

This week, I am reprinting an editorial written by Mitch Yanyanin, president of the New Brighton Area School Board, and John Ludwig who is vice president. Their letter succinctly spells out the significant issues about cyber school funding and performance that are being ignored by the state lawmakers. The letter appeared in the Beaver County Times Online.

At General McLane, in 2013-2014, we averaged 20 students at the PA Cyber school referenced here at a total cost of \$190,789.26 as of the end of May. You the taxpayers pay \$8,414.49 per regular education student at that school and \$16,258.25 for special needs students. The school's founder and sister are currently under Federal investigation for questionable financial practices.

We are writing in response to the article regarding PA Cyber building a brick-and-mortar facility in the tune of \$5.7 million to house instructors. While this building may be important to PA Cyber, it exemplifies the travesty that is occurring in public education. PA Cyber boasts a fund balance of \$40.7 million, far in excess of the 8 percent recommended by the commonwealth, which would be approximately \$9.6 million for the business. This fund balance, created over 14 years, shows that there is far more revenue collected than is necessary for a cyber education. Additionally, the fund balance was grown while, according to Times articles, questionable business practices were occurring. This excessive fund balance was grown at the expense of local school districts.

Please take into account the following:

1. Cyber school's calculations are based on local school district's cost per pupil, so even those items that they do not provide — because they are a cyber school and not a brick-and-mortar school — are paid to them.
2. Charter schools receive a pension reimbursement in the per-pupil allocation and also as a reimbursement from the state. It is a double dip for pension reimbursement.
3. The state eliminated the charter school reimbursement approximately two years ago so districts cover 100 percent of the cost.
4. Local school districts are responsible for truancy filings. Charter schools report truancy to the local school district, so although the student is enrolled at the charter school, it remains the responsibility of the local district to ensure they are attending.
5. A student enrolled in a cyber/charter school that is enrolled as a special-education student costs approximately 50 percent more to the local district. If the charter school enrolls a student into special education, but the student was previously enrolled as regular education when they left a specific district, the contributing district is not invited to attend the IEP meetings, or have a voice in the analysis of the data.
6. The state Department of Education data show that most cyber/charter schools have never made Adequate Yearly Progress and have the lowest School Performance Profile scores in the

The above are only a handful of injustices facing our local taxpayers. While there are worthy charter schools, examples such as PA Cyber magnify what is wrong with the system. Their excess is sickening when we consider that our administration has been forced to produce a budget that requires them to cut staff and programs. The above arguments are stated without specific numbers, but those exist in every surrounding community.

The average attendance at PA Cyber by New Brighton students is 23 individuals. The total payment by New Brighton for 2013-14 school year was \$223,716.

The cost per pupil for regular education is \$9,561.55, and the cost per pupil for special education is \$17,567.47. This is a huge financial burden to a distressed local tax base.

Our administration and board of directors have to make serious decisions regarding staff and programs to meet a balanced budget, a budget that is being distressed by the financial burden placed on us by cyber schools that have a \$40 million surplus.