

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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**PEN Joins with Pennsylvania Education Funds to Urge Legislature to Fully Fund Education and Pass Gov. Rendell's Budget**

*Hundreds to gather for rally and lobby legislators to support budget so that every child can receive the quality education they deserve*

**Harrisburg, PA** – Public Education Network, a leading national advocate for public school reform, will join students, parents and the leaders of Local Education Funds (LEFs) in the Good Schools Pennsylvania Stand for Children rally on the front steps of Pennsylvania State Capitol at 11 a.m. on Wednesday, April 30. The rally will be led by the Executive Director of the Mon Valley Education Consortium Linda Croushore with Wendy Puriefoy, President of the Public Education Network, and Warren Simmons, Exec. Dir. of the Annenberg Institute for School Reform, leading calls for passage of Governor Rendell's budget as it is central to ending inequities in the Pennsylvania education system. After rallying at the state capitol, the hundreds of education reform leaders, parents and students from across the state who attend the rally will carry this message to their legislators.

“The situation in Pennsylvania is dire and we are here to show that communities across Pennsylvania are calling for passage of Governor Rendell's budget so that all of Pennsylvania's children get the opportunity to receive a quality public education,” said Wendy Puriefoy, president of PEN. “I am proud to be in Harrisburg to support the Mon Valley Education Consortium and the other LEFs in Pennsylvania as they bring their message to the state capitol. Public engagement is at the heart of PEN's work in Pennsylvania and across the country and this kind of rally is wonderful evidence of the kind of impression communities with strong education-focused organizations can have on the budget and school funding process.”

The rally could not have come at a more important time. The lack of consistent education funding has left inequities in the way Pennsylvania's students are educated and the children who should be receiving a quality education cannot wait another year for real improvements to take place. The facts are alarming:

- In 2002, 49% of Pennsylvania's students failed the state standardized exam
- In January, *Education Week* ranked Pennsylvania among the four worst states when it comes to ensuring that state funds are used so that kids in poor school districts would get an equal opportunity to a quality education
- According to the U.S. Department of Education, Pennsylvania ranks 15<sup>th</sup> lowest of the 50 states in spending tax dollars for each student

“We believe that education funding equity is central to improving Pennsylvania’s education system,” said Linda Croushore, Executive Director of the Mon Valley Education Consortium. “Working with Good Schools Pennsylvania, we are here to make it clear that Pennsylvania’s local education funds, education leaders, parents and students are urging passage of Governor Rendell’s budget as a first step to reviving Pennsylvania’s schools. Without this budget, we will not be able to tackle the solutions that will increase student achievement such as ensuring quality teachers are in every classroom, expanding pre-kindergarten and kindergarten programs and developing the academically-oriented, quality, after-school programs.”

The rally coincides with a meeting Tuesday in Harrisburg of national education leaders and community advocates from across the country. Convened by the Public Education Network, the group shared strategies and concerns about the effect that state budget crises may have on major education reform efforts. Participants include LEF leadership from Alabama, New Jersey, North Carolina, Pennsylvania, Oregon and West Virginia as well as government officials and education reform leaders from across the country.

#### **About Public Education Network**

For over a decade, Public Education Network has been working to make quality education a reality for every child. Advocating for and actively working toward public school reform at the national level, PEN also supports a network of 80 local education funds (LEFs) that work on the ground with communities across the country to improve the quality of public schools district by district. Through its LEFs, PEN serves nearly 11 million students in 31 states and the District of Columbia. Operating with the belief that greater public responsibility leads to greater reform, PEN is unique in that it focuses on engaging every member of the community to advance public school reform.

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