

Introduction to Attached Survey Results

As you all have heard, Governor Corbett will be (or has today) presenting his “education reform” agenda. It will include an effort to enact taxpayer funded tuition vouchers and expand the number of charter schools, among other things. Regarding the former, PSBA has recently released the results of the latest statewide public opinion survey (conducted by Terry Madonna, from Franklin and Marshall, one of the most respected pollsters in the state), which shows a **strong majority** of Pennsylvanians continuing to oppose vouchers. This opposition is spread across all demographic segments of the state and is particularly significant given the vast sums voucher proponents have spent this year in an effort to sway public opinion. Interestingly, the same poll revealed strong public support for public schools.

This latter point underscores the reality that most of the schools in PA are doing relatively well. Most schools are staffed by compassionate professionals and run by committed, caring administrators. Students are making impressive yearly gains with the resources provided. This is not to divert the much needed attention away from the districts that are struggling. We do have students in PA who deserve much better, and it is time for the state to *strategically* and *meaningfully* intervene. PSBA will be disseminating their latest research paper on ways to address underperforming public schools (I will get copies for you). PSBA’s research staff spent a great deal of time examining the literature and talking with administrators in schools around the country that have successfully improved student achievement in some of the most challenged learning environments. The key point is that if state policymakers are serious about helping struggling schools, there are ways to do so without resorting to vouchers, which not only are unpopular but also are ineffective, unaccountable, unaffordable and unconstitutional.

Finally, next week I will be attending the PSBA/PASA Leadership Conference. I am looking forward to hearing what the keynote speakers have to say about the current state of public education. PSBA will be launching the new collaborative “Stand Up for Public Education” campaign to further shape the educational debate in and beyond PA. Also, I will be attending the yearly PSBA Legislative Policy Council, representing KASD in the voting for next year’s legislative platform items as charged by the Board in last December’s re-org meeting. I will share a summary of the week at next month’s board meeting.

Submitted by Stephanie Eckstrom, PSBA Liaison