



**pennsylvania**  
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

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**Testimony**

*presented to the*

**House Appropriations Committee**

*by Pedro A. Rivera, Secretary of Education*

Monday, March 6, 2017

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 this morning to discuss Governor Tom Wolf's 2017-18 Budget Proposal for the Pennsylvania Department of Education (PDE).

As the governor noted in his budget address last month, budgets are – at their heart – a statement of priorities and values. The governor's proposed 2017-18 budget reflects the belief he and I – and you – share: that there should be no greater priority for our government than educating our children.

Over the past two years, we've worked together to make sure that our state budget reflects that belief, securing historic investments in all levels of Pennsylvania's public education system – from early childhood to K-12 to postsecondary. Together, we have achieved remarkable progress, helping to mend the cracks in a public education system challenged by years of being asked for more and more without receiving enough in return. These investments have translated into more opportunities for students in the classroom and beyond, helping districts reduce class sizes, preserve and expand pre-K and kindergarten programs, and provide supports for struggling and at-risk students.

But while this progress is laudable, we know there is more work to be done to expand opportunity for students and communities, and to ensure the state's long-term economic growth. Even with significant recent increases in basic education funding, Pennsylvania still ranks near the bottom of all 50 states in the percentage of state funding in our total K-12 spending.<sup>1</sup> Similarly, Pennsylvania's support for higher education is less than half what it was per student at its height in 2000, leaving students and families to bear the brunt of increased tuition.<sup>2</sup> This means that, for too many students and families, zip code continues to dictate access to educational opportunity.

We also know that while Pennsylvania has historically scored significantly above the national average in nationwide measures of student achievement, the commonwealth also has some of the most significant achievement gaps between low-income students and students of color and their white peers in the nation. And although the commonwealth's high school graduation rate exceeded the national average in 2014-15, across Pennsylvania, nine in 10 white students graduated high school in four years, compared with only seven in 10 black and Latino students.<sup>3</sup> In addition, more than 13,000 students were enrolled in 51 high schools that graduated fewer than two-thirds of their students in 2014-15; these high schools disproportionately serve students of color and those living in poverty.<sup>4</sup>

We have a chance to change that story in Pennsylvania by continuing to provide ongoing, increased, and equitable investments in Pennsylvania's students, from birth through school-years and beyond to adult education. I am optimistic of the results we will achieve.

Over the past two years, my senior leadership team and I have appreciated the opportunity to provide you with testimony on policy issues as far-ranging as high school graduation requirements, career and technical education, assessments, special education, substitute teachers, and school construction. As

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<sup>1</sup> U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics.

<sup>2</sup> State Higher Education Executive Officers (SHEEO); data adjusted for inflation using the Higher Education Cost Adjustment (HECA); and Institute for Research on Higher Education, *2016 College Affordability Diagnosis: Pennsylvania*, University of Pennsylvania Graduate School of Education, 2016.

<sup>3</sup> [Cohort Graduation Rate](#), 2014-15 data, PDE.

<sup>3</sup> [Cohort Graduation Rate](#), 2014-15 data, PDE.

<sup>4</sup> Calculated using 2014-15 Pennsylvania 4-year cohort graduation data. See [Cohort Graduation Rate](#), 2014-15 data, PDE.

we've visited dozens of communities across the commonwealth, we've also been inspired by the commitment and passion demonstrated by the tireless educators, parents, advocates, and leaders who have shared their time, talents, and treasure to create a better world for learners of all ages and backgrounds. During these discussions, hearings and meetings, we've heard a common theme: that education is key to ensuring a vibrant future not only for our students but for our commonwealth as a whole.

It is my hope that with this budget proposal, we can once again honor our shared commitment to help all students – regardless of the zip code where they live or their country of origin, the color of their skin or the language they speak at home – realize their potential through sustained and increased investments in our education system.

### **Current Pennsylvania Public Education Landscape**

Pennsylvania's public education system currently serves 1.7 million PreK-12 students. Those students speak over 270 languages; 276,185 students receive some form of special education in traditional public, charter or private school settings. They are sons and daughters of teachers, business owners, doctors and nurses, senators and representatives, even a Secretary of Education. There are children of migrant laborers, homeless veterans, and newly arrived refugees. This diversity is an asset, and it is a privilege to work each day to ensure that all learners – whether enrolled in a preschool or attending college – can shape their future and seize opportunity through safe, supportive, and well-rounded educational experiences.

Over the past two years, Pennsylvania has also expanded access to high-quality care and education for our youngest learners. The commonwealth currently serves 23,720 three- and four-year olds: 18,140 in Pre-K Counts and 5,580 in the Head Start Supplemental program. In order to ensure Pennsylvania's students and their families are better prepared for the start of their K-12 education, 53,700 children receive early intervention services.

Our 500 school districts, which are comprised of over 2,900 schools, range in size from just over 200 students to over 140,000 students. Over 160 brick-and-mortar charter schools and 14 cyber charter schools are responsible for educating 135,000 students. The commonwealth's 29 Intermediate Units provide special education, professional development and technical assistance services to school districts. Career and technical education programs are provided at 136 high schools and 84 career and technical centers, offering over 1,720 approved programs of study to over 66,000 students, representing approximately 12 percent of Pennsylvania's high school students. The 105 postsecondary and adult technical institutions in Pennsylvania provide training to over 90,000 students seeking a commonwealth secondary school diploma or technical certificates.

In 2016-17, more than 353,000 students were enrolled full-time in Pennsylvania's publicly supported institutions of higher education. During that same year, the commonwealth's public colleges and universities awarded more than 87,000 postsecondary credentials ranging from a two-year associate degree to doctoral and professional degrees. High school graduates in Pennsylvania continue to look to publicly supported institutions to further their education. Since 2009, seventy percent of college-bound high school graduates in Pennsylvania enroll in one of Pennsylvania's publicly supported institutions.

Finally, Pennsylvania's local public libraries serve as a hub of knowledge, information, and opportunity, serving more than 43.3 million visitors each year who borrow approximately 64 million books and other materials.

## **Sustaining Investments in Education**

Pennsylvania cannot get ahead if our schools fall behind. Fair and increased education funding for all schools continues to be one of Governor Wolf's top priorities to ensure students are college- and career-ready. Working with the legislature, the governor secured historic increases at all levels of education in his first two years in office, including:

- \$415 million increase in Basic Education Funding;
- \$50 million increase in Special Education Funding;
- \$60 million increase for early childhood education;
- \$14.6 million increase for early intervention;
- \$81.4 million increase for PASSHE and state-related schools; and
- \$16.4 million increase for community colleges.

Thanks to the bipartisan work of the Basic Education Funding Commission, in June 2016, the governor signed Act 35 establishing a new funding formula to provide more equitable levels of basic education funding for school districts across the commonwealth. The formula considers both student-based factors – including the number of children in the district who live in poverty or who are enrolled in charter schools – as well as district-based factors such as the wealth of the district, the district's current tax effort and the ability of the district to raise revenue.

The 2017-18 budget provides increased funding for Pennsylvania schools to deliver high-quality education to every student across the state, regardless of zip code.

### **Basic Education Funding**

Governor Wolf continues to make education his top priority and his 2017-18 budget proposal leads off with a \$100 million increase in Basic Education Funding, which will be distributed through the Basic Education Funding Formula, providing an equitable allocation to school districts across the commonwealth.

Despite the significant achievement of the new funding formula, inequities in funding across Pennsylvania's schools persist. Pennsylvania's per pupil spending is severely disparate, ranging from \$10,303 to more than double that in the highest spending district at \$25,234. My visits to schools throughout the commonwealth have illustrated the ongoing need for our continued commitment to increase our investment in schools in all 500 districts.

### **Special Education**

Governor Wolf's budget also includes a \$25 million increase in the 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.

Even with this proposed increase, special education expenses continue to be borne primarily by school districts. Special education costs in the commonwealth increased over the past decade by nearly 70 percent. In that same period, state special education funding increased by only 12.7 percent; and federal funds increased 11.6 percent. Governor Wolf's proposed increase helps to mitigate that pressure on school districts.

## Early Childhood Education

Providing students with a strong foundation through high-quality prekindergarten programs is a proven path to achievement and a hallmark of Governor Wolf's commitment to education. The governor's education proposal includes a \$75 million increase for high-quality pre-K – \$65 million for Pennsylvania Pre-K Counts and \$10 million for the Head Start Supplemental Assistance Program – and an \$11.7 million increase for Preschool Early Intervention.

Currently, more than sixty percent of young children who qualify for high-quality, publicly supported pre-K are not enrolled in these programs; this means nearly 113,000 eligible preschool children are currently underserved. Urban, rural, and suburban districts alike suffer from unmet need at rates of 51 percent, 68 percent, and 74 percent respectively.

The governor's proposed investments in early childhood education aim to help more young children, and their families, access these programs. However, in expanding access, it is also important to ensure that these programs are high-quality. Research suggests that quality of programs is the single greatest determining factor in whether the benefits of early childhood education last.<sup>5</sup> When we make such significant investments, we want to ensure that each dollar is creating maximum value for the families receiving services, for the communities into which these funds are invested, and, ultimately, for our taxpayers. Pennsylvania is recognized as a leader in setting a clearly defined standard for what constitutes "high-quality" early childhood education through its model rating tool, Keystone STARS, which awards up to four stars for clearly defined performance metrics.

In addition to increasing investments in early childhood education, the Office of Child Development and Early Learning (OCDEL) has also made significant progress to integrate and align systems to promote quality, equity, and efficiency. Led by a steering committee and developed by robust work groups, OCDEL's integration efforts led to the development of more than 60 recommendations to streamline agency functions, integrate programs and services, and reduce administrative burden for providers. These recommendations include increasing access to high-quality services by aligning certification and performance standards, maximizing the use of funds to support tiered reimbursement rates for programs participating in the STARS program, stabilizing payments to high-quality providers, and other efforts.

The research is clear – high-quality Pre-K affords significant benefits to individual students, their families, and their communities over both the short- and long-term. In the short-term, young learners are better prepared to start kindergarten; there are fewer referrals for special education services and greater achievement of social and emotional developmental milestones. In the long-term, benefits accrue both to the individual – who is a more likely to graduate on time, complete postsecondary training and have higher earnings – and to the community level, with better health, lower crime, and more engaged civic participation. With the governor's proposed investment in Pre-K Counts and Head Start, we can connect more families with the once-in-a-lifetime benefits of these high-quality programs.

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<sup>5</sup> See J. Heckman (University of Chicago), and K. Dodge (Duke University).

## Postsecondary and Higher Education

Working together, we have also strengthened support for higher education—especially the public institutions that educate the overwhelming majority of Pennsylvania’s middle class and first-generation students. These efforts are central to advancing the life prospects for individual Pennsylvanians, and to growing our state’s knowledge economy. By 2020, over 60 percent of jobs in Pennsylvania will require some type of postsecondary education – whether a two- or four-year degree, or a high-value, industry-recognized credential;<sup>6</sup> however, only 40 percent of Pennsylvania residents currently have these credentials.<sup>7</sup> Data from the National Student Clearinghouse (NSC) reveals that nearly 70 percent of high school graduates in Pennsylvania who pursue postsecondary education go to one of the commonwealth’s 33 publicly-supported institutions.<sup>8</sup> In short, publicly-supported postsecondary institutions are crucial to meeting Pennsylvania’s recently established statewide postsecondary attainment goal: 60 percent of Pennsylvanians with a postsecondary degree or credential by 2025.<sup>9</sup>

Over the past two years, Pennsylvania has made \$97.8 million in new investments for publicly-supported postsecondary institutions. The governor’s 2017-18 budget makes further investment, \$8.9 million, in the 14 universities of the Pennsylvania State System of Higher Education (PASSHE) which comes at a critical time to ensure the system continues to support Pennsylvania’s high school graduates and families as the state system undergoes its comprehensive review and restructuring evaluation. Nearly 70 percent of college bound seniors in Pennsylvania enroll at our publicly supported institution of higher education in Pennsylvania and their work and partnership is critical to preparing Pennsylvania residents to meet workforce needs. While this budget does not increase appropriation for state related institutions, community colleges or Thaddeus Stevens College of Technology, we are recommending level funding and are proposing additional support to PASSHE as they examine their organization and operations to position the state system and its universities for long-term sustainability.

As we work to increase investment for public higher education, we must also acknowledge that far too many students do not ultimately earn a degree or credential as intended. Only 57.8 percent of Pennsylvania high school students in the Class of 2010 enrolled in a postsecondary institution after high school graduation. Six years later, only 61.5 percent had earned a degree or credential. This means that nearly 38 percent, or more than 32,000 students, enrolled in college – often taking on debt – but did not earn a degree.<sup>10</sup>

The Department is working with state and national leaders to improve college access, affordability, and completion in Pennsylvania. These efforts include:

- ***Pennsylvania “15 to Finish” Campaign:*** Through a partnership with Complete College America, the Department is developing a statewide “15 to Finish” campaign, which will emphasize the importance of students taking 30 credits each year to increase their likelihood of graduating on time.
- ***Complete College Pennsylvania:*** Over 1.4 million Pennsylvania residents have some college and no credential to show for this work. To help the commonwealth maximize this unrealized human

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<sup>6</sup> Georgetown Center for Education and the Workforce.

<sup>7</sup> Lumina Foundation

<sup>8</sup> National Student Clearinghouse

<sup>9</sup> On November 5, 2016, the Council on Higher Education for the State Board of Education approved a Motion to Support for adoption of this statewide postsecondary attainment goal.

<sup>10</sup> National Student Clearinghouse.

capital, the Department is planning to engage in a statewide effort to provide pathways for these residents to earn a credential that will have value in the marketplace.

- ***Reach Higher College Counseling:*** This year, PDE will coordinate statewide counselor conferences in collaboration with state and national partners to provide information about pathways, financial aid, college admission, and college advising for counselors working with students making decisions about postsecondary education options.
- ***Access and Affordability:*** The Department is also focused on increasing college access and affordability, including promoting a statewide college application month and a FAFSA completion initiative.

In addition to these efforts, the Wolf Administration has also led efforts to ensure that sexual violence is not part of the cost of any student's college education. Launched by Governor Wolf in January 2016 from a core belief that our school communities must speak up and act decisively to reject sexual violence, the *It's On Us PA* statewide campaign encourages everyone to play a role in ending sexual assault in our schools and on college campuses. The campaign was seeded in last year's budget with \$1 million to pursue its three major goals to improve awareness, prevention, reporting, and response systems in schools; to remove or reduce barriers that prevent survivors from reporting and accessing resources; and to demonstrate significant, proactive, and sustainable leadership by challenging schools to end sexual violence on campus. In November, Governor Wolf announced awards to 36 postsecondary institutions from the 62 applications submitted. The 2017-18 Budget requests the same \$1 million to bolster efforts underway by expanding strategies to more campuses across Pennsylvania.

### Public Libraries

Governor Wolf's 2017-18 proposed budget maintains funding to libraries. Public libraries are an integral part of Pennsylvania's education ecosystem. They provide opportunities for self-sufficiency and success for each person who walks through the door or connects virtually. Our libraries are community centers providing opportunities for learning 21st century skills and literacies, connecting people to the world of information and ideas, and creating spaces for innovation and community dialogue.

Over the past year, the Department's Office of Commonwealth Libraries has worked to expand STEM education efforts, including MakerSpaces, and has helped bring broadband access to rural areas through federal funding. The Department is also collaborating with the Department of Labor and Industry (L&I) to ensure access to resources and information for job seekers.

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 research experts to the members of the general public.

Pennsylvania is home to 604 state-aided, community-based public libraries serving 5.4 million card holders and more than 55 million in-person and virtual visitors annually. Approximately 385,265 children participated in the 2016 summer learning program conducted by local libraries, up from 352,122 participants in 2015. Public libraries provide services for lifelong learning to residents in communities across Pennsylvania.

## **Strengthening Accountability and Supports for Schools**

Increased investment in public education and a commitment to distributing those investments in an equitable and predictable manner is vital to ensuring a fair opportunity for success for every student and every school. These investments need to be coupled with technical assistance for schools that face additional challenges – academic, financial, and structural. And in cases where our long-term commitment to fair funding and meaningful support is not making a measurable impact, we have an obligation to act.

To begin, it's important to underscore that, for too long, school improvement efforts – both in Pennsylvania and nationwide – have revolved around a model that issues sweeping labels of failure based on limited data, and prescribes only a handful of cookie-cutter interventions, without attention to local context and community voice.

As a career educator who has worked with historically-underserved schools and systems, I am proud of the Wolf Administration's commitment to school improvement strategies that draw on a careful review of evidence and practice, and that emphasize both educator and community voice in the implementation of improvement efforts. These efforts are already garnering national attention and yielding early signs of success. The enactment of the federal Every Student Succeeds Act, or ESSA, provides us the chance to implement Pennsylvania-centric strategies.

First, ESSA maintains requirements for states to develop accountability systems that provide meaningful measures of school performance, but expands the range of indicators beyond snapshots of test-based academic achievement. This provision of the law mirrors the work already underway with our proposed Future Ready PA Index and its focus on indicators like academic growth, student attendance, and multiple measures of postsecondary readiness and success.

Next, ESSA gives states important discretion in designing interventions for struggling schools, which affords Pennsylvania the chance to develop supports that are responsive to the specific needs of individual schools and their districts. Governor Wolf's 2017-18 budget dedicates \$2 million to school improvement, leveraging \$1 million in federal funds, to serve 15 persistently low-achieving schools with comprehensive needs assessments and tailored technical assistance.

Finally, beginning in 2018-19, ESSA will require the Department to identify a broader set of schools for improvement efforts. Based upon a review of evidence and policy analysis from high-performing public education systems (both in the U.S. and in Canada) and feedback from practitioners and other stakeholders involved in our ESSA work, we propose a comprehensive system of:

- Diagnostic audits, such as those used on a broad scale in both Kentucky and Massachusetts. Audits will include comprehensive, quantitative reviews of academic, financial, school climate and organizational data (both for the identified school and the district's formal relationship – e.g., funding, staffing, structural – with the broader district) as well as site visits.
- Significant, on-site professional development, delivered by a central team of school improvement experts and regional cadres of educator leaders. This model will provide access to consistently high quality professional development and leadership networks and will include a peer-led coaching and support structure for teachers and school leaders. This approach resembles the learning community and rotation strategies employed in several high-performing systems

internationally, and provides Pennsylvania the chance to distinguish itself in ensuring practitioner voice in school improvement efforts.

- Evidence-based supports to ensure that struggling schools (and their broader districts) have access to aligned curricula, data analytics, and other resources tied to specific needs identified in the audit.

### Future Ready PA Index

Over the past two years, the Department has focused on resource equity and fair funding, efforts to grow professional capacity of educators at all levels, and provide research-based tools and supports to ensure meaningful learning opportunities across the states roughly 700 local education agencies. We've also listened to thousands of stakeholders who have challenged state leaders to develop a more comprehensive set of school performance measures that recognizes that students – and the schools that serve them – are more than just results on a standardized test.

The Future Ready PA Index would operationalize these principles, and would focus all elements of the state's school accountability and improvement system. Over the past year, we facilitated 30 sessions reaching more than 1,000 stakeholders to identify nearly two-dozen research-based indicators of school performance. The proposed Future Ready PA Index would:

- Elevate the role of value-added (growth) measures;
- Measure English language acquisition among English learners, not simply performance on a test of grade-level English language arts standards;
- Incentivize career exploration and awareness activities beginning at the elementary level;
- Incentivize course offerings such as dual enrollment, Advanced Placement (AP), International Baccalaureate (IB), and Career and Technical Education Programs of Study;
- Allow LEAs to include locally-selected assessments (grade 3 reading and grade 7 math) as additional snapshots of student progress in key grades; and
- Recognize schools graduating students with high-value credentials.

The proposed Index would also help fulfill a number of requirements under ESSA, including identification of schools requiring comprehensive and targeted support under the law's "meaningful differentiation" requirements and would help foster a shared language around the multiple levers associated with improving student opportunities and outcomes as part of a diagnostic audit and needs assessment.

### From Interventions to Support

The Department's efforts to expand ideas of school progress and success come with an imperative to rethink the nature of state-driven improvement strategies. For much of the past decade, school improvement work was defined by the prescriptive and escalating models associated with federal School

Improvement Grant funding. School improvement is exceptionally challenging work, with mixed results even in [states](#) and [districts](#) held up as national models.<sup>11</sup>

In planning for the interventions and school supports required under ESSA, PDE consulted evidence and policy analysis from high-performing public education systems; reviewed feedback from practitioners and other stakeholders involved in the department’s ESSA accountability work group; and examined various state-led models of technical assistance delivery employed in fiscally-distressed and other high-need districts. This process has informed a set of overarching principles for state accountability policies and the delivery of interventions:

- Accountability policies (both the criteria for determining interventions and the interventions themselves) should apply consistently and evenly to all public schools, both traditional public and charter.
- State policymakers share in accountability, and must work to ensure that districts and schools have fair and predictable resource levels to meet new accountability requirements.
- The challenges facing a struggling school cannot be disentangled from community and other contextual factors (e.g., district leadership, recurring resources, collective bargaining agreements).

The Department will use these principles to design a comprehensive system of supports and resources for schools identified for comprehensive and targeted support as part of Pennsylvania’s statewide accountability system under ESSA.

#### Governor’s 2017-2018 Proposed Pilot for Supporting Persistently Struggling Schools

In his 2017-2018 proposed budget, Governor Wolf included a proposal to use the flexibility ESSA provides states in designing school improvement strategies and the lessons we’ve learned in our work with York City School District as an opportunity to scale research-based intervention in other communities statewide.

By braiding \$2 million in state funding with \$1 million in federal funds, the governor has proposed establishing a pilot program in three districts serving 15 persistently struggling schools.<sup>12</sup> State and federal funds – up to \$1 million per district and a maximum of \$200,000 per school – will be leveraged to support one or two evidence-based strategies tied to significant and urgent needs identified through a diagnostic audit for each district and struggling school that can be implemented over the course of one to two school years. The diagnostic audit would identify gaps in available resources, including academic, financial, human capital, and community relations. The Department will evaluate the impact of these efforts through a broader set of school progress measures, consistent with the proposed Future Ready PA Index.<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> A [2015 IES brief, summarizing interviews with state education agency staff from 49 states and D.C. on the use of SIG funding](#), revealed that “at least 50 percent [of states] found it very difficult to turn around low-performing schools.”

<sup>12</sup> “Persistently struggling schools” are defined as Priority Schools (lowest performing five percent of schools) with low growth over the last three years. Growth would be measured using the [Pennsylvania Value Added Assessment System \(PVAAS\)](#).

<sup>13</sup> Too many school improvement efforts – in PA and nationwide – have been evaluated on the basis of test scores alone.

This approach reflects the Department’s belief that the challenges facing a struggling school cannot be disentangled from local context, such as district leadership, recurring resources, collective bargaining agreements, and other factors. School turnaround efforts must involve both districts and schools in order to be effective. Successes at the school level cannot be sustained in the absence of strong district leadership, reforms to collective bargaining, and attention to within-district resourcing. In addition, district, school, and community buy-in are prerequisites for successful school improvement.

### Office of School Improvement

Making and sustaining improvement in historically underserved schools is the most difficult work in education and there is no one-size-fits-all approach to address the myriad challenges they face. Many of our most challenged schools serve high numbers of kids and families who live in concentrated poverty, and encounter hunger, health challenges, and trauma daily; in these cases, interventions might include community schools supports. Other schools face high educator turnover, or suffer from outdated curriculum and classroom materials; here, the Department, will deploy school improvement specialists to evaluate and close instructional and curricular gaps. There are also cases where school leadership is failing students; in these cases, know that we will work aggressively to make changes.

The Department’s Office of School Improvement will be a key component in our work to identify persistently low-achieving schools eligible for interventions and supports. Housed within the Office of Elementary and Secondary Education, the Office of School Improvement will work closely with me and my senior leadership team to provide technical assistance, support, and accountability to struggling and historically underserved schools and districts.

### **Investing in Pennsylvania’s Teachers and School Leaders**

Great schools need great teachers and leaders. The Department invests in several programs that promote and support the preparation and professional development of teachers, principals, and other education leaders.

National trends in teacher preparation programs point to a dramatic decline in the number of education graduates, and Pennsylvania is no exception to this national trend. Since the fall of 1996, the number of students enrolled in bachelor degree programs in education in Pennsylvania has declined by 55 percent. And while the commonwealth still has one of the largest populations of students enrolled in teacher preparation programs despite these decreases, only a small fraction of those future educators are from underrepresented groups: in 2013-14, only 363 students from underrepresented groups graduated from education programs. Recognizing these urgent challenges, the Department is collaborating with state and national partners to identify strategies to more effectively develop a pipeline for teachers and school leaders, with a specific focus on enhancing recruitment, retention, and supports for teachers of color and diverse school leaders.

The Department supports a number of efforts that help current and future teachers, principals, and leaders gain skills, knowledge, and experience. The Department provides high-quality, no-cost options for research- and standards-based continuing professional development for school and system leaders, fosters partnerships to support future principals in their work to close achievement gaps in early learning programs, and supports educators serving in high-need communities.

## **Science, Technology, Engineering & Math (STEM) Education**

Data indicates that by 2018, there will be approximately 300,000<sup>14</sup> Pennsylvania jobs that require STEM skills or content knowledge; and over the next 10 years, 71 percent<sup>15</sup> of new jobs will require computer science skills. Coupled with the existing 21,000 unfilled computer science and software development jobs, and retirements from the engineering field, opportunities for careers in STEM abound.

Underscoring the importance of STEM education in Pennsylvania, Governor Wolf has outlined increasing the number of STEM majors at Pennsylvania's postsecondary institutions as a goal for his administration, and has helped the state make important progress in delivering additional resources to help achieve that goal.<sup>16</sup> The overwhelming majority (91 percent<sup>17</sup>) of STEM jobs in Pennsylvania will require postsecondary education and training. Students interested in pursuing STEM careers will need access to supports and pathways to get them to and through college or a postsecondary training program.

In 2016, the Department hired a Special Consultant to the Secretary for STEM Education, who has helped to catalyze the development of a statewide STEM network and bring together existing efforts in schools and communities across the commonwealth, in partnership with early learning, K-12, and higher education, as well as business and industry. Over the past year, the Department has earned recognition for its efforts to improve cross-sector and statewide collaboration in STEM education. Pennsylvania currently has four nationally-recognized STEM ecosystems, which are community partnerships that help integrate resources from businesses, industry, and others to provide STEM experiences for all students.

## **School Construction and Facilities (PlanCon)**

Encouraged by the bipartisan efforts to date and the precedent set by our collaboration on the Basic Education and Special Education Funding Commissions, I am looking forward to finishing the work of the PlanCon Advisory Committee and crafting a report that outlines the best way forward for the commonwealth to fund school facility construction.

## **Other Proposed Initiatives**

### **Expanding School Breakfast Programs**

Research suggests that teachers can't deliver effective instruction, and students can't meet their full potential, when issues like health, hunger, and safety are unmet. As a Department, we are committed to promoting evidence-based strategies for school improvement that are tailored to students', families', and communities' needs. The governor's 2017-18 proposed budget also recognizes the importance of meeting the needs of the whole child. Kids can't learn if they are hungry. With that in mind, the governor is proposing investing an additional \$2 million to leverage up to \$20 million in federal funds to be competitively awarded to prioritize evidence-based school breakfast delivery models.

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<sup>14</sup> The Alliance for Science & Technology Research in America: *Pennsylvania Federal R&D and STEM Jobs Report 2013*

<sup>15</sup> Code.org state facts; *K-12 Computer Science Education in Pennsylvania*.

<sup>16</sup> 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.

<sup>17</sup> Georgetown University Center on Education and the Workforce: <https://cew.georgetown.edu/wp-content/uploads/PA-STEM.pdf>

### Leveraging Efficiencies from Pupil Transportation

School districts, intermediate units, and career and technology centers all directly or indirectly receive commonwealth transportation reimbursement. Revisiting the formula which calculates reimbursements for pupil transportation presents a valuable opportunity for savings. The formula, originally enacted in the School Code in 1972, uses half a dozen factors such as vehicle capacity, usage, miles traveled with and without students, etc. to determine the amount paid to school districts. Since enactment, much has changed in the way local education agencies administer student transportation, but the formula has remained largely the same.

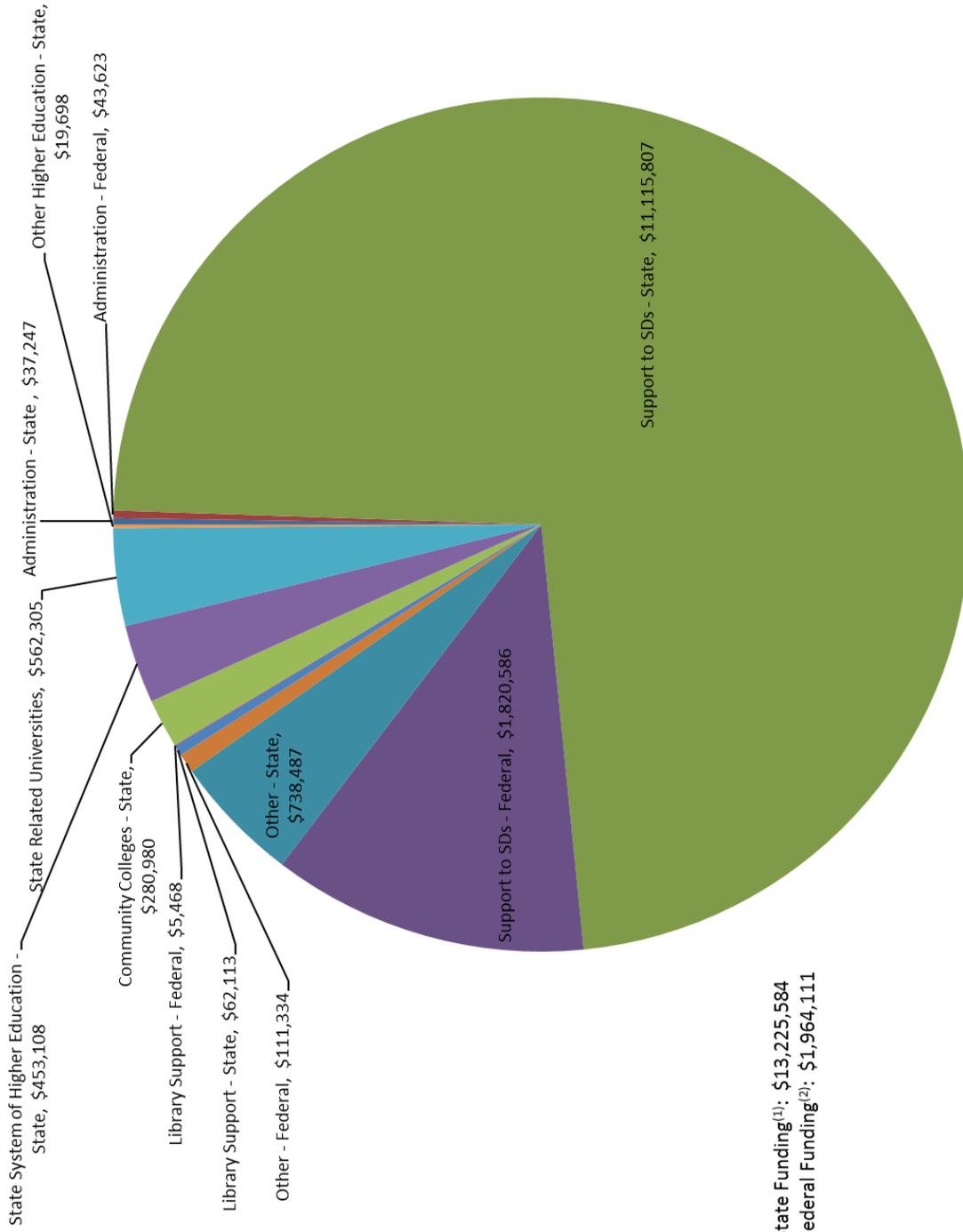
Currently, there is neither a requirement nor an incentive for school districts to competitively bid their transportation service contracts. As districts have transferred the costs and liabilities of maintaining their own fleets of buses to contracts with outside pupil transportation vendors, the formula has not been updated to encourage best practice for procurement of services contracts. Today, roughly 80 percent of pupil transportation in the commonwealth is provided through contracted services. Combined with the fact that buses and other vehicles today are more efficient than they were four decades ago, we have a unique opportunity to redesign the pupil transportation funding formula and save commonwealth taxpayers \$50 million.

### **Working Together to Invest in the Next Generation of Pennsylvania's Leaders**

Finally, it bears repeating that our progress has come through cooperation, for which I am deeply grateful. Thanks to our work together, school districts will be receiving the increased education investment we make through a new funding formula, which represents a critical first step in putting the commonwealth's education system on a more equitable path. We have also taken up the important task of pausing the narrow state-level high school graduation requirements, and developing recommendations that would provide more options and pathways for students to demonstrate college and career readiness.

Over the course of the next year, I look forward to working with you to continue to achieve great things on behalf of the commonwealth's more than 1.7 million students. Thank you for your commitment to making education funding a mutual priority and I will be happy to address any questions.

## Fiscal Year 2017-18 Department of Education Funding (Dollar Amounts in Thousands)



Total State Funding<sup>(1)</sup>: \$13,225,584  
 Total Federal Funding<sup>(2)</sup>: \$1,964,111

(1) Includes estimated grant awards to be received during FY17-18 that may run over multiple state fiscal years and does not include carryover from current grants received in previous years. Includes federal grants subcontracted to PDE through other state agencies.