

aisle," said Palmer, noting that he would challenge the legality of HB 2346 should it be signed into law. "I am totally opposed to the Fleck bill, and I hope the Philadelphia Democratic delegation gets on board and comes to the realization that charters and here, and here to do a good job."

Sidebar

Charter school pioneer Dr. Walter D. Palmer outside School District of Philadelphia during press conference in March to announce his stance on public education funding. PHOTOS BY ABDUL R. SULAYMN/TRIBUNE CHIEF PHOTOGRAPHER

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**June 15, 2012**

**Philadelphia Tribune**

"Poll finds support for school reform"

Damon Williams

**An educational survey, along with a new report on national high school graduation figures, is bound to have an effect on how residents throughout the commonwealth look at public education - both its funding and academic achievements.**

The poll, conducted by Public Opinion Strategies on request by StudentsFirst - a nationwide non-partisan, non-profit education reform thinktank founded in 2010 by former Washington, D.C., Education Chancellor Michelle Rhee - netted interesting results from its more than 800 calls to residents statewide.

Overall, the survey found that Pennsylvanians supported reform to teacher evaluations by a large margin, with 72 percent of the callers supporting it, while only 15 percent of the callers opposed; those polled also opposed the general "last in, first out" method of targeted layoffs (34 percent supported the notion, while 23 percent opposed it). Public Opinion Strategies also found that Pennsylvanians supported teacher effectiveness as a barometer over simple seniority, by a 62 percent to 32 percent margin.

More than half of the respondents - 53 percent - support public charter schools, while 23 percent were opposed to the charter school system. Interestingly, charter school support increased to 66 percent when callers were properly informed of the nuances of the charter school system.

These results also reflect the mood and sentiment of the educational landscape in Philadelphia, where charter school support has become a divisive topic. Charter school operators were recently caught off-guard by the introduction of charter school reform bill - HB 2346 - which would severely cripple that system's funding and resources, while the School Reform Commission's own five-year reorganization blueprint calls for a drastic pullback in the amount of funds going to the city charter schools from the school district. Many charter operators - including Dr. Walter D. Palmer - plan on challenging the legality of HB 2346.

But it's not all fire and brimstone for the state of public education here, as the percentage of minorities graduating has steadily risen over the last decade. A joint study by Education Week and the Editorial Projects in Education Research Center recently found that in 2009 - the most recently completed data set - that there has been a 1.7 percent increase in the number of African-American high school graduates, and a 5.5 percent increase in the number of Latino graduates.

The aggregate numbers for Pennsylvania put it in select company, joining only nine others - Alabama, Arizona, Delaware, Florida, Georgia, New Jersey, New York, South Carolina, Tennessee and Texas - as the only states to enjoy a double-digit increase in overall graduation rates for the decade ending in 2009. The report also indicates that minority graduation rates fared even better during those ten years, as those groups enjoyed a 10 percent increase in its graduation rate.

As an example of Pennsylvania's overall standing, the state is one of only six to graduate more than 80 percent of its high school students. Washington, D.C.'s school system graduates fewer than 60 percent of its high school students.

Against national averages, from 1999-2009, Pennsylvania ranked third by graduating 80.5 percent of all its students, trailing only New Jersey (87.4 percent) and North Dakota (85.9 percent). The state ranked fifth in the nation by graduating 78.2 percent of its male high school students, and ranked fourth by graduating 82.5 percent of its female high school students.

Pennsylvania didn't rank as well in terms of minority graduation increases. In 2009, Pennsylvania graduated 59 percent of its African-American students, ranking it 21st in the

country, and barely edging the national average of 58.7 percent. The averages for Hispanic students are even bleaker. According to the report, 58.7 percent of Hispanic high school students graduated in 2009, well behind the national average of 63 percent - and making Pennsylvania 23rd in the nation in that category.

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**June 22, 2012**

**PALCS**

["PALCS Graduation 2012 Keynote Speaker Walter D. Palmer"](#)

YouTube

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**July 6, 2012**

**Philadelphia Tribune**

"Education reform in the pipeline"

Damon Williams

Reform continues to be the buzzword in education circles, and that buzz is becoming louder, thanks to a pair of developments.

Pennsylvania Governor Tom Corbett last week signed legislation that at once sets the commonwealth's education budget and enacts several phases of public education reform. According to the Pennsylvania Department of Education, Corbett's budget invests more than \$11.35 billion in the three layers of public education, and, coupled with recent legislation that will reform both charter school funding and teacher evaluations, will lead to a smoother running and more accountable public education system.

"In order to bring about systemic changes to public education, reforms must start with those who teach in and lead our schools," Secretary of Education Ron Tomalis said in a statement released by the DOE. "Governor Corbett's initiatives will not only raise the bar for effective educators, they will ensure that every student has access to quality academic programs.

"This new approach will ensure that those who are responsible for educating Pennsylvania's students have the knowledge and skills necessary to prepare students for postsecondary success,"