

POTTSTOWN CITIZENS FOR Enlightened LEADERSHIP

Disparities in school spending

There is a huge disparity in spending among Pennsylvania's 500 school districts.

According to data collected by the Pennsylvania Department of Education for 2013-2014 (the most recent available) school spending ranged from \$38,000 per pupil in the Brownsville Area School District to \$10,600 in the Greater Nanticoke Area School District.

However, it's hard to find any correlation between spending and achievement. The top ten districts in spending include Upper Merion and Lower Merion, among the wealthiest, highest-performing districts in the state. But the top ten in spending also include two of the poorest, lowest achieving districts in Pennsylvania — Duquesne and Wilkinsburg.

In fact, by far the greatest factor in student achievement is the education and income of the parents.

Students at The Hill School do well academically not just because of its excellent faculty, small class sizes and lavish facilities, but be-

cause of the background of its students. The Hill only accepts proven high achievers in the first place.

As a Pottstown school director who spent about 150 hours last year visiting every one of our classrooms, I have no concerns about our quality of education. If you are a motivated student, you can get everything you need in Pottstown.



Commentary by
Tom Hylton

I am concerned about costs. Pottstown's high spending — requiring exorbitant taxes — is the number one impediment to the revitalization of our borough.

Consider the Boyertown and Daniel Boone school districts. More Pottstown teachers live in those districts than live in Pottstown. These teachers, whose children attend Boyertown and Daniel Boone schools, are apparently satisfied with the taxes and the quality of education in their districts.

Yet if Pottstown was spending the same, per pupil, as those districts, we could cut \$7 million to \$9 million from our \$57 million budget.

Pottstown can, and must be, far more cost-effective than it is.

Pottstown School District spending compared to selected school districts

School district	2013-2014 Cost per pupil	2013-2014 Enrollment	Total annual budget savings as compared to Pottstown
Pottstown	\$15,886	3,180	—
Daniel Boone	\$13,564	3,646	\$7,383,960
Boyertown	\$13,034	7,132	\$9,069,360
<i>High poverty districts:</i>			
Allentown	\$13,197	17,006	\$8,551,020
Lebanon	\$11,817	4,790	\$12,939,420
Reading	\$11,119	17,487	\$15,159,060

There is a huge disparity in spending among Pennsylvania school districts — including those in the Pottstown area. The chart above shows how much money Pottstown could cut from its \$57 million budget if it was spending as much as the other districts listed. For example, if Pottstown spent the same, per pupil, as Daniel Boone, we could cut more than \$7 million from our budget. If we spent the same as Reading, we could cut about \$15 million from our budget.