
**A RESOLUTION BY THE PENNSYLVANIA COUNCIL OF CHURCHES
TO ENDORSE THE PENNSYLVANIA SCHOOL REFORM CAMPAIGN**

WHEREAS we are concerned that:

- Pennsylvania has never determined how it must align funding with the high standards that students are expected to meet. In contrast, 33 other states have performed “costing-out studies” to obtain objective information on how to fund public education so that all students have a real opportunity to meet the learning standards;
- In 2004, 50 percent of Pennsylvania’s eleventh graders scored below proficient in math and nearly 40 percent of eleventh grade students scored below proficient in reading on the state’s standardized test. The Pennsylvania Department of Education identified 566 schools as needing to make improvement in meeting the federal government’s No Child Left Behind goals;
- In national comparisons, Pennsylvania gets a C- for efforts to make sure education funds in the state are spent fairly across the Commonwealth;
- There is a \$9,631 gap between what the highest and lowest spending school districts in Pennsylvania spend per pupil. The highest spending district spent \$15,756 per student in 2003-2004, the lowest only \$6,124. This translates into a \$240,775 gap per classroom of 25 students;
- Pennsylvania also has a striking disparity in local school taxes, ranging from 10.8 mills to 42.5 mills. Ironically, it is many of the poorest school districts that have the highest tax rates, yet still do not have adequate levels of funding to ensure a high quality education is available to all students; and
- Among the 38 states that offer some type of state-financed preschool program, Pennsylvania only ranks 37th. Pennsylvania is serving only 2 percent of its eligible population; and

WHEREAS we believe that:

- All children must enjoy the educational opportunities that we want for our own children and grandchildren;
- All children can achieve high standards if given such opportunity; and
- Returning the state to full partnership in public education requires a strong grassroots voice committed to supporting policies – both fiscal and educational – that guarantee this right to all children; and

WHEREAS the *Principles for Public Advocacy* of the Pennsylvania Council of Churches asserts that:

- All people should be educated and empowered, to the extent possible, so that they can enjoy the benefits of economic opportunity; and
- It is the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania’s responsibility to provide a thorough and efficient education to every child;

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that on October 24, 2006, the Pennsylvania Council of Churches supports the efforts of Good Schools Pennsylvania toward securing a quality public education for every Pennsylvania child through its advocacy program. To do so will require the State to ensure:

- Adequate funds, equitably distributed to result in each child being equipped to succeed: in postsecondary education; and/or in a good job; and as a good citizen;

- Tax reform, shifting education funding from the local property tax to a state-wide tax, while not reducing total resources available below the level necessary to provide an adequate level of funding for each child;
- High academic standards, and a rigorous accountability system that rewards schools and schools systems whose students surpass required performance levels, help schools/school systems in trouble and sanctions schools/school systems which persistently or dramatically fail with their students;
- Quality teachers and administrators resulting from sound pre-service training, including a major in an academic area; intensive and sustained quality professional development; a compensation system that recognizes the importance of educators and rewards improved skill and knowledge;
- Quality preschool opportunity for every three- and four-year-old and full-day kindergarten for every five-year-old;
- Reduced class size to 17 students in pre-K through the third grade;
- Extended learning time for students in academic trouble;
- A safe learning and teaching environment in every school;
- Family support services in schools with large numbers of poor children; and
- Up-to-date technology and instructional materials and facilities.

Notice of this endorsement will be printed in the minutes of the Governing Board.



Bishop A. Main, President
Pennsylvania Council of Churches

October 24, 2006