



Pennsylvania School Districts Confirm that Drastic State Cuts Will Impair the Ability to Deliver Quality Education

New survey offers sobering insight into the impact of proposed cuts to education funding

HARRISBURG, PA—(**EMBARGOED UNTIL** May 19, 2011 at Noon)—A new survey indicates that school districts across Pennsylvania will be forced to make deep cuts in core programs in order to close huge budget gaps, a situation exacerbated by a proposed reduction in state aid to education of more than \$1 billion.

Data from the survey, conducted by the Pennsylvania Association of School Business Officials (PASBO) and the Pennsylvania Association of School Administrators (PASA), shows the severity of the impact of the loss of federal stimulus money, the shrinkage in local revenues and the proposed budget cuts from Harrisburg.

Seventy-one percent of all districts responding to the survey expect to cut instructional programs in the 2011-12 school year. Class sizes will increase in 86 percent of districts in 2011-12 due to layoffs of instructional staff. Elective courses will be cut in 71 percent, 64 percent will eliminate tutoring and 51 percent will drop summer school.

All-day kindergarten is endangered as well. Thirty-one percent of districts plan on cutting this key building block of school success for next year. In the current school year,

less than 1 percent of districts did so. All of the findings from the survey are included in a new report from PASBO and PASA.

Two-thirds of districts plan to lay off instructional staff, and 70 percent will lay off non-instructional personnel.

The cuts threaten to reverse one of the signal accomplishments of the previous decade – the steady improvement in the achievement levels of Pennsylvania’s public-school students. Pennsylvania was the only state to consistently improve student achievement in reading and math every year from 2002 through 2008, according to the Center for Education policy, and the percentage of school districts making adequate yearly progress rose from 62 percent in 2005 to 95 percent in 2010.

Because the effect of the planned cuts will be so deep and widespread, the survey report concludes, "The billion dollar cut is the wrong answer for Pennsylvania’s children today and the wrong answer for Pennsylvania’s future."

“Without additional funding, school districts will be forced to continue cutting programs and laying off teachers and other staff – actions that will stall the academic progress our students have made in recent years,” said Jim Buckheit, executive director of the PA Association of School Administrators.

The convergence of declining state, local and federal revenues to schools has required unprecedented and extraordinary cost reduction measures,” said Jay Himes, executive director of the PA Association of School Business Officials. “The survey results reflect the statewide efforts to control costs by wage freezes, unfilled positions from retirements and layoffs across-the-board among others. These measures will reduce costs but also will reduce the resources to sustain student achievement gains.

The survey examined three years' worth of financial data and forecasts for 2011-12 from 263 of the state's 500 school districts,

For more information about this survey, contact:

Jim Buckheit, Executive Director PA Association of School Administrators: (717) 540-4448 Cell (717)395-2009. Email: jbuckheit@pasa-net.org

Jay Himes, Executive Director PA Association of School Business Officials: (717) 540-9551, Cell: (717) 350-8593 Email: jhimes@pasbo.org