



## ***CORRY AREA SCHOOL DISTRICT***

**CENTRAL ADMINISTRATION**

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I am William A. Nichols, Superintendent of the Corry Area School District. I am pleased to provide our district's information for your review as we see the importance of a fair and equitable funding formula as vital to our school district and all school districts in Pennsylvania. I am currently in my 44<sup>th</sup> year in public education and my 40<sup>th</sup> year as an administrator. During my time with Corry, I have watched significant changes which have led to my strong commitment to fair and equitable funding for the financial and educational future of all districts.

Corry Area School District is located in three counties (Crawford, Erie, Warren) in northwest Pennsylvania, with the center of the district being 35 miles southeast of the City of Erie, PA. Our district has approximately 225 square miles with 2,150 students and approximately 15,000 residents. During the past 30 years, the Corry School District has been impacted by the departure of local industry and a significant growth in low income families and students.

Our district's demographics and high tax rate make growth difficult for our communities but the Corry School District and its communities are working to stabilize our area.

Special Education	23%
Economically Disadvantaged	60%
Median Income	\$18,589
Census Poor	2,465
Transient Population	400 in/out per year

There are 17 districts in our Intermediate Unit (Northwest Tri-County IU5) and our district is 14 of 17 for lowest income in northwest Pennsylvania. Additionally, during the past 20 years we have had the highest per capita tax for 18 of those years.

Below, I am listing a few things which seriously concern our district in the next few years and which will make a significant difference in our educational and financial status.

The Corry Area School District is a low income school district with a high number of special education students and high property taxes. We offer excellent programs and inservice trainings to meet the needs of our students and community. During the past few years we have been able to maintain and increase student programs, while at the same time maintaining and even slightly reducing property taxes and maintaining steady improvement in test scores. Our district provides such services as a before and after school latch-key program for PreK to 5<sup>th</sup> grade students which includes educational programs. In addition, despite the lack of state funding and a very high property tax, we have maintained strong educational programs, including a comprehensive

middle high school with ten (10) vocational programs that are clearly at risk without funding and unfunded mandate changes such as charter schools.

To sustain and grow programs we implemented several cost cutting measures such as reducing the number of principals, reducing the number of teachers (through attrition) and reducing the purchase of supplies and equipment. We also closed two of our older elementary buildings with all students now filling open seats at our two new elementary buildings. Again, these efforts enabled us to maintain and even increase programs for our students.

All of this leads to our potential financial crisis, including a reduction of many programs. As a district, we now face a charter school request which, if approved in Harrisburg, will cost our district a new expenditure of \$1.3 to \$2 million if the charter enrolls 100 students from our district, which the charter application projects. As you know, 100 of 2,150 students will not bring a reduction of \$1.5 million in our costs (if any reduction) and Act I will not allow a 19.2% increase to our budget. I hate to even mention the risk our entire educational program faces with the potential charter school, as well as the impact of the list of items provided below which clearly shows us at a financial cliff. These, of course, will seriously impact the education of our students:

- PSERS / Retirement
- Increase in mandates
  - Cyber charter (2015-16 projection)
  - Brick and mortar charter (\$1.2 million if approved in Harrisburg)
  - Special Education requirements
  - Even PIMS increases personnel expenses

Equitable and consistent fair funding has been on the table for much of my 44-year career in education and it needs to be resolved. The mandates, especially with cyber charters and brick and mortar charters, have had a serious financial and educational impact on most districts in Pennsylvania. If you're a longtime school board member, superintendent, or elected official, you know it's been a very difficult financial process with flat funding, reduced funding, Act 1, increased mandates, and cyber and brick and mortar charters, which are unfunded mandates, and many more funding issues which have stressed many districts to the financial ledge.

In closing, I want to thank everyone involved with reviewing and making recommendations for school funding in Pennsylvania.

Sincerely,



William A. Nichols  
Superintendent