

POTTSTOWN CITIZENS FOR Enlightened LEADERSHIP

Vigil in perspective

Earlier this month, Pottstown School District students and others in the school community staged a candlelight vigil to advocate for fair funding in Pennsylvania.

The state has always given more money per pupil to poor school districts than affluent ones. But in 2016, the state revised its funding formula. The new formula gives more money to 137 school districts and less money to 363 districts based on a variety of factors. But the formula hasn't been fully adopted.



Commentary by
Tom Hylton

Because Pottstown would get a lot more money under the new formula, the Pottstown school community has been campaigning mightily for its full implementation.

The fair funding vigil comes as a new Cold War is emerging from the Russian invasion of Ukraine. Facing humiliating setbacks on the battlefield, Russian president Vladimir Putin is threatening to use nuclear weapons and has put his nuclear forces on "special combat readiness."

It's a frightening time.

The war has turned Ukraine cities into rubble, killed thousands, and displaced 10 million people. Nearly 4 million of those, mostly women and children, have fled Ukraine for Poland, Romania, and other western European nations.

The Russian invasion will increase world hunger. Russia and Ukraine together export more than a quarter of the world's wheat, feeding billions of people, especially in North Africa and the Middle East. They are also major exporters of fertilizers. The war

is disrupting these exports.

Unfortunately, massive dislocations and famines will become more common as climate change escalates.

Last week, the head of the United Nations, Antonio Guterres, warned the world is "sleepwalking to climate catastrophe" as the ongoing pandemic and the Ukraine war make it less likely the earth's warming can be limited to 1.5 degrees Celsius above pre-industrial levels, a goal set at the 2015 Paris Climate Agreement.

"There is no kind way to put it," he said. "The 1.5-degree goal is on life support. It is in intensive care."

Ironically, the highest ranking Russian official to resign in protest over the Ukraine invasion, Anatoly Chubais, was Putin's climate envoy to international organizations for sustainable development.

No one will be more affected by climate change than our young people. A survey of 10,000 teens and young adults by Junior Achievement last year found that three-quarters were frightened of the future.

Yet the Pottstown School District's new comprehensive plan doesn't even mention climate change.

Pottstown Council and the Pottstown School District adopted a joint Sustainability Plan in 2018, but only one of the numerous initiatives proposed has taken place: the installation of LED street lights.

A tentative proposal last year to plant more than 500 shade trees on school district property was tabled by the school board despite the superintendent's recommendation to move forward.

Is preserving and protecting the planet and the people who live on it critically important?

If so, we should start acting like it.



FAIR FUNDING VIGIL at Pottstown Middle School earlier this month.