



Education Update

From the Senate Education Committee

MARCH 26, 2007

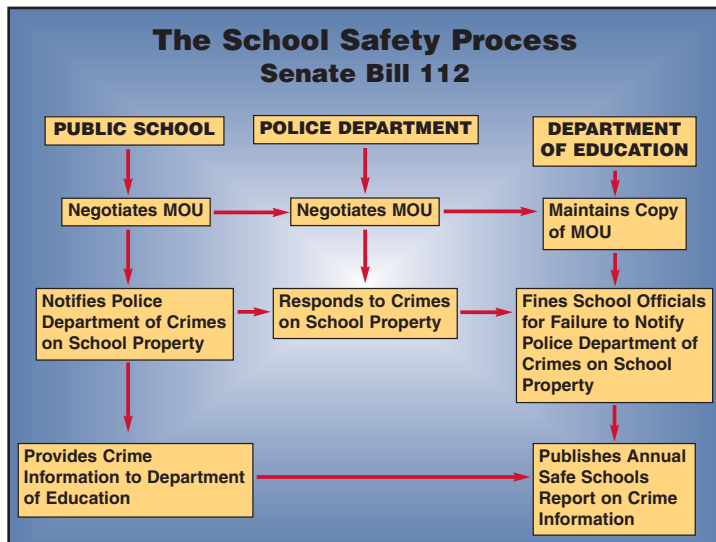
Committee Acts to Tighten School Safety Law

At its March 20 meeting, the Senate Education Committee approved legislation that would tighten Pennsylvania's Safe Schools Law and clarify that public schools must immediately notify local police when violent crimes occur on school property.

Senate Bill 112 would require that schools report violent incidents immediately and would impose fines on school officials who fail to do so. In addition, the bill would clarify the types of violent incidents that a public school must include in the annual school safety report that is submitted to the Department of Education.

Under current law, each school district, intermediate unit, area vocational-technical school and charter school is required to have a memorandum of understanding (MOU) with local police. The MOU establishes procedures for reporting violent crimes to police when they occur on school property.

The bill has been referred to the Senate Appropriations Committee.



Committee Hearing: Pre-K is Least Popular Block Grant Option

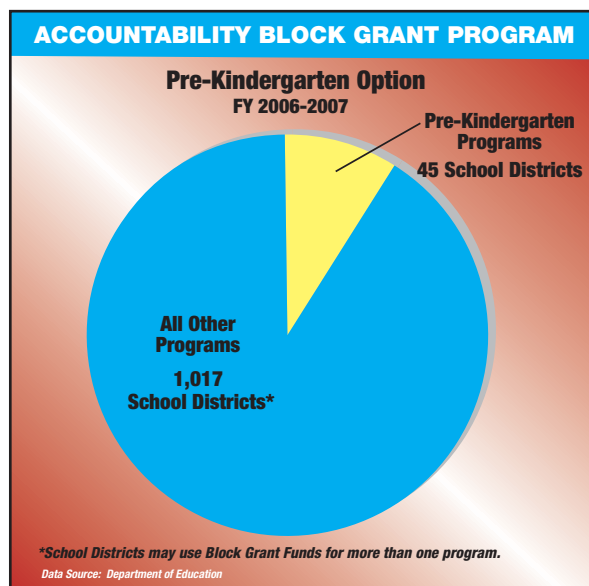
At a public hearing held on Governor Edward Rendell's proposal to dedicate \$100 million in increased accountability block grant funding to early childhood initiatives, Senate Education Committee members pointed out that pre-kindergarten was the least popular of the ten approved programs for which school districts could use block grant funding in FY 2006-2007.

According to the Department of Education's mid-year report on the accountability block grant program,

only 45 school districts elected to use their block grant funds for pre-kindergarten programs. These 45 school districts expended \$15,648,261 in block grant funds to provide pre-kindergarten services to a total of 4,287 students.

Under the accountability block grant program, each school district receives a

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Senator James J. Rhoades
 Chairman

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Committee Hearing

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formula-driven amount, which it can use to support any of ten types of programs. The Department approves the use of a school district's block grant funds before the monies are disbursed.

For FY 2007-2008, the Governor's proposed budget includes an additional \$100 million for the block grant program, with \$25 million of that increase dedicated to school districts for full-day kindergarten programs and \$75 million distributed on a request for proposal basis to licensed pre-kindergarten providers.

ACCOUNTABILITY BLOCK GRANT PROGRAM			
FY 2006-2007			
Program Summary			
Approved Program	School Districts	Grant Funds Approved	Students Served
Pre-Kindergarten	45	\$ 15,648,261	4,287
Full-Day Kindergarten	335	\$142,776,803	55,079
Class Size Reduction	94	\$ 16,366,685	23,530
Social and Health Services	69	\$ 6,009,881	126,746
Tutoring	90	\$ 7,334,594	24,179
Student Subgroups	117	\$ 18,456,334	125,059
Science Skills	87	\$ 10,196,013	170,787
Professional Development	99	\$ 7,003,382	319,978
Literacy and Math Coaching	108	\$ 23,050,669	280,394

Data Source: Department of Education

Governor's Subsidy Proposal Reduces Supplement for High Tax School Districts

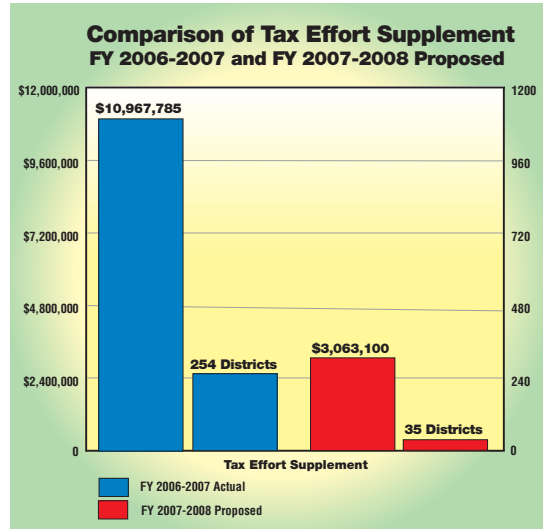
School districts with high local tax effort would receive less state support than they did in FY 2006-2007 under the basic education subsidy included in Governor Edward Rendell's FY 2007-2008 proposed budget.

The Governor's basic education subsidy proposal includes only \$3,063,100 in the funding supplement designed for high tax effort school districts. As the Governor has proposed it, only 35 school districts would qualify for the funding.

This approach is in sharp contrast to FY 2006-2007, when the tax effort supplement included \$10,967,785 for 254 school districts.

The funding methodology in the Governor's proposal is in marked contrast to the approach used in prior years. To qualify, a school district must have had less than a 10% increase in the market value of taxable property between 2000 and 2005.

In FY 2006-2007, any school district with an equalized millage rate over the state median of 21 equalized mills qualified for the supplement, with school districts that had the highest equalized millage rates receiving a greater share of the funding.



Senate Education Committee Activities

Wednesday, March 28

Hearing Room 1, North Office Building
9:00 a.m.
Public Hearing

No Child Left Behind Reauthorization

Philadelphia School District: Additional State Funds Needed to Cover Deficit

The City of Philadelphia School District has projected an operating deficit of \$37 million for FY 2007-2008 and has requested additional state funds to cover the shortfall.

On March 14, the school district recommended a \$2.18 billion proposed spending plan and indicated that it would need an additional \$54 million in state funding, over and above the

increase that the Governor has requested in his FY 2007-2008 budget proposal.

Under the Governor's proposed budget, the school district would receive nearly \$1.1 billion in state funding through the basic education subsidy, special education subsidy and charter school reimbursement programs.

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