



Senate of Pennsylvania

Senator Anthony H. Williams

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DATE: May 31, 2011
TO: All Senators
FROM: Senator Anthony H. Williams
SUBJECT: Co-sponsorship of Legislation: **Parent Trigger**

In the near future, I will be introducing legislation to address persistently failing schools in our Commonwealth. This legislation would empower parents with the ability to compel a habitually underperforming school to reform. If 51% of parents or guardians of school students sign a petition requesting reform, the school would be required to institute one of four approved intervention models: (1) school closure; (2) restart model; (3) transformational model; or (4) turnaround model.

According to the school closure model, the students may be enrolled in another school within the district, a school in another school district, a charter school, a cyber charter school, or a private school that accepts tuition from the school district, where the students have achieved higher academic performance.

The restart model allows the school district to convert the failing school into a charter school following a rigorous review process. Subsequently, the school district must enroll any former student who wishes to attend the converted school.

The transformational model would mandate that the school district replace the school principal and implement specified strategies to ensure student achievement growth and teacher effectiveness. These strategies include, but are not limited to, the use of transparent and equitable evaluation systems for the purpose of assessing teachers and principals, comprehensive instructional reform strategies, increasing learning time and creating community-oriented schools, and providing operational flexibility and sustained support. In addition, this model allows the school district to reward school leaders, teachers and staff members who have increased student achievement and graduation rates.

Finally, the turnaround model is similar to the transformational model in that it provides for replacing the principal and providing sufficient operational flexibility to implement a fully comprehensive approach in order to substantially improve student achievement and graduation rates. Moreover, the school district must use locally adopted competencies to measure the effectiveness of staff who can work within the turnaround environment to meet the needs of the students by both screening and rehiring no more than 50% of the existing staff and selecting new staff. This model would also require school districts to provide incentives to recruit and retain skilled staff, provide professional development, and adopt a new governance structure within the turnaround school.

Several other state legislatures, including those of Maine, Ohio and Illinois, are presently considering whether to introduce similar education reform legislation. If you wish to co-sponsor this legislation, please contact Shannon A. Sargent, Esq., at 787-5970 or email ssargent@pasenate.com.