

Childwatch

A publication
of Public
Citizens for
Children and
Youth (PCCY)



Helping to improve the lives and life chances of children, youth and families in Southeastern Pennsylvania

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In this issue

| | |
|--|---|
| What the Election can Mean for Kids | 1 |
| State Opens its Eyes to Children who Need Glasses | 1 |
| We Need to Cut Child Care Red Tape for Teen Parents Struggling to Graduate | 2 |
| Can a 4th Grader's Reading Proficiency Change His Life? | 2 |
| Alarming New Poverty Numbers in Southeastern Pennsylvania | 3 |
| Getting Pennsylvania to the Top of the Class on School Funding | 3 |
| State Law Shuts Out Thousands of Children in Pennsylvania | 3 |
| What Pennsylvania can Learn From its Neighbor to the South | 4 |
| Save the date! | 4 |
| Pre-K for PA | 4 |

WHAT THE ELECTION CAN MEAN FOR KIDS

Excerpts from PCCY's Letter to Governor-Elect Tom Wolf

Dear Governor-elect Wolf, Here's what kids need...

Expand High-Quality Pre-K to all Pennsylvania Children

If you have or ever had a child in pre-k, you know it's a valuable part of a child's development. Unfortunately, high-quality pre-k is not available to every three-and four-year-old in Pennsylvania. PCCY asks the Governor-elect, in his first budget to add at least 16,000 new slots for pre-k by expanding the state's Pre-K Counts Program. Governor-elect Wolf should also sit down with members of the Pre-K for PA Campaign to build a strategy for pre-kindergarten and where the state can wisely invest to help more children start school ready to succeed.

Fairly Fund Pennsylvania's Schools

Most people would agree that education was THE number one issue in this year's election. Governor-elect Wolf made it pretty clear in his campaign ads that he intends to make funding education a top priority of his administration. To make good on his promise, in his first budget the new Governor must restore the cuts made to education since 2011. Governor-elect Wolf can restore funding by working with state legislators to enact a school funding formula that is based on the actual costs necessary to provide a quality education for all Pennsylvania students.

Healthy Children are Happy Children

You can't be expected to do your best work if you are not feeling well. Children are no different. Currently there are more than 47,000 children in southeastern Pennsylvania who suffer because they do not have health insurance.

As the new Governor works to expand Medicaid in Pennsylvania through the Affordable Care Act, PCCY urges the new administration to work with Medicaid managed care organizations to ensure children have access to the full complement of health care services they need.

Governor-elect Wolf can also help improve the health of children by aligning services offered by the state Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIP) with those offered through Medicaid. Medicaid provides better benefits than CHIP at the moment. Aligning services will help all enrolled children get the full and proper care they need.

Public health insurance should be available to all children. PCCY is urging the new Governor to direct his Insurance Commissioner to create a plan to change the state's "Cover All Kids" law to ensure that all children, including those who are undocumented, can enroll in CHIP.

Make Sure No Child Is Hungry

We all try our very best to make sure our children are fed each and every day, but for a growing number of families in southeastern Pennsylvania, it is becoming harder and harder to put food on the table.

The new administration must work to create outreach strategies to help families enroll in the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) and do away with unfair eligibility requirements that harm working families struggling to provide for their children.

The next state Secretary of Education can also help thousands of Pennsylvania children start the day right by working to expand school-breakfast participation. The research is clear, children who start the day with a healthy meal are more likely to pay attention, learn and engage in school. PCCY looks forward to working with the new governor and members of the State Legislature to set a new path for success for our region's children.

To read the full text of PCCY's letter to Governor-elect Wolf, please visit www.pccy.org.

STATE OPENS ITS EYES TO CHILDREN WHO NEED GLASSES



Any parent will tell you, kids are anything but accident-proof. Whether it's a new action figure or a pair of glasses, there's a good chance it will eventually end up on the floor in pieces. While some parents may be able to replace a broken toy, replacing a pair of glasses can be expensive especially if insurance does not cover it.

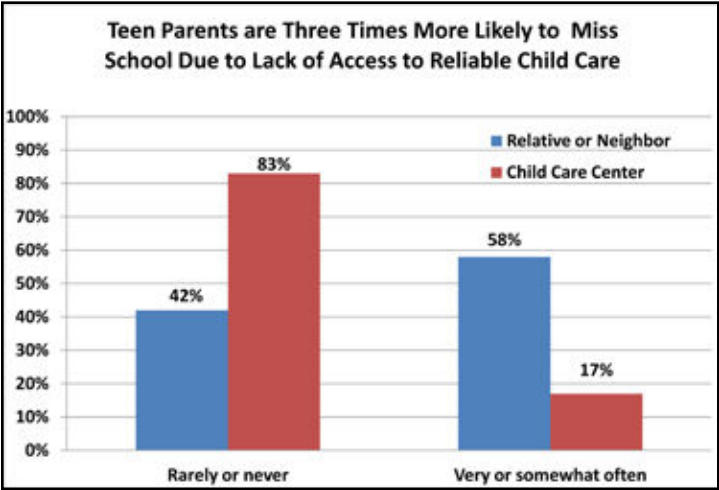
For years the state's Children's Health Insurance Program hasn't covered replacement glasses if they are lost or broken... until now.

PCCY met with State health officials after noticing that 40% of CHIP children who came to Give Kids Sight Day attended because they needed new glasses. And you know what? They got the message. Now CHIP has directed its providers to make replacement eye glasses available to children who need them, free of charge.

Lieutenant Governor-elect Mike Stack, who was a State Senator at the time, credited PCCY for exposing the problem in CHIP's policy saying "Pennsylvania's children will benefit not only physically, but academically through the addition of the vision program to CHIP."

Now when an accident happens, parents can rest easy knowing they can get new glasses so their children can see clearly.

WE NEED TO CUT CHILD CARE RED TAPE FOR TEEN PARENTS STRUGGLING TO GRADUATE



Teen parents face a unique dual challenge: growing up, while bringing up a young child. They struggle to improve their child’s chances to thrive by going back to school, while trying to access the difficult and sometimes confusing resources made available to them through valuable government programs aimed at helping them achieve their parental goals.

Reliable child care and bureaucratic red tape created by the state are more often than not insurmountable hurdles, according to PCCY’s latest report “How Does Access to Childcare Affect High School Completion in Philadelphia’s Multiple Pathways to Graduation Programs?”

The state requires proof that teen parents are enrolled in a graduation program before the approval process can begin for their child care subsidy, which consequently turns into missed school days due to waiting for child care to kick in. Our analysis shows that teen parents usually do not fill out the application until the first day of school, followed by the weeks they have to wait to receive child care assistance.

The report also found that those who depended on a relative or a neighbor for child care were three times more likely to miss school very or somewhat often than parents whose children attended a daycare center.

Some teen parents said they preferred to trust neighbors or a relative to care for their children during the school day, but many reported they had no other choice because they had been denied child care subsidy through the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families Program (TANF). TANF requires that any at-home adult provide care for the child even if she/he is unwilling, unskilled, unable, or is a bad choice for the child.

PCCY also found those parents fortunate enough to receive subsidy from TANF often struggle to keep up with state requirements to re-submit documentation every six months to prove they are still eligible for assistance. If parents do not send the documents in on time, they could lose their benefits.

Solving systemic challenges outlined in the report begins with proper funding. A fully funded child-care subsidy program, with a simplified application process supporting the limitations of teen parents who are struggling to complete their education while enhancing their child’s life, is an achievable and laudable goal for leaders in Harrisburg. The state can also better serve young parents by revising TANF rules so child care benefits are not cut off until it is clear parents no longer need them.

To read PCCY’s full report please visit www.pccy.org. For questions about the report, email Della Jenkins at dellaj@pccy.org.



CAN A 4TH GRADER’S READING PROFICIENCY CHANGE HIS LIFE?



You may have heard it rationalized to young students and their parents before: “Oh, don’t worry about him taking a little bit longer to learn how to read,” or “maybe she’s just not that interested in reading.” But by fourth grade, that lost time is not regained and could change the outcome of a child’s life. Research shows that fourth grade reading levels are an important predictor for future success. Still, more than half of Philadelphia public school students

enter the fourth grade reading below grade level.

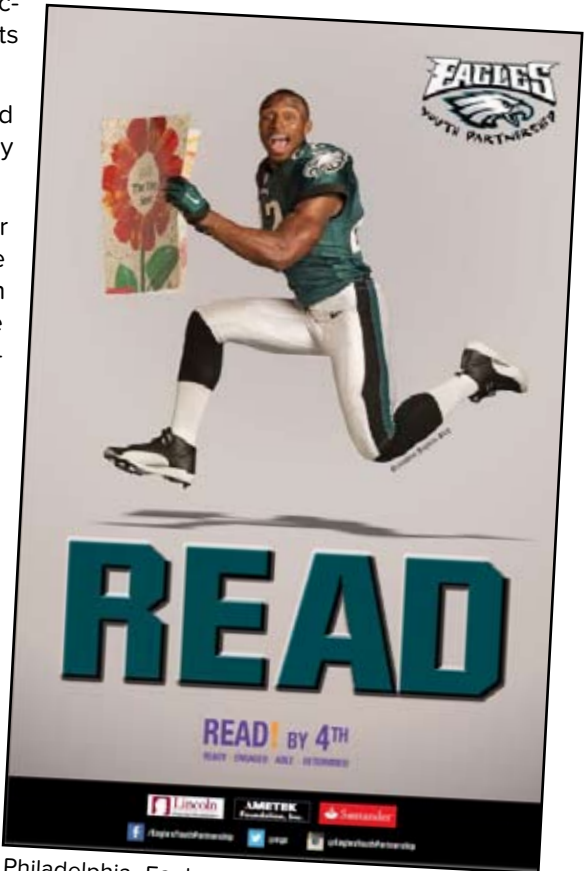
What does that fourth grade moment in time mean to a child’s future? Of students who cannot read proficiently by the end of third grade, 74% struggle in later grades and are four-to-six times more likely to drop out of high school without earning a diploma.

PCCY and 50 of Philadelphia’s most respected public and private organizations are working together to ensure more children are reading on grade level by the start of fourth grade through the innovative READ! By 4th Campaign. The Campaign’s goal is to double the number of students prepared for 4th grade work by 2020. To hit the benchmark of having 95% of Philadelphia children reading on grade level, Campaign members are focusing their efforts on five key areas proven to boost reading proficiency:

- Improving the quality of early learning programs
- Giving parents training and tools to help their child become strong readers
- Strengthening summer reading programs
- Addressing factors to reduce school absenteeism
- Implementing reading practices in schools that research proves are successful in boosting reading success

The Philadelphia Eagles Youth Partnership recently teamed up with the Campaign, naming Eagles cornerback Brandon Boykin as the Campaign’s first Philadelphia icon for reading. Boykin recently challenged children at Prince Hall Elementary school in West Oak Lane to “Do the 22.” Boykin said “For 22 minutes, we’re going to shut down Instagram. We’re going to shut down Twitter, we’re going to shut down all of those things, and we’re going to communicate and we’re going to read.” Boykin has pledged to use his appearances in the media to give tips to parents on how to get their children to become great readers.

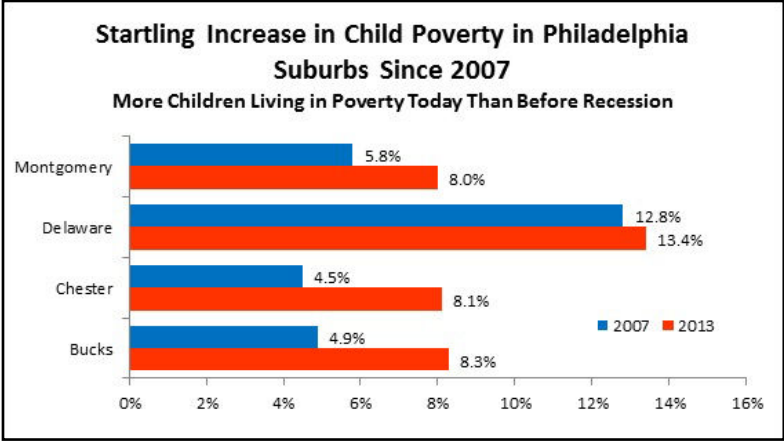
To learn more about the READ! By 4th Campaign and its strategy to improve the share of children reading on grade level by fourth grade, visit www.pccy.org/read-by-4th.



Philadelphia Eagles cornerback Brandon Boykin is the READ! By 4th Campaign’s first icon for childhood literacy. He’s telling children and parents to “Do the 22” by reading for 22 minutes, every day.

ALARMING NEW POVERTY NUMBERS IN SOUTHEASTERN PENNSYLVANIA

Did you know that nearly twice as many children in Bucks and Chester counties lived in poverty in 2013, than before the recession, and 50% more children live in poverty in Montgomery county? News of a growing economy shows that more suburban families are being left behind and are finding it difficult to stay in the game. In fact, child poverty grew dramatically in the suburbs since the start of the recession in 2007, especially in Bucks, Chester, and Montgomery counties, according to PCCY analysis of the latest census data.



Sadly, poverty is not a new issue in Philadelphia, where 123,000 children live in poverty and nearly half of whom live in deep poverty (\$10,000 a year for a family of three). As the all too routine story of widespread urban poverty extends to communities in the traditionally wealthy suburbs, no headlines are telling the stark new reality for families across the region now being forced to decide between paying for food, rent or medical bills.

Poverty puts a strain on families and negatively impacts school districts because more resources are required to educate children from low-income families. The story continues as children who live in poverty are more likely to drop out of school and are more likely to suffer from depression and other behavioral health problems.

As America begins to recover following the recession, a new chapter is being written in our once stable suburban neighborhoods. It's hard to imagine, but already, the number of poor children in our region exceeds the combined number of seats in the city's three major sports venues. Our region's burgeoning child poverty rate should be a wake up call for leaders in Harrisburg to see beyond the headlines and invest in proven strategies that prepare our children to be on the winning team of life.

The Number of our Region's Children Living in Poverty far Exceeds the Number of Seats in Philadelphia's Three Major Sports Venues

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| Lincoln Financial Field | 68,532 |
| Citizens Bank Park | 43,647 |
| Wells Fargo Center | 19,500 |
| Total number of seats | 131,679 |
| Total number of children living in poverty in our region | 171,314 |

GETTING PENNSYLVANIA TO THE TOP OF THE CLASS ON SCHOOL FUNDING



Unless you've ignored the news for the last few years, you're probably aware that Pennsylvania has a funding crisis when it comes to its schools. You've seen the headlines: "Teacher's Laid Off," "Music Programs Cut," "One Guidance Counselor for 1,800 Students." It's a sad narrative that plagues schools all across the Commonwealth.

This wasn't always the case. In 2008, Pennsylvania enacted a funding formula that fairly distributed state funding to schools based on the needs of the students in each school district. Test scores went up, programs expanded to help children catch up in the classroom and students were on the right track to graduate. So what happened? In 2011, Governor Corbett and the State Legislature scrapped the formula and cut nearly \$1 billion in school funding. Our schools have not been the same ever since.

PCCY finds that in southeastern Pennsylvania alone, school districts are receiving \$304 million less in state funding than in 2010. To make up the difference, homeowners are digging deeper into their own pockets to pay for public education through higher property taxes. In fact, nearly every school district in southeastern Pennsylvania raised property taxes at least once in the last four years; some have raised taxes every year.

To reverse the tide of years of unfair funding, a diverse coalition of organizations from all corners of the state launched the Campaign for Fair Education Funding, with the goal that every child in Pennsylvania has access to quality education, no matter where they live. Just how deep is the breadth of the Campaign? It's not that often that the Pennsylvania chapter of the American Federation of Teachers and the Pennsylvania Chamber of Business and Industry join together for a common cause.

The Campaign calls for a school funding formula that's based on four key principles:

Accuracy: A funding formula must be accurate and based on real costs needed to provide a high-quality education.

Schools and students need stability: A formula must also be stable and equitable so school districts can plan their budgets long-term.

Shared Responsibility: The burden of funding schools should also be shared fairly between the state and the local tax base.

Accountability is required: Strong accountability measures are needed to ensure tax dollars for schools are invested wisely to boost student performance.

Creating a fair and adequate school funding formula is not rocket science. Forty-seven other states already do it. With a little hard work and a willing

General Assembly, we can get schools and students back on track.

To learn more about the Campaign for Fair Education Funding, visit www.fairfundingpa.org.

If you would like to get involved with the campaign, please email [Shanee Garner](mailto:Shanee.Garner@pccy.org) at shaneeg@pccy.org.

Campaign Members

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| A+ Schools | PA Assoc. of School Nurses and Practitioners |
| Action United | PA Budget and Policy Center |
| AFL-CIO of PA | PA Business Council |
| Allegheny Conference on Community Development | PA Chamber of Business and Industry |
| Allies for Children | PA Coalition of Public Charter Schools |
| American Federation of Teachers-PA (AFT-PA) | PA Council of Churches |
| Building One PA | PA Immigration and Citizenship Coalition (PICC) |
| Congregations United for Neighborhood Action (CUNA) | PA Interfaith Impact Network (PIN) |
| Cross-City | PA League of Urban Schools (PLUS) |
| Education Law Center | PA Municipal League |
| Education Matters in the Cumberland Valley | PA Partnerships for Children |
| Education Policy and Leadership Center | PA PTA |
| Education Voters-PA | PA School Boards Assoc. (PSBA) |
| Greater Philadelphia Chamber of Commerce | PA School Librarians Association |
| Greater Pittsburgh Chamber of Commerce | PA State Education Association (PSEA) |
| Jewish Social Policy Action Network (JSPAN) | PennCAN |
| Keystone State Education Coalition | Philadelphia AFL-CIO |
| League of Women Voters of Pennsylvania | Philadelphia Federation of Teachers (PFT) |
| Lutheran Advocacy Ministry in PA | Philadelphia School Partnership |
| NAACP of PA | Pittsburgh Federation of Teachers (PFT) |
| PA Assoc. of Elementary and Secondary School Principals (PAESSP) | POWER (Philadelphians Organized to Witness, Empower, and Rebuild) |
| PA Assoc. of Intermediate Units (PAIU) | Public Citizens for Children and Youth (PCCY) |
| PA Assoc. of Rural and Small Schools (PARSS) | Public Interest Law Center of Phila. (PILCOP) |
| PA Assoc. of School Administrators (PASA) | United Way of Greater Philadelphia & Southern New Jersey |
| PA Assoc. of School Business Officials (PASBO) | Urban League of Greater Pittsburgh |
| | Urban League of Philadelphia |

STATE LAW SHUTS OUT THOUSANDS OF CHILDREN IN PENNSYLVANIA

We all remember how tough school can be- schoolyard politics, pop quizzes, what to wear, and how to compete among your peers. Now imagine school and having trouble seeing the chalkboard, constant toothaches and chronic exhaustion. That is what "Jose" faces. This eight year-old Philadelphia child struggles in school like 47,000 other children in Pennsylvania, because he does not have legal immigration status and is therefore ineligible to enroll in the state Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIP).

For most kids, a trip to the eye doctor, the dentist and access to pediatric visits eliminates these challenges. But "Jose" does not have those luxuries. "Jose's" mother and father both work but can't afford the high costs of health care that families must pay when they do not have health insurance. "Jose's" mom tells us she is at her wits end, "We do everything in our power to make sure our child has care, and that means my husband has to work extra hours and overtime all the time. We can't spend time together as a family as much."

Luckily for "Jose" PCCY's Give Kids Sight Day at Wills Eye Hospital provided children like him with a free pair of eye glasses from Visionworks and Eagles Youth Partnership. When "Jose" put on his glasses he saw clearly for the first time, "Mommy, Mommy I can read the letters!" The time has come for our state's leaders to see as clearly and increase access to health care for children who do not have legal immigration status.

Children across Pennsylvania who can't access this unique, Philadelphia-based program struggle every day because their parents can't afford to take them to an eye doctor and pay for glasses. PCCY is working to push the State Legislature to change 13 words in the "Cover All Kids" law to include children who do not have legal immigration status. In our open letter to Governor-elect Tom Wolf, we are asking that the new state Insurance Commissioner prepare a plan like those implemented in parts of California, Illinois, Massachusetts, Washington state, and New York that permit all families to purchase health care for their children through the CHIP program. **For more information about PCCY's push to make CHIP available to all children, contact PCCY Health Policy Director Colleen McCauley at colleenm@pccy.org.**

