



Testimony

presented to the

House Appropriations Committee

by

Pedro A. Rivera, Secretary of Education

Monday, March 5, 2018

2018-19 Appropriations Hearing Testimony

Chairman Saylor, Chairman Markosek, Chairman Hickernell, Chairman Roebuck, and distinguished members of the House Appropriations Committee, thank you for the opportunity to be with you to discuss Governor Tom Wolf's 2018-19 Budget Proposal for the Pennsylvania Department of Education (PDE).

At the heart of public education is a belief in possibilities. Students begin each school year with hopes for the year ahead: making friends, seeking new pursuits, and learning about themselves and the world around them. As educators, parents, and policymakers, we work to ensure that all learners in the commonwealth – whether in early childhood programs, postsecondary education and training, or in the K to 12 schools that are a vibrant and proud part of our neighborhoods – have the chance to not only improve the trajectory of their own lives, but those of their families and communities.

Since its founding, our commonwealth has affirmed and celebrated the importance of education. Pennsylvania's state constitution, signed in 1790, was among the first in the nation to establish a system of public education by providing children with the opportunity to learn regardless of their family's circumstances.

But we also know that the promise of a transformational education has not always been within reach for all Pennsylvanians, and that, even today, students' futures are often shaped by factors beyond their control. Achievement gaps persist, often beginning before kindergarten, and have significant, long-term impacts on students and communities. While opportunities in fast-growing fields of science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM), as well as computer science, abound, not all students in Pennsylvania have had access to meaningful, high-quality learning opportunities that help them develop these essential skills.

Investing in Pennsylvania's Students and Workforce

Recognizing that Pennsylvanians are our commonwealth's greatest resource, we can – and must – do better. That's why Governor Wolf's proposed 2018-19 budget invests in education at all levels – from pre-K to postsecondary – as well as workforce development and training. It is a budget that emphasizes unprecedented cross-sector and cross-agency collaboration, and acknowledges that rebuilding our schools is the beginning of rebuilding our economy – and ensuring that Pennsylvania will remain competitive in the global, knowledge-based, 21st century economy. These proposed investments in education build on the significant progress we have made as a commonwealth over the past three years, and acknowledge the optimism, work ethic, and entrepreneurial spirit that has defined our commonwealth's history since its founding more than three centuries ago.

Advancing success for all students in Pennsylvania is a top priority for the Wolf Administration and the PA Department of Education. Over the past three years, Governor Wolf has worked tirelessly to reinvest in Pennsylvania's education system. Under the governor's leadership, Pennsylvania has expanded access to high-quality early childhood education, elevated educators' voices in policymaking, confronted bias and discrimination in schools and communities, and ensured that historic investments in public K-12 schools are driven out through a newly adopted fair funding formula that considers both student- and district-based factors. These efforts are informed by a commitment to equity, including the understanding that,

in providing opportunity for all students, some communities need more support for educational resources than others.¹

In January 2018, the U.S. Department of Education approved Pennsylvania's Consolidated State Plan² under the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) – which replaced No Child Left Behind as the nation's prevailing federal law guiding K-12 education. The ESSA State Plan emphasizes the Department's vision for public education and serves as a roadmap for ensuring opportunity and success for each of the 1.7 million K-12 students in the commonwealth, ushering in a new era of transparency, equity, and innovation for public education.

The State Plan was developed in consultation with thousands of diverse stakeholders included representatives from business and industry, who advocated for including measures of career awareness, preparation, and readiness in Pennsylvania's statewide accountability system. The Future Ready PA Index, a new public-facing dashboard, illustrates more comprehensive measures of school progress. By expanding the definition of success for Pennsylvania's students – and schools – beyond standardized tests, the Department is working to create conditions that incentivize personalized, well-rounded, and relevant education that prepares every student for success beyond high school graduation.

The governor's proposed 2018-19 budget would invest in programs and services that help all Pennsylvanians – regardless of their age, income, or zip code – realize the possibilities and promise of a brighter future.

Early Childhood Education

Providing students with a strong foundation through high-quality prekindergarten programs is a proven path to achievement and a hallmark of the governor's commitment to improving the quality of life for Pennsylvania's youngest learners and their families. Research clearly shows that high-quality early childhood education helps put young children on a path for success later in life. In the short-term, young learners are better prepared to start kindergarten, receive fewer referrals for special education services, and gain greater achievement of social and emotional developmental milestones. In the long-term, benefits accrue to both the individual – who is more likely to graduate on time, complete postsecondary training or education, and have higher lifetime earnings – and to the community, with better health, lower crime, and more engaged civic participation.

Currently, 1,900 pre-K programs provide high-quality learning opportunities to approximately 78,000 children across the commonwealth; however, high-quality care and education are still out of reach for too many of Pennsylvania's youngest learners and their families: 60 percent of income-eligible three- and four-year old children remain unserved.

Since taking office in 2015, Governor Wolf has demonstrated a strong commitment to expanding access to high-quality early learning in Pennsylvania. The governor's 2018-19 budget includes a proposed increase of \$40 million in funding for Pre-K Counts (PKC) and Head Start Supplemental Assistance Program (HSSAP), which will support nearly 4,400 additional slots. These new investments build on the more than \$90 million in new investments in early

¹ Blair Mann, "Equity and Equality Are Not Equal," The Education Trust, March 12, 2014, <https://edtrust.org/the-equity-line/equity-and-equality-are-not-equal/>.

² *Pennsylvania's Consolidated State Plan*, <http://www.education.pa.gov/K-12/ESSA/Pages/Consolidated-State-Plan.aspx>.

childhood education secured by Governor Wolf since taking office in 2015. Together, these increased investments will double access to high-quality pre-K programs for eligible children across the commonwealth, enabling the commonwealth to serve 24,810 children in Pre-K Counts and 6,570 in HSSAP. The governor's budget also proposes a \$11.6 million increase for Preschool Early Intervention.

The governor's proposed investments in early childhood education aim to help more young children, and their families, access these life-changing programs. However, in expanding access, it is also important to ensure that these programs continue to meet high standards of quality. Research suggests that program quality is the single greatest determining factor in whether the benefits of early childhood education last.³ Pennsylvania is recognized as a national leader in setting a clearly defined standard for what constitutes "high-quality" early childhood education through its model rating tool, Keystone STARS. By making significant investments tied to quality, Pennsylvania can ensure that each dollar creates maximum value for families, communities, and taxpayers.

K-12 Education

Today, the commonwealth's public K-12 education system serves more than 1.7 million students. Pennsylvania's 500 school districts range in size from approximately 200 students to more than 140,000 students. In addition to traditional public schools, more than 170 charter schools are responsible for educating 135,000 students. Pennsylvania's 29 Intermediate Units (IUs) provide special education, professional development, and technical assistance services to school districts, charter schools, and private schools.

- Basic Education Funding

Governor Wolf's 2018-19 budget proposal reaffirms his commitment to public education, and includes a \$100 million increase in Basic Education Funding, bringing the total increase in this investment in Basic Education Funding to \$615 million since 2015. Since 2016, statewide investments in K-12 education have been distributed through the funding formula that provides equitable, fair funding for all school districts through consideration of student- and district-based factors.

- Special Education

The governor's proposed budget also includes a \$20 million increase in Special Education Funding. This increase, allocated to school districts through the formula adopted by the bipartisan Special Education Funding Commission, will continue Pennsylvania's transition to the goal of equitable special education funding. This proposed increase will help to alleviate pressure on school districts, who are primarily responsible for special education expenses and have experienced significant increases in costs over the past decade without requisite increases in federal or state funding.⁴ They will also build on the \$75 million in increased investments the governor has worked with the legislature to secure since taking office in January 2015.

³ See J. Heckman (University of Chicago), and K. Dodge (Duke University).

⁴ Over the past decade, special education costs in Pennsylvania have increased by nearly 70 percent. In that same period, state special education funding increased by 12.7 percent, and federal funds increased 11.6 percent.

- **Expanding Measures of School Progress through the Future Ready PA Index**

In addition to its focus on improving resources and fair funding for public K-12 schools, the Department has worked diligently to develop a new, public-facing school progress report that provides a fairer, more comprehensive and reliable set of school performance measures. The Future Ready PA Index will launch in the fall of 2018, and will place additional emphasis on academic growth, chronic absenteeism, high school graduation rates, and assessments of postsecondary readiness.

The indicators of achievement, on-track, and college and career readiness will be presented in a dashboard format. Many of these measures will also be used as part of Pennsylvania's statewide accountability system under the federal Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA), eliminating duplicative federal and state reporting frameworks that are currently in place.⁵ The Future Ready PA Index will contain more information than has been provided in the past, including the performance of individual subgroups of students on each measure. It also will include the state average and goal for indicators in each school report to provide context for a school's performance in key areas.

In addition to reducing the emphasis on standardized assessments in Pennsylvania's forward-facing school report card, the Department also has reduced the length of PSSA tests by 20 percent, eliminated two sections of the exam, and shifted testing to later in the school year for students in grades 3 through 8.

- **Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math (STEM) and Computer Science Education**

Demand for a STEM-ready workforce continues to grow, including an estimated 300,000 STEM-related jobs available in Pennsylvania in 2018. Over the past two years, the Department has focused attention and resources on improving equity and promoting innovation in STEM and computer science education. Pennsylvania has earned national recognition for its efforts to improve cross-sector and statewide collaboration in STEM education, and is home to five nationally-recognized STEM ecosystems, which integrate resources from business, industry, education, and community partners to provide STEM experiences for all learners.⁶ The Department has conducted more than 30 STEM stakeholder sessions across the commonwealth, and established a statewide STEM network, bringing together existing efforts in schools and communities across the commonwealth, in partnership with early learning, libraries, higher education, business and industry.

Over the past year, the Department has worked to more than double the number of individuals who are engaged in the Pennsylvania STEM Coalition. The Coalition – established in November 2016, and charged with supporting the Department's vision of advancing equity and generating

⁵ Under No Child Left Behind and Pennsylvania's ESEA Flexibility Waiver, PDE published a separate report card for federal accountability purposes called the *Required Federal Reporting Measures (RFRM)*. The Future Ready PA Index will eliminate the need for this redundant data reporting tool.

⁶ The five STEM ecosystems formally recognized by the national STEM Funders Network include: 1) Philadelphia STEM Ecosystem; 2) Lancaster County STEM Alliance; 3) Schuylkill/Carbon/Luzerne Region Ecosystem; 4) Pittsburgh Area STEM Ecosystem; and 5) PA SEED (Bucks, Chester, Delaware, and Montgomery Counties) STEM Ecosystem.

support for STEM education – now boasts close to 300 diverse members representing education, business and industry, and community organizations across the commonwealth.

Underscoring the importance of STEM education, Pennsylvania has established a goal to increase the number of STEM majors at Pennsylvania's postsecondary institutions by 10,000 by 2020.⁷ In December 2017, Governor Wolf joined bipartisan colleagues from 15 states as part of the Governors for K-12 Computer Science Education Partnership, committing to expanding access to and improving equity in K-12 computer science education. This commitment was bolstered by the State Board of Education's endorsement of the Computer Science Teachers Association (CSTA) K-12 Computer Science Education Standards in January 2018.

- **Career and Technical Education (CTE)**

Pennsylvania has a strong tradition of CTE, and has been recognized as a national leader for its work to integrate rigorous academic and technical instruction to prepare students for the careers of today and tomorrow. Pennsylvania's 1,720 approved secondary and postsecondary CTE programs of study serve more than 67,000 students at 136 high schools and 84 career and technical centers.

The governor's proposed budget recognizes that investments in CTE can put Pennsylvania's students – and communities – on a fast track for success in a 21st century economy. In his 2018-19 budget, Governor Wolf proposed a \$10 million increase in the commonwealth's Secondary Career and Technical Education (SCTE) formula grants for secondary programs, providing an estimated \$59.6 million in total funding. If enacted, it would represent the first increase in funding for CTE in a decade.

Postsecondary Education

Pennsylvania is home to 243 degree-granting postsecondary institutions, including 14 community colleges, 14 state-owned universities, four state-related universities, and the state-affiliated Thaddeus Stevens College of Technology. In the 2016-17 school year, these public and private institutions awarded more than 187,000 postsecondary credentials ranging from industry-recognized certificates to doctoral and professional degrees. A significant majority of college-bound high school graduates in Pennsylvania enroll in one of the state's 33 publicly-supported 2- and 4-year postsecondary institutions.⁸

In today's economy, a high school diploma is often not enough to get ahead: more than 60 percent of good paying jobs in Pennsylvania will demand a postsecondary degree or credential over the next decade,⁹ and the overwhelming majority of STEM jobs in the state – 91 percent – require postsecondary education or training.¹⁰ Currently, only 45 percent of Pennsylvanians

⁷ By 2020, the number of full-time students enrolled in STEM-specific majors at state-supported institutions of higher education will increase by 10,000.

⁸ National Student Clearinghouse

⁹ Carnevale, Anthony P., Nicole Smith, and Jeff Strohl. [*Recovery: Job Growth and Education Requirements Through 2020*](#). Washington, D.C.: Georgetown University Center on Education and the Workforce (2013).

¹⁰ Carnevale, Anthony P., Nicole Smith, and Jeff Strohl. [*Help Wanted: Projections of Jobs and Education Requirements through 2018*](#). Washington, D.C.: Georgetown University Center on Education and the Workforce (2010).

hold these credentials, and a significant skills gap – especially for “middle skills” occupations requiring some postsecondary education but not a bachelor’s degree – continues to persist for the commonwealth’s current and emerging workforce.¹¹ While six in 10 Pennsylvania high school graduates go on to postsecondary education within 16 months of graduation, less than two-thirds of those students ultimately complete their degree or credential within six years.¹² These students join the more than 1.4 million working-age Pennsylvanians who have earned at least 20 college credits but do not have a postsecondary degree or credential. Access and completion rates are even lower for students of color and low-income students.

Recognizing these challenges, in November 2016, the State Board of Education adopted the first statewide postsecondary attainment goal: 60 percent of Pennsylvanians with a postsecondary degree or credential by 2025. To meet this goal, Pennsylvania will need to produce nearly 820,000 additional postsecondary credentials between 2017 and 2025.

To help meet that ambitious goal, the Department is pursuing several strategies focused on promoting postsecondary readiness, access, and completion, especially for underrepresented students and underserved communities in Pennsylvania:

- **Strengthen and Expand Postsecondary Guidance and Supports for All Students:** PDE has teamed up with local, state, and national partners, including the PA School Counselors Association, to develop resources related to college and career advising and guided pathways for the 2017-18 school year and beyond as part of the Reach Higher Initiative.
- **Improving Access to Advanced Coursework for All Students:** Recognizing the impact that advanced coursework can have on the success of students’ transition from high school to postsecondary education, PDE will work to expand the number of students enrolled in at least one advanced rigor course each year, and to identify opportunities to improve equitable access to such coursework.¹³ This includes supporting early college initiatives, like Pennsylvania Highlands Community College’s Accelerated College Education (ACE) program that helps high school students simultaneously earn a high school diploma and an associate’s degree; in 2016-17, nearly two dozen high school seniors in Johnstown graduated high school with an associate’s degree.
- **Focus on Timely Degree Completion:** Pennsylvania is one of five states selected to participate in the Complete College America (CCA) Alliance of States “[15 to Finish](#)” Campaign. The campaign encourages students to take 15 credits per semester, or 30 credits per year, to increase the number of students completing degrees in a timely manner and with minimal debt. The [Fly in 4 Graduation Partnership](#) is a partnership

¹¹ <http://strongernation.luminafoundation.org/report/2017/#state/PA>

¹² National Student Clearinghouse enrollment data provided to the Pennsylvania Department of Education, April 2017.

¹³ In 2016-17, nearly 102,000 secondary students across Pennsylvania (19 percent) enrolled in at least one course of rigor, including Advanced Placement (AP), International Baccalaureate (IB), and dual enrollment courses; however, only 10 percent of all low-income students and less than 13 percent of students of color enroll in these courses. PA Information Management System (PIMS), PA Department of Education. Note: Students are counted once per course type (AP, IB, dual credit), regardless of the number of courses they may have taken in each type.

between freshmen entering Temple University in the fall semester and the university to promote graduation in four years and reduce student debt.

These initiatives have been bolstered by increased support for public postsecondary institutions during Governor Wolf's tenure. Over the past three years, Pennsylvania has made \$110.4 million in new investments for publicly-supported postsecondary institutions, including community colleges and four-year institutions. These increased and sustained investments recognize postsecondary education is a critical path to economic security, particularly for underrepresented populations, including low-income, first-generation and immigrant students.

The governor's proposed 2018-19 budget makes additional investments of \$15 million in the 14 universities of the Pennsylvania State System of Higher Education (PASSHE). These investments come at a critical moment to ensure that the system can continue to provide support to students and families following a comprehensive review and restructuring evaluation. The governor's budget recommends sustained investments in other publicly-supported postsecondary institutions.

Finally, as part of the Wolf Administration's efforts to ensure that sexual violence is not part of any student's education, the governor's proposed 2018-19 budget includes funding to address campus sexual assault through the It's On Us PA campaign. Over the past two years, the governor worked with the legislature to secure \$2 million in funding to invest in postsecondary institutions' efforts to improve awareness, prevention, reporting, and response systems, with a particular focus on addressing barriers and promoting proactive, sustainable leadership. In 2016-17, the first year of funding, these grants invested in efforts at 36 postsecondary institutions, reaching an estimated 87,000 students and 16,000 professional staff. This year, 63 public and private colleges and universities applied for more than \$1.5 million in competitive funding as part of the 2017-18 grant program to support bystander intervention and prevention programs, enhanced reporting systems, campus climate surveys, and other evidence-based initiatives.

Public Libraries

Libraries serve as gathering places for all community members seeking knowledge, information, and resources. Pennsylvania's network of 604 state-supported public libraries and 29 District Library Centers are a key part of the commonwealth's educational system. Libraries provide resources, technology, and programs that support learners of all ages, from preschoolers to Millennials to the Silent Generation, in all 67 counties.

Pennsylvania's public libraries offer STEM-related experiences to pre-K through elementary students, with more than two-thirds of all libraries providing elementary-age STEM learning and 72 percent of public libraries offering opportunities for pre-K children. More than one in 10 public libraries in Pennsylvania also feature Maker Spaces, delivering even greater STEM options. These programs – coupled with libraries' role as a primary provider of broadband access, especially in low-income and rural communities – position the commonwealth's public libraries at the center of efforts to promote connectedness, innovation, and career readiness.

Public libraries are also important partners to early learning programs and K-12 schools as they work to improve literacy and academic success. Last year, approximately 320,000 students participated in summer reading programs hosted at local libraries, helping to mitigate the "summer slide" that often occurs between school years. Pennsylvania is a national leader in promoting family and community engagement through public libraries, with 109 Family Place

programs across the state that connect young learners and families with important community-based resources.

More than 70 percent of Pennsylvania's public libraries provide resources and supports to job seekers, including career navigation, research and information gathering, and other services. Nearly a third offer loaner laptops, mobile hotspots, and similar programs that offer digital equipment for community members. These programs supplement other community-based resources to assist unemployed, underemployed, and other individuals to the resources and information they need, including PA CareerLinks.

Funding includes support for local library operations, providing services to the blind, disabled, and older Pennsylvanians, along with a growing number of wounded returning veterans in need of special reading and listening formats, and making invaluable print and digital resources available to everyone, from researchers to members of the general public.

Promoting Career Readiness through Cross-Sector Collaboration: PAsmart

Since the beginning of his administration, Governor Wolf has demonstrated a commitment to ensuring all students throughout their pre-K to postsecondary education have opportunities to explore and identify interests, skills, and career pathways to succeed in today's rapidly changing, global economy. As we have traveled to schools and communities across Pennsylvania over the past three years, it is clear: too often, there is a disconnect between the skills demanded by a connected, knowledge-based economy and those of the state's current and emerging workforce.

What is also clear is that, in many places across the commonwealth, education, business, and community leaders are already coming together to develop innovative strategies for connecting classroom experiences with real world applications through initiatives such as career pathways, work-based learning, educator in the workplace programs, and accelerated learning opportunities like dual enrollment and CTE. Pennsylvania also has made important progress in advancing career readiness in the past year:

- Pennsylvania is the only state in the nation to include a true ***K-12 Career Readiness Indicator***, aligned with the state's [Academic Standards for Career Education and Work](#), as part of its approved federal accountability system under ESSA. The plan includes a goal that all elementary, middle, and high school students will participate in career readiness activities by the 2022-23 school year. Pennsylvania will report the measure on the ***Future Ready PA Index***, beginning in fall 2018.
- PDE is working with cross-sector partners from pre-K to postsecondary education, workforce development, and human services to ***identify PA Career Ready Skills and Employability Assets/Traits aligned to Pennsylvania's academic standards***.
- PDE has encouraged LEAs to consider ***Educator in the Workplace opportunities*** for Act 48 professional development credit, and is working to embed career education and career pathways in its professional development resources for educators.
- School districts across the commonwealth are working with cross-sector partners to create comprehensive K-12 counseling programs that ***promote college and career pathways for all students***, and to implement innovative programs, like accelerated "Associate in High School" programs that allow students to simultaneously earn a high school diploma and an associate degree.

Building on his commitment to promote Schools That Teach, Jobs That Pay, and Government That Works, and from recommendations shared by Pennsylvanians through the Middle Class Task Force, Governor Wolf announced a new \$50 million signature workforce development and education initiative as part of his 2018-19 budget proposal. PAsmart aims to realign workforce development from K-12 through postsecondary education and careers to prepare students and workers with 21st century skills. The initiative also seeks to reimagine how new and existing resources at the state, regional, and local levels are leveraged to move beyond segmented efforts to achieve shared goals.

PAsmart was developed to leverage new and existing resources to break down siloes in state government and between the public and private sector to address common concerns expressed by businesses, educators, and community leaders. The initiative builds on Pennsylvania's leading STEM and apprenticeship programs by collaborating with employers to provide targeted investments in STEM, computer science, apprenticeships, and more, so students and workers get the training and skills for in-demand, middle class jobs, and aims to attract new businesses to the commonwealth by investing in Pennsylvania's workforce.

The \$50 million strategic initiative would include a:

- **\$25 million increase in STEM and computer science education at all levels.** Nearly 300,000 jobs in the commonwealth require skills in Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics. Over the next decade, more than 70 percent of new jobs will require these skills.
- **\$7 million increase in the Department of Labor and Industry (L&I) for apprenticeships** with a goal of doubling the number of registered apprentices by 2025. Since Governor Wolf established the commonwealth's first Apprenticeship and Training Office in 2016, the number of registered apprentices has increased 14.5 percent, from 13,282 registered apprentices to 15,208.
- **\$3 million increase for Industry Partnerships in L&I**, which bring together workers and multiple employers in the same industry in a public-private partnership to provide job training.
- **\$10 million increase to develop Career and Technical Education and STEM career pathways** to help students learn about career options and earn an associate degree at a lower cost and in less time.
- **\$5 million increase to encourage employers to partner with colleges and universities** to develop educational programs that prepare students for high demand jobs.

The initiative also would establish a cross-agency and multi-sector public facing interactive data dashboard that will inform policy priorities, program efforts, and decision-making around investments that support student, worker, and business success in the 21st century economy.

Finally, the workforce development initiatives proposed through PAsmart support the governor's goal to increase the number of workers in Pennsylvania with postsecondary training from 45 percent to 60 percent by 2025, with a focus on business and industry needs that do not require a 4-year degree.

Conclusion

Over the past three years, we've worked in partnership with educators, families, students, advocates, community members, business and industry leaders, and policymakers across the commonwealth to ensure that all Pennsylvanians can access a great education and succeed in our economy. By investing in education at all levels, we can put students, and our commonwealth, on a path to a brighter future.

In the year ahead, I look forward to working with you to continue to achieve great things on behalf of the commonwealth's students, educators, families, and communities. Thank you for your commitment to making education a shared priority, and I will be happy to address any questions.