



## Educators plead case for funding

By [Mark Hofmann](#), DAILY COURIER  
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### About the writer

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Fayette County educators pleaded their case to local state representatives to maintain the school funding formula through tough economic times.

"It has to be instilled upon all of us that an investment in education is an investment in the future," said Ronald Sheba with the REACH initiative through Fay-Penn Economic Development Council.

In a community/legislative forum held Friday at the Fayette County Area Vocational Technical School, Sheba along with others connected to education stressed the need for the Commonwealth's General Assembly to not turn away from its commitment of a six-year school funding formula established last year. That formula is known as Act 61.

However, with the state budget expected to be fought over throughout the span of the summer and with many programs expected to be cut, Pennsylvania school districts could receive less funding than expected.

School officials told state legislators yesterday that Pennsylvania school districts need to know if the state will come through with the \$418 million for education. The districts need this money so they can afford to keep student achievement programs in the schools as well as constructing a responsible budget, which needs to be passed by June 30.

"We set our budgets while you're negotiating yours," said Kathleen Smith, a legislative liaison of the Pennsylvania School Board Association and a member of the Canon McMillan School Board.

Smith said the expected funding for the 2009-10 school year will continue technology-based academic programs within the schools but if the General Assembly decides to eliminate that funding, it would cause the schools to slide back in the progress they've made.

"When the state is cheap, the people pay the bill," said Ron Cowell, president of Education Policy and Leadership Council.

Officials attending yesterday's meeting said Pennsylvania taxpayers may have to fund education with a tax increase -- either on the state or local level.

Mike Krajovic, president and CEO of Fay-Penn and chairman of the Good Schools Pennsylvania, said the situation is not a tax issue, but an investment.

"It's a contribution for the common good," Krajovic said. "We cannot get out of this economic situation if we cut education."

Other speakers at the forum included a mother of five Head Start students, a representative from The United Way, the director of the Uniontown Public Library and a high-school student who's participating in a dual enrollment program for college credits.

Local state officials attending included state Reps. Deberah Kula, Tim Mahoney and Bill DeWeese and state Sen. Richard Kasunic.

"I hope to salvage some part of the plan we had last year," Mahoney said of Act 61.

The state officials said they never want to raise taxes on their constituents, but it was hinted that it might have to be done.

"This is going to affect everybody," Kasunic said.