

Key Facts about the Final Education Budget for 2011-12
Adopted by the General Assembly – June 30, 2011

What are the Cuts in Education Funding?

1. The total statewide level of cuts for PreK-12 education is **\$961 million**. This is a **12% total cut**.
2. The biggest cut is in state funding for Basic Education, which is cut statewide by \$420 million.
3. The budget **completely eliminates many important education programs** benefiting disadvantaged students and schools. This includes:
 - Reimbursing School Districts for Charter Schools \$224 million cut
 - Education Assistance Program (at-risk student tutoring) \$ 47.6 million cut
 - School Improvement Grants \$ 10.8 million cut
 - High School Reform \$ 1.8 million cut
4. Accountability Grants (at-risk student tutoring; PreK; kindergarten) are cut by 61%, totaling \$259 million. Two early childhood programs are cut about 3% – PreK Counts and Head Start.
5. Career and Technical Education and Special Education are important **programs that are not cut**.
6. The education budget includes **a few increases**, with 90% of the increases (\$313 million) going for School Employees' Retirement.
7. A few other **non-education areas in the state budget are receiving increased state funding** or much smaller cuts than education. For example:
 - Probation and Parole 5% increase
 - State Police 6% increase
8. The Governor's Executive Budget Report contains data showing the harm that will be caused by large education cuts, especially for disadvantaged students and schools:
 - *On page E14.24* – The state share of total school district spending will fall nearly 4% and reach a new low (37%) due to the cuts in 2011-12. **Local communities pay for the rest, mostly from property taxes.** Pennsylvania already ranked among the worst states in the country on this measurement, with many other states paying close to 50% of total costs.
 - *On page E14.24, 25* – **In the last two years, student achievement has increased to historically high levels.** In 2010, 75% of students were proficient or advanced in math and 72% were proficient or advanced in reading. This reflects steady annual increases in test scores. This progress will be threatened by cuts in education funding, especially in schools with the most challenging students and the largest remaining achievement gaps.

Who Gets Cut the Most? (Cuts include Basic Ed., Accty. Grants, Charter Reimb., and Ed. Assistance)

9. State education funding is cut for every school district compared to 2010-11 levels. **In general, the cuts fall hardest on school districts with the greatest student poverty.**
 - Some schools having the most student poverty are cut more than \$30,000 per classroom, while other schools with the wealthiest students are cut less than \$1,000 per classroom.
 - The disparity of the cuts is most plainly seen when measured by the dollars cut per student. Some districts are cut more than \$1,000 per student, while others are cut less than \$40 per student. In Berks County, Reading School District (90% student poverty) is cut \$972 per student but Wyomissing School District (22% student poverty) is cut just \$95 per student.

10. For the 144 struggling schools targeted in the **voucher** legislation, SB 1, **total funding is cut nearly twice as much per student** than other schools. These “voucher” schools have nearly twice the level of student poverty as other schools and need adequate funding to make progress for all children.
11. Governor Corbett said that local schools should make up for the state funding cuts by lowering teacher pay and laying off teachers. Such measures would fall mostly on school districts receiving the biggest cuts. Many of these districts already have the lowest teacher salaries, the highest property taxes, and the lowest student achievement in the state. Wealthy districts getting smaller cuts will not need to take such drastic measures.

How are the Cuts Calculated?

12. The foundation of the education budget structure was first weakened last year. The General Assembly cut back state dollars for public schools in order to make room for federal stimulus dollars. The cutbacks were greatest per student for the school districts with the highest poverty. In addition, many smaller programs benefitting struggling students were cut or eliminated.
13. Instead of shoring up the weakened foundation, Governor Corbett proposed a budget in March that started by using last year’s shaky levels of state funding and then made additional funding cuts up to ten times larger in high-poverty schools than in wealthier schools.
14. Even though the House of Representatives added back over \$200 million in school funding in May, it gave away these dollars based on politics and not the real needs of students and schools. 150 school districts, including some of the poorest in the state, got none of the \$100 million added for basic education. And once again the poorest districts received far less per student than wealthy districts of the funds put back for early childhood programs, primarily through the Accountability Block Grant Program.
15. Initially, the Senate said it would fix the inequities of the House budget, by adding sufficient funding to avoid the worst cuts for high-poverty schools. But it appears that these promises were also broken. Less than 0.5% of the education budget was restored, and the added funds were given in an arbitrary manner to both rich and poor schools.
16. The final education budget includes at least five separate funding formulas, with most of the calculations designed to manipulate things so that only selected school districts will “qualify” for state dollars. One formula is even designed solely to give \$1 million to a single school district.
17. **This kind of arbitrary budget calculation method was often used by the state for 30 years before 2008, resulting in one of the worst education funding systems in the country.**

2011-12 Cuts in Education Funding (compared to 2010-11 levels)		
Cut per student	Number of Districts	Percent of Students in Poverty
Over \$700	29 districts	58.97%
\$500 to \$700	130 districts	46.99%
\$300 to \$500	187 districts	34.87%
\$150 to \$300	103 districts	22.82%
Under \$150	51 districts	11.78%
<i>Data from PA Dept. of Education.</i>		