

POTTSTOWN CITIZENS FOR Enlightened LEADERSHIP

Pottstown school spending soars

Pottstown High School was among seven of 10 area high schools to see state test scores drop last year.

The main reason given is that the test was changed to be more rigorous. That's very likely. Test scores dropped everywhere in Pennsylvania.

But statewide testing has changed so often in recent decades that no school district can give an accurate assessment, over time, as to how well its students are doing.

In fact, there is only one credible test that has measured student achievement consistently since 1969 -- the National Assessment of Educational Progress. The results,

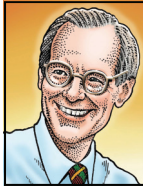
from periodic national samplings, show students have done about the same or only marginally better in reading and math than they did 40 years ago.

One thing that has changed, dramatically, is cost. Reflecting state trends, Pottstown School District spending has soared over the last four decades, fueled mostly by dramatic increases in the number of special education teachers and classroom aides.

Pottstown's spending

has been triple the rate of inflation.

Has all this increased spending actually increased student performance? Or do we need to rethink how we use our resources?



Commentary by
Tom Hylton

Swelling staff, skyrocketing costs		
1974-1975		
Enrollment		4,481
Percentage low income		18%
Speech, therapists, psychologists		3
Special education enrollment		136
Special education teachers		8
Classroom aides		5
Budget		\$7,099,876
Cost per pupil		\$1,584
40 years later...		
2014-2015		
Enrollment		3,091
Percentage low income		70%
Speech, therapists, psychologists		15
Special education enrollment		485
Special education teachers		42
Classroom aides		79
Budget		\$55,992,642
Cost per pupil		\$18,114
Increase in per pupil costs, 1974 to 2014		
		1,112%
Rate of inflation, 1974 to 2014		
		380%