
Education in the State Budget

Priyanka Reyes-Kaura | August 31, 2026



We are in a critical moment in the history of Pennsylvania's education system

1. Brief history of fair funding in Pennsylvania
2. This year's state education budget in context
3. The role of elected officials in maintaining progress

Historical context

- Most state funding for schools did not go through a formula - not tied to student needs
- Relatively low state contribution (#45 nationwide)
- History of local control & school choice
- Students in low-wealth school districts underserved, even though most had extremely high tax effort

2023 Commonwealth Court ruled the state school funding system unconstitutional

B. EDUCATION

§ 14. Public school system.

The General Assembly shall provide for the maintenance and support of a thorough and efficient system of public education to serve the needs of the Commonwealth.

(May 16, 1967, P.L.1037, J.R.3)

and tasked the executive and legislative branches with developing a remedy



“All witnesses agree that every child can learn. It is now the obligation of the Legislature, Executive Branch, and educators, to make the constitutional promise a reality in this Commonwealth.”

Developing a remedy (2023-4)

- Basic Education Funding Commission
- Successful schools model & calculation of per-student funding threshold
- Calculation of adequacy shortfalls for every school district
- 364 school districts have an adequacy shortfall

FY 27 PA education budget at a glance

- + **\$565 million** in adequacy and tax equity
 - + **\$526 million** through the adequacy formula
- + **\$50 million** through the BEF formula
- + **\$50 million** through the SEF formula

- + Cyber reform measures around wellness checks, enrolling habitually truant students, residency requirements

Additional education investments

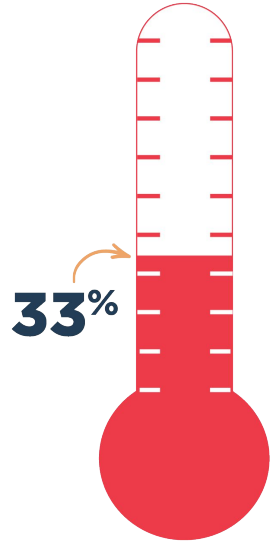
- + \$10 million for student teacher stipends
 - + \$10 million early literacy
 - + \$10 million for Career and Technical education
 - Continued funding for school breakfasts and menstrual products in schools
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- And the list goes on...see more detail [here](#)

3 Years of Historic Education Funding Increases

Numbers are YOY increases in millions of dollars

	FY 25	FY 26	FY27
Adequacy formula	493	526	526
Tax Equity formula	32	32	32
BEF formula	285	105	50
SEF formula	100	40	50
Cyber reform savings	100	78	-

3 years of adequacy investments have filled the first 1/3 of the statewide gap



- Total gap in 2024: \$4.8 billion
 - Filled: ~ \$1.5 billion
 - Remaining: ~ \$3.2 billion
- Timeline: 6 more years if lawmakers continue at the current rate. Not explicitly stated.

Adequacy by the numbers

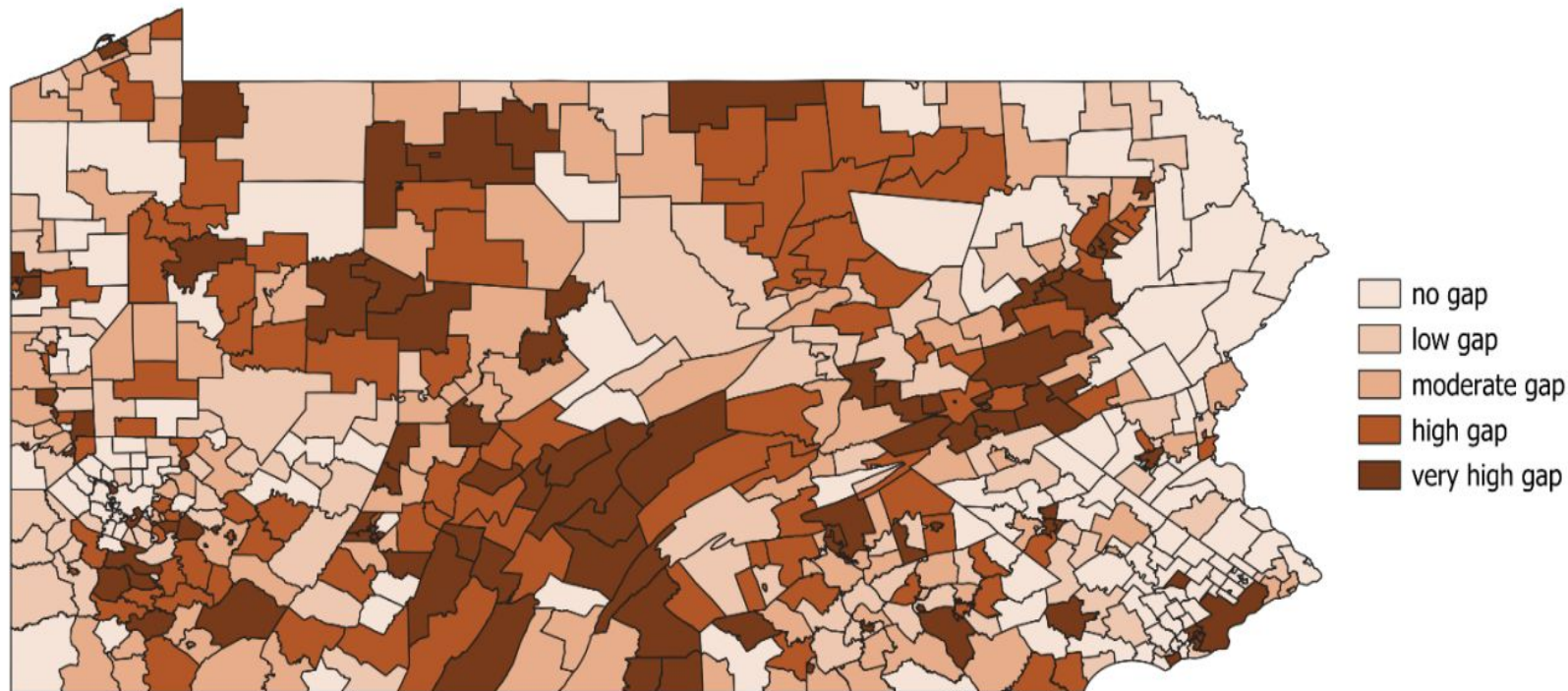
In 2026, 364 school districts had an adequacy gap and received an adequacy supplement:

192 RURAL school districts

154 SUBURBAN school districts

18 URBAN school districts

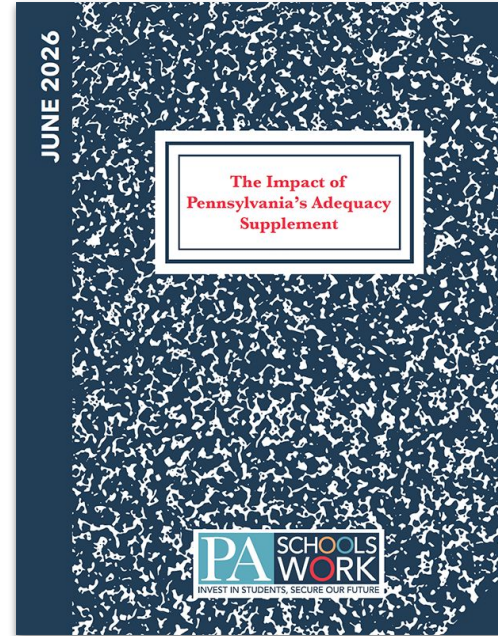
Per Pupil Funding Gaps in Pennsylvania, 2024



Early Impacts of Adequacy funding

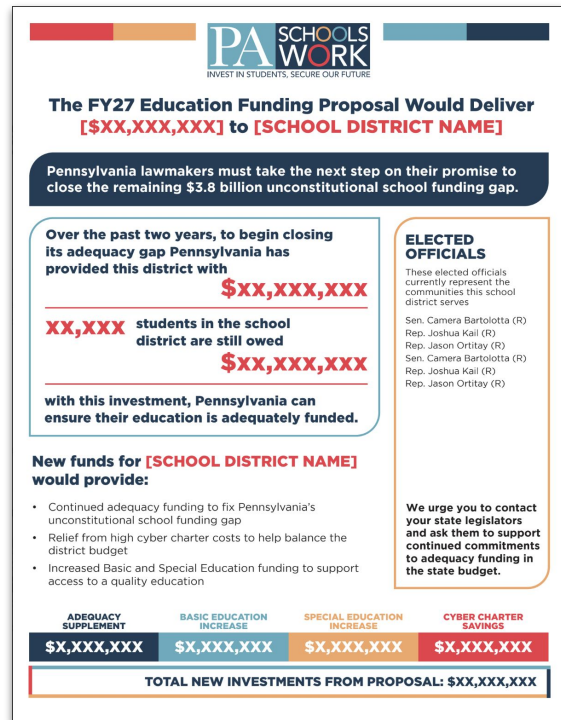
- Reduced class sizes
- Increased staffing - hiring critical teachers and counselors
- Reduced CTE wait lists
- Improved school climate
- Literacy readiness and growth

<https://paschoolswork.org/adequacy-report-june-2026/>



How did we get here?

- **The lawsuit:** constitutional obligation
- **The champions:** policymakers who consistently prioritize fair funding
- **The movement:** statewide, diverse
- **The math:** every school district benefits through multi-pronged approach
- **The research:** school district fact sheets



We have come a long way, but the road is getting bumpier

- Rising inflation
- Pressing school facilities needs
- Competing budget priorities
- Disagreement about potential revenue sources
- No explicit timeline



Lawmakers who support education have paved the way for all these budget reforms

Recent votes are one way to look at lawmaker support for education, though not a perfect measure

Budget bill

- [House Bill 2400](#), Printers Number 3765
- Senate vote: 44-6
- House vote: 167-35

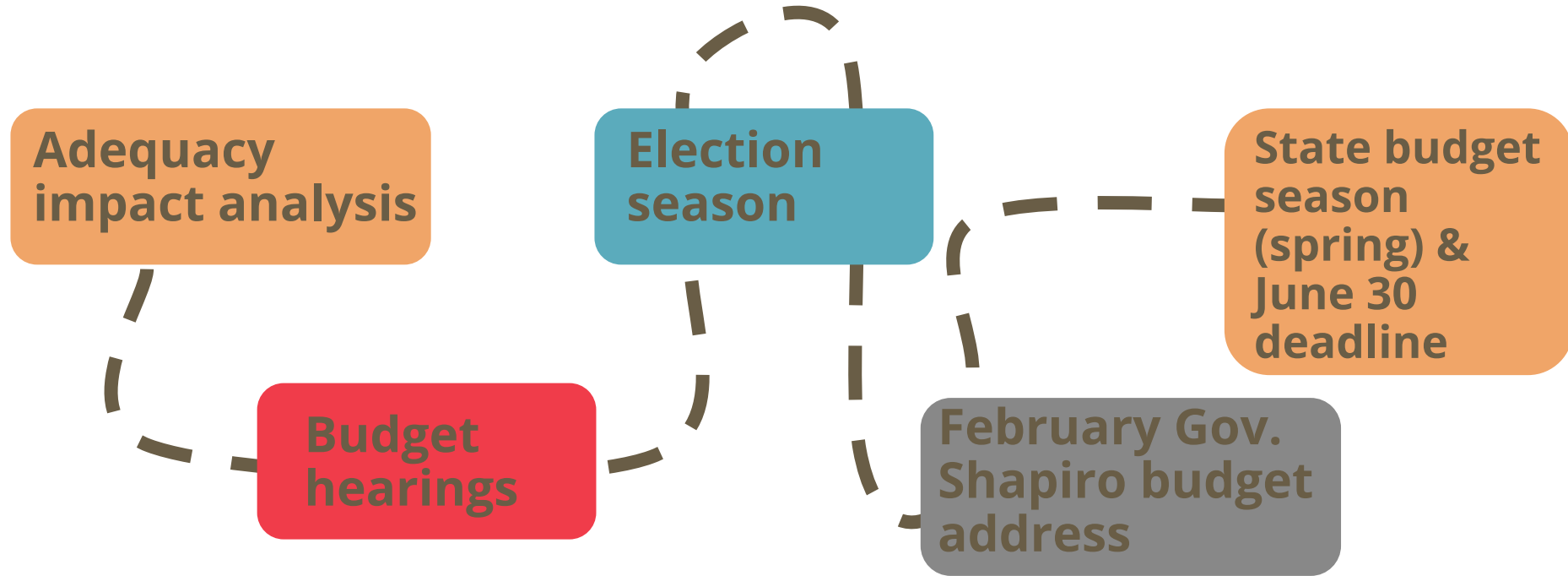
School code bill

- [House Bill 1505](#), Printers Number 3764
- Senate vote: 45-5
- House vote: 172-30

Electing and maintaining education champions is critical

- No guarantee that lawmakers will continue filling the adequacy gap at this rate
 - Though several legislative leaders have made this their clear priority
- Other non-budget education issues where lawmakers are making critical progress:
 - Guaranteed recess for every K-5 student
 - Technology policies (cell phones, AI)
 - Teacher pipeline

The Road Ahead



Take Action: thank leaders who support education budget reforms



[Email link here](#)

Join us to keep up the progress on education



<https://childrenfirstpa.org/get-involved/>



<https://paschoolswork.org/join-the-work/>