art and science of teaching and learning are both complex and multi-faceted, and as intricately varied as the students we serve.

Throughout this document PSEA has provided a menu of researched-based options that have the ability to improve the climate and results of public education. PSEA's Vision has also pointed to the significant gains our students have registered on a variety of standardized tests and has attempted to identify the state and local initiatives that have contributed to these successes. An important part of PSEA's Vision is the continued support for and investment in programs that are *proven* to work. There is a growing body of evidence that the programs we support *do* work. Just as important, there are well-reasoned arguments against a menu of initiatives that are often touted as education "reforms," but that *do not* work. The following are issues that have been discussed at various times as a means to improve public education, and the reasons those claims are misleading or false.

Merit pay

Every so often, a push is made to link teacher pay to student test scores or for the implementation of some other type of outcomes-based merit pay system, sometimes referred to as performance-based pay. In fact, the recent Race to the Top (RTTT) regulations released at the federal level require some form of merit pay be proposed by states that seek these grants.

In reality, some of the elements of merit pay are not grounded in empirical research, and even worse, contradict strategies that are supported by research. Here are the facts about merit pay:

In the private sector, outcomes-based merit pay is rare. Non-production based bonuses[3] are insignificant, and merit pay's effectiveness is tenuous. Private sector instances of merit pay tied to explicit measures of specific outcomes (such as pay tied to test scores) are "surprisingly rare." Only six percent of employees are compensated using formulaic systems, such as piece rate or commission systems. Incidence of formulaic systems declined between 1995-1996 and 2005-2006. Three sectors -- finance, insurance, and real estate -- experienced increases in formulaic pay, with the largest increase coming in the financial services industry. Non-production based bonuses, to which 49 percent of private sector workers have access, only account for 1.5 percent of compensation. [4]

The effectiveness of pay for performance in the private sector is also somewhat tenuous: workers boost the quantity of their output when driven by financial incentives, but there is little evidence that the quality of the work improves.[5]

A 2008 *Financial Week* article summarized the merit pay research in the private sector and concluded, ". . . evidence is mounting that the assumptions underlying individual performance pay are wrong… The real question posed by the best research is not whether companies should be spending more on performance based pay programs, but whether they should be spending less." [6]

Teachers are already sufficiently motivated. Merit pay plans, at their best, are simply motivation plans: they attempt to provide motivation for employees to achieve goals that the employees are not sufficiently motivated to achieve.

"Individual incentive plans," for example, "are most likely to improve performance in...simple, structured jobs in which employees are relatively autonomous" and in which the best production processes are non-collaborative.[7] Professional educators do not work in occupations that meet these conditions; they do not have the same motivations to do their work as do workers in other industries.[8] "Teachers are primarily motivated by two major factors: helping students achieve and collaborating with colleagues on teaching and learning issues."[9]

Professional educators already exert sufficient effort and already align their efforts with school-wide and district-wide educational goals. Teachers are motivated by the intrinsic satisfaction they get from teaching students.[10] Pennsylvania's teachers, in particular, enabled Pennsylvania to be "one of only 10 states to make significant gains in reading and math since 2003" and to have made gains in all academic categories from 2002-2008.[11]

Despite repeated and various attempts over the past 80 years, merit pay has not provided sustained improvement in educational outcomes. Despite being implemented all over the country since the 1930's, systems of merit pay for individual professional educators based on evaluations of teachers or standardized test scores of students fail to provide sustained improvements in educational outcomes,[12] fail to attract more teaching candidates,[13] and fail to provide conditions under which individual teachers can improve their performance.[14]

Reasons for failure include: unsatisfactory evaluation systems, negative impacts on educator morale, and the cost and time needed to administer the plans.[15] Union opposition to merit pay plans has not been a reason for their failure. [16] Citing research on the separate topics of successful schools and merit pay, Allan Odden concluded that "merit pay is at odds with the team-based, collegial character of well-functioning schools, and thus have limited potential to support school improvement." [17]

In Pennsylvania, several school district merit pay systems existed in the late 1970s. As is the case with many traditional merit pay systems, these plans resulted in serious inequities among teachers with similar skill and performance levels, and created morale problems. Individual merit bonuses based on a value-added assessment model for student test scores were recently employed by the Colonial School District. The Colonial experiment suffered from problems of poor design and implementation, rewarded teachers inequitably, and created morale problems. Surveys conducted after the plan was terminated indicated that the participants did not understand what they could have done, what they should have done, or even, for those awarded a merit bonus, what they had done to obtain the individual bonuses.

Merit pay encourages bad practice. Parents, students, and teachers have legitimate reasons for concern about test-based performance pay. Researcher Richard Rothstein outlines a number of obstacles that will corrupt the implementation of pay systems that focus on narrow performance indicators. First, goal distortion occurs when resources and time are shifted toward tested subjects and away from non-tested subjects such as social studies, art, music, and physical education. Second, "sampling corruption" occurs, whereby teachers focus on skills most likely to be on the standardized tests. Third, Rothstein notes that high stakes tests create an incentive for teachers to "ignore students who are either above or below the passing point on tests," hardly a comforting thought for parents of students who aren't "on the bubble."[18]

While there is no doubt that parents, teachers, and policymakers see acquisition of basic skills in the core academic subjects as a critical education goal, it is not the only goal. For the public, school board members, state legislators, and school superintendents, the importance of basic academic skills is closely followed by critical thinking and problem solving, social skills and work ethic, citizen and community responsibility, preparation for skilled work, physical and emotional health, and arts and leisure.[19] These other important school goals could be shortchanged if the regulations tie test scores to evaluation and compensation.

Pay for hard-to-staff subjects is contrary to quality education processes. Without a definition of "hard-to-staff subjects," it is difficult to anticipate who would make such determinations and on what the determinations would be based. However, a policy that attempts to match salaries primarily on a particular set of knowledge and skills fails to recognize some fundamental characteristics of the education process: (1) the process of teaching is fundamentally the same across disciplines; (2) the impact of any particular teacher depends on the abilities of the rest of teachers; (3) the differentiation of compensation by subject area may create divisiveness among teaching teams; and (4) the definition of "hard-to-staff" can vary from year to year and the definition of "hard-to-staff" may be particularly prone to improper manipulation.

Also, right now, districts can determine incoming salary step placement for new hires (with certain limitations). This allows them to recruit shortage areas if they wish. The fact that districts do not do this indicates that they either find it unnecessary or too divisive.[20]

Vouchers

Another approach that is wrongly touted as a silver bullet solution for public education is the imposition of school voucher programs. The unfounded claim is that vouchers improve student achievement. The research, however, does not support this.

The heart of the voucher movement is the assumption that private schools are better than public schools. Recent research exposes the truth. Although the average scores for private schools are higher than those for public schools, when the comparison is adjusted to account for student characteristics such as race and ethnicity, disability status, and identification as an English language learner, public school students perform as well as, and even better than private school students.

Researchers at the University of Illinois analyzed the test scores of more than 340,000 4th and 8th grade students in 13,000 traditional public schools, charter schools, and private schools, on the 2003 National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), commonly called "the nation's report card." They found that "demographic differences between students in public and private schools more than account for the relatively high raw scores of private schools… after controlling for these differences, the presumably advantageous 'private school effect' disappears, and even reverses in most cases."[21]

An analysis of the same data by the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) found that after adjusting for selected student characteristics, there was virtually no difference in the scores of public and private school students in grade four reading and grade eight mathematics. The adjusted school average was actually higher for public school in grade four mathematics, while it was higher in private schools only in grade eight reading.[22] In addition, a reanalysis of data from two studies using different national data sets (the Education Longitudinal Study and the National Educational Longitudinal Study) suggests there is little difference between public and private high school student performance.[23]

An official evaluation of the Milwaukee voucher program, conducted by Professor John Witte of the University of Wisconsin at Milwaukee, lasted from 1990 through 1995. In his final report, Witte found that "achievement (of voucher students), as measured by standardized tests, was no different than the achievement of MPS (Milwaukee Public School) students."[24]

Cleveland's voucher program was evaluated from April 1997 through December 2003 with similar results of no improvement in academic achievement of private school students over those who attended public school. The evaluation, commissioned by the Ohio Department of Education, also found that the high cost to attend private school -- even with a voucher -- as well as the limited number and range of participating private schools, discouraged many low-income families from participating. Families who did use the vouchers had higher incomes, were more likely to be Caucasian, and were more likely than public school students to have been enrolled in private schools in the prior year. The cumulative effect of this trend, according to the official evaluation, is that the voucher students are proportionately less minority and more affluent compared to their public school peers.[25] Re-analysis of achievement data from the Cleveland program also found "no academic advantages for voucher users; in fact, users appear to perform slightly worse in math."[26]

More recent studies of the Milwaukee and Washington, D.C. publicly funded voucher programs also suggest that voucher programs offer no "silver bullet." Both studies found no significant difference in student achievement in mathematics between students attending public school and those participating in the voucher program. In addition, it appears the vouchers had no impact on the scores of students who transferred to private schools from the most academically challenged public schools.[27]

Even studies of international voucher programs also highlight that voucher programs provide limited, if any, benefits for needy students and can even increase social and economic segregation among schools. Vouchers in Chile, for example, have had a negative effect on student achievement, while broadening the achievement gap between low-income and middle- and upper-income students.[28]

Reconstituting Schools

Another silver bullet solution for struggling schools that has been part of the legislative and educational landscape in Pennsylvania and beyond is a concept referred to as reconstitution. While this could be implemented in various fashions, at its most basic level, it refers to removing a majority of staff, including both administrators and teachers, from a school and replacing them with new individuals.

Provisions allowing for reconstitution of schools can be found in the Pennsylvania Education Empowerment Act (Act 16 of 2000), ESEA/NCLB and in the competitive Race to the Top federal grant program, which is set to provide more than $4 billion in funding to a select group of states to implement "cutting edge" education reforms. Fortunately, this avenue has not been explored in an aggressive manner in Pennsylvania, as nearly all of the education empowerment districts selected alternative means to improve student and achievement, and for good reason.

There is little evidence to support school reconstitution. As a matter of fact, replacing substantial numbers of staff in a turnaround effort can actually make school improvement more difficult. Schools in need of improvement often exist in communities with chronic local teacher shortages, and so letting go large numbers of teachers can often result in less experienced and less prepared staff. Little, if any, discussion is ever focused on where an untapped pool of educators waiting to fill these openings can be found. In communities characterized by teacher shortages, large-scale replacement of staff can weaken rather than strengthen a school.

PSEA appreciates any focus on innovation. However, PSEA has seen no research evidence that demonstrates reconstituted schools are inherently more innovative than other public schools. As a matter of fact, traditional public schools are engaged in a tremendous amount of research-based innovation. Career academies, cyber learning opportunities, early college high schools, and dual enrollment options are just a small number of innovations taking root in traditional public schools. The key to innovation is not the administrative structure of the school. It is an ethos of leveraging resources in new ways to meet both ongoing and emerging needs among children. States have varying ways of supporting innovation, and in many cases states choose to support research-based innovation within traditional public schools. State funds should be employed to support research-based innovations wherever they reside: in charter schools, where appropriate within a specific state context, but also in traditional public schools, where the vast majority of our children in every state continue to receive their education.

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[2] https://www.shamwow.com/ver15/index.asp
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What really works

A comprehensive approach to our most seriously challenged communities and schools

While Pennsylvania's public education system well serves the vast majority of the Commonwealth's students, there is no doubt that far too many students and schools are struggling to meet basic educational objectives. Overwhelmingly, they are concentrated in urban communities that have long lacked the social and economic means to provide a nurturing educational environment. Some of these communities have already experienced unsuccessful takeovers of their school districts by state boards of control. Recently, with the Commonwealth's quest to obtain Race to the Top (RTTT) funding, the Pennsylvania Department of Education (PDE) has used Pennsylvania System of School Assessment (PSSA) scores to identify what it calls "the bottom 5 percent" or "failing public schools." If only it were so simple.

PSSA scores provide a very crude signal of what is occurring within a school. The overwhelming part of the variance in PSSA scores (a status measure) is accounted for by non-school socio-economic status (SES) variables such as the proportion of students eligible for free or reduced price lunches. That reality cannot be ignored if educational interventions are to succeed. The identification of schools as part of the "bottom percent" begs for a closer, onsite audit of the condition of each school by a team of experts. It begs for a detailed review of the challenges faced by each of those schools' students.

It is noteworthy that using the PSSA data set, supplemented with other state data, PSEA was able to determine that some of the school districts containing these "bottom 5 percent" schools also contained schools that were among the most positive outliers, i.e., schools that "beat the odds." This too, is a situation that suggests we need to know much more before deciding if a school is failing.

Experience tells us that it will be very difficult to turn around the lowest performing schools using school-based methods alone. PSEA strongly believes in the measures advocated in this document, and will work within our communities to make them successful. Communities need stability, and new growth will coalesce around institutions in which we build social and economic capital. This will happen when policymakers, elected officials, educators, and community leaders place a priority on educational achievement and work together to make it happen.

Research shows that partnerships of schools, families, and community organizations dedicated to student success can play a vital role in closing achievement gaps among students of similar

ability. As the Annenberg Institute for School Reform concludes in its analysis of multiple research studies extending over six years, *Building Partnerships to Reinvent School Culture*, such partnerships consistently contribute to:

- better attendance;
- higher test scores;
- completing high school; and
- aspiring to a college education.[1]

In order to maximize the chance for successful reform, PSEA believes the state should create a demonstration project in a small number of target schools as community learning centers. These school facilities would be redesigned to allow them to not only educate students but also provide an array of after school social services that would help provide stability and necessary social support. In short, target schools would be redesigned to become a source of social capital and engagement for the community.

One version of this idea was the "Lighted Schoolhouse" proposal of Alex Molnar and his colleagues. In their conception, targeted urban schools would be redesigned for additional functions, such as housing day-care centers, or providing adult education and job training – for example, teaching English to adults at night in communities with large immigrant populations.[2]

Given current economic and budgetary constraints, such a project should be undertaken on a demonstration basis in a small number of schools. PSEA believes that by targeting resources, employing many of the school-based reforms we described earlier with this expanded community center concept of schooling, the prospects for turning around chronically low scoring schools will be the greatest.

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Dr. Carla Claycomb has more than 20 years experience in education. A former teacher, she has conducted both quantitative and qualitative research, evaluation studies, and policy analyses for audiences at the national, state, and local levels. She's authored numerous papers, journal articles, and reports and has presented at national conferences.

Claycomb works on teacher certification, student achievement gap issues and best practices research in teaching and learning. She represents PSEA on the Pennsylvania Staff Development Council and the Pennsylvania Association of Colleges and Teacher Educators, and works with the Learning First Alliance-Pennsylvania. Claycomb holds a B.S. in Elementary Education, summa cum laude, from Bucknell University; a M.A. in Multicultural Education Studies from York University in Yorkshire, England; and a Ph.D. in Education Theory and Policy from The Pennsylvania State University.

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Elliott provides bargaining support to PSEA's members by analyzing the finances of school districts. He has also conducted research on school funding equity in Pennsylvania, including assisting the Pennsylvania Association of Rural and Small Schools in its equity lawsuit. In 2006, he was appointed by Governor Rendell to the state's Task Force on School Cost Reduction.

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For more than a decade, James Henninger-Voss has specialized in research and negotiations regarding compensation, alternative compensation, and pensions for PSEA members. Henninger-Voss has taught at the University of Massachusetts – Amherst, Rider University, Mercer County Community College, and Princeton University.

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Miller was an adjunct professor at West Chester University and worked at the Delaware County Intermediate Unit for 30 years as a classroom teacher, community-based coordinator, and technical assistance consultant. He is a frequent state and national conference speaker and is a guest lecturer at several universities. Miller has his master's degree from Temple University and his bachelor's degree from Bloomsburg University.

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Steve Nickol served as a member of the Pennsylvania House of Representatives for 18 years representing the residents of York and Adams counties. After retiring from the House, Nickol joined PSEA in 2009. Nickol is a graduate of York Country Day School, and attended Franklin & Marshall College in Lancaster, PA.

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Petruzzi taught secondary emotional support, served as a facilitator, and as a lead teacher in the special education office in school districts in both Ohio and Pennsylvania. He earned a B.S. in Special Education and a M.Ed. in Curriculum and Instruction from Lock Haven University. He also attended the Educational Leadership program at St. Francis University and has participated in trainings focused on improving contract negotiations and collective bargaining.

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Zwerling earned a Doctorate in Industrial Relations and a law degree from the University of Wisconsin at Madison. He also has a Masters in Labor Relations from the University of Massachusetts - Amherst. Prior to joining PSEA, he worked for eight years as an Assistant Professor with McGill University's Faculty of Management and the State University of New York at Potsdam's Economics Department. He has published numerous book chapters, journal articles, and monographs in the areas of collective bargaining, education, and employment law.

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