



COMMONWEALTH OF PENNSYLVANIA  
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

March 17, 2015

Dear Superintendent,

After years of deep classroom budget reductions, Governor Wolf's FY2015-16 Budget holds the promise of reinvestment in our schools, our students and our future.

Pennsylvania's future depends on providing every child with a world-class education and the skills to succeed in the global economy of the twenty-first century. The 2015-16 Budget sets Pennsylvania on a path to fully meet the State's responsibility for education funding while requiring schools to demonstrate that students are developing the skill set needed for success in the workforce and that State funds are used appropriately.

As you know, the Governor has proposed a \$400-million increase in Basic Education Funding, which represents significant progress but, for many school districts, will only restore funding levels to less than what they were in the 2010-11 school year. In recent memory, no Legislature has ever reduced a Governor's Basic Education Funding proposal, and we look forward to working with the General Assembly to enact the Governor's plan.

The next several months are an important opportunity for you and your community to plan how you will invest these proposed resources to improve student learning. To assist in this process and ensure public and transparent accountability, Governor Wolf's budget includes two essential accountability measures for the use of these new resources:

**Ensuring that new investment reaches the classroom**

Under the Governor's budget proposal, all school districts will be required to strategically use the portion of their Basic Education Funding increase that exceeds the inflation-based index for their choice of evidence-based programs as well as to restore cuts to programs and personnel that school districts were forced to make as a result of state budget cuts. The list of evidence-based options follows:

1. High-quality early childhood programs, such as pre-kindergarten and full-day kindergarten
2. Additional instructional time for students by extending the school day and/or year
3. Summer learning programs
4. Professional development, curriculum, classroom materials and other strategies necessary to successfully implement high academic standards for all students and prepare students for college and careers
5. Smaller class size in the early elementary grades
6. Academic and other enrichment programs and courses, such as music, arts, world languages and library services
7. Community partnerships and wraparound programs that provide health and human services to students and their families, including trauma-informed education and positive behavioral support
8. Offering or partnering with an institution of higher education to make available advanced courses, including dual enrollment, that prepare students for college

9. Personalized help/interventions for struggling students
10. College and career counseling in middle and high schools
11. Career and technical education aligned with STEM and other high-demand and emerging occupations
12. Alternative school settings and programs
13. Hybrid/innovative learning options
14. Restoration of other cuts to programs and personnel that school districts were forced to make as a result of State budget cuts

This list ensures both flexibility and accountability.

### **Getting results for Pennsylvania's students**

In addition to accountability for how the resources are invested, the Governor's budget proposal requires clear benchmarks for student performance and progress—so that we can ensure the effectiveness of our investments. School districts will select the most relevant measures, which could include:

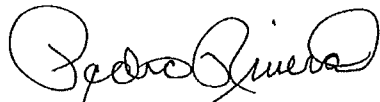
1. Percent of additional students able to read on grade level by the end of third grade
2. Percent of additional students who graduate from high school on track for success in college and careers
3. Improvements in high school graduation and dropout rates
4. Improvements in student attendance and truancy rates
5. Closing the achievement gap
6. Successful program completion for English language learners
7. College/training/apprenticeship matriculation rates
8. College/training/apprenticeship retention and completion rates
9. Employment rates and wages

The Governor's legislative proposal seeks school district submission of these plans to the Pennsylvania Department of Education for review and approval. Please plan to submit by May 15, 2015, with PDE review and feedback by June 15 or within 15 days of a plan's submission, whichever is later. I am writing to share these details with you and to ask you to begin planning with your parents and educators. In coming weeks, we will share additional details including a streamlined online process for school districts to submit their plans.

In the meantime, please do not hesitate to contact my office with any questions. We have also established a dedicated resource email account for superintendents to ask about the Basic Education Funding proposal ([RA-edacctplan@pa.gov](mailto:RA-edacctplan@pa.gov)) and will periodically post questions and answers on the Department's website.

This is an exciting moment for public education in Pennsylvania, and I look forward to working together to seize this opportunity on behalf of the children and families we serve.

Sincerely,



Pedro A. Rivera  
Acting Secretary of Education