

For immediate release

Historic coalition of K-12 groups calls on General Assembly, Gov. Beshear to restore state funding for student achievement

Frankfort, Ky. (Jan. 4, 2012) – For the first time, seven organizations representing the full spectrum of elementary and secondary education in Kentucky have banded together to urge Gov. Steve Beshear and the General Assembly to reverse four years of state funding reductions to key services that support teaching and learning in the state’s public schools.

During a Frankfort news conference today, representatives of the Kentucky Education Action Team (KEAT) called on state leaders to restore funding to the SEEK (Support Education Excellence in Kentucky) program, the primary source of state funding for public schools; and to key elements such as textbooks, preschool, teacher training and family resource and youth services centers, along with afterschool and school safety programs.

“At a time when schools are being expected to significantly boost student achievement, budgeting equals tools that can help teachers and schools succeed for students,” said Tim Hitzfield, president of the Kentucky Association of School Councils and principal of Conner High School in Boone County. “Training, materials, technology and extra time for students are all key investments for kids to succeed instead of just getting by.”

KEAT’s efforts represent the first statewide joint advocacy campaign by the seven founding members: Kentucky Association of School Administrators, Kentucky Association of School Councils, Kentucky Association of School Superintendents, Kentucky Education Association, Kentucky Parent Teacher Association, Kentucky School Boards Association and the Prichard Committee for Academic Excellence.

Prichard Committee Executive Director Stu Silberman said, “Having all of these organizations come together like this is a historic time for Kentucky. We believe that education is the bridge to a better life for all Kentuckians. The progress that has been made over the last 20 years is in danger of regression due to the reductions in funding.”

Jessamine County Schools Superintendent Lu Young, a member of the board of directors of the Kentucky Association of School Superintendents, said her members are “excited about the collaboration. This is perhaps the first partnership that focuses entirely on funding issues that impact our children.”

(more)

Page Two

During the Jan. 4 news conference, KEAT released data demonstrating the reductions in state funding to key K-12 programs since 2008, including:

	<u>FY 2007-08</u>	<u>FY 2011-12</u>
SEEK	\$4,230 per student	\$3,769
Preschool	\$4,092	\$3,191
FRYSCs	\$103	\$87
Afterschool	\$59	\$20
Training	\$25	\$4
Safe schools	\$17	\$6
Textbooks	\$40	\$0 (for the past two years)

“The public hears a lot of talk about education having been ‘protected’ from cuts in recent years, but that’s only true on a relative level to the cuts in funding to other public services,” said Bill Scott, executive director of the Kentucky School Boards Association. “School funding has not gone untouched, and the public needs to understand that.”

Representatives of classroom teachers and district administrators called on state leaders to end the slow eroding of resources that they see affecting student learning.

Sharron K. Oxendine, president of the Kentucky Education Association, a group with 42,000 active, student and retired teachers, said, "KEA members see the impact of reduced funding on their students’ lives and on their own economic welfare every day in our classrooms. KEA believes the united effort to inform lawmakers about the impact of funding cuts is important.”

“Our call to action is necessary and urgent,” said Mayfield Independent Schools Superintendent Lonnie Burgett, president of the Kentucky Association of School Administrators. “Kentucky’s educators are poised to lead our schools in this global society, and our children are engaged and ready to learn. Funding must be restored to meet the higher standards for learning as set forth by the General Assembly in Senate Bill 1 in 2009.”

Kentucky Parent Teacher Association President Teri Gale of Fairdale pledged her organization’s No. 1 focus to “advocate that Kentucky must fully fund all programs it mandates to local school districts.

“Our members believe all parents should be involved both in the home and in the classroom in the education of their children,” she said, “so we support the position that the Kentucky General Assembly acts to restore funding levels for education to 2008 levels.”

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Attachments