

AFT Pennsylvania Position Adequate State Funding for Public Education

Every child is entitled to a well-rounded, high-quality education that focuses on teaching and learning, not testing; includes art, music, sciences, world languages and enrichment programs; encourages critical thinking and fosters creativity; helps youngsters overcome poverty and other challenges; and ensures that children and their families have access to wraparound services to meet social, emotional and health needs.

The state of Pennsylvania has a constitutional responsibility to fund free and open public schools adequately for all children. The Pennsylvania Constitution (Article III: Section 14) states: *"The General Assembly shall provide for the maintenance and support of a thorough and efficient system of public education to serve the needs of the Commonwealth."*

The Pennsylvania legislature must make development of a permanent state formula for funding public education its top priority. The formula must identify costs accurately and distribute state funding fairly and transparently. It must ensure that all students receive the resources necessary to meet state academic standards.

A state funding formula must be based on student and community characteristics and take into account the cost of helping every student reach his or her full potential. A state funding formula must ensure a base funding level for all students and account for student factors that include poverty, special needs and other student characteristics and for district and community characteristics, such as size, community wealth and tax effort. Adequate funding should ease school districts' dependence on local property taxes, which has resulted in tremendous disparities in access to educational opportunities across the state's 500 school districts.

AFTPA supports updating the 2007 bipartisan legislative report known as the "[Costing-Out Study](#)," to address adequacy and equity in the state's funding of education and to determine the cost for all students to receive a high-quality education that prepares them for college and careers. The report found that 92 percent of the children in Pennsylvania attended schools that spend substantially less than is needed to educate children adequately. It also found that if PA's state and local tax revenues were in line with those of the six bordering states, PA would generate between \$3 billion and \$6 billion in additional revenues. The Pennsylvania General Assembly adopted a statewide education-funding formula in 2008, which was designed to increase state education funding by nearly \$5 billion over several years. The formula was abandoned in 2011 by the Corbett administration with catastrophic consequences for school districts across the state.

Since Gov. Corbett took office Pennsylvania's share of support for public schools has dropped significantly. The state now ranks 47th in the country in its contribution to funding education and those cuts have fallen disproportionately on the poorest school districts and must be restored.