

PA Schools Work
Invest in Students, Secure Our Future
<http://paschoolswork.org/>
#WeWORKForFunding

Introduction for AAUW Pennsylvania

Who

- PA Schools Work is a coalition of organizations from across Pennsylvania representing
 - teachers and other educators;
 - urban, suburban and rural communities;
 - parents;
 - and other community members
- Mission is to ensure that every child, regardless of their background or where they live, is attending a public school that has the funds necessary to help them succeed.
- Recognize that every campaign partner organization has their own perspective and issues regarding education. This coalition will ONLY address state funding. When communicating as PA Schools Work, the only issue is adequate funding in the state budget for public education.

Goals

- The PA School Works approach tackles the entire problem without pitting school districts against each other and forcing districts to fight over slices of a pie that can't satisfy their needs in the first place.
- Here's how:
 - Increasing basic education funding by at least \$3 billion, with the increases running through the state's fair funding formula
 - Raising, over the next five years, the state's share of special education funding back up to 35% of costs so all special education students get the high-quality, inclusive services they need and deserve.
 - Ensuring that funding for career and technical education is adequate and distributed equitably so that every student who chooses to pursue CTE can get learning opportunities that allow them to progress towards an industry-based credential in their chosen career.
- To impact
 - Equity
 - Growing up in the right zip code in Pennsylvania can change a student's entire educational experience. With one of the widest gaps between the highest and lowest spending school districts of any state in the country, our students and educators are experiencing inequity at outrageous and damaging levels. The disparity in spending is so wide that the most well-off districts spend about \$114,000 more per classroom than those with the lowest spending districts.

- Go to <http://paschoolswork.org/equity/> for explanation of why redistributing existing state dollars without increasing the amount of budget money isn't the solution.
 - Adequacy
 - Pennsylvania ranks 46th in the nation for its share of education funding. Almost dead last. That means 429 of its 500 school districts – serving 1.4 million students – do not receive their fair share of state education funding. Students aren't the only ones paying the price of this underfunded system—local taxpayers are too! This year, 75% of local school districts intend to raise property taxes to fill the gap from a diminished state share.
 - Go to <http://paschoolswork.org/adequacy/> for graphics illustrating the impact of chronic underfunding of schools.
 - Excellence
 - Amazing educational opportunities exist in many public schools across Pennsylvania. They would be available to many more students if schools had enough resources. In PA Schools Work, we celebrate the many successes achieved in public schools every day. They show that investing in schools will produce tremendous returns for our students and our communities. That's why we're working to make sure schools get the funding they need so all students have access to the same opportunities for excellence.
 - Go to <http://paschoolswork.org/excellence/> to see examples of the great things happening in public schools across Pennsylvania.

Funding

- Basic Education
 - To achieve PA Schools Work's mission that Basic Education Funding meets the purpose and intent of the current funding formula, the state must pay its fair share of public education costs by:
 - Increasing basic education funding by at least \$3 billion through the state's fair funding formula
 - Ensuring sufficient resources for special education and career and technical education
 - Delivering targeted property tax relief to those who need it
 - Generating the necessary revenues through sustainable, recurring funding sources
- Special Education
 - Special education is supported by a mix of federal, state, and local school district funding. Because school districts are the funder of last resort, they must cover any necessary costs remaining after the federal and state governments determine what they will fund.
 - Inadequate state funding is resulting in an insufficient number of staff to support our students and not enough resources and services critical for these students to make educational progress. It also is forcing school districts to divert money from their operating budgets to close the shortfall, which harms all children.
- Career and Technical Education

- If Pennsylvania is to give every student a chance to succeed, it must do more for students seeking career and technical opportunities. Creating educational and career pathways for students is crucial to maintaining a competitive workforce, fostering economic growth, and bolstering Pennsylvania's middle class.
- Property Tax Relief
 - Today, our public schools are overly-reliant on local funding, in large part because the state does not cover its fair share of the state/local funding partnership. Pennsylvania contributes just less than 38% of public schools' costs to educate students, ranking it 46th in the country in state share. Local taxpayers pick up a much greater share: 55%.
 - Go to <http://paschoolswork.org/property-tax-relief/> to learn how some measures to reform or "eliminate" property taxes, such as the so-called "Property Tax Independence Act," will actually make matters worse.
 - PA Schools Work believes that property tax reform must:
 - Preserve local control and retain the predictability and stability of local revenues.
 - Help the taxpayers and school districts that need it most.
 - Enable districts to continue to cover changes in the costs of meeting student needs now and into the future.
 - Be part of a strategy to secure new equitably-raised recurring state revenues to eliminate the state's structural deficit and increase the state's adequate and equitable commitment to major public-school subsidies.

Resources

- Research
 - Fact based research on Pennsylvania's woeful funding of public education. <http://paschoolswork.org/research/>
- School District Data
 - School District Fact Sheets <http://paschoolswork.org/school-district-data/>