

Dr. Edward Maritz, Jr. – April 17, 2007
School Director, Sto-Rox School District

Dear Friends of Public Education:

I applaud your interest in achieving equity in public education in Pennsylvania! By visiting this website you are already advancing the statewide cause for educational equity for *all* children.

Pennsylvania funds its school districts using an equalized basic education subsidy formula, however, the formula is equalized in name only. The school finance system in Pennsylvania is a woefully inadequate and broken system that tolerates vast inequities among our state's 501 school districts. The education of our children should not rely on funding that is directly correlated to the relative wealth of its community. The educational outcomes of children should not be predisposed by the financial circumstances of a child's community nor should such a system predispose the destiny of its children. In a study by Dr. William Cooley, of the University of Pittsburgh, entitled "The Difficulty of the Educational Task" the researcher found that "those districts with the easiest educational task often have the most resources available to them and those districts with the most difficult educational task often times have the least resources available to accomplish their respective goals."

When I first got involved in this worthy cause back in the early 1990's, I was just elected to the school board for the Sto-Rox S.D. (Allegheny County). Our former Superintendent, Anthony Skender, and a small team from Sto-Rox were the lone rangers and lone soldiers fighting a battle for equity that few people were interested in entertaining back then because, sadly, we lacked the power of a unified statewide voice. Our lobbying efforts began back in 1990 and throughout the last two decades we have provided written testimony on the impact disparate state funding streams has on a school districts ability to provide standards-driven accountable education programs.

The Sto-Rox School District is a small, poor school district wrestling with various societal challenges germane to inner-city urban areas. Our school system educates over 1500 students, and like many former rust-belt communities with declining industrial tax bases, many of our families and students are deeply impacted by poverty.

We have great concern for our students and worry about their nutrition, basic health care, non-functional families, teenage pregnancy and dropouts, drugs and alcohol and suicide and depression. We realize high incidence rates of special education students, substantially above the statewide average and representing nearly 20% of our student population. Toward this end, nearly 15% of our entire school district budget is devoted toward special education programming.

Given the socio-economic status of our communities, we place a heavy emphasis on our ability to programmatically meet the needs of all learners. The real travesty occurs

regarding the inequity of special education funding in that state subsidies cover only one-third of our overall special education expenditures. As such, our board is forced to levy nearly 9 mills of local property taxes annually to fund the over \$2 million dollars of special education expenses not covered by the state. Our school district was declared financially distressed in 1992 and was under state-appointed receivership until 1999. Despite these challenges, our school district is comprised of highly dedicated teachers and administrators that consistently realize amazing achievement results for all Sto-Rox children despite an insurmountable financial disadvantage in available resources. We at Sto-Rox stand as proud partners with Good Schools Pennsylvania and their statewide leadership efforts regarding educational equity for *all* Pennsylvania students.

As a longstanding soldier in this battle for equity and adequacy in education I can say with absolute certitude that if we had organizations like Good Schools Pennsylvania (GSPA) or the Education Policy and Leadership Center (EPLC), or the Education Law Center (ELC) 15 years ago we would be enjoying and realizing equity for all children right now **TODAY!** The impact this statewide campaign for educational equity **WILL** have in the field of Education 10 years from now is beyond anyone's expectation (or imagination) right now. Why not become part of systemic change today? The power is in the numbers of professionals and policy makers that are signing on to join this cause to make meaningful change happen for the betterment of all Pennsylvania's children. The good news is that you can join the cause now by affiliating yourself with this outstanding organization to create a *STRONG UNIFIED VOICE* for all Pennsylvania's children.

In closing, Lillian Katz, an esteemed early childhood educator, captures the essence of Good Schools Pennsylvania's mission:

“Each of us must come to care about everyone else's children. We must recognize that the welfare of our children and grandchildren is intimately linked to the welfare of all other people's children. After all, when one of our children needs lifesaving surgery, someone else's child will perform it. If one of our children is threatened or harmed by violence, someone else's child will be responsible for the violent act. The good life for our own children can be secured only if a good life is also secured for all other people's children.”

Good Schools Pennsylvania truly is a worthy organization and cause and I highly recommend you join me in uniting our efforts to bring about educational equity for all Pennsylvania school age children. Our kids deserve no less!

Sincerely yours,

Dr. Edward Maritz, Jr.
School Director
Sto-Rox School District