

POTTSTOWN CITIZENS FOR Enlightened LEADERSHIP

School funding reform (part 2)

Education is shaping up to be the biggest issue in the governor's race between incumbent Tom Wolf and Republican challenger Scott Wagner, a former state senator, both from York County.



Commentary by
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This year, Pennsylvania has budgeted more than \$6 billion in basic funding for Pennsylvania's 500 school districts.

Traditionally, the state allocates money to school districts based on wealth. Poor districts like Pottstown receive a lot more money per pupil than wealthy districts like Abington.

However, there has been a widespread consensus that the distribution formula needs to be adjusted even more to provide extra money for needy districts.

In 2014, the legislature established a "Fair Funding" commission to determine a new formula to distribute state subsidies based on a district's wealth, local tax effort, and student demographics.

In 2016, the legislature adopted the new formula. BUT it called for the new formula to be phased in very slowly (more than 25 years for full implementation) because a lot more districts — 363 — would lose funding than gain funding — 137 — if implemented right away.

For the most part, urban districts and districts in southeastern Pennsylvania would gain money and those in the west and north would lose money.

But the formula is so complicated it's almost impossible for anyone but an expert to figure out the "whys and wherefores" of the subsidy distribution.

The chart at right shows how the formula would play out in our area. Why

would Boyertown lose \$3.7 million in funding and Spring-Ford gain \$1.8 million? I'm sure I don't know.

A lawsuit challenging the state's school funding system is currently pending before Commonwealth Court. That's probably the only way the issue will be settled.

Fair funding facts Based on 2017-2018 budget	
Basic education budget	\$5.9 billion
Amount of basic education budget to be redistributed	\$1.1 billion (20%)
Districts to receive MORE money	137
Districts to receive LESS money	363

Fair Funding redistribution Based on 2017-2018 budget	
School district	Increased funding
Pottstown	\$13,269,948
Spring-Ford	\$1,809,060
Owen. J. Roberts	\$1,734,012
Perkiomen Valley	\$1,107,278
	Decreased funding
Boyertown Area	-\$3,746,074
Upper Perkiomen	-\$2,837,577
Daniel Boone	-\$2,787,567
Methacton	-\$1,911,722
Oley Valley	-\$1,416,021
Pottsgrove	-\$1,169,022



WAR OF WORDS OVER SCHOOL FUNDING — Gubernatorial candidate Scott Wagner claims Gov. Wolf wants to cut funding to rural districts and raise it for urban districts. Wolf says that's not true. It will probably take a state Supreme Court decision to fully implement a new funding system.