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# Comparative Analysis of Privilege in Relation to the School District of Philadelphia and the Tredyffrin-Easttown School District

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Comparative Analysis of Privilege in Relation to  
the School District of Philadelphia and the Tredyffrin-Easttown School District

A Thesis

Presented to the Department of Political Science

College of Liberal Arts and Sciences

at

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of the Requirements for High Honors in Political Science

Kathryn Marie Battafarano

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## Abstract

Although public education is an option for all local residents, the variation in American public education is littered with inequalities. In particular, the School District of Philadelphia and the Tredyffrin-Easttown School District are representative of this variation. The School District of Philadelphia is located within the biggest Pennsylvanian city. The Tredyffrin-Easttown School

District is a smaller school district operating in a suburban area in close proximity to Philadelphia. There are three focus areas, socio-economic levels, geographic region, and funding, which specifically constitute the differences in these school districts. The differences show how privileged educational circumstances arise. This analysis suggests that the School District of Philadelphia should decrease in size, local relationships for public education should be supported, and conventional public schools should be improved rather than charter schools.

## Comparative Analysis of Privilege in Relation to the School District of Philadelphia and the Tredyffrin-Easttown School District

Public education in America is thought to be an important, mandatory requirement in the development of the youngest generations of Americans. While most people are in unison about the need to obtain an education, there is a divisive conflict between dreamy ideas about public education in America and its real characteristics. Education can correlate with privilege and the results are inequalities in public education. Some school districts and students flourish and others have to deal with systemic hurdles to a good education. The urban public schools in Philadelphia and the suburban public schools of the Philadelphia area, specifically the Tredyffrin-Easttown School District, will serve as a case study. Socio-economic levels, geographic region, and funding will be explained in order to understand the array of privilege. The difference is complicated due to demographics, size of populations being served, and access to resources. This perpetuates a system of privilege that benefits the suburban schools to the detriment of urban schools. Decreasing the size of the School District of Philadelphia, perpetuating local relationships to rally for public education, and working on public schools instead of charter schools are recommendations to diminish privilege so that all obtain a proper education.

### **Personal Anecdote**

This study matters to me because I grew up in Chester County and am tied to a legacy of Philadelphia area roots from my parents and grandparents. I graduated from Conestoga High School in the Tredyffrin-Easttown School District in 2013. It was during my time at Conestoga High School that I realized my passion for education. I had impactful teachers and accessible educational resources. I was challenged greatly to always do and learn more than I thought possible. While growing up and during high school, I began to understand that there was no

universality to the quality of my public education. I was exposed from time to time to news stations and *The Philadelphia Inquirer* articles expressing headlines about the substandard educational facilities and funding in some School District of Philadelphia public schools. My parents were in a privileged position to locate my family in the Tredyffrin-Easttown School District purposely for its educational rankings rather than in the city of Philadelphia. It had some measure of diversity in the school district though distinguished by its wealth capacity. I have grown to understand more about the systemic developments that made my education contrast in multiple ways to public education in Philadelphia. This study has helped me to understand the situational nature of privilege.

### **Privilege**

Public education and privilege relate to one another in a myriad of ways. Privilege is loaded with a multitude of associations and connotations. The Merriam-Webster Dictionary defines privilege as “a right or immunity granted as a peculiar benefit, advantage, or favor” (“Definition of Privilege”). There are certain privileges that some young, American students have that directly influence the access and quality of their public education. The privileges can be consciously understood or the students can be unconscious of their inherent privileges. Disparities in educational access and opportunity will be scrutinized and studied in the following areas: socio-economic levels, geographic region, and funding. Decisions made about who benefits and suffers are often intentional and detrimental to those who are powerless to fight against those decisions; these are largely due to socio-economic conditions.

## Understanding Public Education in the United States

Education in the United States became more of a heightened issue in the late twentieth century as the United States became more of a competitive state of talented, educated individuals. Also, a challenge began for groups of certain races, genders, and income levels that did not have just access or quality to education. These issues were not new, but momentum grew to try to correct inequalities during this time. The United States' Department of Education has a variety of aims. Some of them are providing equal education for students and helping local education agencies and states. The Department of Education gathers information on schools in order to better education and work on education programs ("Overview"). The Department of Education has a spending cap of around sixty-eight billion dollars ("About ED").

The United States' Department of Education has multiple parts and offices in order to make progress. The office most related to the younger, American students is the Office of Elementary and Secondary Education. The priorities of the Office of Elementary and Secondary Education are similar to the Department's far-reaching aims. The Office of Elementary and Secondary Education serves as the primary branch between local education agencies, private actors, and the federal government for developing education early in a students' life. It can help those local education agencies financially depending on what the federal government prioritizes. It notes that there are hurdles and discrepancies for education for certain groups and wants to decrease that gap ("Office of Elementary").

There is important historical and recent legislation that is especially relatable to younger, American students. The Elementary and Secondary Education Act passed as legislation by Congress in 1965 ("Every Student Succeeds Act of 2015"). It did not just help give grants to elementary and secondary education, but it stuck out as an attempt to make opportunities for

overlooked groups that had difficulty assessing a solid education. The act created financial help to school districts. Examples include scholarships and school books (“Every Student Succeeds Act”). The No Child Left Behind Act was made in 2002 by President George W. Bush (“No Child Left Behind”). However, there have been more recent developments in legislation. The Elementary and Secondary Education Act and No Child Left Behind Act became an updated combination in the Every Student Succeeds Act (“Every Student Succeeds Act”). President Barack Obama took into account these past acts and made the Every Student Succeeds Act at the end of 2015 (“Every Student Succeeds Act of 2015”). One of the primary priorities is that the United States is thoughtful of not overstepping the authority of local education agencies (“Every Student Succeeds Act”). It cites the Tenth Amendment as the reasoning for this (“Laws & Guidance”). This background makes for a proper transition into policy for Pennsylvania, which is a primary actor in reiterating and applying United States Department of Education’s tenets to how Pennsylvania school districts function.

### **Pennsylvania’s Role in Public Education**

Education is organized, contested, and evaluated by Pennsylvania’s Department of Education and the State Board of Education. A subset of the State Board of Education is the Council of Basic Education. It utilizes precedents and standards from the federal government. The Council of Basic Education specifically comes up with ways to develop education that impacts Kindergarteners through twelfth graders; it must be approved by the other education powers in the state. Besides Pennsylvania’s Department of Education, there is authority in the hands of the school districts as well (“Pennsylvania State Board of Education”). There are over one million seven hundred sixty thousand public schoolers in pre-Kindergarten through twelfth grades. These statistics include a small percentage of charter school students in Pennsylvania



(“Public Education in Pennsylvania”). Pennsylvania absolutely has pressure to satisfy all of its constituents’ educational needs, especially with so many school districts throughout its borders. It is important that Pennsylvania and its many districts follow federal guidelines to limit discriminatory and unfair tactics within schools. Supreme Court cases like *Brown v. Board of Education* were necessary to show that discriminatory practices were being implemented regardless of what schools were formally stating or attempting to cover up. The Office of Civil Rights is the main place for federal oversight of civil rights that the states, in this case Pennsylvania, then have to follow (“About OCR”).

### **How Pennsylvania Assesses Schools and Achievement Standards**

Pennsylvania has a number of ways to assess and evaluate how well public schools and students do in academics. Pennsylvania looks collectively at a number of factors. There are a few state-wide tests. The Pennsylvania System of School Assessment is given in elementary and middle school during select grades. The test subjects are English, Mathematics, and Science. They are created based on the requirements for those subjects that Pennsylvania comes up with. The Keystone Exams are another state standardized test. The Keystone Exams are geared toward high schoolers. They are used to see how high schools do in terms of the United States and Pennsylvanians as a whole. There are certain levels that high school students will have to be up to par with or else they cannot graduate; this will start with the graduates in 2017. There is slightly altered testing for students who are learning English as a second language. The Pennsylvania Alternate System of Assessment is a different test for students who cannot sufficiently do well on the Pennsylvania System of School Assessment as well (“Assessment and Accountability”). Pennsylvania is, of course, dependent on standardized testing results. The

standardized testing factors into the standards and sufficiency of the individual school districts of the Philadelphia area.

### **Understanding Philadelphia and its Geographic Area**

It is important to know about Philadelphia and exactly where it is before assessing its public education. The Philadelphia metropolitan area consists of Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, Camden, New Jersey, and Wilmington, Delaware. It is the seventh biggest metropolitan area in the United States and home for about six million residents (“Philadelphia, Camden, Wilmington”). According to the most recent Census data, the population of Philadelphia was listed as over one million five hundred and sixty thousand people. Philadelphia uniquely is situated within Philadelphia County (“Philadelphia City”). Philadelphia is the biggest city in Pennsylvania. It is the fifth biggest city based on the total number of people that live there in the United States. It is rooted in the historical formation of the United States and used to be the capital of the United States. It has a strong culture due to its American history and position in the Mid-Atlantic region (“Capital”). Its culture is built on an immigrant foundation, which factors into its diversity and increasing rights over time for its African American community (Klaczynska). The closest counties in Pennsylvania to Philadelphia are Bucks, Montgomery, Delaware, and Chester Counties. The surrounding counties make up the popular suburban area of Philadelphia.

Wayne Batchis’ article called “Urban Sprawl and the Constitution: Educational Inequity as an Impetus to Low Density Living” emphasizes the monetary problems and the mere fact of geography that will resonate with the following argument (Batchis). Batchis says that “Each political jurisdiction offers its own package of educational goods—making a choice of residence about so much more than the mere physical attributes of one’s land and home” (Batchis 97).

Batchis argues that public education is something that one can buy. The wealthier people do not attend public schools if they can make ends meet for other institutions or can go elsewhere to attain an education (97). Urban schools usually have antiquated buildings, more students, and not as much technology than found within suburban schools (97). Batchis references specifically geography and understands how closely tied it is to educational outcomes. These are foreboding references for the School District of Philadelphia and the Tredyffrin-Easttown School District. The following discussion about Tredyffrin-Easttown School District's suburban, wealthy position and the School District of Philadelphia's lack of resources and range of socio-economic classes seem to agree with Batchis' claims.

### **The School District of Philadelphia**

Based on the total number of students registered for its schools, the School District of Philadelphia is the eighth biggest school district in the United States ("About Us- The School District of Philadelphia"). Therefore, the School District of Philadelphia expands over a large area and is the biggest in the state of Pennsylvania ("2017 Largest School Districts"). The school district has one hundred and fifty elementary schools, fifteen middle schools, and fifty-five high schools. The total number of students within the school district is shy of one hundred and thirty-five thousand students ("District Schools"). The School District of Philadelphia used to have a School Board. However, the School Reform Commission was established in 2001. The School Reform Commission and the adaptation to it will be discussed in more detail later on (Travers).

Niche is a website that keeps track of statistics that assess educational quality. It has information on colleges, individual schools, and school districts ("Niche"). The School District of Philadelphia has a composite ranking of a "C+." Niche has a whole list of rankings for each school district. For example, it got a "C-" for academics, "B" for college preparedness, and "B-"

for resources and facilities. Only thirty-four percent of reading scores met Pennsylvania requirements. Nineteen percent of math scores met minimum requirements. The graduation rate was under seventy percent. The latest analysis of the district shows that it spent over twenty-five thousand two hundred dollars for each person going to public schools in Philadelphia (“Philadelphia City School District”). The School District of Philadelphia does not rank within the top school districts in the state (“2017 Best School Districts”). Its overall ranking on Niche and the subpar or satisfactory rankings of the district allow for many follow up questions about why this occurs in the School District of Philadelphia.

### **Tredyffrin-Easttown School District in Suburban Philadelphia**

The case study’s suburban school district is set within the Main Line, a historical community within Pennsylvania. The prosperity and the socialization of the Main Line factors into the aspects of socio-economic class and obviously geographic region of the school district (“About the Philadelphia Main Line”). The school district is called Tredyffrin-Easttown. It is within the east of Chester County in the suburbs; it is close by to Philadelphia County. It has five elementary schools. It has two middle schools, which is for fifth through eighth graders. It has one high school called Conestoga High School. There are over six thousand students that attend schools in this district (“About TESD”).

The Niche composite ranking for the Tredyffrin-Easttown School District is “A+.” The academics, college preparedness, and resources and facilities for the school district all received an “A+.” Eighty-eight percent of students met minimum requirements for reading in Pennsylvania. Seventy-two percent of students met minimum requirements for math. Almost one hundred percent of Tredyffrin-Easttown students graduate from Conestoga High School. The amount for each public schooler in the school district is over sixteen thousand eight hundred

dollars (“Tredyffrin-Easttown School District”). The Tredyffrin-Easttown School District is ranked the best out of every other one in Pennsylvania (“2017 Best School Districts”). The Tredyffrin-Easttown School District is close to Philadelphia yet its Niche rankings contrast starkly to the School District of Philadelphia’s rankings. The geography, socio-economic classes, and funding in each school district in the study are major determinants of why these rankings stand out. On the surface level, the difference in each school district’s rankings attest to the unjust circumstances to come.

### **The Geographic Area of the Main Line**

The explanation of the Main Line is a distinguishing detail in the conversation of privilege. The Main Line is a designation for the suburbs Northwest of Philadelphia. The Main Line has its own culture and is stereotypically wealthy. The title is drawn from its nascent around the Main Line of the Pennsylvania Railroad. The stops went from Philadelphia to a town called Paoli. There is a current train line called the Paoli/Thorndale Line that completes a similar route to the original train’s line. Society bubbled up around the construction of the railroad. Rich Philadelphians had large houses in the area. The names for the railroad stations became the town names. The Main Line was also built along U.S. Route 30 and is a large entry way into other areas. During the late 1800s, there were efforts by Pennsylvania to restrict what could be unsightly or noisy construction. For example, factories and taverns were restricted (“History of the Main Line”). Electricity, homes, libraries, and other places needed for a thriving community emerged. Some of the train stops and towns are Berwyn, Devon, Haverford, and Wynnewood. The Main Line has other high-ranking public high schools. It has a multitude of prestigious, private schools. It also has a generous amount of Catholic schools (“About the Philadelphia Main Line”).

The Main Line extends into parts of Chester, Montgomery, and Delaware Counties. The Main Line has a variety of alluring reasons to live there. The Main Line has its own culture that is unique and different than the city scene. The Main Line has its own magazine. According to their website, “*Main Line Today* devotes itself to the communities, traditions, culture and more” (Main Line Today). It has articles about a variety of subjects such as shopping, entertainment, and dining. The “Best of the Main Line” are designations for good businesses in the area. There are yearly awards that stick out to locals as trusted places to go. There are renowned health centers and importantly they are nearby to neighborhoods. Main Line Health has a number of locations for Main Line towns. There are nearby YMCA branches. As previously stated, the area has an extensive train system running through it which allows for easy, cheap transportation to outside of local towns. The King of Prussia Mall is located near the Main Line. It is one of the biggest malls in the United States (Main Line Today).

The background on the Main Line surely is evidence of a comfortable area in which to have a school district. The history of the area underlies the wealth in the area. The fact that there are numerous private and Catholic schools highlights that residents do have the means to send their children to those institutions instead of public schools if they want to do so. Many necessities for healthy living seem to be situated directly around the Tredyffrin-Easttown School District.

### **Philadelphia Socio-economic Levels**

The expanse of Philadelphia makes for complicated socio-economic levels. Employment in 2016 reflected high numbers of workers in transportation and utilities, health, education, and government positions (“Fast Facts”). The average salary for a family unit measured according to 2014 is over thirty-nine thousand dollars. Outside of Philadelphia, families typically make over

sixty-two thousand which is quite a difference. About twenty-five percent of Philadelphians are impoverished. Thirty-seven percent of those in poverty are kids. Philadelphia has seven percent unemployment. The unemployment rate around the United States is about five percent (“Philadelphia: The State of the City”). The Urban Institute studied Philadelphia and its surrounding areas’ differing economic situations. According to 2010, the lowest ten percent of Philadelphians were in the Northern part and some of the Western parts of the city (Otterbein). The highest ten percent were located in the center and moving east of the city. This shows that the people in the immediate area of Philadelphia have very different standards of living although they are in close proximity with one another. This information mimics some insights from Wayne Batchis’ “Urban Sprawl and the Constitution: Educational Inequity as an Impetus to Low Density Living.” The wealthier people of Philadelphia may be able to pick other schools than public education. However, this is absolutely not an option for the high percentage of others identified as poor. They have no choice except to enter the nearby public schools where they are likely to receive an education inferior to the schools in the suburbs.

The discussion about Philadelphia’s socio-economic classes must include acknowledging the city’s racial background. The population of Philadelphia consists of over one-million five hundred people. Whites are about thirty-five percent. Latinos are about fourteen percent of the total residents. Seven percent of Philadelphians are Asian. African Americans are forty-four percent of the people (“Philadelphia City, Pennsylvania”). According to the School District of Philadelphia’s website, over one hundred thirty-four thousand students go to their public schools. The racial background of public schoolers are also visible on the school district’s website. About eight percent are Asian. Fifty-percent of public education enrollment is of African American children. Twenty percent are Latinos. Caucasian students represent around fourteen percent

(“District Schools”). It is clear from this information that Philadelphia has a representation of minorities and they definitely attend the public schools.

The article entitled “Mapping Educational Inequality: Concentrations of Poverty among Poor and Minority Students in Public Schools” adds to the discussion of socio-economic class and the important layer of race. Salvatore Saporito and Deenesh Sohoni assess poverty in public schools and racial makeup (1227). They cite prior assessments on this topic before delving into their own inquiries. They note from previous assessments that the socio-economic levels of students at a school are the number one influence of how well students do in that school (Saporito and Sohoni 1229-1230). They also cite that students regardless of socio-economic levels who go to schools with less overall poverty succeed more so compared to going to schools with drastic poverty (1230). Sohoni and Saporito focused on elementary students who go to school in some of the most populous districts in America (1231). They measured the impoverished as students who receive free or reduced lunch.

Forty percent of school-aged kids were from families at or below the poverty level who lived in the School District of Philadelphia in 2000. At the time, about twenty-seven percent were whites, fifty-five percent were African-American, and thirteen percent were Latino. There was an increased percentage of impoverished who went directly to the public schools in Philadelphia; it was seventy percent. Interestingly, the white percentage of kids who go to Philadelphia public schools, fourteen percent, went down compared to the whole racial percent who live there (1231-1232). Although this article is dependent on earlier Census data, they say “in districts such as Chicago and Philadelphia, more than half of all white students attend private schools” (Saporito and Sohoni 1231). The low, fourteen percent of white students in Philadelphia public schools verifies Saporito and Sohoni’s statement. The percent of Latinos that went to



Philadelphia public schools and total that live there was about the same. The African Americans made up a higher percentage of public school attendees at nearly sixty-seven percent. The total percentage of kids who live there, but go to private schools is twenty-five percent. They found that poor population was not very different in schools and district lines if both had similar socioeconomic classes (1236). Saporito and Sohoni posit that the high representation of minority students correlate with impoverished representation in education and living areas (1240).

Although not a resident of Philadelphia, Amanda Godley penned an influential article that is relatable and substantial when considering Philadelphia's School District. Amanda Godley firstly identifies some personal characteristics. She is a mother of two children, white, self-proclaimed as middle class, and studies literacy (Godley 250). She has her kids go to public schools in the city of Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, on the opposite side of the state compared to Philadelphia. She reveals her passion for educational equity and the problems that can arise for this objective (250). For example, she disagrees with gifted education in schools (250). One of the reasons she is against it is because it points out different treatment. She says that not every kid is getting substantial English courses like those without the special programs (250-251). It is probably the most significant point that she acknowledges her varied privileges compared to others living her school district (251). She has a personal dilemma because she wants to staunchly separate her children from the gifted classes. She will not let her daughter join it, but is worn by her daughter's unhappiness at social separation from her friends (254-255). The kids in this program get to go to a particular center once a week (255). She also pointed out how many students in this program were middle class, white, and Asian (255). She ended up putting her daughter and eventually her son in the gifted program (256). She also makes a relevant position when she says how other families in similar situations put their kids in private or university lab

institutions. She says that she is capable of these alternate educational opportunities, but wants her kids to go to the public schools instead (252). Godley's story represents her choice to keep her kids in public schools, but she still chooses to have her kids enter a program that is not open to all students, especially those who differ from her background.

The Pew Charitable Trusts have gathered information on the middle class in Philadelphia. The Pew Charitable Trusts state how Philadelphia's middle class has been about the same percentage for many years now. In 2000, it was forty-three percent and in 2010 it was forty-two percent. It looks into past data when the middle class was nearly sixty-percent in 1970. It also says that Philadelphia's population went down by four hundred thousand people since 1970. Importantly, the Pew Charitable Trusts is formulating middle class due to an average percent of household salaries for Philadelphia and its suburbs. The whole Philadelphia area has an average salary of about sixty-one thousand and five hundred dollars. It pins the middle class between forty-one thousand and one hundred twenty three dollars. This takes into account a larger area than the immediate city so the totality of the middle class in Philadelphia is still slightly different than this assessment, but these give general statistical representation of who is truly middle class ("Philadelphia's Changing Middle Class").

The Pew Charitable Trusts also asked people to self-identify as being in a socio-economic class. The upper-class was found to be twelve percent of Philadelphians. The middle class thought that they were forty percent. And the lower class was forty-five percent. The Pew Charitable Trusts surveyed middle class city dwellers on some of their opinions about the city. Two important developments are recorded. Middle class Philadelphians did not influence government much and did not think they were a priority. In a similar way to Godley and other parents' concerns about Pittsburgh Public Schools, the Philadelphia middle class thought

extremely negatively of the school district of Philadelphia. They also rallied behind charter schools. The percentage of white middle class Philadelphians decreased from 1970's level of seventy-four percent to 2010's level of fifty percent. The African American middle class increased from twenty-six percent in 1970 to 2010's forty-two percent. The Latino middle class are included in the white and black categories. The report goes into jobs of the Philadelphia middle class. A critical point that they make is that jobs have gone up in suburban Philadelphia. It particularly mentions Bucks, Montgomery, Chester, and Delaware Counties. Chester County is the notable one since it is the location of the Tredyffrin-Easttown School District. There were seven hundred seventy-eight thousand people working in the suburbs in 1970. In 2011, there were over one and a half million employed there ("Philadelphia's Changing Middle Class"). The increase in middle class job seekers in the Philadelphia suburbs relates back to the livability of the Main Line. The decreases magnify the extremes of socio-economic class within the city; therefore, within Philadelphia public schools as well.

### **The Main Line and Socio-economic Levels**

The Main Line has several school districts, including, of course, the Tredyffrin-Easttown School District. The Tredyffrin-Easttown School District is located in Chester County. The Census Bureau has statistics on the general nature of the county's economic climate and population identification. The average salary for a family unit in 2015 dollars in Chester County is nearly eighty-six thousand dollars ("Chester County"). Apparently, Chester County is the county in Pennsylvania with the most wealth and greatly stands out compared to that of the state as a whole (Sauter, Stebbins, and Frolich). Chester County only has six percent poverty. Eighty percent of people living in Chester County are Caucasian. Six percent of the total population are represented by African Americans. Five percent of the people are of Asian descent. Latinos make

up seven percent of those living in the county (“Chester County”). The Main Line is one of the richest areas in the entire United States. The Philadelphia Business Journal has even explained how some of its suburbs are the wealthiest in the nation. For example, the towns of Villanova and Berwyn stand out in particular (Hilario). The Main Line contrasts to the socio-economic levels of Philadelphia because of its overwhelming affluence. That is not to say that the Main Line does not have poverty, but the six percent of poverty in Chester County is not in the same strata of Philadelphia’s poverty (“Chester County”).

The Tredyffrin-Easttown School District includes two townships in which its name is derived: Tredyffrin Township and Easttown Township. The most recent numbers of who attends the Tredyffrin-Easttown School District are reflected in a study from October 2016. Sundance Associates conducted a study to identify characteristics of the townships and make predictions for the future of the Tredyffrin-Easttown School District. There are about forty thousand people who live within the Tredyffrin-Easttown School District’s borders. The Tredyffrin-Easttown School District has over six thousand seven hundred students. The study separates a portion of their information about each township. Tredyffrin Township has some racial diversity. Its latest statistics show that it is eighty-three percent white, three percent African-American, ten percent Asian, and two percent Hispanic. Its Caucasian percentage has dropped about eight percent compared to 2000. About thirty percent of Tredyffrin Townships’ households have school-aged children. The average salary in Tredyffrin Township is around ninety-five thousand dollars. Easttown Township has similar statistics on race. Easttown Township is about ninety percent Caucasian, two percent African American, five percent Asian, and two percent Hispanic. About thirty-four percent of Easttown Township’s households have school-aged children. Easttown Townships’ average salary is about eighty-two thousand dollars. The combination of each

townships' races and salaries represent the totality of the Tredyffrin-Easttown School District. The Tredyffrin-Easttown School District's public school enrollment is high compared to the other educational offerings still located within the confines of the school district. Public schoolers in kindergarten, elementary schools, middle schools, and the high school that are in the Tredyffrin-Easttown School District ranged from seventy-four percent to a high of eighty-eight percent of total public school enrollment in the school district. The Tredyffrin-Easttown School District certainly has high socio-economic levels within the wealthy Chester County. It is not as diverse compared to the School District of Philadelphia, but has some enrollment of racial variety which reflects diverse residents who live within Tredyffrin and Easttown Townships ("Demographic Study").

## **Funding**

The Center for Public Education provides an exceptional overview for how funding for school districts work. It explains that a small portion comes from the United States' government. The governmental dollars link back to some of the nationally supported educational plans and legislation. Pennsylvania gives a certain amount which will be discussed in more detail. The most important to this argument is obviously the school district's ways of funding. It says that school districts can work pretty much solely within themselves and others work cooperatively with some form of surrounding governmental guidance. The individualistic school district describes more of the Tredyffrin-Easttown School District's scenario. The school district example with more government involvement is comparable to Philadelphia's School District. The heavy source of money for school districts has traditionally been property taxes in the surrounding area. Foundations and organizations can give money toward school district's needs. Grants are used toward school district's incentives as well. The Center for Public Education also

notes the controversy of “equity” and “adequacy,” which are majorly relevant in the following exploration of the School District of Philadelphia and the Tredyffrin-Easttown School District. School districts should take into account that every student should get a reasonably similar sum of money. One of the overarching goals of funding is, of course, for all school districts to be able to teach the most crucial learning fundamentals (“Money Matters”).

### **Pennsylvania Education Funding**

The government of Pennsylvania is currently in the stages of making the final editions to the state budget that will run through 2017 and into 2018. The Governor of Pennsylvania, Tom Wolf, has several particular goals for bettering the state. Education is one of them and he wants to meticulously use budgeted money for education. The complete budget for Pennsylvania is supposedly thirty-two billion dollars. This total amount funds what Pennsylvania spends money on regularly. The money goes toward areas like criminal justice, health, and retirement. The budgeted money comes from personal income tax, sales tax, cigarette tax, among other tax forms. The education besides higher education is allotted for the grades below it. The Kindergarten through twelfth grades make up about thirty-seven percent of the whole budget. These are not set in stone yet, but are likely to be the amounts for the upcoming budget (“Governor’s Executive Budget-in-Brief”).

The State of Pennsylvania provides ample material about educational dollars for public access on their website. The predicted budget has a number of categories that organize the variety of educational needs. Significantly, the title of “Grants and Subsidies: Support of Public Schools” breaks down the category even more so. One of the subsets of this category is “Basic Education Funding.” It is expected to be about five billion nine hundred ninety-five million dollars. Governor Wolf has decided to raise this compared to previous years. The 2015-2016

school budget used about five billion six hundred ninety-five million dollars for “Basic Education.” As it comes to a close, there are estimates from the 2016-2017 budget which is listed as about five billion eight hundred ninety-five million dollars. This means that the upcoming budget would be approaching two percent more money for “Basic Education Funding.” Other subsets of grants and subsidies for public schools include food services, special education, transportation, and teacher training; there are additional sums of money for each of these subsets. There are twenty-two subsets that make up the “Support of Public Schools” category in total. Twelve of the subsets receive more money than the estimates of the past year’s budget. Seven subsets see no change in money for the future budget. Only three subsets will get less money compared to the former budget. The overall total for “Basic Education Funding” is set to be close to thirteen billion dollars. (“2017-2018 Governor’s Executive Budget Executive Budget”).

It is necessary to go into even more depth about how the basic education funding is created because it provides more information on monetary contributions for school districts. Pennsylvania did not have a formula that cared about the factors in the past. There was even a Basic Education Funding Commission brought together to assure a comprehensive formula. This happened extremely recently during the summer of 2016 (“Basic Education Funding Report”). There are a number of factors for the formula. Multiple poverty factors include the median of acute poverty and the amount of students who go to schools that are considered poor. Students who are in the process of learning English and how many students go to charter schools are part of the total as well. There are mathematical equations to understand large and small sizes of schools districts based on land and enrollment. Household income and personal income are also pieces of the formula (“2017-2018 Proposed Basic Education”).

The formula is trying to assure the right amount of money for every school district. Some key variations and conclusions can be made about the Basic Education Funding formula that is speculated for the upcoming fiscal year. The Basic Education Funding total for Tredyffrin-Easttown comes out to be over three and a half million dollars. The School District of Philadelphia totals over one billion dollars. The School District of Philadelphia's Basic Education Funding is so large that it overshadows every other school districts' shares; the School District of Philadelphia's Basic Education Funding is about eighteen percent of all Basic Education Funding for Pennsylvania. The sparsity/size ratio that is a component of the calculation for Basic Education Funding is dependent on the square millage, students in the school district, and students in Pennsylvania. The Tredyffrin-Easttown School District and the School District of Philadelphia both had negative sparsity/size ratios. The sparsity/size ratio for the School District of Philadelphia is almost negative twenty-five percent. Additionally, both school districts have high expenditures ("2017-2018 Proposed Basic Education").

The sparsity/size ratio might relate to revenue drawn from taxes. It seems that the Tredyffrin-Easttown School District is in a fortunate position. A local article even mentioned the Tredyffrin-Easttown School District and their relationship to the state's formula by saying, "but districts closer to the Main Line that have a higher tax capacity with both residential and commercial taxes, like...Tredyffrin-Easttown, would not receive quite as much funding through the formula" (Rodgers). The takeaways from the making of the formula seem to emphasize the former arguments of "adequacy" and "equity" from the Center for Public Education ("Money Matters"). This hopefully supports that districts with more needs can use their money wisely.



## **Earlier Problems with Funding in the School District of Philadelphia**

The School District of Philadelphia has a spotty past related to finances. Eva Travers authored an excellent recap of changes in Philadelphia's School District that allow for the understanding of its current status. She states that "the education of Philadelphia's school children during 2002-2003 are the result of a series of economic, political, and ideological decisions at the state level during the 1990s" (Travers). She mentions a reform by Superintendent David Hornbeck during that period in time. She discusses the No Child Left Behind Law that was effective nationally in 2002. The School District of Philadelphia was not on the track for the act's goals that were supposed to be acquired. She says that the formula for Pennsylvania that determined how Kindergarten through twelfth grades' money was selected was stopped in the early 1990s. The dissolution meant that the number of students that went to the schools in the city and prediction of adding to property taxes was not a factor in where Pennsylvania's education money went. The School District of Philadelphia incurred substantial financial woes because of the earlier idea to do so. As previously stated, the School District of Philadelphia has to take the Pennsylvania State Standardized Assessment. The majority of the results show Philadelphia public school students plummeted under their average score levels for their age groups around this time. Pennsylvania wanted to jump in because of the dire situation in the city (Travers).

Pennsylvania's authority over the School District of Philadelphia happened in 2001. A private entity was recruited to deal with it. The private entity was Edison Inc. and they were paid nearly three million dollars. Travers believes that there did not seem to be some transparency or influence on the idea to have Edison in charge. Edison rallied for a major private holding of faltering schools and to have a School Reform Commission in lieu of the functioning School

Board. There was a ton of backlash of Edison's implied interests and immediate power. There was dislike of how the School Reform Commission was supposed to operate. The School Reform Commission was composed of three people from the Governor and three people from the Mayor of Philadelphia. The head leader of the School Reform Commission proposed improvement of schools with entities that operate similarly to Edison and colleges. There were going to be other organizations to come in other educational aspects.

The Commission decided to close about ninety schools, excluding high schools. The Pennsylvania School Standardized Assessments from 1998-1999 did not meet the threshold for continuing to function independently. There were a total of seven entities that were put in place, including two colleges, to work with schools. There was an array of tactics depending on the school guidance entity and what they wanted to achieve. There was also a big problem with teachers going elsewhere in the district or quitting Philadelphia. A man with past experience in helping failing Chicago schools named Paul Vallas was the CEO of the School Reform Commission halfway through 2002. The CEO at the time seemed to create a wide expanse of changes (Travers). Travers' disappointment and skepticism can be felt throughout the tone of the article. Those same concerns have not gone away over the years in the School District of Philadelphia. The School Reform Commission is still intact ("Our Leadership").

### **Current School District of Philadelphia Funding**

The School Reform Commission only has five members in all that are designated by the Governor and others by the Mayor of Philadelphia. However, the School District of Philadelphia only lists four members at the moment ("School Reform Commission"). The School Reform Commission dominates as the power leader in Philadelphia. It approves of educational standards, among other things. Besides the School Reform Commission, the School District of Philadelphia

has multiple levels for their educational administration. The Superintendent, William R. Hite, Jr., has been in his place since 2012. There are four Assistant Superintendent positions. There is a Chief of Staff and a Chief of Academic Support. There are six other positions of Chief Officers related to particular topics such as Chief Operating Officer (“Our Leadership”). Significantly, it seems that the School District of Philadelphia’s educational administration is based on appointments. One of the latest changes described that Uri Monson was chosen to be Chief Financial Officer by the School District of Philadelphia (“School District Announces”). Superintendent Hite also made changes in 2015. For example, he created the Chief of Staff position in the Summer of 2015. The article describing alterations in School District of Philadelphia positions mentioned that Assistant Superintendents make around one hundred forty-five thousand dollars annually (Graham). All of these members certainly have to contribute to the process of formulating the city’s education and being mindful of the School District of Philadelphia’s yearly budgets.

The School District of Philadelphia displays an accessible guide for those affected by and who want to know more about its budgets, especially for those educators in the district (“Guide to School Budgets”). The pay for teachers and school employees is done by apportioned averages. The budgets are made by working with School Advisory Councils. The assistant superintendent for a school consents to it. There is a whole format for how much money is given due to how many students go to the school and summer education programs, among other designations. Grants are explained in detail and they are provided for schools based off of their level of needs. The School District of Philadelphia outlines how federal funding instructs what schools in the district have the authority to use Title I funds such as for those who have the highest risk of poor academic performance. Chief of Academic Supports, assistant

superintendents, and principals work together on “Schoolwide Plans” for the academics of a school. The School District of Philadelphia states that assistant superintendents and principals are the most informed about their schools and their educational demands. Their preparative plans can be edited throughout the school year if it they have to be.

The School District of Philadelphia is trying to finalize its budget for next year, which is situated in a larger outlook for the district. The local, state, and federal monetary amounts for the School District of Philadelphia are totaled at over two billion eight hundred and twenty dollars for their 2017-2018 budget. They plan to spend over one billion four hundred seventy-five thousand dollars on district schools, excluding charter schools. The larger outlook for the School District of Philadelphia is called the Five Year Plan. It began during last year’s budget of 2016. It includes budget estimates that now go up to the fiscal year 2021-2022. The estimates accompany priorities to make the School District of Philadelphia more effective. The Five-Year Plan includes aims for increasing the graduation rates, reading rates, and expertise of principals and teachers. For future fiscal years, a few of the most alarming aspects seem to be shutting down three School District of Philadelphia schools—it says it is because of falling student enrollment. It is based on that the School District of Philadelphia will get more from Pennsylvania every year. The Fiscal Year 2017 to Fiscal Year 2018 is also giving almost eighty million dollars more to district charter schools. But, in between these Fiscal Years, money towards district workers’ benefits and salaries are to increase by forty-three million and twenty-five million dollars, respectively (“Preliminary Five-Year Plan”).

### **Main Line Funding**

The Tredyffrin-Easttown School District has a pretty different scenario compared to the School District of Philadelphia’s funding demands. The Tredyffrin-Easttown School District is

composed of several primary leaders and certain committees. There are nine primary leadership positions. The positions are elected within regional areas of the Tredyffrin-Easttown School District. The website limited their information to their terms and involvement in school activities prior to being elected. There are several committees that work within the School Board. They meet at various times. Some committees are, for example, devoted to policy, education, and finance. School Board meetings happen every month. The website explicitly includes public commentary. The website also states its future inclusion of what the meetings tried to accomplish and other past information from the prior five years (“School Board Members”). This website has transparent information and openness to the public. The easy access to data is probably pretty relatable to the mere size of the district; since it operates with less people it can work collectively in some progressive ways to run the school district.

The Tredyffrin-Easttown School District is also working on a new budget. The budget has to be finalized in June. The meeting times for the finance committee are all listed on the school district’s website. The Tredyffrin-Easttown School District wants to bring up their property taxes. They want property taxes to go up by around three and a fourth percent. They want property taxes to go up because they do not have enough money to cover their estimated operations’ budget. The amount of money that they think they will generate is about one hundred thirty seven million nine hundred ten thousand dollars. The realistic amount of money that they believe they will use is one hundred forty one million nine hundred ten thousand dollars. They mark the additional four million under “reserve/contingency” (Gusick). They expect the money to increase every year through 2021-2022 (Gusick). Their move to increase property taxes is not a new initiative and it seems that the Tredyffrin-Easttown School District feels obligated to continue this trend of high property taxes.

## **Assessing Inequality Derived from Privilege**

The certain aspects of geographic area, socio-economic levels, and funding for the School District of Philadelphia and the Tredyffrin-Easttown School District have shown how privileges arise and become entangled in school systems. The School District of Philadelphia and the Tredyffrin-Easttown School District contrast with one another even within the same region of Southeastern Pennsylvania. The Tredyffrin-Easttown School District is more privileged compared to the School District of Philadelphia. Their educational opportunities are clearly not the same. The qualities of the focus areas resulted in either the lack of or prevalence of adequate or exemplary educational circumstances. The Main Line's development expressed this greatly. Their businesses and the construction of the railroad in what would become suburban Philadelphia was a good addition to connect to the city and had restrictions on community inconveniences ("History of the Main Line"). The act of building the railroad and its developments over time meant that only certain people could afford to live in this area; therefore, creating privileged circumstances. The people that could not afford to live in the area had to live elsewhere and conglomerations of similar or identical socio-economic levels happened. People who can afford to live in a geographic area and are content with their surrounding community are not going to decide to move elsewhere just because it is cheaper or for other motives. The way in which people live is attached to all of these focus areas. It is apparent that privileged circumstances cannot be easily deconstructed or erased. However, there must be an intentional movement to diminish inequalities. Acknowledging and ameliorating the identified forces of privilege is what school districts and states must work toward.

## **Recommendation: Separating the School District of Philadelphia into More School**

### **Districts**

The School District of Philadelphia should decrease in size by becoming smaller school districts. Firstly, Aaron Saiger's article entitled "The School District Boundary Problem" will be explained due to its exemplary nature in creating a similar structure for the School District of Philadelphia. Saiger mentions how geography, race, and socio-economic class impact school district composition and these are identified in the case of the two school districts of this study. Saiger discusses the ability to pick a school district and that the school district is required to educate locals (Saiger 499). He restates that people become secluded in a school district that majorly represents the socio-economic class that they are in (500). Saiger further clarifies his perspective on the limitations of strict borders by saying, "is a problem of unequal achievement. Because wealth and race predict achievement, and because housing is stratified by race and class, this is quite unsurprising" (Saiger 506). Saiger has a problem with these unequal circumstances because he talks about how education is influential to societal well-being (521).

Saiger proposes a way to decrease discrepancies that result in educational privileges in certain school districts and perpetuate educational success by completely changing the landscape of school districts. Saiger's idea is simply put: redistrict (532). His proposal is that districts should change their borders every ten years. He chose that time period for several reasons relating to the makeup of a school district. He does not want the boundaries to be created by the local area, but insists it would probably be the state that comes up with them (533). The school districts should have a scattering of socio-economic classes. Saiger discusses how time and preferences to associate with like-minded people lead to overall, similar school districts (500). Saiger backs up that differing characteristics like many socio-economic classes can determine

better academic achievement. He notes differing racial composition in school districts (506). Saiger also wants to make sure that locals influence the policy of school districts even though the composition and basic requirements are set about by the state (Saiger 534). Saiger's plan does not seem fool-proof, but the main premise and the factors of his redistricting solution should be applied most of all to the School District of Philadelphia. There is a constant talk in general of suffering urban school districts and successful suburban school districts. The factor that plays a role in both of those seems to go back to the size of the school district.

The School District of Philadelphia is troubled with extremely high enrollment and in an extremely large area. While high enrollment can be seen as an asset, it is a challenge for the School District of Philadelphia because it cannot sufficiently accommodate the high numbers of public schoolers. The School District of Philadelphia has to finance public schools and all the components like teachers, superintendents, textbooks, etc.—as could be determined from the information on the school district—that go into keeping it in line. The School District of Philadelphia should redistrict because of its city-wide composition of socio-economic classes. The study of the School District of Philadelphia showed that there are areas that have the highest ten percent of socio-economic classes and areas that were lowest on the scale of socio-economic classes. The School District of Philadelphia should redistrict and be deliberate of what sections of the city, for example using Census data, have what socio-economic classes. The smaller school districts could have a composition of a range of socio-economic classes.

The city of Philadelphia should have more agency in forming school districts than the state because the city knows the socio-economic environment and just the communal environment of their constituents better than the state. Of course, the state should have a part in creating the new school districts since they assess Pennsylvania school district success and fund



a percentage of each school district in the state. Saiger's suggestion that the school districts should change their borders every ten years, although with good intentions, does not seem practical (Saiger 532). Residents become used to school district boundaries and neighbors and friends end up going to the same schools. The changing of school district boundaries could make residents unhappy if they separated this communal bond and children could end up changing to different schools. If school district boundaries were changed and children had to go to a faraway school then that could wreak havoc on transportation and costs as well.

Saiger says that the diversity will defend from sorting and making a school district with identical characteristics (Saiger 538). This and the fact that good academic outcomes could result would be a sound argument to not have redistricting every ten years. People would be content with the circumstances in which they live and would not be compelled to move. Residents who currently enroll their children in charter schools and private schools could decrease. This could happen because having a good public school system is persuasive and attractive in having families enroll their kids in public school instead of the other options. There would be a portion of residents who live in a school district that go for non-public school options regardless of the academic achievement of public schools. However, the high functioning of public schools would always be a free, optional, and convincing reason to enroll their kids in public schools.

Prior to the turn of the twenty-first century, there was an attempt to change the composition of the School District of Philadelphia that firstly seems like a byproduct of Saiger's "The School District Problem." Pennsylvania Senator Vincent Fumo was aware of the horrible academic performance in the School District of Philadelphia. Senator Fumo wanted to create something that would ameliorate the distressing conditions within the public schools. Similar to the ideology of Saiger, Fumo wanted the downsize districts to be wary of geography, socio-

economic levels, race, among other factors (Baer, Ousley, and McDonald). Also, he related to Saiger's concern for local government involvement in school administration in that the tinier districts would have communication among leaders and residents. Additionally, Representative Dwight Evans tried to uniquely come up with another plan to cure problems that were similarly held by Senator Fumo. Representative Evans wanted small councils to be in charge of a number of schools. Local government leaders and educational administration in area seemed to have predominantly hopeful responses as long as it helped children. Specifically, there was talk of decentralization, which looked to be promising ("Two Plans to Divide"). Fumo stated that, "the plan could save money by reducing the size of the current bureaucracy" (Baer, Ousley, and McDonald).

However, these willful plans progressed into something different than the general, positive overview in the beginning of January 1997. The summer of 1997 was also a time in which charter school legislation was being considering in Pennsylvania government. Senator Fumo supplemented and specified his generalized original plans into additional help for forming charter schools. He planned for clusters of charter schools for early education to be put in place with leadership chosen by voters in Philadelphia. The article mentions that sixty-seven grants were formed by the Pennsylvania government to start-up charter schools. Sixteen grants were meant for Philadelphia ("Charter Plan").

Senator Fumo's first ideas seemed particularly great for disjoining the large oversight of the School District of Philadelphia. However, the development of his plan took a sad turn when it became rooted in charter school innovation in the School District of Philadelphia. Fumo's plan obviously did not pan out as the School District of Philadelphia is still a collective to this day. The support for charter schools still stands as the Five-Year Plan suggests help for Philadelphia

charter schools (“Preliminary Five-Year Plan”). In sum, a mixture of Fumo’s plan and Saiger’s suggestions on redoing school district boundaries should be promoted in Philadelphia and at the state level.

### **Recommendation: “Civic Capacity” in the School District of Philadelphia**

A significant part of a functioning, academically successful school district are the partners involved in the process. Suzanne Blanc and Elaine Simon wrote a quintessential article in which they explain “civic capacity” in the context of the city being discussed, Philadelphia (Blanc and Simon 503). Blanc and Simon provide historical background of Philadelphia even before the School Reform Commission (Blanc and Simon 504). The issues of race and lower socio-economic classes in Philadelphia neighborhoods are main themes as city leadership, nearby organizations, and other powers in the past could not make sustainable resolutions to public education (504-505). Blanc and Simon argue for “civic capacity” in Philadelphia (506). They explain this by proposing discussions and work to be done by city leadership, Philadelphians, and Philadelphia community organizations in a cooperative way (506). They want reachability to constituents. Blanc and Simon are concerned when it comes to contracts and constituents. They think that the monitoring of actions within contracts for community organizations that are not as large compared to others could decrease their positive work toward public education in Philadelphia (506). They give the example of an activist that then started working for the school district, but was told she had to stop her activism because it went against what the school district wanted (506). The complexity of how grants and how their money is dispersed has much more to do with what the School District of Philadelphia wants and even their individual schools want than discussion from the students who go to the public schools or their parents (“Guide to School Budgets”). A current example is that Philadelphians who want to

provide input at School Reform Commission meetings have to register in advance in order to be able to talk at meetings (“Meeting Schedule”).

This is different from the Tredyffrin-Easttown School District because it is smaller and the local community is more pervasive in the outcomes of its school district’s administration. The Tredyffrin-Easttown School District’s board meetings are listed online. The Diversity Committee is also an example of the community’s acknowledgement to care and cater to the concerns, needs, and conversation about its residential diversity (“Diversity Committee”). The Tredyffrin-Easttown School District offers resources for families and those who live in the school district on their website. A few examples of them are T&E Care, Chester County Council on Addictive Diseases, and Childline and Abuse Registry; these are not endorsed by the Tredyffrin-Easttown School District though (“Parents and Community Resources”). The School District of Philadelphia has structural limitations on what its immediate constituents can do to change it positively; it must work to take away or alter those structures and policies that clash with these goals.

### **Recommendation: Mutualism among Public School Districts in the Philadelphia**

#### **Metropolitan Area**

The significance of relationships expressed in Blanc and Simon’s article should be prevalent in a larger geographical, culturally-tied context. The majority of the analysis and studies on suburban and urban schools have positioned school districts in each type of area to be functioning in separate realms. This is not the case or how they should holistically be perceived. The School District of Philadelphia and Tredyffrin-Easttown School District should also keep each other’s success in mind when delving into their own needs and how well each one is doing. The Tredyffrin-Easttown School District had to work out erasing the deficit in its spending for

the next school year's budget. It looked for property tax increases and other areas to make up the money. Each school district is surely trying to allocate its money in the best ways. At the state level, Pennsylvania tried to look for similar ways in order to reach its projected state budget. As school districts create their yearly budgets, they need to more strictly contest the speculated budget for legitimate needs compared to comfortable needs. A mutual understanding, care, and reactionary response by cities and metropolitan area school districts could help to make this happen. It does not seem to be palpable in the current operations of school districts in the Philadelphia area public school districts. The Tredyffrin-Easttown School District freshman and sophomores all received a laptop this year, which they could use within Conestoga High School and outside of school ("1:1 Laptop Initiative"). There was a small fee and information about using them. The School District of Philadelphia has a less comparable technological standpoint or less easy access to resources. This is supported by the unfortunate case right now that the School District of Philadelphia only has eight librarians ("Philadelphia School District Librarians"). These examples show the variation in opportunities and resources. The school districts within a region should be aware and concerned about the educational outcomes for its neighboring school districts.

### **Recommendation: Turn Away from Charter Schools**

The public schools operating in the School District of Philadelphia and the Tredyffrin-Easttown School District should be prioritized over charter school developments. There are huge variations in how charter schools are run and their academic performance. There is no overall opinion that they are better than public schools in the context of school districts ("What is a Charter School?"). Charter schools are open to students in public school districts. They are not connected to a Pennsylvania school district though and do not abide by the requirements of a

Pennsylvania school district. Charter schools form agreements for a space to serve as a school. More charter schools were seen in regions with higher gaps among socio-economic classes and school districts that had big dropout rates (Kirst 186). Charter schools have been implemented in the Philadelphia area's history. The School District of Philadelphia has what are called Brick and Mortar Charter Schools and cyber charter schools. Their Brick and Mortar Charter Schools total nearly ninety. There are fifteen charter education options that are online ("Charter Schools"). Chester County is also has many local and cyber charter schools as well ("Listing of Charter Schools"). The money that is being directed towards charter schools in the Philadelphia area should be redirected toward the perpetuation of conventional public education development.

## **Conclusion**

The School District of Philadelphia and Tredyffrin-Easttown School District must adopt changes to diminish their privileges stemming from geographic region, socio-economic levels, and funding. The Tredyffrin-Easttown School District has privilege based on developments over time that led to high socio-economic classes and exceptional funding for the school district. The School District of Philadelphia has not been as privileged. The School District of Philadelphia's temporary fixes and actions by the School Reform Commission have not solved enough. The United States' Department of Education and Pennsylvania need to truly understand these focus areas, among other contributing influences, and how they lead to privileged public schools. The intentions toward equal education seem to be implied within different entities that affect public education, but more experimental and innovative reforms need to resonate enough to achieve impactful results. The recommendations for these school districts should be applied in a similar fashion to other school districts around the country. Although the School District of Philadelphia

and Tredyffrin-Easttown School District have differences, their establishments work hard to serve public schoolers in Pennsylvania.

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