



Pay now, or pay later

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We go on and on about equal opportunity in this country. It's ingrained in our thinking. Unfortunately, we don't practice what we preach. Consider education.

Because Pennsylvania schools are largely funded with property taxes, wealthy school districts provide more and better educational opportunities than low-income districts. A lot more. Try an annual expenditure of \$21,399 per student in Lower Merion vs. \$9,727 in Upper Darby.

No wonder there are vast differences in test scores and graduation rates around the state.

Harrisburg is supposed to even out things via a funding formula for rationing out state education money. But the formula is woefully out of date and is not getting the job done.

The governor's proposed education budget, now under consideration by state lawmakers, proposes a new formula based on the Legislature's own "Costing-Out Study." Among the study's findings was this shocker: Of Pennsylvania's 501 school districts, 474 are underfunded. It also found that the state picks up just more than one-third of the cost of public education vs. the national average of nearly 50 percent.

We urge lawmakers to approve the governor's updated funding formula.

If education is the key to success, every child deserves an "equal" opportunity to succeed.

The state can pay now and reap the benefits of its educated citizens' success, or pay later to rescue those who fail.

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