

# Transfer of wealth: Revenue-producing counties subsidize poor school districts

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As we noted in Tuesday's main editorial, 14 counties in Pennsylvania account for much of the state's tax revenue, which is then shared, rather generously, with the remaining 53 counties.

The state's school subsidy formula illustrates how this massive transfer of wealth works.

According to Standard and Poor's SchoolMatters Web site, the Moon Area School District and the Penncrest School District in Crawford County had similar per pupil revenue in 2006 —\$11,271 and \$11,263 respectively.

Yet while Moon Area residents provided 77.18 percent of their district's revenue, Penncrest's taxpayers were only asked to fork over 38.44 percent. State revenue accounted for 56.44 percent of Penncrest's per pupil revenue, while it was only 21.67 percent of Moon Area's.

This disparity in state funding takes place across the commonwealth.

In some school districts — North Allegheny, Mount Lebanon, Quaker Valley and Upper St. Clair, to cite a few local examples —local taxpayers generate around 80 percent of per pupil revenue.

In other school districts, state and federal taxpayers can account for more than 50 percent of per pupil revenue. For instance, in three of the five school districts in Greene County, the poorest county in Pennsylvania, the state accounts for around three-fifths of their revenue, while a little more than half of the Aliquippa School District's revenue comes from the state.

The reason for this is that the state's funding formula takes into account a number of factors in determining the amount of aid a school district receives. The percentage of low-income students a district has is the top consideration — and there's nothing wrong with that.

The result, though, is that taxpayers in the more well-to-do districts in the state are double funding public education.

First, they foot most of the bill for their own school districts through local property and earned income taxes. Then, they see much of the tax dollars they send to Harrisburg — in the form of sales, motor vehicle sales, personal income, inheritance and estate and realty transfer taxes — divvied up to fund public education and other operations around the state, with very little of it returning to their home districts.

It's too bad those on the receiving end of this generosity aren't more appreciative of the sacrifices others are making to educate their children. If these freeloaders don't have the decency to say thanks, the least they could do is keep their mouths shut instead of whining when someone in Harrisburg wants more funding for mass transit or asks them to pay a pittance for state police protection.