



Basic Education Funding and Accountability: Year One Results

Introduction to the Panelists

- Josh Varon, Staff Attorney, Education Law Center
- Sandy Zelno, School Reform Associate, Education Law Center
- Janis Risch, Executive Director, Good Schools Pennsylvania
- Jean Brown, President, Easton NAACP
- Marissa Harris, Advocacy Developer, Lutheran Advocacy Ministry in PA
- District Pastor David Branekey, Lansdowne Baptist Church, Lansdowne Ministerium
- Nancy Lee Crowder, Parent, Baldwin-Whitehall School District
- Student Organizer, Philadelphia Student Union
- Jan Pearce, School Board Director, Norristown School District



Overview of this Presentation

- Background on State Funding and Accountability for Public Education
- Connecting Act 61 Funding to Improved Student Achievement
- The Results and Impact of Act 61 Funding and Accountability on Students, Schools, and Communities
- Moving Forward with Act 61 and HB 1493

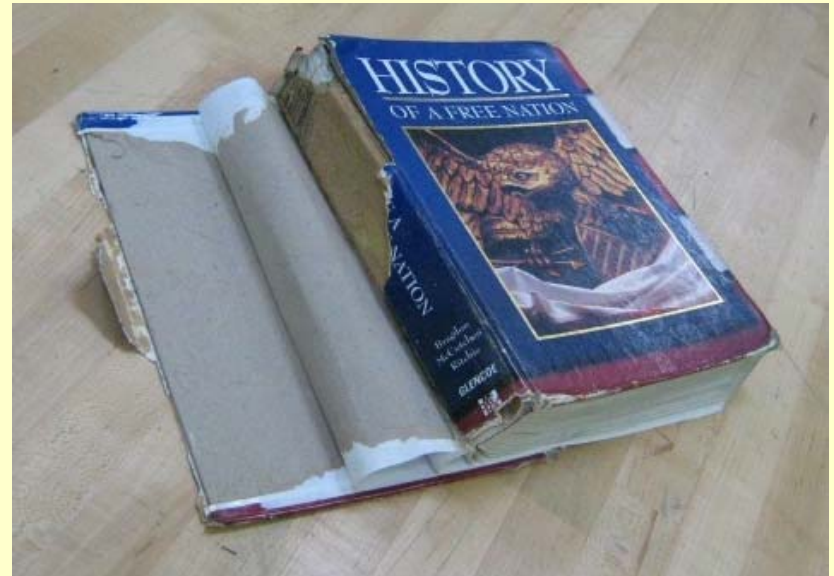


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Background on State Funding and Accountability for Public Education

A Stakeholder Perspective on Life Before ACT 61

- Before ACT 61, the Pennsylvania school funding system caused inequities in resources and education opportunities:



A Stakeholder Perspective on Life Before ACT 61

- Opportunity Gaps: Due in large part to consequences of the previous school funding formula and other economic differences among communities, inequities in available resources left some schools underfunded by as much as \$5000 per student.



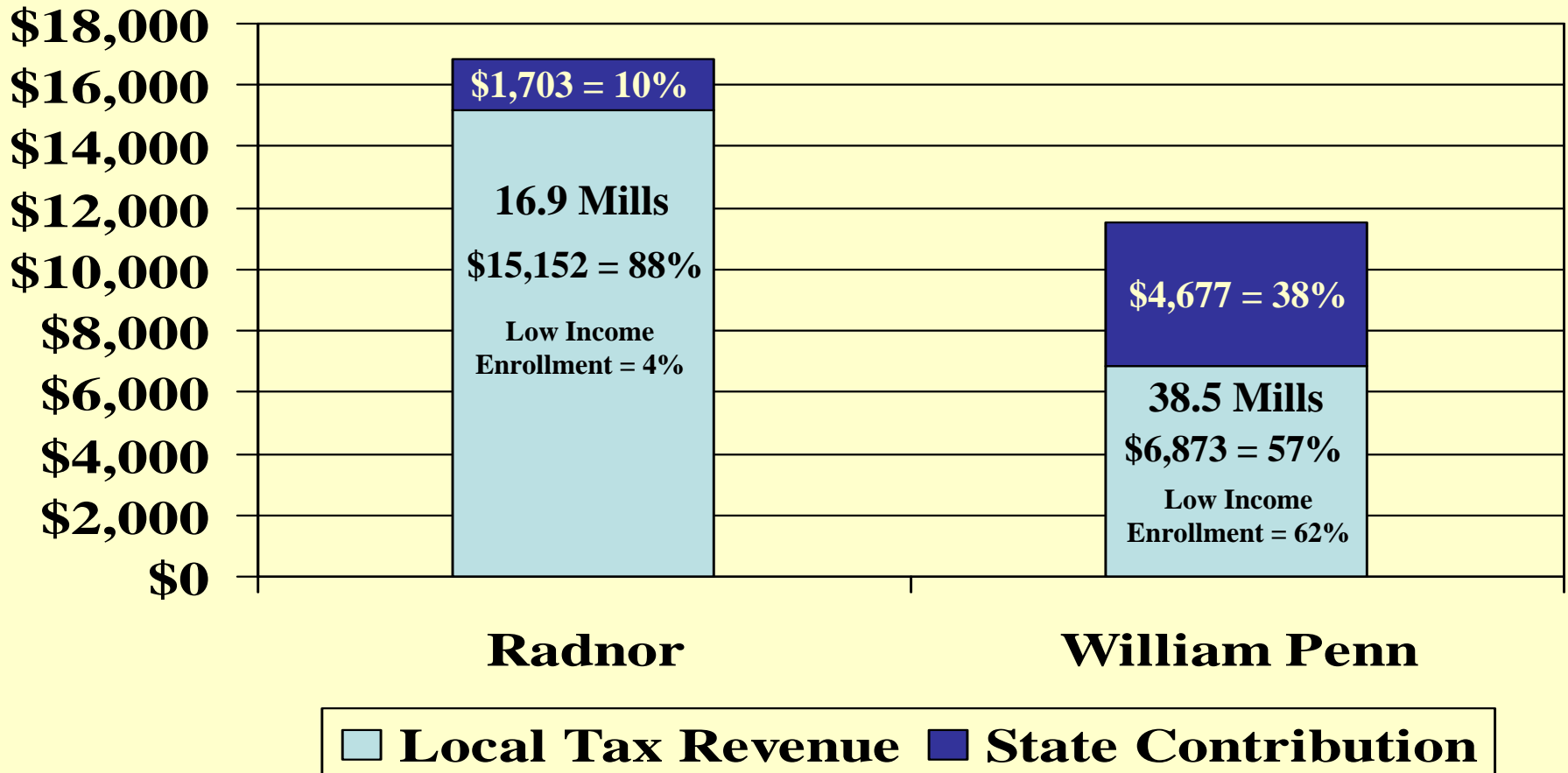
A Stakeholder Perspective on Life Before ACT 61

- Achievement Gaps: Test scores and high school graduation rates demonstrated that students whose education was supported by adequate resources far outperformed students whose education was not supported by adequate resources.



A Stakeholder Perspective on Life Before ACT 61

A Tale of Two School Districts



Stakeholder Highlights of Act 61 Education Funding Reform

- Act 61 aligns resources with student and school needs:
 - By incorporating the findings of an independent adequacy study into school funding legislation, and
 - By funding schools based on principles of adequacy, equity, efficiency, predictability, and accountability.

Stakeholder Highlights of Act 61 Education Funding Reform

- Independence Day for Education:
 - On July 4, 2008, Pennsylvania committed to phasing-in the state share of funding so that all districts will achieve the adequacy level target as identified in the Costing-out Study.
 - As a down-payment on the phase in, Pennsylvania increased basic education funding by \$274 million.



Connecting Act 61 Funding to Improved Student Achievement

Act 61's Four Components of Accountability

- First, Act 61 Uses New Resources To Create Improved Programs:
 - Act 61 Accountability rules apply to all districts that received increases over the inflation index, last year 4.4%.
 - Districts must devote at least 80% of funding in excess of the index to creating more effective programs and practices.

Act 61's Four Components of Accountability

- Second, Act 61 Funding Is NOT a Blank Check:
 - Districts must create financial plans called PA-PACT for investment of Act 61 resources.
 - PA-PACT plans require districts to conduct a “root cause analysis” to identify areas in which they have challenges.
 - Once identified, districts must invest resources in programs that remedy the root causes of low student performance in the district.

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PA Pact-Part D: ACT Funding

Budget Narrative
Click here to review the chart of PA Pact Strategies and the funding eligibilities for ACT funds.
Click here to review ACT funding amounts.

Using the Project Plan table below, indicate the strategies you will fund, how the funds will be used and the amount planned to be expended on the strategy*.

Strategies	Amount Funding*
Evidence Based Supports and One-Time Costs	27000
Research-Based Improvement Strategies	26000
Other new curricula/course offerings	53050
Teacher Training	10000
Extension of the school day/year	85717
Literacy and math coaching	18000
Science and applied knowledge skills	42000
Pre-kindergarten	8000
Other professional development	10000
Other educational support services	2000

*Note: Please make sure the total on this table matches your allocation of Accountability to Commonwealth Taxpayers (ACT) funds only. ABG funds are to be budgeted in the form PA Pact-Part B: ABG Funding and EAP funds are to be budgeted in form PA Pact-Part C: EAP Funding.

**Click here to review PA Pact Guidelines section F if Strategy: Other is chosen.

Agency Name Steelton-Highspire SD (PDE USE ONLY) Contract #
PROGRAM YEAR 2008 - 2009 Application Narrative PA Pact-Part D: ACT Funding

Act 61's Four Components of Accountability

- Third, Act 61 Provides a Menu of Options in Which to Invest
 - Act 61 resources must be invested in any of seven, research proven practices that correlate highly with student achievement.
 - Some examples are increased instruction time, new curricula or courses, staff professional development, reduction in class size, and expanded pre-k and kindergarten.



Act 61's Four Components of Accountability

- Fourth, Department Of Education Oversight
 - The Department of Education must review, and in some cases it must approve plans prior to Act 61 funding distribution.
 - Last year, 141 school districts submitted PA-PACT Plans. 54 plans from districts with schools not making AYP needed approval from the Department of Education.

Resources + Community Involvement = Improved Achievement

- Over the past year, hundreds of stakeholders across Pennsylvania have reviewed PA-PACT plans.



Resources + Community Involvement = Improved Achievement

- After reading, understanding, and evaluating PA-PACT plans stakeholders have collaborated with school districts to make sure resources drive achievement.
 - Stakeholders communicate with educators and neighbors to make sure all students take advantage of new opportunities provided by Act 61 funding.
 - Stakeholders also provide recommendations, suggestions, and monitoring to make plans even better.
- Year one of Act 61 has yielded numerous examples of success. Here's what happens when we rationally distribute funding with strong accountability measures...



The Results and Impact of Act 61 Funding and Accountability on Students, Schools, and Communities

Statewide Success

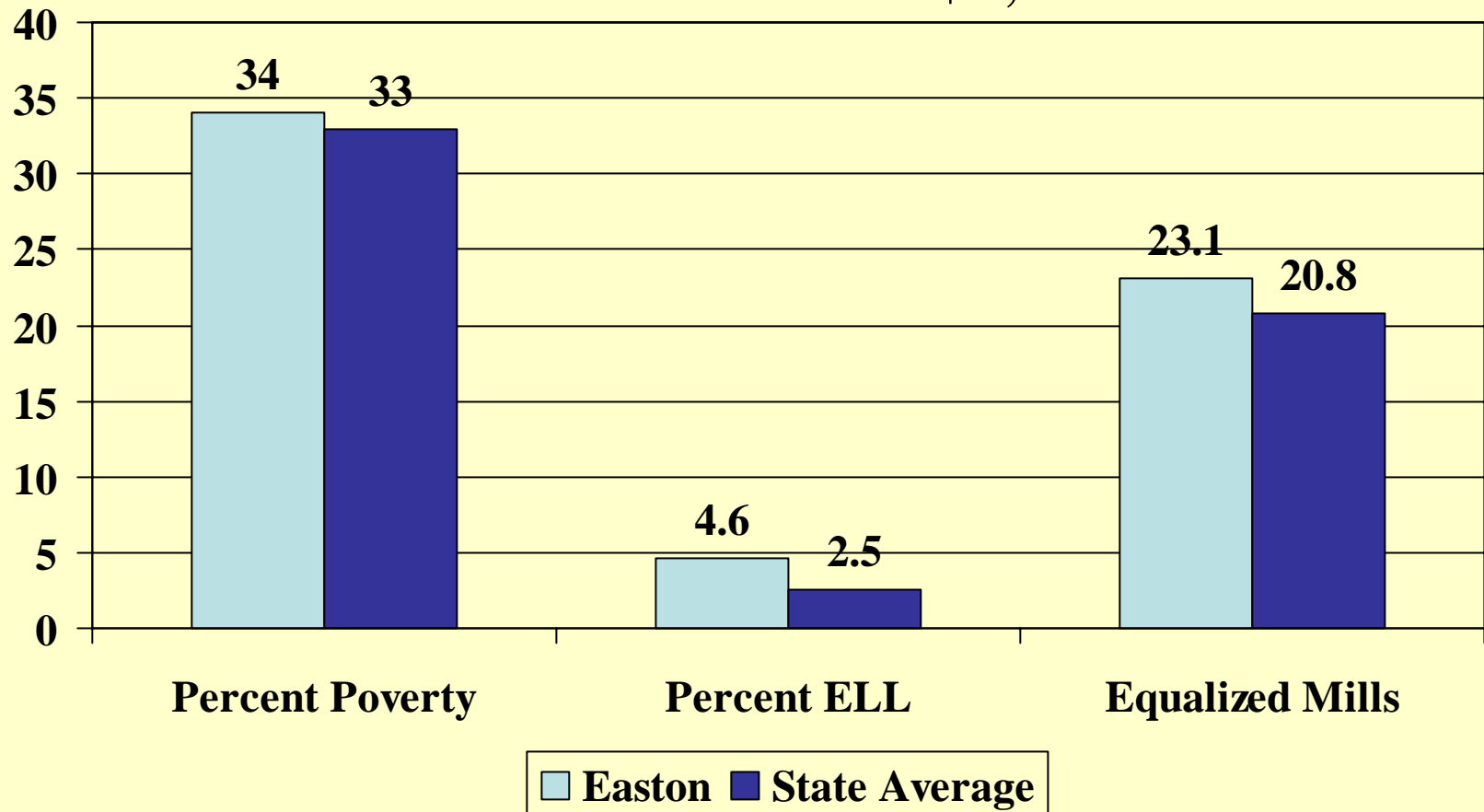
- \$18,787,069 funded increased instructional time for 500,261 students in 58 school districts
- \$2,523,139 funded teacher training that benefited 94,926 students in 30 school districts
- \$13,886,299 funded new course offerings for 92,580 students in 42 school districts
- \$8,262,164 funded literacy and math coaching for 90,003 students in 34 school districts

* Based on Pennsylvania Department of Education Figures from the 2008-09 school year

District Snapshot: Easton

□ Total Enrollment: 8,879

□ Adequacy Shortfall:
\$2,546 Per Student



Easton Success Stories

- Last year, Easton developed a tutoring program for 9th grade students, which also featured a mentoring program for at-risk students. Community members mentored students, helped with homework, and provided support to ensure that the students succeeded.



Easton Success Stories

- Easton implemented English as a second language classes in its high schools. For example, a student from Santo Domingo who initially felt isolated commented that ESL classes allowed him to learn English quickly, complete assignments, and to better communicate with his teachers and fellow students.
- Easton offered diversity training to help teachers and administrators more effectively teach their diverse student body. Ruby Payne lead an all-day workshop on the impact of poverty for the entire district.

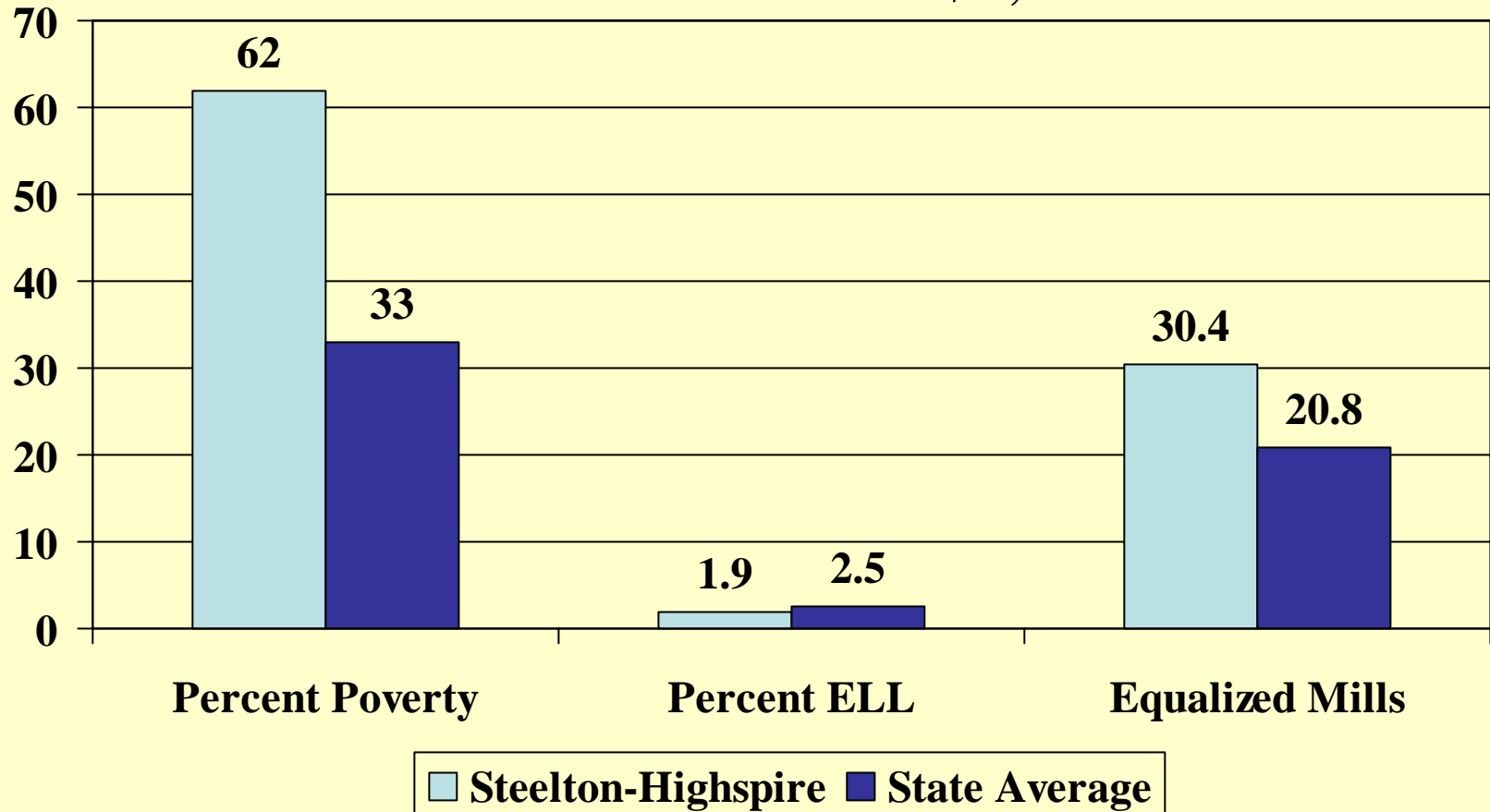
Easton Success Stories

- The district added new technology, which helped many students become more proficient in computer skills, as well as audio and video functions.
- Easton introduced full day kindergarten, a district wide diversity team, and led a trip of 20 students to Alabama to study the 1964 Civil Rights Movement.
- Finally, in addition to student success, PA-PACT galvanized the Easton community by strengthening its ties with the school district. This created a partnership that increased the district's capacity to support at-risk students.

District Snapshot: Steelton-Highspire

□ Total Enrollment: 1,354

□ Adequacy Shortfall:
\$3,666 Per Student



Steelton-Highspire Success Stories

- Steelton provided supplemental instruction time during the school day and on Saturday. On Saturdays, teachers described students as fresh, ready to learn, and eager. When the Saturday tutoring ended, students asked if they could keep attending anyway.
- Steelton implemented Read 180, designed for English language learners and students with special needs; a Reading Edge group that provides an extra hour of reading per day to 7th and 8th grade students. All students – especially ELL students – are reading at much higher grade levels.
- Steelton invested \$156,000 in early childhood education, providing full day Kindergarten for all 90 enrolled students and funds to complement Pre-K Counts.
- Steelton hired a director to coordinate the work of math and reading coaches and teachers throughout the district. Coaches help students with their current curriculum and prepare them for their future. Coaches also help teachers coordinate student centered common-planning time.

More Success in Central Pennsylvania

- The same success evident in Steelton occurred in neighboring districts with similar demography and characteristics.



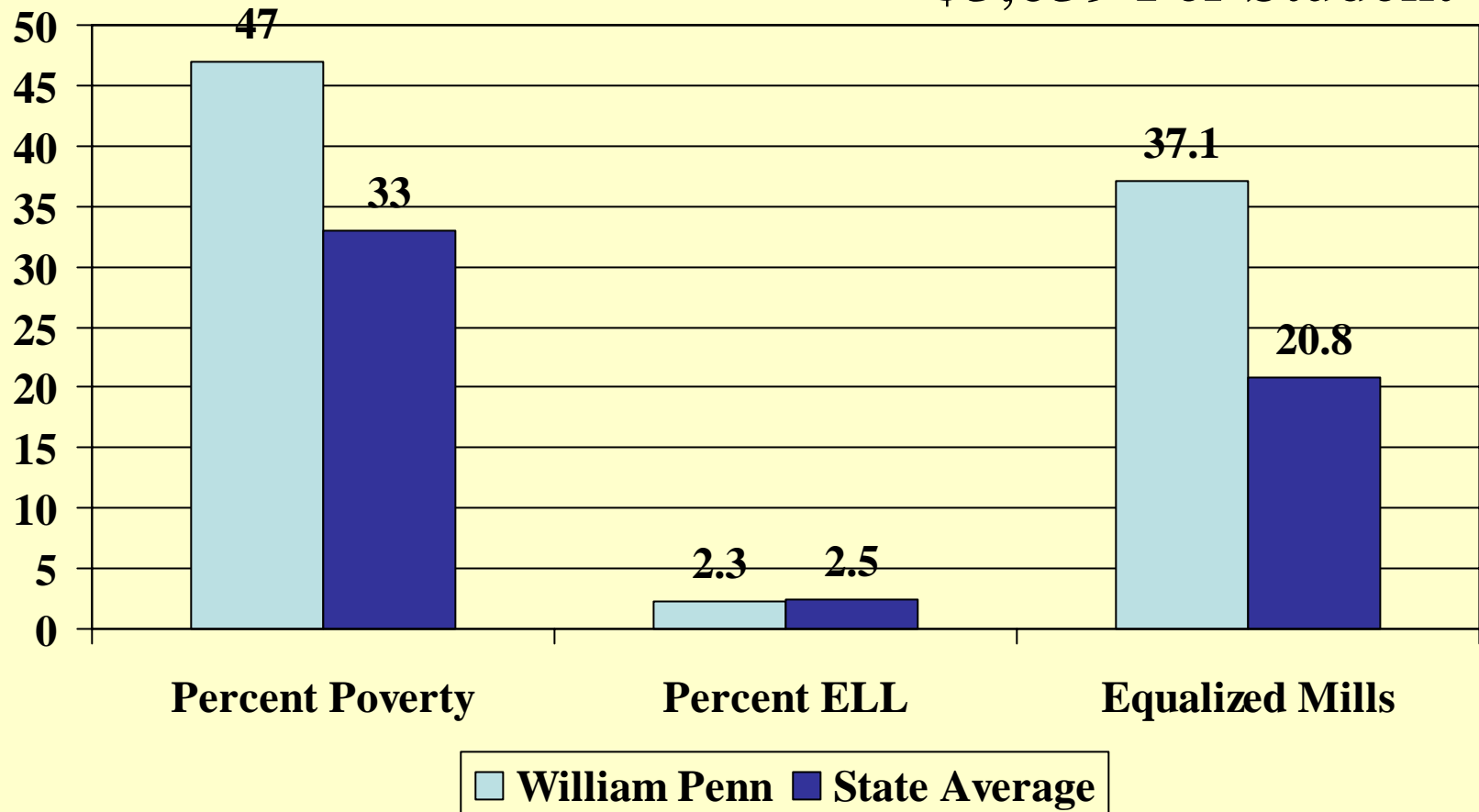
More Success in Central Pennsylvania

- In Reading the school district expanded full day kindergarten; hired a full roster of teachers ensuring a low and manageable student/teacher ratio; provided more than 5,000 hours of after-school tutoring; and enrolled thousands of students in fourteen virtual high schools.
- In York the school district hired teachers for ELL, reading, math, and expanded all day kindergarten. The William Penn High School improved parent involvement and implemented a data-tracking system for student achievement that especially benefits ELL students.
- In Lebanon, in addition to investing in kindergarten programs and new curriculum, the district considers its biggest success a positive change in culture that resulted from new technology, textbooks, and teaching materials.

District Snapshot: William Penn

□ Total Enrollment: 5,693

□ Adequacy Shortfall:
\$3,039 Per Student



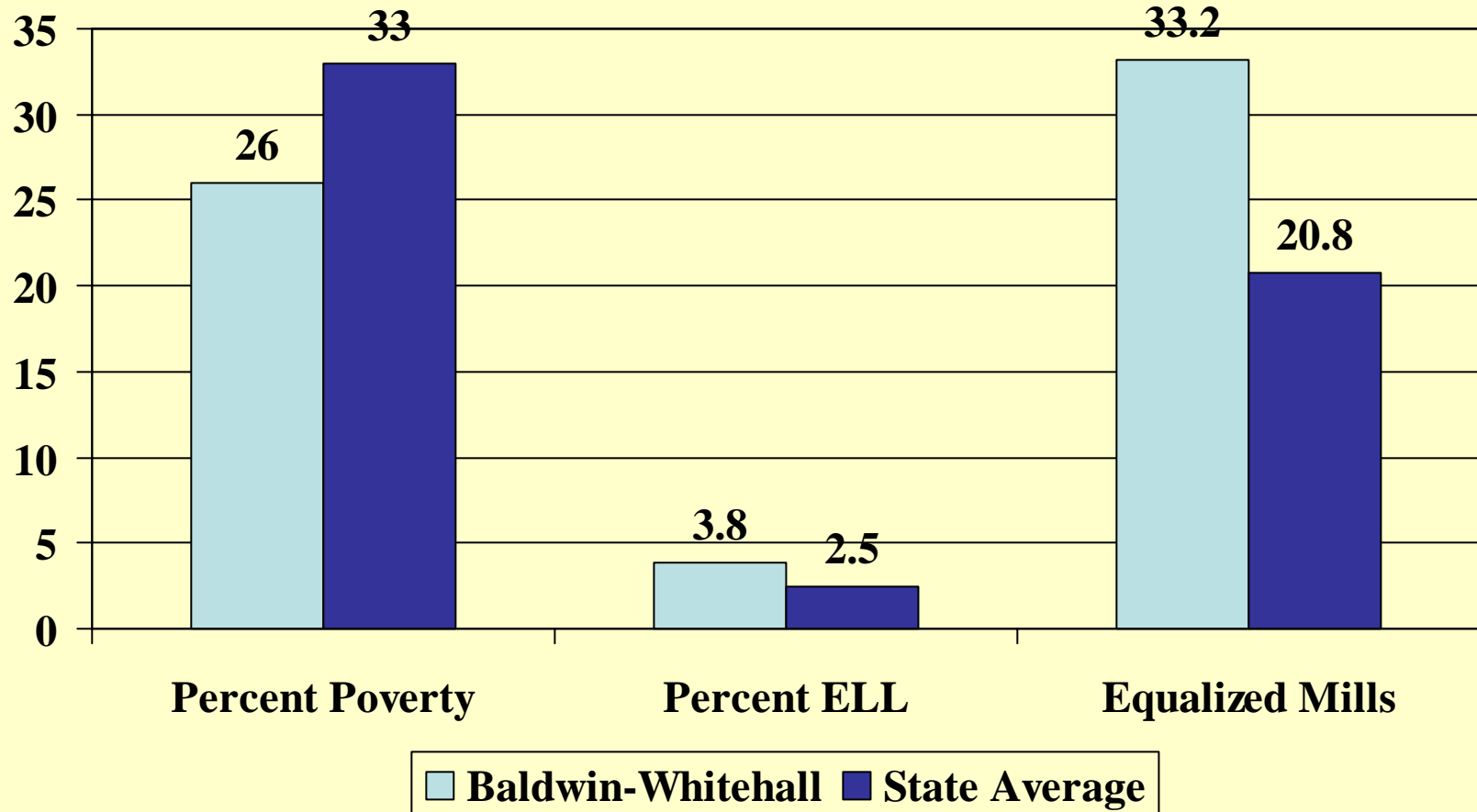
William Penn Success Stories

- Clergy from the Ministerium have studied the district's use of new resources, have participated in legislative visits, and have met with the school administration. Families are returning their kids to an improved public school system, though the schools still have a long way to go.
- William Penn has experienced positive results from Act 61 resources.
- For example, a congregant was close to dropping out of high school but refrained. He stayed in school because of an alternative learning "Twilight Program", extra tutoring, and new supports in the high school. He's now headed to college.
- William Penn has also implemented professional development, early learning, and class size reduction to the district.
- Recently, we met with the William Penn Superintendent who agreed to collaborate with our congregations to create a clear and honest picture of the District's progress and shortcomings. The clergy agreed to help connect our members to the resources Act 61 allows the district to offer. Similar partnerships are also taking place in Upper Darby, under the leadership of Pastor Eckert at Drexel Hill United Methodist Church.

District Snapshot: Baldwin-Whitehall

□ Total Enrollment: 4,280

□ Adequacy Shortfall:
\$2,055 Per Student



Baldwin-Whitehall Academic Success

- Baldwin-Whitehall increased instructional time by providing one-on one after school instruction in reading and math. To make sure this program impacts the students who need it most, parents met with the district and reviewed plans to learn how they could maximize and support the programs for the district's most academically challenged students.
- Because the previous curriculum was not “standards-based,” the district purchased and implemented a new reading curriculum, conducted staff development, and introduced materials for “differentiated instruction.” Realizing that students are not “one-size-fits-all,” the instruction now is geared toward helping all students meet high academic standards.

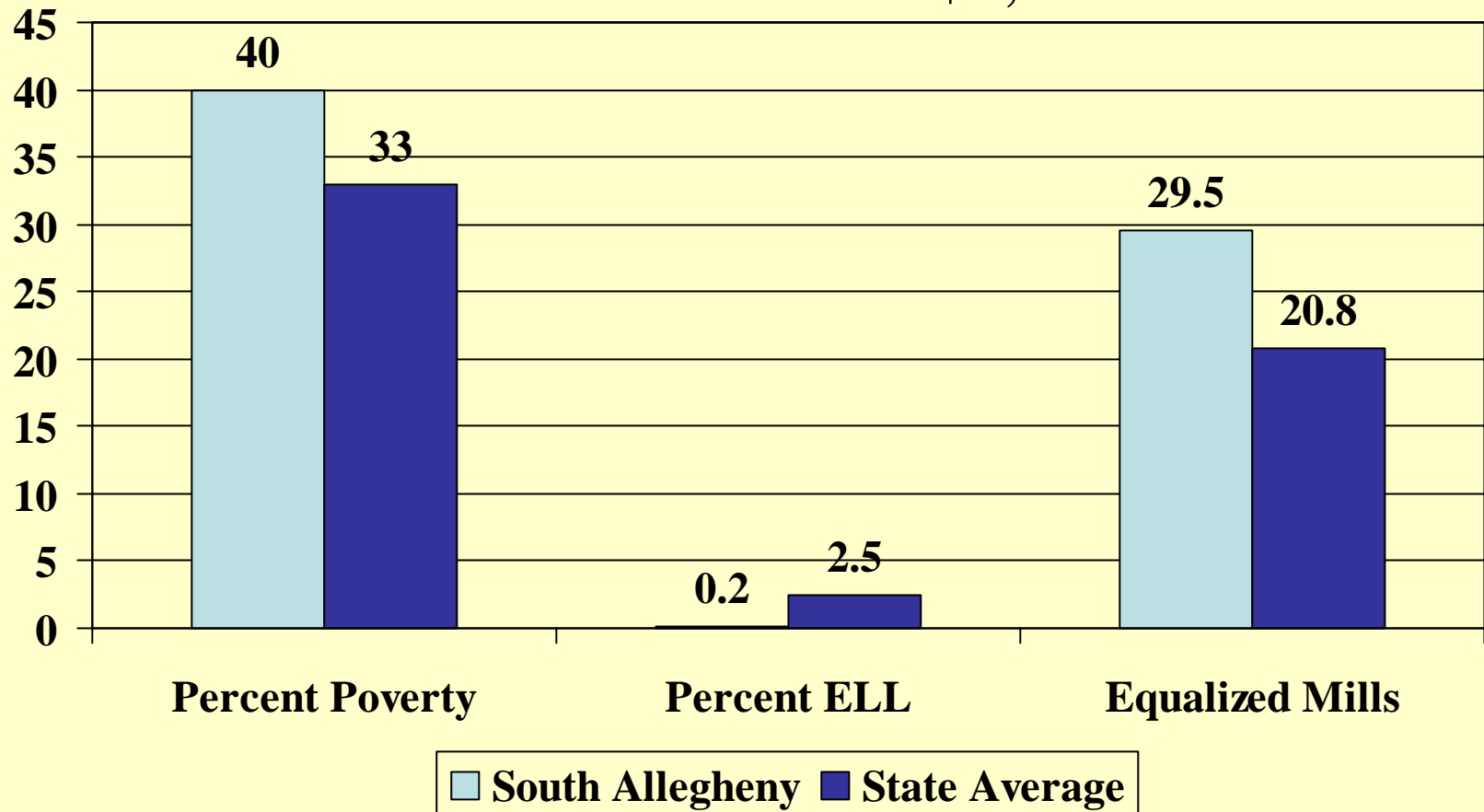
Baldwin-Whitehall Community- District Collaboration

- Baldwin-Whitehall parents initiated information sessions to discuss the link between dollars and student achievement to ensure the district used new resources wisely and as planned.
- We worked in collaboration with Dr. Randy Lutz and others to learn how the district analyzed the root causes of achievement challenges, the assessment methods used, and how new subsidy dollars were targeted, both to individual schools and to students.
- As long as state accountability provisions are tied to dollars, I will continue to support sustaining the new funding formula. But I've never believed that change totally comes from the top. To sustain what the legislature put into place, I'm going to continue to work towards building civic capacity. But we need your commitment as policy makers to sustain what you embedded into law last year.

District Snapshot: South Allegheny

□ Total Enrollment: 1,713

□ Adequacy Shortfall:
\$3,441 Per Student



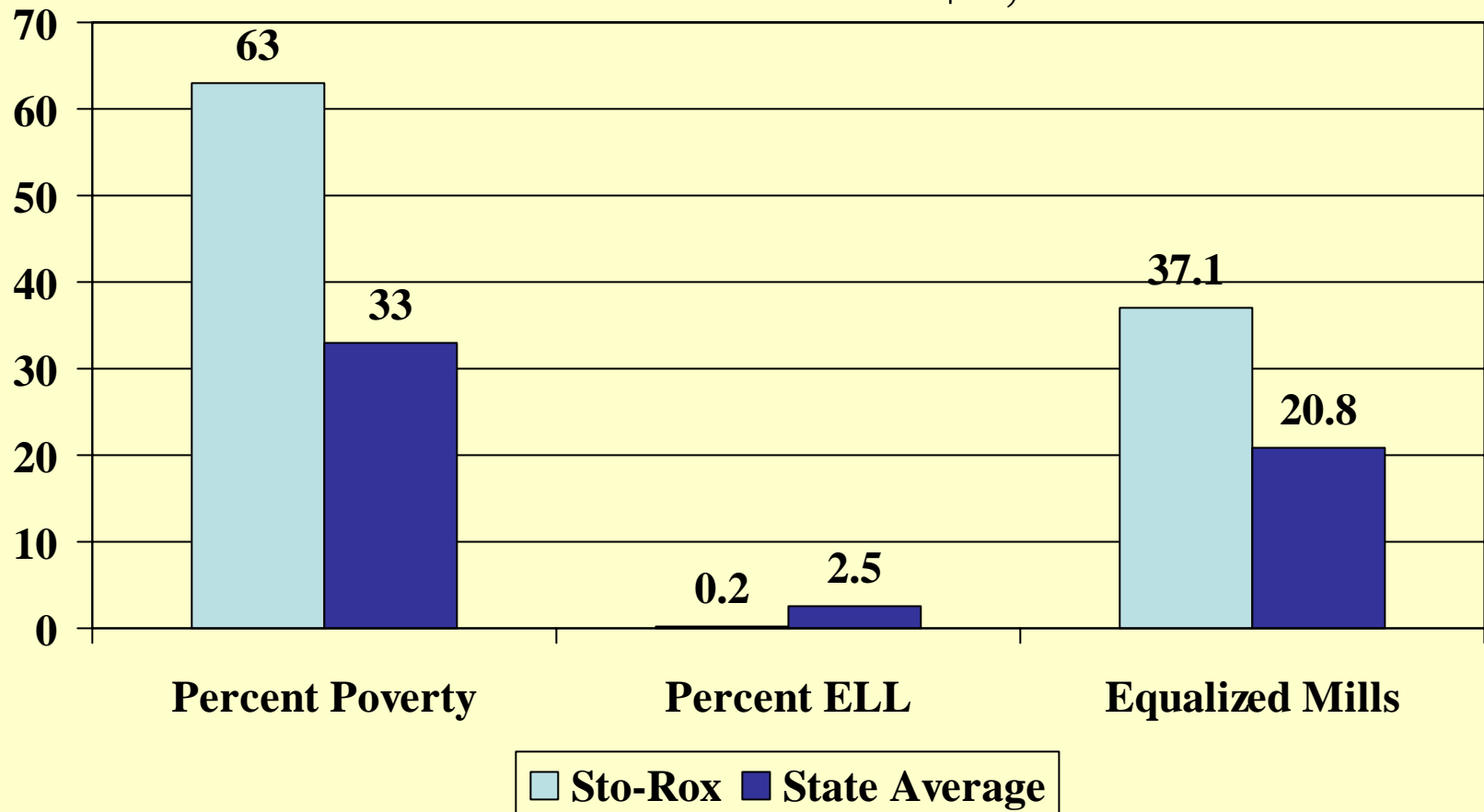
South Allegheny Success Stories

- South Allegheny implemented an elementary “Before-School Tutoring” program that not only meets the needs of working parents, but targets the academic and nutritional needs of students. The tutoring programs used throughout the school year will be available to parents and students in the summer months through web-based home access.
- Because Kindergarten programs implemented through previous Accountability Block Grants have been successful, the district began a Kindergarten Transition program that the community values and needs. Students and their parents come to school for a half-day each month to prepare for the coming year and are engaged in a variety of activities. Sixty percent (60%) of next year’s Kindergarten students are currently enrolled.
- New subsidy dollars are supporting science education to help students meet academic standards in that area. Harmony Habitats consists of a pollinator garden, a woodland habitat, greenhouse, compost and worm bins, as well as a recycling area. Outdoor classrooms and learning centers have been created that have leveraged additional support of grants and contributions from the community.

District Snapshot: Sto-Rox

□ Total Enrollment: 1,639

□ Adequacy Shortfall:
\$1,452 Per Student

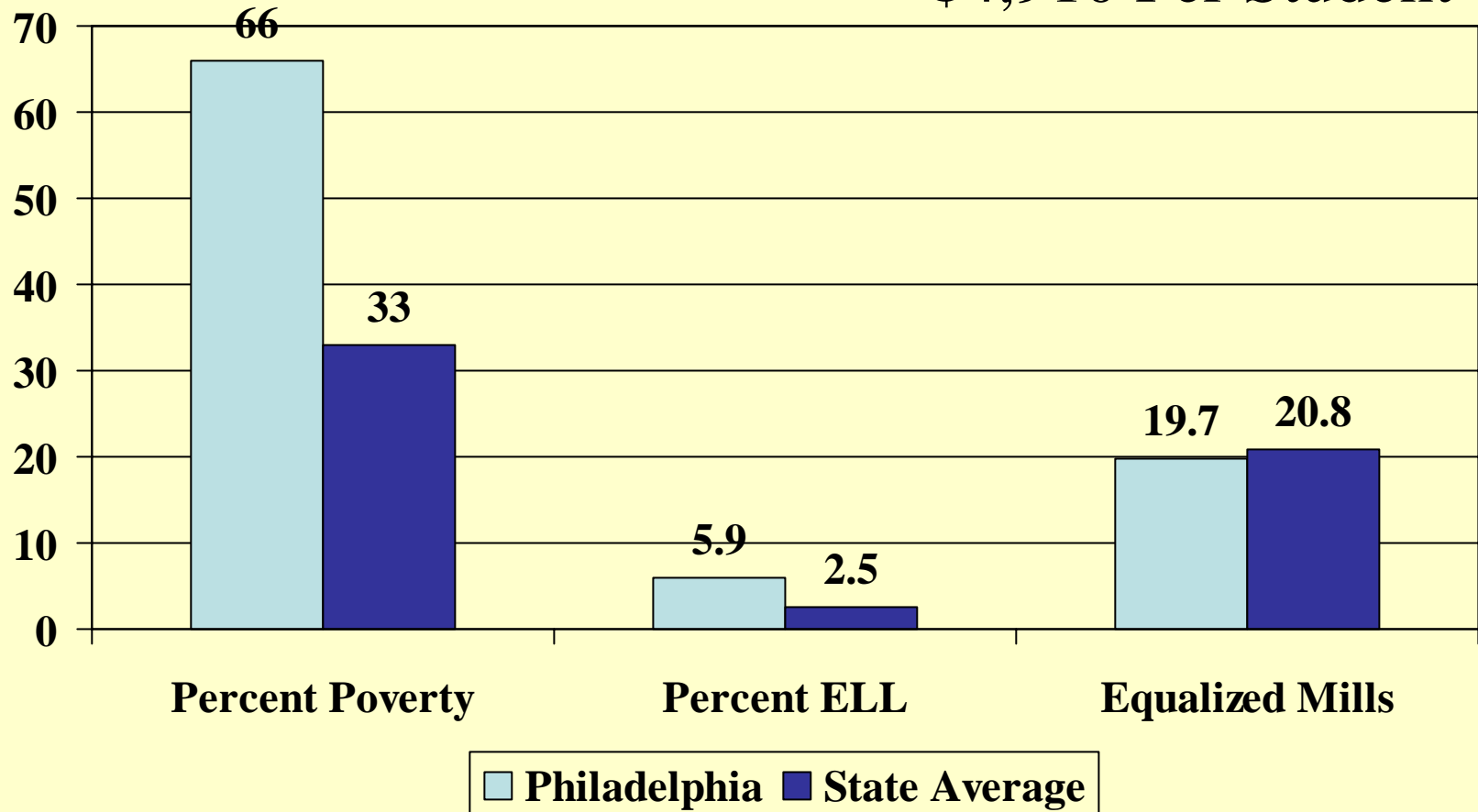


Sto-Rox Success Stories

- As a financially struggling school district still wrestling with the collapse of the steel mill industry, Sto-Rox targeted its subsidy dollars toward students in poverty and purchasing research-based curriculum materials so that teachers may be the “architects of standards based learning.”
- Given the societal challenges of their population, they hired a District-wide Home and School Visitor who works collaboratively with principals, counselors, support staff, teachers, and parents to intervene with social and education problems. Students at risk of “falling through the cracks” have benefitted from this collaborative model of intervention.
- Sto-Rox ranks as the fourth highest taxed school district statewide for overall tax effort. It isn’t that the district is “unwilling” to tax, they are simply “unable.” Dr. Ed Maritz, Jr., Sto-Rox School Board Member is quoted, “Without sustaining the basic education formula placed into law, we will extend into tomorrow the current challenges and consequences of today’s tough economic times.”

District Snapshot: Philadelphia

□ Total Enrollment: 207,866 □ Adequacy Shortfall: \$4,910 Per Student



Philadelphia Success Stories

- Philadelphia reduced class sizes in many schools, especially for K-3 classrooms. Cindy Stone, a parent-ombudsman at Clymer Elementary School, reports that “class sizes were reduced for the kindergarten and the sixth grade. Class size is slated to be reduced for the third grade as well.”
- New technology and other resources, including books, were provided for many Philadelphia classrooms. For some schools, this meant new Smartboards and laptops. In other cases, schools were able to invest in new sets of books. In Philadelphia, new books means that students no longer have to share in class, and in some cases it allows students to take books home.
- Over the past year Philadelphia has started offering new courses. In high schools, these include new Advanced Placement (AP) classes, as well as Twilight programs that have been shown to lower drop-out rates. Khalif Dobson, a junior at West Philadelphia High School, said “Our new AP classes are the most engaging classes I have ever experienced in high school.”

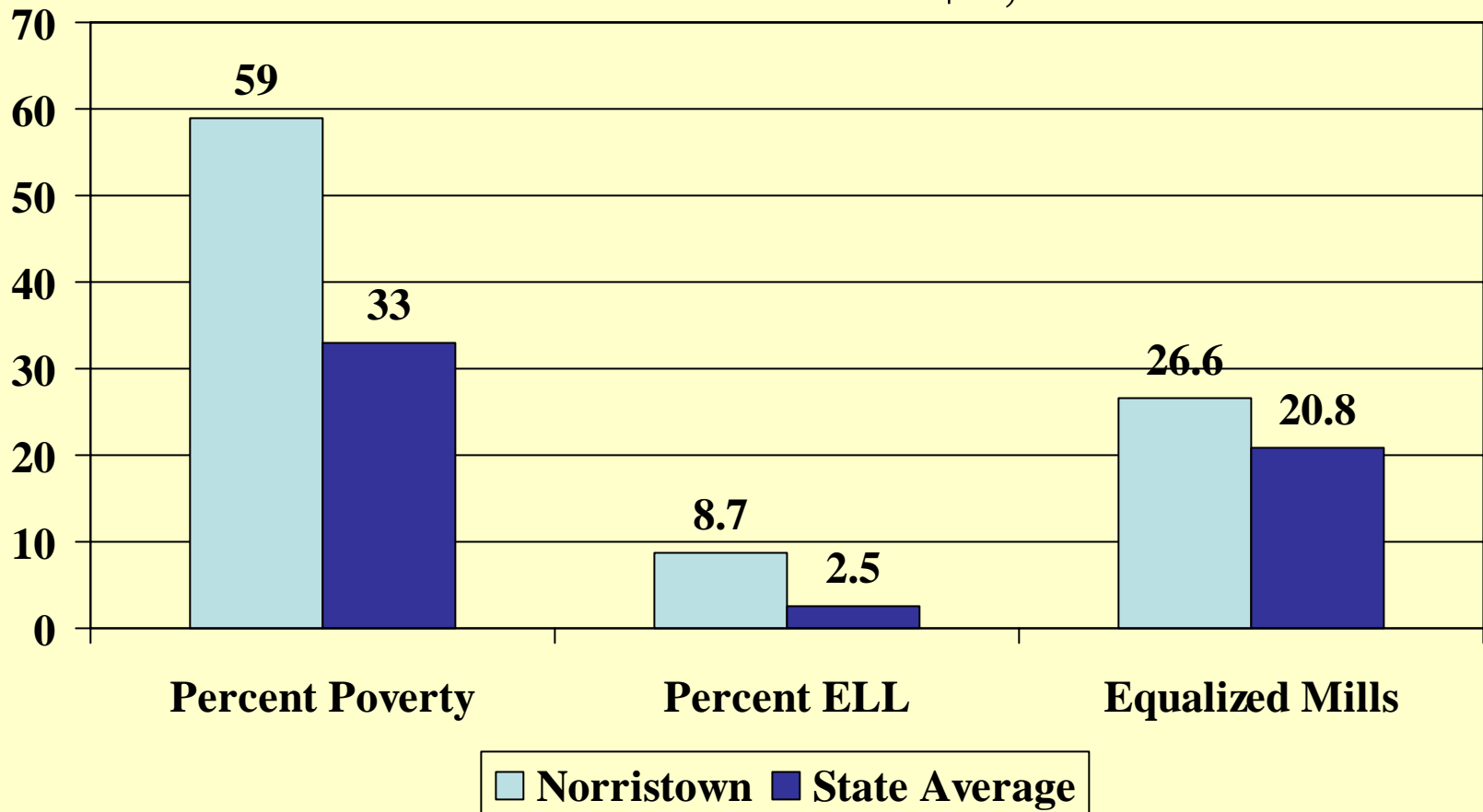
The Community Account

- New resources are only effective if we use them strategically and invest them wisely. Last year, to improve student achievement, Southeast Pennsylvania school districts invested new resources in research-proven programs and interventions. All year long other members of Philadelphia Student Union, our partners, and I have monitored program implementation and tracked the success these programs have created.
- We examined the PA-PACT plans of school districts in Southeast Pennsylvania and have gathered hundreds of testimonies from parents, students, teachers, administrators and community members. Often, we found concrete examples of Act 61 resources creating a significant improvement in school climate and student achievement. Our Community Account is a report that represents the most significant findings we have gathered over the past year. The Community Account uses the words of many different education stakeholders to demonstrate the broad and varied education improvements created by new resources combined with accountability.
- I hope our work and the Community Account demonstrate the importance of Act 61 resources. Many districts we monitored still need more improvement, but Act 61 resources, accountability, and PA-PACT have been instrumental in the progress they have achieved over the past year.

District Snapshot: Norristown

□ Total Enrollment: 7,116

□ Adequacy Shortfall:
\$3,683 Per Student



Norristown Success Stories

- Like many of the other school districts described, Norristown has experienced increasing poverty among its students, but declining property tax revenue to support our community's increasing need.
- As a school board director, I face a dual challenge: adopting the budget my students need requires tax increases that will drive out wealthier families who can afford to move. But schools suffer by keeping taxes low.
- Many Norristown students depend on athletic scholarships to support college. We need facility improvements to avoid shut downs. Still, I recognize that new state funding has accountability measures that wisely require investment of new resources to the programs that will improve academic achievement.
- We've made great progress over the past year. Norristown is very proud of our new tutoring program including a tutor designated specifically for ELL High School students, our new middle school math and reading teacher coaches, and our expanded Pre-K and Kindergarten opportunities.

Act 61: A New Community Compact

- Act 61 creates a foundation for the General Assembly, school districts, and stakeholders to collaborate for improved student achievement:
 - The General Assembly must provide a rational education finance system that is adequate, equitable, and ties funding to student needs and achievement with strong accountability.
 - School districts are accountable for using resources in ways that improve student achievement. Achievement also improves when school districts operate with transparency and welcome community input.
 - Stakeholders have opportunities to monitor spending, celebrate successes, identify problems, and make recommendations for improvement/modification.
 - Predictability is key: A commitment to funding drives long term planning which increases efficiency and improves student achievement.

Act 61: A New Community Compact

- All Pennsylvanian's benefit when we invest resources effectively to: increase test scores, decrease dropout rates, and provide an education supported by adequate resources so all Pennsylvania students succeed.



Recap & Summary

- The whole of Act 61 funding and accountability is greater than the sum of its parts – a rational funding system that addresses root causes of student achievement with sustained accountability creates numerous opportunities to improve school and community outcomes.
- Act 61 aligns Pennsylvania more closely with neighboring states by increasing the contribution of state funding to the per pupil cost of education.
- Investing in education has social and economic benefits*: dropout rates decrease, the prison population decreases, health improves, and financial savings accrue.
- A sound system of education finance is as vital to communities as it is to students; excessive local tax burdens seriously strain school districts to remain economically viable.

* See, Pennsylvania's Best Investment: The Social and Economic Benefits of Public Education, www.elc-pa.org

In Conclusion

- Thank you for allowing us the opportunity to present our work and our findings.
- Thank you for passing Act 61 last year, for including strong accountability provisions, and for your ongoing commitment to Pennsylvania student's education by phasing in adequate resources to support it.
- We support HB 1493, which maintains the state's commitment to these issues.
- We plan to continue partnering with school districts and the General Assembly in 2009-10 and in future years.