

PA Education Policy Forum

**Philadelphia
October 28, 2011**

The Education Policy and Leadership Center

PA School Funding Campaign

- **35-member Steering Committee.**
- **Developing “ask” for 2012.**
- **Documenting effects of 2011 budget.**
- **PASA/PASBO report.**
- **Grassroots Advocacy in spring 2012.**
- **Education Funding Symposium 11/17.**

Arts and Education Initiative

- **Increase public and policymaker support for arts and arts education.**
- **Current decline in arts and music education.**
- **32-member Study Group.**
- **10/13 Symposium; 8 community forums.**
- **February 2012 report.**
- **Advocacy Campaign.**
- **aei-pa.org**

PA Education Issues Poll

**Results to be released in
November.**

Teacher Project

- **Being conceptualized – how can EPLC contribute?**
- **Reviewing past EPLC and Governor's Commission reports.**
- **Educator evaluation.**
- **Recruiting to the profession.**
- **Minority recruitment.**
- **Retention.**
- **Other Issues?**

Governor Corbett's Education Reform Proposal

- **Opportunity Scholarships**
 - **Based on income and residence within attendance zone of lowest-performing 5% of schools.**
 - **State dollars “follow” the child.**
 - **Attend public or non-public school.**
 - **Scholarship recipients required to take an assessment to measure academic achievement.**

Governor Corbett's Education Reform Proposal

- **Educational Improvement Tax Credit**
 - **Increased funding – scholarships & improvement organizations.**
 - **Program reforms will be proposed.**
- **Charter Schools**
 - **Statewide authorization entity.**
 - **Easier conversion of buildings.**
 - **“Improve” current payment mechanism.**
 - **Academic performance and ethics requirements.**
- **Educator Evaluations**
 - **New rating system focused on student performance.**

The “Stage” for Consideration of School Choice Legislation in PA - Fall 2011

- **Past attempts at school vouchers failed**
- **Charter school law now 14 years old**
- **EITC Program has become institutionalized**
- **Very little previous discussion about public school choice**

- **Governor Corbett’s commitments**
- **State Senate Activity**
- **State House Activity**

Fiscal Backdrop

- **State revenue picture still uncertain.**
- **Expense obligations – budget drivers.**
- **Commitments made to “no new taxes”.**
- **Basic Education took a \$900 million reduction this current year.**

Prognosis?

- **No Legislation from Governor, yet.**
- **Competing ideas in Legislature.**
- **More interest in Senate than House.**
- **Rural Republicans don't see much benefit for their districts/constituents.**
- **Some voucher proponents feel too limited.**
- **EITC changes likely to be approved.**
- **Vouchers a high stakes issue for Governor.**
- **They'll pass anything for which they can get enough votes and call it a victory.**

Senate Bill 1

- **Opportunity Scholarships (Vouchers).**
- **Charter Schools.**
- **Education Improvement Tax Credits.**
- **Approved in Committee on 10/25.**
- **Approved by Senate 10/26 (27 yes – 22 no).**

Policy questions when considering school voucher legislation

- **Does it comply with state constitution?**
- **What is the purpose?**
- **Who is to benefit financially?**
- **Who is eligible for voucher?**
- **Will beneficiaries go beyond those currently enrolled in non-public schools (capacity questions)?**
- **Access assured for special needs and ELL students?**
- **Value of the voucher? Will it vary?**
- **Who gets to “choose”? (student or school)**

More questions when considering school voucher legislation

- **What is the accountability for use of funds?**
- **What is the accountability for student achievement?**
- **What is the cost of the program?**
- **How will cost be paid?**
- **Is this the most effective and cost-efficient way for state policy to expand meaningful school choices for the maximum number of students?**
- **What capacity will be needed in PDE or other state agency to administer any new program?**

2011-2012 State Budget and Reduced Choices

- **Full-Day Kindergarten**
- **Dual Enrollment**
- **AP courses**
- **Foreign Languages**
- **Career-Technical Programs**
- **Art and Music**

PA School Choices Project

- **Forum in Harrisburg on November 29.**
- **Web Site under development.**
- **Primer for parents.**
- **Primer for state policymakers.**

PA School Choices Project

- **Broad discussion about school choices in PA.**
- **Build awareness about existing options.**
- **Long-overdue discussion about public school choices.**
- **Issues:**
 - **What choices exist?**
 - **What choices ought to exist?**
 - **Consider choices from a parent/student perspective?**
 - **What do parents want/need to know?**
 - **Consider questions of accountability for funding.**
 - **Consider questions about accountability for student achievement.**

Contact Information

Ron Cowell

717-260-9900

cowell@epic.org

The Education Policy and Leadership Center

800 North Third Street, Suite 408

Harrisburg, PA 17102

www.epic.org