

## The Ed Fund and Partners Voice Support for School Funding

If our economy is to recover, we must invest in education. President Obama has recognized this simple truth. Pennsylvania must also.

Over the last eight years, school districts across the state have shown that investment pays off. They have made significant gains because they were given the resources they needed. Philadelphia is no exception.

On behalf of 13 organizations (see full list below), we urge state officials to continue this progress by maintaining strong funding to school districts. There is no better investment in our city, our region, and our state.

In 2003-2004, only 57.6 percent of students across the state were proficient or advanced in reading and only 65.6 percent in math. By 2009-2010 76.3 percent of Pennsylvania students were proficient or better in reading and 72 percent in math. In fact, last year, the Center for Education Policy reported that Pennsylvania was the only state to make improvements in math and reading at every grade.

In Philadelphia, the gains have been even more dramatic. In 2002 only one out of every four students was proficient or advanced in reading. At the same time, only one of every five students was proficient or advanced in math.

Now, with increased resources and smart investments, things have changed. In 2010, 51 percent of Philadelphia's students were proficient or better in reading and 57 percent were proficient or better in math. We are still a long way from the 100 percent our children and communities deserve, but a 27 point increase in reading and 37 point jump in math are very good signs. We need to continue this positive trajectory.

We can continue this positive trajectory by maintaining state financial support, while we hold public schools — both district and charters — accountable.

Efforts to reduce funding to public education, whether by diverting money to vouchers or by simply cutting the education budget, would seriously impact the future of our city, region, and state.

A costing-out study sponsored by the state legislature in 2007 revealed that more than 94 percent of the state's school districts lacked the financial resources they needed to educate our children "adequately." While this has improved since 2007, most districts are still underfunded. Yet recent history has shown that when districts are given resources, they can spend it on teachers, science labs, library resources, technology, materials, teacher and student supports, and numerous other programs that have been proven to work.

Reducing state support for education may force local school districts to increase taxes to plug budget holes. Indeed several districts in Montgomery, Chester, and Delaware Counties have already penciled in 6 to 8 percent tax hikes, while still having to cut school personnel and other necessities by millions of dollars.

We urge our elected officials not to stop the clear progress that public schools have demonstrated. Education is the underpinning of our economic future. It is a basic need of our communities and it must be supported.

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*Urban League of Philadelphia*, Patricia A. Coulter, President & CEO  
*United Way of Southeastern Pennsylvania*, Ann Schmieg, Senior Vice President  
*The Enterprise Center*, Della Clark, President  
*Public Interest Law Center of Philadelphia*, Jennifer R. Clarke, Executive Director  
*Public Citizens for Children and Youth*, Shelly Yanoff, Executive Director  
*Philadelphia Anti-Drug/Anti-Violence Network*, Darryl Coates, Executive Director  
*MicroSociety, Inc.*,Carolynn King Richmond, President & CEO  
*Keystone State Education Coalition*, Lawrence A. Feinberg, Co-Chairman  
*Education Law Center*, Len Rieser, Executive Director  
*Education Voters Pennsylvania*, Susan Gobrewski, Executive Director  
*Children's Literacy Initiative*, Linda Katz, Executive Director  
*Association of Philadelphia School Librarians*, Carol W. Heinsdorf, President