

POTTSTOWN CITIZENS FOR Enlightened LEADERSHIP

Return on investment?

Pottstown spends more on public school education than all other local government services combined.

Because of the pandemic, all but a handful of Pottstown students have been taught remotely since March, with students using Chromebooks from home.

No one thinks virtual learning is an adequate substitute for in-person instruction. Many students are falling behind, and national surveys show the education gap is greatest for low-income and minority students.

Yet the cost of this diminished educational experience is not much lower than regular classroom instruction.

In Pottstown, school-aged children and youth comprise less than 20 percent of our residents.

And after this small cohort of our population graduates from high school, we really don't know what becomes of them. Our guidance counselors know who intends to go to col-

lege or other post-secondary education, or the military. But we really have no way to keep tabs on students a year or two out of school.

Our society is highly mobile at all age levels.

Of Pottstown's nine school board members, for example, only three graduated from Pottstown High School. The

others were educated elsewhere. Likewise, only one of seven Pottstown Council members attended Pottstown schools. Our mayor hails from California!

Many if not most of our graduates, even if they stay in the area, move into the suburbs or semi-rural areas outside of Pottstown.

The overwhelming majority of Pottstown's educators and other public servants, like police officers, don't actually live in Pottstown.

There are 1.7 million students enrolled in Pennsylvania public schools. Pottstown is responsible for educating less than one-fifth of one percent of the total.

It's not just what Pottstown does, therefore, but what all our schools do — in Pennsylvania and nationally — that determines the education levels of Pottstown adults.

With the seventh highest local school tax effort in Pennsylvania, Pottstown property owners are doing far more than their fair share to support our young people.

Moreover, we also know that people change jobs and even careers frequently during their working lives.

Because of changing technology, people must constantly upgrade their job skills or learn ever-changing new ones.

When I started at The Mercury in 1971, we were still using manual typewriters. Computers, the Internet, and smart phones were barely imaginable.

Workers who spent years learning a highly skilled trade found those skills were suddenly useless.

The Pottstown School District needs to broaden its thinking beyond the traditional school age to encompass all Pottstown residents.



Commentary by
Thomas Hylton

Major local spending, 2021

Pottstown Schools	\$65,413,61
Water, sewer service	\$20,797,00
Police protection	\$8,252,797
Trash collection	\$3,388,502
Fire protection	\$1,632,071
Public works, streets	\$1,669,752
Parks	\$1,021,340
Library	\$172,939

Pottstown age of population

Age group	Number	Percentage
<5	1,716	7.7%
5-9	1,491	6.7%
10-14	1,294	5.8%
15-19	1,385	6.2%
20-24	1,521	6.8%
25-34	3,479	15.5%
45-54	2,861	12.8%
55-64	3,253	14.5%
65-74	2,370	10.6%
65-74	1,481	6.6%
75+	1,526	6.8%
TOTAL	22,377	100%