

# PARENTS UNITED

*for public education*

*“Philly parents fighting for quality and equity in our schools”*

## What Parents Can Do About the “Doomsday Budget”

Sometimes this is what it means to be a Philadelphia public school parent. It’s not enough that we take care of our children and our families, our personal and professional lives, and volunteer and support our schools. It means that in times of crisis, we pick up the mantle of democracy and set the priorities straight for our elected and appointed officials. That time is now.



Students from a May Roxborough Corridor Parent Summit.  
Photo: Matthew Hall Photography

### FOCUS ON FAIR AND STABLE FUNDING

*State:* Pennsylvania is one of only three states in the nation without an education funding formula to determine how schools get funded. Under Gov. Corbett we’ve seen an unprecedented drop in public school funding. We need to build alliances across the southeast region with co-workers, friends and family members to demand a fair education funding formula that helps all Pennsylvanians and especially high poverty districts like Philadelphia.

*City:* Despite two property tax hikes, did you know the City’s investment priority in schools has been declining? Under the Nutter administration the **share of property tax collection going to the schools**

**has dropped from 60% to 55%.** Combine this with the City’s tax abatement program (the most generous in the nation) and failure to collect delinquent taxes, and we have a poor recipe for localized funding stability – a critical buffer in a state where Philadelphia is at the whim of whichever political party wins office. We need major structural investment – not ad hoc emergency measures – that *guarantee* and *stabilize* school funding at the local level.

### INVEST IN DISTRICT-MANAGED PUBLIC SCHOOLS

For over a decade, the District has chased one reform trend after another. Reckless expansion of charters has brought the District to the breaking point. Even amidst the greatest budget crisis the District has seen, the SRC approved a \$139 million charter expansion, \$15 million for a cyber charter contract, and \$12 million to the billion dollar testing giant Pearson Inc., deemed grossly incompetent in NY where they’ve been embroiled in testing scandals. Meanwhile our schools – our nurses, counselors, librarians, lunch staff, NTAs and teachers – bear the brunt of these failed experiments. It’s time to ensure that District-managed public schools are the central investment – lower class sizes, a stable school staff, a rich curriculum which values the arts, music and sports.

### ADVOCATE FOR QUALITY PUBLIC EDUCATION

Many of us have children in different types of schools, but all of us know the value of a free quality public school in our neighborhoods. Every day, however, our elected and District officials hear from people who don’t value what we value. We need to change that. Whether it’s a local BBQ, a ribbon-cutting, or a neighborhood constituents’ meeting, we must speak up and make quality public schooling a central issue for every politician and District leader who crosses our path.

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## **Action Tool Kit: Fund Our Schools!**

*Now through June 10<sup>th</sup>*

Parents United supports the **Maria Quinones-Sanchez Use & Occupancy bill** to fund schools. The Use & Occupancy tax is a 100% schools tax on commercial properties. Her bill would guarantee up to \$72 million to help stabilize our schools. Unlike the mayor’s plan for sin taxes on cigarettes and liquor, it doesn’t rely on Harrisburg for approval. Just as important the bill doesn’t place a burden on homeowners. Instead, it’s a bill that equalizes the unfair tax breaks corporate landlords gained under AVI and protects small businesses with a \$2,000 exemption.

Regardless of whether you support this bill in particular, we want to ask City Council to:

- **Guarantee** significant school funding. Punting to Harrisburg *jeopardizes* school funding. City Council must *guarantee* it.
- **Demand the SRC redo its budget.** If the District continues to expand charters and pursue questionable contracts, then we will be in this place time and time again. All money must go toward stabilizing and ensuring a quality District-managed public school.

*Now through June 30<sup>th</sup>*

Parents United for Public Education is working toward a statewide fair and equitable education funding formula. We need our legislators to:

- Develop a three year plan to restore over \$900 million in budget cuts lost each year in the Basic Education Subsidy under the Corbett administration.
- Develop and enact a fair and equitable education funding formula that counts students, and gives weighted resources to address special needs, poverty, etc.

### ***If you have 15 minutes in your day***

1. Contact your local & at-large Council members about ensuring a \$60 million guarantee for public schools, and to demand that the money go toward District-managed public schools’ needs; OR
2. Call your state representative and ask them what they’re doing to ensure the state allocates at least an additional \$120 million for Philadelphia schools and begins to establish an education funding formula; OR
3. Contact a local business, suburban work colleague or friend about reaching out to both City Council and their local state representative to support public school funding.

### ***If you have one half-day in your schedule***

Schedule a meeting with your City Council representative or your state representative. Get a group of fellow parents, community members, teachers and businessowners to attend with you. It’s fine if you meet with their staff members. You can also just pick a convenient time and make a few rounds at City Hall stopping into the offices of key councilmembers.

### ***If you can spare one evening***

Consider phone banking for Education Voters PA which is coordinating statewide voter calls to encourage people to contact their local legislators about education funding. Contact Ed Voters at: [edvoters@edvoterpa.org](mailto:edvoters@edvoterpa.org) or 215-564-2299.