



Education Update

From the Senate Education Committee

JANUARY 24, 2005

PSERS Employer Contribution Rate Announced

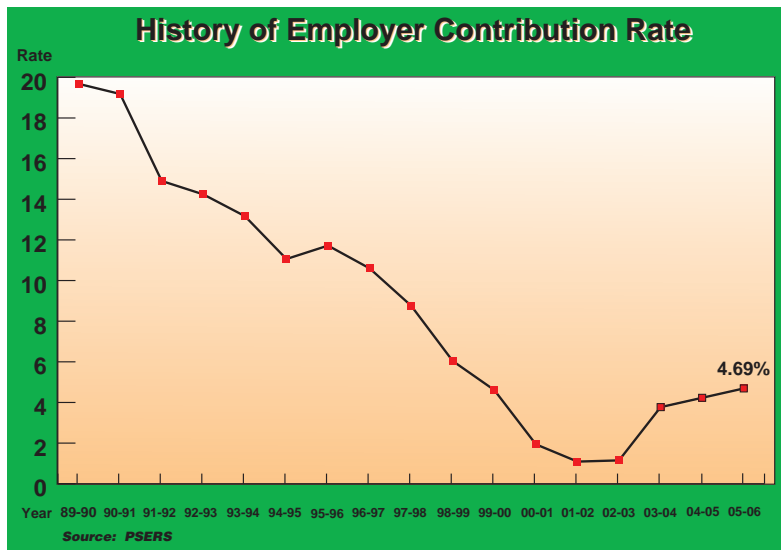
On December 9, the Board of the Public School Employees Retirement System (PSERS) approved the employer contribution rate of 4.69% for FY 2005-2006. The rate reflects a slight increase over the 4.23% rate in effect for FY 2004-2005.

The enactment of Act 40 of 2003 has slowed rapid increases in the employer contribution rate that had been projected by the PSERS board two years ago. The statute authorizes the amortization of certain fund liabilities over a period of thirty years.

It also sets a minimum employer contribution rate of 4%.

The Commonwealth pays at least 50% of each school district's employer contribution.

The 2005-2006 employer contribution rate is one of the lowest since FY 1989-1990.



State Board Approves Bridge II for Highly Qualified Teachers

The State Board of Education has approved a Department of Education policy designed to ease the transition of certain Pennsylvania teachers to the "highly qualified" status required by the federal No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB).

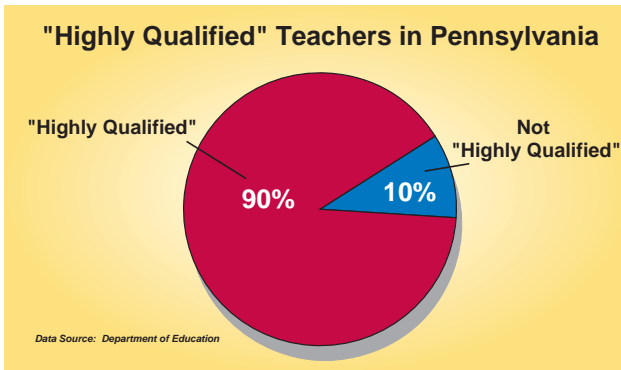
According to the Department of Education, approximately 90% of Pennsylvania's 120,000 teachers are already considered "highly qualified."

The transition program, known as "Bridge II," applies to special education and alternative education teachers who are the primary instructors in several core subjects. Under NCLB, teachers must hold a content area certificate or its

equivalent in each of the content areas they teach.

Currently, many special education, alternative education and middle teachers teach several core subjects to students in a self-contained classroom. These students stay with the teacher for most of the school day and are taught reading, mathematics and science. While the teachers in those classrooms hold state certificates, they do not hold certificates in each of those subjects.

Under Bridge II, these teachers could



be considered "highly qualified" by completing the Bridge I process in one content area, having completed one college-level course in each of the other content areas they teach and receiving a successful classroom evaluation.

Senate Education Committee

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Senator James J. Rhoades
Chairman

David L. Broderic
Executive Director

Pennsylvania AYP Targets Will Increase in 2005

Pennsylvania schools must have a higher percentage of their students scoring at proficient or above on the PSSA exams in order to meet adequate yearly progress (AYP) this year.

As part of the state's plan to meet the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) goal of 100% student proficiency by 2014,

the Commonwealth will require 54% of a school's students to score at proficient or above in reading and 45% to score at proficient or above in mathematics in 2005. The performance targets will remain until 2008, when they will increase again.

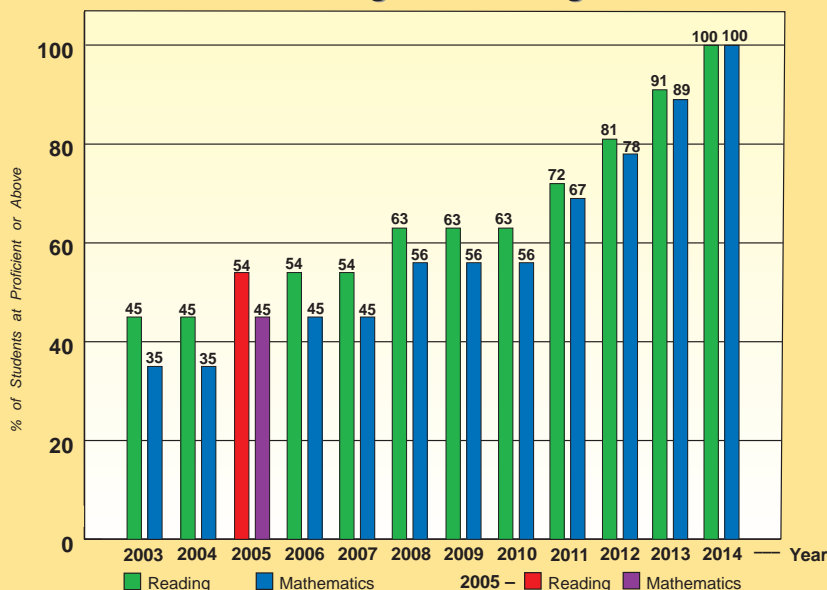
This is an increase from the levels set for 2003 and 2004, which required

45% in reading and 35% in mathematics.

Schools that meet these performance thresholds and requirements for attendance, graduation and performance in student subgroups will be considered to have met AYP.

In 2004, 86.2% of Pennsylvania schools met AYP.

Academic Performance Targets in Reading and Mathematics



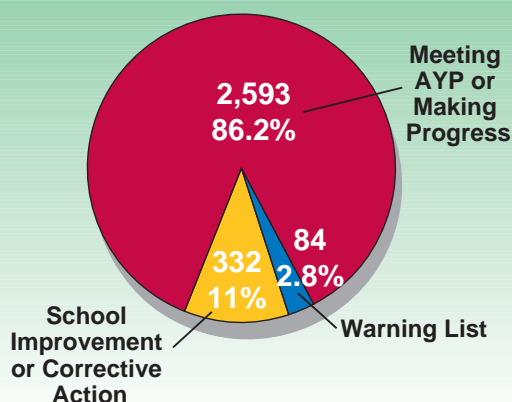
Spellings Confirmed as Education Secretary

The United States Senate confirmed Margaret Spellings as secretary of education on January 20.

Spellings replaces secretary Rod Paige, who offered his resignation in November.

She has served as President Bush's domestic policy advisor since 2001 and is known as one of the architects of the No Child Left Behind Act.

Academic Achievement Report Results 2004



Senate Education Committee Activities

Tuesday, February 1
Senate Majority Caucus Room
9:30 a.m.
Public Hearing
Bridge Certificate Program

Wednesday, February 2
Room 461, Main Capitol Building
10:00 a.m.
Committee Meeting
Senate Bills 146, 147 and 148

For more information or detailed analyses of these topics, contact the Senate Education Committee staff at 787-2637.