

Brownsville Area School District

1,500 Students

Insights on why small rural public schools in Pennsylvania are inadequately funded by the state, focusing on special education costs, charter school costs, and outside cyber school costs.

Key points:

Special Education Costs: (30% student population)

Small rural schools often have a higher percentage of students with special needs compared to larger schools due to a lack of nearby specialized facilities.

The cost of providing quality special education services is significantly higher, including hiring trained staff, therapists, and purchasing specialized materials.

State funding formulas do not adequately account for these higher special education costs in rural schools, leading to a funding gap.

BASD Cost: \$6, 500,000

State Subsidy: \$1,752,342

Charter School Costs:

In Pennsylvania, charter schools receive funding from the same pool of money as traditional public schools, but they often do not have the same level of accountability and transparency.

Procedures, checks and balances, and transparency issues with new local Charter.

When we applied as a County, PDE did not approve

Many small rural schools have seen an increasing number of students enrolling in charter schools, diverting funds away from the traditional public school system.

This shift in enrollment leads to a reduction in per-pupil funding for rural schools, making it challenging to maintain necessary programs and services.

BASD Cost: \$1, 908,806

Outside Cyber School Costs:

In recent years, there has been a rise in students opting for cyber charter schools, which receive funding from the same pool as traditional schools.

Small rural schools may lack the infrastructure to offer online education, forcing them to outsource to these cyber schools, which can be costly.

This diverts funds from traditional schools, negatively impacting their ability to provide a well-rounded education.

BASD Cost: Regular Education Student \$10,000

Special Ed Student \$30,000

Rural School Funding Disparities:

Rural schools often struggle with declining enrollments and a shrinking tax base, which makes it difficult to raise local revenue to offset state funding shortfalls.

The state's funding formula doesn't adequately address the unique challenges faced by small rural schools, failing to allocate sufficient funds to meet their needs.

As a result, rural schools often must make difficult choices, such as cutting essential programs, reducing staff, or increasing class sizes, all of which negatively affect the quality of education.

Basic Education Funding: \$14,053,750 Equals: \$9,370/student

Inadequate State Investment:

Pennsylvania ranks among the lowest states in terms of the percentage of funding provided by the state compared to local sources, placing a significant burden on local property taxes.

The state's failure to invest adequately in education disproportionately affects rural districts, which cannot generate the same revenue as urban districts through local taxes.

This lack of state investment perpetuates funding disparities and inadequacies in rural schools.

BASD Real Estate Revenue: \$5,700,000

Budget of: \$30,000,000

Budget Timelines:

Districts are required to submit a budget by June 30th without knowing State funding numbers. State Budget not approved until the school year is started.