



Education Law Center

## SUMMARY

### Co-Directors

Janet F. Stotland, Esq.  
Len Rieser, Esq.

Philadelphia  
1315 Walnut St.  
Suite 400  
Philadelphia, PA  
19107-4717

T 215-238-6970  
F 215-772-3125

Pittsburgh  
429 Fourth Ave.  
Suite 702  
Pittsburgh, PA  
15219

T 412-258-2120  
F 412-391-4496

[elc@elc-pa.org](mailto:elc@elc-pa.org)  
[www.elc-pa.org](http://www.elc-pa.org)

### **Education Law Center's Recommendations for Pennsylvania Investment of Education Funding in the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act**

The Education Law Center would like to applaud Governor Rendell for quickly moving to implement plans for investing federal stimulus education dollars and for using the Commonwealth's new education funding formula to distribute those dollars. We believe the Pennsylvania Department of Education took an important first step on March 11, 2009 in outlining clear guidelines for utilizing the estimated \$2.7 billion of education funding.

We would like to encourage parents, community leaders and public officials to use opportunities in the coming weeks and months to further influence the details of how stimulus funding will be invested to strengthen public education.

In a position statement we sent last week to the Governor and Secretary Zahorchak we outlined specific stimulus recommendations for public schools, and urged the Governor to consider three guiding principles in allocating the federal money: impact, accountability, and transparency. The full statement is available on [www.elc-pa.org](http://www.elc-pa.org).

Several key ELC recommendations are as follows:

#### **Impact**

All federal stimulus education funding in Pennsylvania should be targeted to address the most disadvantaged students and schools with the largest achievement gaps. Much of the funding should be distributed through the basic education formula adopted by the General Assembly in 2008. The new formula has proven during the current school year to be a highly effective way to invest resources.

A top priority should be the improvement of school facilities in disadvantaged communities. Facility improvements should facilitate the inclusion of students and others with disabilities in the regular environment. Other priorities should include renovations and repairs closely related to instructional services, such as libraries, science labs, and computer technology.

#### **Accountability**

Accountability for effective investment of the federal stimulus money by local education agencies should be a top priority. The existing school funding formula, known as PA-PACT, provides a useful guide for accountability over all federal stimulus education funds. The PA-PACT process should be enhanced to require public input and monitoring.

Making sure that all of Pennsylvania's children have access to quality public schools.

**Transparency**

Beyond accountability, the Commonwealth should require school districts to fully engage students, parents, and community leaders in developing and monitoring plans for investment of education stimulus funds.

Similar transparency and involvement should occur at the state level, especially regarding the decisions made about the Fiscal Stabilization Fund. The Fiscal Stabilization Fund accounts for nearly \$2 billion in discretionary education funding for Pennsylvania. It's vital, then, for the Commonwealth and school districts to openly share information about the selection of Stabilization options and the allocation of funds to various programs.

The Education Law Center's full position statement provides many other detailed recommendations, such as restructuring for smaller school settings, teacher coaching and training, curriculum development, and student interventions and supports.

This is a tremendous opportunity to invest in Pennsylvania's future. Improving public education is a double investment, strengthening the economy in the short run and building our communities for the long run.