

# Education Update

From the Senate Education Committee

MARCH 13, 2006

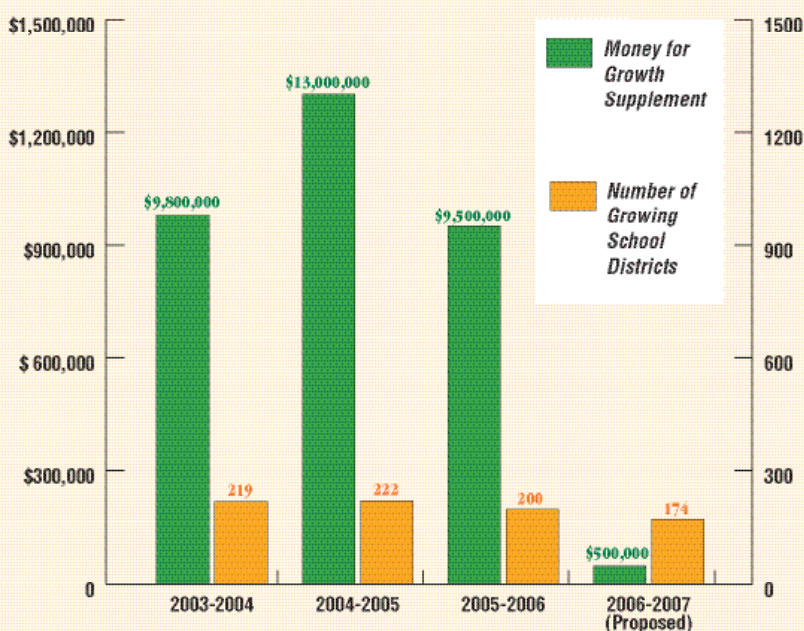
## Governor's Budget Proposal Overlooks Growing School Districts

**A**lthough Governor Edward Rendell's FY 2006-2007 budget proposal would increase the basic education subsidy by 5%, or \$224 million, it does not provide for a specific funding supplement for school districts that are experiencing enrollment growth.

The basic education subsidy normally includes a specific funding supplement for growing school districts. Since FY 1993-1994, the General Assembly has allocated a total of \$73 million for growing school districts in the subsidy formula. However, the Governor's FY 2006-2007 subsidy proposal includes only \$500,000 for growing school districts. Six school districts would qualify for the funding supplement.

Between FY 2004-2005 and FY 2005-2006, 174 school districts experienced increases in student enrollments.

### History of Growth Supplements & Growing School Districts



## Special Education Students to Participate in Commencement Exercises

**T**he Senate Education Committee is poised to consider legislation that would require school districts to allow special education students to participate in high school commencement exercises even if they have not completed their special education programs.

House Bill 1618 would ensure that special education students are not denied participation in high school commencement exercises because their individualized education programs require them to receive services beyond the fourth year of high school. The legislation would also require school districts to provide

these students with a certificate of attendance.

Current law does not require school districts to allow these students to participate in commencement exercises. However, the Department of Education recommends that school districts do so.

### Senate Education Committee

Phone: 787-2637  
FAX: 783-9149

senateeducationcommittee@pasen.gov

Senator James J. Rhoades  
*Chairman*

David L. Broderic  
*Executive Director*

## Committee to Focus on Safe Schools Legislation

The Senate Education Committee will hold a public hearing on legislation introduced by Senator Jeffrey Piccola to strengthen background checks for prospective school employees and improve the reporting of criminal incidents on school property.

Senate Bill 965 would add a number of serious criminal acts to the list of offenses that disqualify an individ-

ual from school service and would permanently bar anyone convicted of those offenses from being employed in public schools. Under current law, an individual is disqualified from school service if the conviction occurred within five years of an application for school employment.

Senate Bill 966 would improve the process through which school dis-

tricts report violent offenses to the Department of Education and clarify the process used to enter into memoranda of understanding with local law enforcement.

The public hearing is scheduled for Wednesday, March 15 at 9 a.m. in Hearing Room 1, North Office Building.

## PSERS Approves Employer Contribution Rate Increase

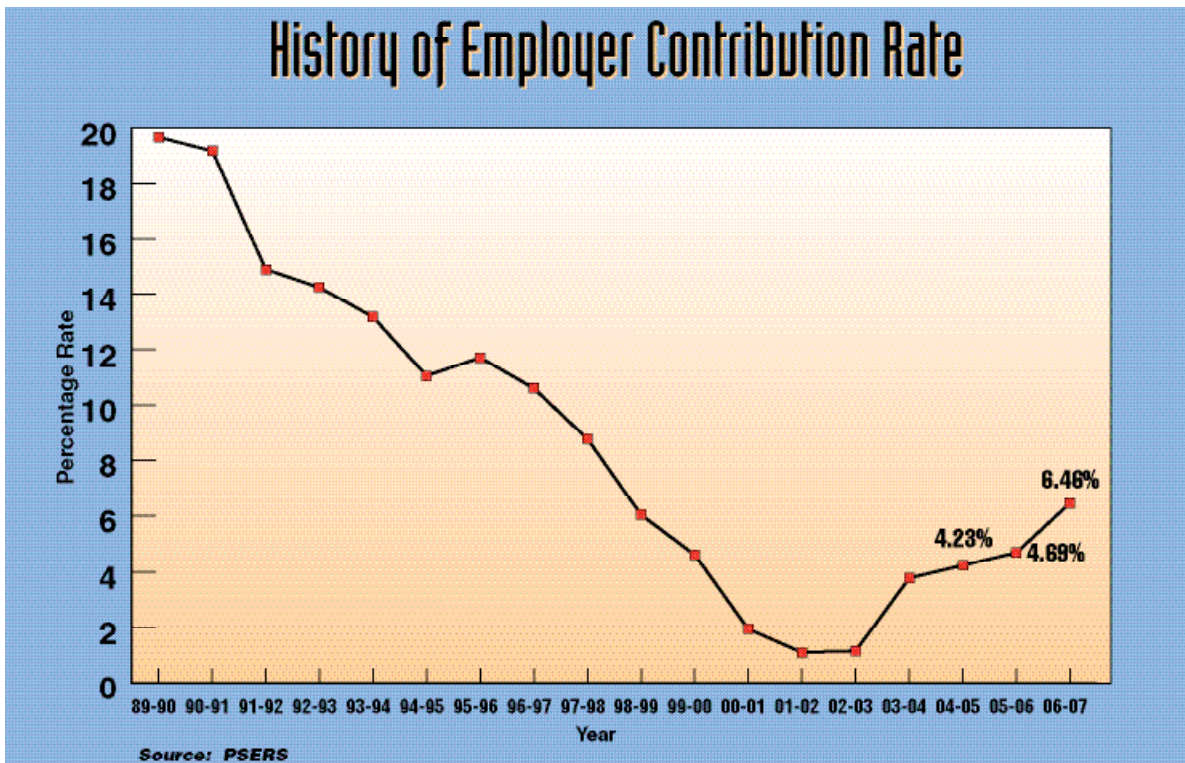
On December 16, the Board of the Public School Employees' Retirement System (PSERS) set the FY 2006-2007 employer contribution rate at 6.46% of payroll, an increase over the FY 2005-2006 rate of 4.69%.

The enactment of Act 40 of 2003 is expected to slow rapid increases in the

employer contribution rate that had been projected by the PSERS board. The statute authorizes the amortization of certain fund liabilities over a period of thirty years.

It also sets a minimum employer contribution rate of 4%.

The Commonwealth pays at least 50% of each school district's employer contribution. As a result, the Administration's FY 2006-2007 budget proposal includes an increase of \$114.2 million, or 45%, to cover the Commonwealth's obligation.



**For more information or detailed analyses of these topics, contact the Senate Education Committee staff at 787-2637.**