



## **News for Immediate Release**

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### **Governor Corbett Proposes Education Budget Putting Families, Taxpayers First; Begins Reshaping System**

**Harrisburg** – Governor Tom Corbett today unveiled an education budget that continues to provide the necessary resources for basic education while reshaping the system to put more control into the hands of families and local school districts.

The budget accounts for the loss federal stimulus dollars and resets basic education funding to 2008-09, pre-stimulus levels.

“Washington may be retreating. We’re not,” Corbett said today.

The proposed education budget is one that Pennsylvania taxpayers can afford, said acting Secretary of Education Ronald J. Tomalis.

Among the proposed changes in the new budget:

- Local public schools will receive \$8.6 billion, including \$5.2 billion in Basic Education funding, reflecting a 2-percent increase in the state’s share.
- A property tax referendum, which would require voter approval for any school district spending increases above inflation.
- Early childhood education programs will receive funding at or about this year’s level. Specifically, the budget proposes \$198 million for Early Intervention, \$83.6 million for Pre-K Counts and \$37.7 million for Head Start Supplemental Assistance.
- Funding to universities in the State System of Higher Education and the four state-related institutions, including Penn State, Temple, University of Pittsburgh, and Lincoln University, will be reduced by about 50 percent.

“I ask nothing more of our best-educated people than to face up to a hard economic reality. The system in which you have flourished is in trouble. We cannot save it by individual efforts,” Corbett said. “The sacrifice must be collective, as will be the ultimate rewards.”

"We're beginning a new era that changes the way we do business – we're going to put students and parents first, and give more flexibility to local school districts to get the job done," Tomalis said.

In addition, the budget offers a number of proposals to help school districts as they manage their finances:

- A school grading system to measure both academic and fiscal strength. Academic components would include student performance and other objective measures; fiscal measures would provide information on school expenditures, salaries, and costs-per-student.
- More flexibility in staff decisions for local school districts, including the furlough of professional employees for economic reasons. Currently, districts must cite a change in educational programs or a dramatic change in enrollment.
- It relaxes regulations for school districts, allowing increased bid-size limits and more flexibility in hiring school nurses, as well as changes in advertising requirements.
- It eliminates support for salary "bumps" for teachers with master's degrees, which could save school districts about \$200 million. Compounding the problem, school districts often reimburse tuition costs for graduate school.
- Supports policy initiatives to measure teacher effectiveness and compensation, including merit pay, tenure reform, and alternative certification.
- Suggests a one-year salary freeze from all school employees – administrators, teachers and support staff. Such a salary freeze could save local school districts \$400 million. Those funds could be saved or redirected to other programs.
- Creating a new accountability system – straightforward and easily understandable for taxpayers - to better measure educational success and identify those in need of assistance, helping to better assess quality.

"Charter schools have played a vital role in bringing innovation to our public education system and expanding the availability of quality educational options to our families," Tomalis said. "Growing the number of great charter schools and strengthening the ethical and performance standards to which these schools are subjected are critical components of Pennsylvania's education reform strategy."

Suggestions to improve charter schools include the following:

- Options for families and students to attend the school of their choice will be expanded, as well as measures to enhance charter school and cyber school quality and accountability.
- A new independent state charter school authorizer will approve new charter and cyber charter schools, renew existing charters, conduct appeals from local school districts, and assume oversight of existing cyber charters from the Department of Education.
- Strengthen ethical and performance standards for charter schools by requiring measurable academic, financial and operational standards, to make it easier for families to assess performance.

"Pennsylvania must make our schools more competitive and continuously improve their quality – and do so even in the most challenging fiscal environment in recent history," Tomalis said.

"Success requires reforms that better meet our children's needs," Tomalis said, "More options for families and students, effective teachers and leaders in every school, more flexibility and mandate relief for local educators and schools, and more accountability to - and control for - local taxpayers."

For more information, visit [www.pa.gov](http://www.pa.gov).

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