



Education Update

From the Senate Education Committee

APRIL 23, 2007

Committee: Make Governor's Initiatives Options, Not Mandates

At its meeting on April 17, the Senate Education Committee approved legislation that would add three of Governor Edward Rendell's FY 2007-2008 spending proposals to the accountability block grant program, shifting them from mandated line-items in the state budget to options on which school districts can choose to expend their annual block grants.

Senator Rhoades offered an amendment to Senate Bill 399, legislation Senator Musto introduced to add elementary foreign language programs to the menu of initiatives on which school districts can expend block grant funds.

The amendment would allow school districts to use their block grant funds to purchase lap-top computers, augment elementary science curricula and conduct high school reforms.

In his FY 2007-2008 proposed budget, Governor Rendell requested appropriations totaling \$116 million for

his Classrooms of the Future, Science, Its Elementary and Project 720 initiatives.

Senator Rhoades' amendment would eliminate the need for those line-items and allow school districts the option of spending some portion of their annual accountability block grants on those programs. The General Assembly appropriated \$250 million for the program in FY 2006-2007.

Under current law, the accountability block grant program provides an annual grant to each school district, which the school district can use on any of ten approved programs.

Senate Bill 399, as amended, has been referred to the Senate Appropriations Committee.

Senate Education Committee Activities

Tuesday, April 24

Senate Majority Caucus Room
9:00 a.m.
Public Hearing
No Child Left Behind
Reauthorization

Accountability Block Grant Options *Senate Bill 399, as amended*

Current Options

| | |
|---------------------------|-------------------------------|
| Pre-Kindergarten | Science and Applied Knowledge |
| Full-Day Kindergarten | Professional Development |
| Class Size Reduction | Literacy and Math Coaches |
| Social and Health Service | Teacher Incentive |
| Tutoring | Local Option |
| Subgroups Support | |

Proposed New Options

*Elementary Foreign Language Programs
Lap-Top Computers
Elementary Science Curricula
High School Reform*

Governor's FY 2007-2008 Spending Proposals

| Program | Purpose | Requested Appropriation |
|---------------------------|------------------------------|-------------------------|
| Classrooms for the Future | Lap-Top Computers | \$90,000,000 |
| Science, Its Elementary | Elementary Science Curricula | \$15,000,000 |
| Project 720 | High School Reform | \$11,000,000 |

Senate Education Committee

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Senator James J. Rhoades
Chairman

David L. Broderic
Executive Director

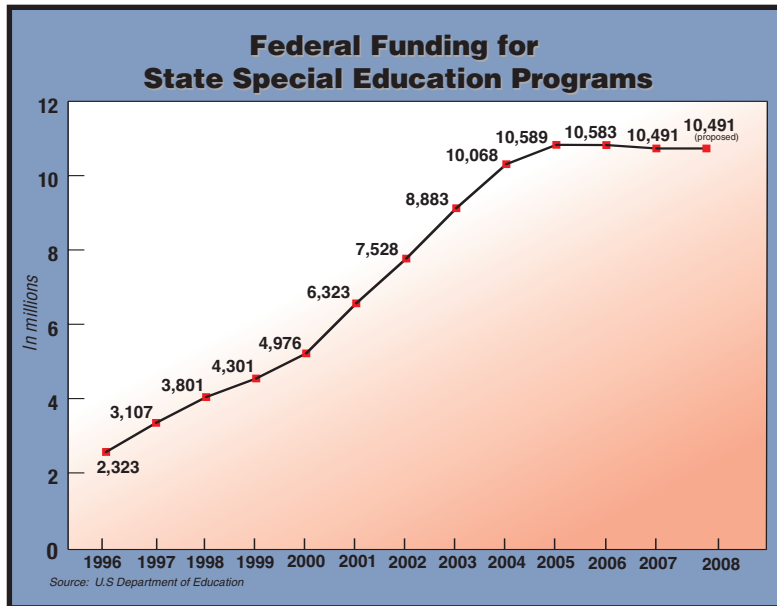
Federal Budget Would Reduce Special Education Funding to Pennsylvania

The proposed federal FY 2008 education budget includes a \$10.4 billion appropriation request for special education grants to the states, an amount that includes no increase over the FY 2007 appropriation.

For state FY 2007-2008, Pennsylvania will receive \$400 million in federal special education funding, a \$2 million, or 0.3%, increase over FY 2006-2007. If the federal FY 2008 education budget is enacted as proposed, Pennsylvania will receive \$389 million in state FY 2008-2009, an \$11 million decrease compared with FY 2007-2008.

Between 1996 and 2005, the federal appropriation for special education

grants to the states increased by 460%. Since 2005, this appropriation has remained flat.



The federal Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, which requires states to offer special education services to students with special needs, includes an appropriations target equal to 40% of the national average expenditure per special education student.

The federal government currently appropriates an equivalent of 17% of the national average expenditure per special education student.

Mandate Waiver Requests Increase Only Slightly

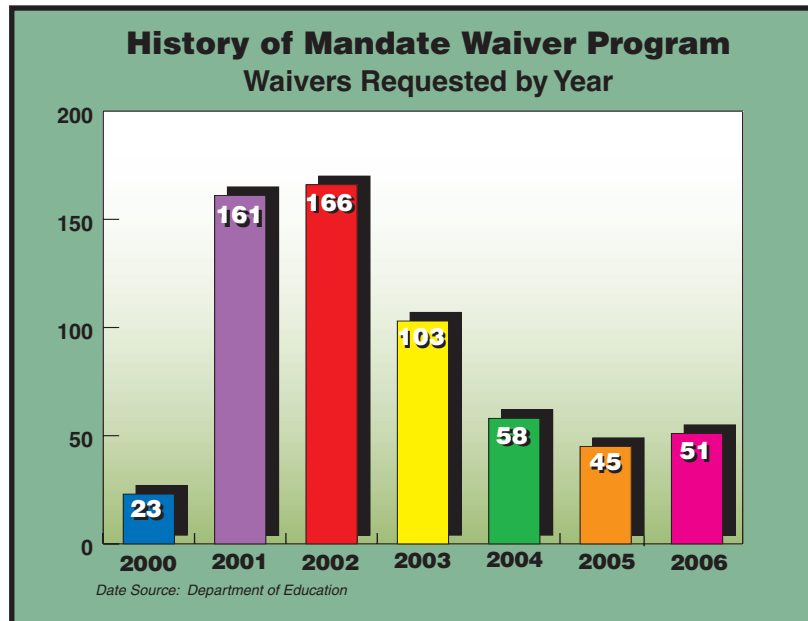
A report issued by the Department of Education indicates that school district requests through the mandate waiver program increased only slightly in FY 2005-2006.

In FY 2005-2006, there were 51 applications for waivers from legal requirements governing the purchase of supplies, maintenance and construction requirements, certification requirements and other unclassified mandates.

Interest in the program peaked in 2002, when 166 waiver requests were submitted, and has declined steadily since then.

According to the Department's report, 80% of the waiver requests in FY 2005-2006 dealt with waivers from purchasing,

construction and maintenance requirements. Thirty-five of the waiver requests were approved, with six still pending and three denied. Seven waiver requests were withdrawn or modified.



Under the Mandate Waiver Program approved by the General Assembly in 2000, school districts, intermediate units and area vocational technical schools may submit waiver requests to the Department and must summarize the benefits of the waiver, indicate the need for the waiver and provide accompanying data on the process.

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