INTRODUCTION

This document reflects PASA’s aspirations for public education. The ten General Priorities represent what PASA should work toward as an organization, while the general principles and advocacy statements are more specific actions that need to be taken in order to achieve them. These Advocacy Priorities, in conjunction with the PASA Strategic Plan, serve to guide the Board of Governors, committees and PASA staff in carrying out the work of PASA. Since PASA is a direct affiliate of AASA®, The School Superintendents Association, PASA accepts the responsibility of supporting AASA’s Legislative Agenda.

GENERAL PRIORITIES

The Pennsylvania Association of School Administrators has as its ongoing priorities:

1. Advocating for the funding necessary to support high quality public education, which remains the foundation of our democracy and the American dream.
2. Promoting the health, safety and general welfare of students, including their mental, social, emotional, physical and character development.
3. Promoting and advocating for high-quality preparation and professional development programs that will ensure school system leaders are well prepared to serve as instructional leaders in Pennsylvania’s public schools, providing ongoing opportunities for them to further develop their leadership skills, and promoting support and respect for the profession and those who consider or assume the role of public school administrator.
4. Working with the Executive Branch and the General Assembly to secure desirable legislation and regulations affecting public education.
5. Maintaining effective relationships with the Pennsylvania Department of Education and other education-oriented organizations for the purpose of improving education policy at the local, state and national levels.
6. Emphasizing the need for effective local control of public education.
7. Providing resources to support the work of public school administrators.
8. Supporting the maintenance of high standards of ethical performance.
9. Recruiting and retaining administrators while supporting strong professional preparation and self-development programs for school administrators.
10. Supporting the Pennsylvania Department of Education and the Pennsylvania State Board of Education to ensure that all schools, whether public or nonpublic, meet legal, educational and health standards as prescribed by law for the Commonwealth.
Outline of PASA Advocacy Priorities

EMPHASIZED PRIORITIES IN 2021-22

STATEMENT OF PRINCIPLES

SUCCESS FOR ALL STUDENTS
Quality Education
Assessment and Accountability
Development of Education Policy
Management and Leadership for Effective Schools

RESOURCES TO ACHIEVE STUDENT SUCCESS
Funding for Public Education
  • General Principles: Equity, Adequacy, Predictability, Accountability & Efficiency
Mandates and Policy
Healthy, Safe and Supportive School Environments
Professional Staff and Supports
Educator Effectiveness
Collective Bargaining

ASSURING OPPORTUNITIES FOR EQUITABLE PUBLIC EDUCATION
Charter Schools and Cyber Charter Schools
Nonpublic Schools, Tuition Vouchers and Opportunity Scholarships
EMPHASIZED PRIORITIES IN 2021-22

Safe, Healthy and Supportive Learning Environments

- PASA calls for state and federal officials to work in partnership with public school officials to identify critical needs in schools and ensure that public schools have access to adequate and equitable funding that will effectively address the safety needs, educational needs, and physical, mental and social/emotional health of all students and maximize their learning in a healthy, secure and positive school environment, whether in the traditional classroom or in virtual environments.

- In the short-term, PASA urges policymakers to work closely with superintendents and school boards to address fallout from the pandemic, specifically to support their work in addressing student needs on the local level without any political agenda, and to identify and address obstacles to providing local educational officials with the flexibility and support needed to meet the unique needs of each student within a variety of learning environments.

- PASA urges state policymakers and agencies to seek input from local public school officials when developing educational policy to coordinate consistent policies and guidance that support public schools in providing a healthy and safe learning environment for students.

- PASA further believes that local officials must have decision-making authority and flexibility in the use of resources to best meet the unique needs of their respective districts rather than having specified state mandates and requirements imposed on all schools.

- PASA believes that officials on the state and local level must focus decision-making with a lens on social justice and equitable access, services and educational opportunity for all students, families and communities to ensure that public education meets society’s needs both now and in the future.

- Finally, PASA believes that school communities and the larger public community must work together to ensure that each public school is equitably and adequately supported to meet the unique educational, health and safety needs and challenges of students in all communities throughout Pennsylvania.

State Education Funding and Policy Priorities

- A partnership between state government and school districts is essential to identifying and providing the necessary resources for developing equitable educational opportunities and a positive learning environment for ALL students. The flexible funding provided to public schools by state and federal government during the pandemic illustrates how that partnership can work in a positive direction to address critical needs in public education and specific needs in each community. Whether under emergency conditions or during a normal school year, state officials must work with PASA and local school officials to identify priorities in the development of a state budget for education, with funding focused on flexibility and the key principles of predictability, adequacy and equity to ensure equal access to quality public education for ALL students in every community.

- In addition, a significant state investment in school building infrastructure and the digital infrastructure throughout the commonwealth is essential to addressing equity in education and meeting the needs of 21st century learning and beyond.
• It is also essential to match funding resources with actual costs in special education, student transportation, and other student services and programs such as those focused on students’ mental/emotional/social health to ensure a positive learning environment where students are supported, safe, thriving and preparing for life beyond the classroom.

• Finally, policymakers must take action to update the current charter school law and enact reforms that focus on accountability and funding to ensure public resources are being utilized for student learning, are based on actual costs, and are not draining school districts of the critical resources needed to provide quality and equitable educational opportunity within their local communities.

**Advocacy**

PASA will work both as an association on behalf of its members and with its members to increase public awareness of the focus issues in public education, the successes of public schools, the need to promote careers in public education in a positive light, and the need for ongoing and increased public support for public education as a constitutional principle.
STATEMENT OF PRINCIPLES

• The success of public schools is the keystone to ensuring an educated public and a strong Commonwealth. For that reason, the Pennsylvania Constitution provides that “The General Assembly shall provide for the maintenance and support of a thorough and efficient system of public education to serve the needs of the Commonwealth.”

• To ensure success for all students, providing for a system of funding that provides adequate, equitable and predictable resources to public schools must be the Commonwealth’s number one priority.

• High quality schools don’t just happen. They are the result of the commitment of teachers, administrators, support personnel, school board members, policy makers on both the state and federal level, taxpayers and parents to create supporting communities in which students can grow and learn.

• All partners in education must stand accountable for their contributions to public schools and the impact their role has on student learning. This includes:
  o the Commonwealth’s commitment to public education and recognition of shared responsibility with local communities for providing adequate and equitable resources and the flexibility needed to comply with laws and regulations regarding public education and essential to support student learning in Pennsylvania’s public schools
  o the teaching profession’s obligation to utilize evidence-based and research-based instructional strategies
  o administrators’ obligation to ensure that high quality leadership is in place to lead efforts to improve student learning
  o the school board’s commitment to informed, consistent decision-making and both respect and support for district administrators and staff
  o student and family commitment to pursue, promote and support the value of education and life-long learning
  o higher education’s commitment to preparing future teachers, offering dual-enrollment courses for students and partnering with school districts to ensure student readiness
  o commitment from the profession, the public, the media and the wider community in acknowledging the high importance of public education and the teaching profession to ensure a strong democracy
  o the greater business community’s commitment to workforce development and career and college readiness

• School reform efforts must be focused on equity and be evidence-based and adequately funded to ensure that accountability in management and educational progress is both measurable and achievable.
• PASA values all school stakeholder opinion in the public education system. We encourage school leaders to work with their staff, governing board, and communities to ensure that all students receive an equitable education and classroom curriculum that is respectful and reflective of the many cultures and backgrounds that make up our communities, commonwealth and nation.
SUCCESS FOR ALL STUDENTS

Quality Education

General Principles:

- All partners in education must stand accountable for their contributions to schools and the impact their role has on student learning.
- Accountability should reflect the full program school districts offer rather than focusing on isolated information within the school district.
- In those schools and school districts where students are not meeting academic expectations, communities, parents, school officials, the Department of Education, state policymakers, and other state and county agencies must work together to ensure that supports and resources are directed appropriately and effectively to ensure a safe, healthy and student-focused learning environment that will lead to gains in student achievement and growth and meet the needs of the whole child, including a child’s mental, social, emotional and physical well-being.
- Collaborative initiatives between education and business and industry will help to direct and support education for all students.
- Both state government and federal government play an important role in directing and supporting equity as it pertains to educational opportunities for ALL students in public schools by ensuring adequacy in health, safety and educational resources for the school environment, including both physical and virtual infrastructure.
- State and federal policymakers should invite the expertise of school leaders when developing education policy and support those leaders in decision-making on the local level to ensure stability and continuing progress in education.

Assessment and Accountability

General Principles:

- Public schools must strive to meet the learning needs of all students as part of a “whole child” approach to education.
- The development of education policy concerning accountability must be based on an understanding of the entirety of the educational experience beyond test scores, recognizing the totality of what public schools do for students, and the multiple realities of the school setting, including the role of educators beyond academics, the challenges of preparing each child for future success, the availability of services and supports for students to ensure that success, and the impact of inequities on student learning.
- Local partners (local control) are still our best resources for school improvement. Superintendents, school board members, educators, school communities and business leaders have the most accurate data and insights to improve teaching and learning and address the complexity of issues impacting students, including their social, emotional and mental health. For that reason, local officials should have the flexibility they need to make decisions based on what they know about their respective districts, students and communities.
• State and federal policy on standards and assessment must be evidence-based, reflect the reality that students have individual needs, and recognize that evaluation of student success should be based on multiple measures of individual students’ progress and not measured by success on a single test.

• State policymakers must partner with school leaders to promote a positive classroom testing environment that provides students with the best opportunity to demonstrate their understanding of curriculum content without undue burdens or stress on either children or staff. Any revisions made to current regulations regarding standards and assessment must address the unintended consequences that negatively impact student learning associated with implementation of federal accountability mandates.

• As the purpose of assessment is to provide a true picture of student growth and educational needs to inform instruction, federal and state policymakers must work together to ensure that, during times of unprecedented national-level emergencies, decisions on assessment requirements are realistic and will adequately reflect the challenges and obstacles faced by both schools and students.

• State assessments must be meaningful, data-driven and intended to further each child’s educational success.

• Federal rules governing each state’s public schools must include sufficient flexibility for states and school districts to provide the most effective education within their respective communities and develop educational strategies to meet the needs of students into the future.

• State assessments must be aligned with rigorous core standards with a commitment to consistency throughout the student’s educational career.

PASA:

• Urges state and federal officials to provide local school officials with the maximum amount of flexibility and authority necessary to address both student and school district needs regarding curriculum and assessment.

• Urges support of local initiatives to address an increasingly diverse student and citizen population in Pennsylvania, focusing on equity, social justice and diversity in the school environment, in curriculum and in all other aspects of school functions and activity that impact students, parents and the community.

• Supports a study to review the impact of parental decisions to opt-out their children from standardized testing, including a look at the impact on teacher evaluation, Future Ready Index comparison/use of school district data, and student demographics.

• Supports clear and rigorous academic standards.

• Supports consistency in academic standards throughout the student’s educational career.

• Supports working with policymakers, parents and the general public to build support for making changes to the assessment system that would reduce the emphasis and impact of high-stakes testing and look beyond what can be easily measured on a test, recognizing that there are numerous ways to assess student progress utilizing a “whole child” approach to better inform all stakeholders in how best to recognize and address each student’s cognitive, emotional and mental health needs.

• Supports an assessment system utilizing both state and local assessments whose primary
goal is to measure growth and inform efforts to improve teaching and learning.

- Supports a continued reduction in the amount of time students are engaged in standardized testing.
- Supports the use of alternative methods of assessment for all students appropriate to their instructional program.
- Supports an accountability system based on state academic standards and state education policy and systems, and reflecting the relative fiscal contribution of the federal government to education in Pennsylvania.

Development of Education Policy

**PASA:**

- Encourages the State Board of Education to continue using public hearing forums as a viable vehicle through which educational concerns such as standards and assessments, accountability and school improvement, and educator evaluation can be assessed and discussed.
- Urges the General Assembly to work with local public school officials and other relevant community agencies to ensure adequate opportunities for public participation in the development of education policy by using the standing committees to review, hold hearings and deliberate upon education legislation before it takes final action.
- Urges coordination in policy and communication among state, county and local-level agencies concerning issues affecting schools, students and communities.
- Urges policymakers on both the state and federal level to actively engage superintendents in the development of guidelines, standards, practices and policies to ensure they reflect already successful models.
- Asks its members to make as a priority active engagement with legislators on education policy issues and partner with state organizations to promote positive education policy.
- Urges policymakers to provide to schools clear and consistent guidance that reflects support for the work of school leaders in ensuring a positive and healthy school environment and recognizes the partnership that must exist between policymakers and school leaders for ensuring that result.
- Recommends that the Secretary of Education have experience as a school administrator and as a commissioned officer in the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania.

Management and Leadership for Effective Schools

**General Principle**

- Public school administrators must be supported consistently both at the state and local level to ensure successful and positive student and district outcomes.
- The role of the school district administrator, particularly the superintendent, is increasingly challenging and often misunderstood. As a result, the number of those moving into administration and the superintendency continues to decline. For that reason, it is imperative that support for these positions in policymaking and in contracts more
adequately matches the demands of the job and recognizes that superintendents are the political and social change agents within their communities, that they are the 10th member of the school board, and that they must address and manage a complicated environment that involves stressors from both within and outside of the district. For that reason, superintendents, with their school boards, must have sufficient flexibility and local authority to effectively manage, support and direct their respective districts.

**PASA:**
- Supports the development of initiatives and systems that will encourage professional educators to consider and assume the role of administrator and will ensure support for leadership in public schools.
- Encourages the development of emergency supports to assist local public school officials with managing and operating school systems during crisis situations.
- Supports ensuring that those appointed to the superintendency, whether through a traditional or nontraditional track, demonstrate a clear understanding of and experience in school building and/or school system leadership and participate in ongoing professional development strongly grounded in the principles of instructional leadership, child development and school system management as outlined in the Pennsylvania Inspired Leadership standards and leadership principles outlined by AASA.
- Supports legislation that would ensure that individuals seeking the superintendency obtain in an educational setting the experience and training that a superintendent needs to be an effective educational leader.
- Supports utilizing Objective Performance Standards and multiple measures of performance in evaluating the performance of the superintendent and assistant superintendent.
- Supports school board member participation in relevant, formal, state-supported pre-service and continuous in-service training programs as required for board service.
- Promotes local school board professional development as led by the superintendent and administrative team.
- Encourages school districts to support the continuous involvement of all members of the community.
RESOURCES TO ACHIEVE STUDENT SUCCESS

Funding for Public Education

General Principles:

• Five principles should guide state funding of public schools: equity, adequacy, predictability, accountability and efficiency. If these goals are met, then schools should be accountable for academic results.
  o Equity: While standards are the same for every school, resources are not. PASA believes that all communities and students should have equitable access to the services and programs needed to meet academic goals.
  o Adequacy: Funding resources must be adequate to support real and actual costs of educating ALL students to meet the state and local standards, be based on local costs, individual student needs, district size, geographic size, and district wealth, and reflect the shared responsibility of adequately funding schools by the state and local community. In particular, the rising costs of providing services and programs for children with special needs, as well as the rising costs of litigation and costs related to unanticipated emergencies beyond the district’s control, necessitate an increased level of financial support from both the state and federal level. PASA believes that the commitment to provide adequate educational resources to Pennsylvania’s children is essential for the success of all students.
  o Predictability: Changes in administrations and changes in political philosophy have rendered a consistent, predictable way for school districts to make long-term operational decisions nearly impossible. PASA believes that, in a time of increasing focus on student achievement and operational efficiencies, a predictable and stable school funding formula is essential to meet local, state and federal expectations.
  o Accountability: All public schools, including charter and cyber charter schools, should be held accountable for practices and operations. However, PASA believes that state and federal governments also must be held accountable for providing to schools the resources necessary to meet operational goals, particularly in student achievement.
  o Efficiency: Public schools, excluding charter and cyber charter schools, are among the most highly regulated entities in the nation. State and federal mandates, taken together, impose a tremendous time and cost burden on school operations. PASA believes that state and federal policymakers should examine all existing mandates imposed on public education to determine the actual cost/benefit for the school and for students. PASA further believes that no mandate should be imposed on school districts unless it is essential to school operations or student needs, is evidence-based and does not entail additional costs to implement in either time or resources.

• The Commonwealth’s share of school funding should be made available to school districts in predictable, regularly scheduled payments and allocated based on a fair, equitable and adequate funding formula.
• Locally elected school officials are in the best position to make tax decisions based on the needs within their communities, particularly when state and federal governments do not meet the five goals of education funding: equity, adequacy, predictability, accountability and
efficiency.

- Public schools should have the flexibility to utilize federal and state funds in the most cost-efficient and effective manner based on student needs within each school and school district.
- Current tax policies in the Commonwealth unfairly benefit some to the exclusion of others and, in general, reduce available revenue sources to address the essential costs of programs, services and facilities that support the educational needs of today’s learners.
- State support of basic education focused on the principles of equity, adequacy, predictability, accountability and efficiency reduces the pressure on districts to raise property tax rates to cover mandated school district costs.
- Federal funding for education should be adequate to fund federal requirements and mandates.
- All public school entities, including charter and cyber charter schools, who receive public funds, whether from the federal, state or local level, should be equally compliant with and accountable for meeting statutory and regulatory requirements for public education in Pennsylvania in order to ensure equal and equitable access and opportunity for all Pennsylvania students and accountability to Pennsylvania taxpayers.

PASA:

- Encourages legislators to recognize that, as schools receive special federal funding, those funds do not negate the crucial need for annual fair, equitable and adequate state funding to reflect increasing costs for basic and special education and other crucial public school services.
- Supports providing sufficient funds through the funding formula based on the needs of individual districts and their students. A true funding formula allows for local control and flexibility in the use of funds while eliminating competitive grants and special funding initiatives that are inconsistent and unreliable.
- Supports use of the school funding formula to distribute increases in state funding, provided the use of that formula does not further compromise struggling districts and is paired annually with increased and adequate funding that meets the needs of schools and their students.
- Supports a sustainable state funding system that is focused on equity, adequacy, predictability, accountability and efficiency in support of Pennsylvania’s public schools.
- Supports implementation of adequate federal funding through revisions to the state funding formula for special education programs and services. This includes full funding of state and federal mandates, eliminating state requirements that go beyond federal requirements, and establishing reasonable limits on available programs.
- Supports substantial increases in funding for both the special education formula and contingency fund that reflect the dramatically increasing annual costs of programs and services for students with exceptionalities.
- Supports full funding of IDEA at the federal level equal to 40 percent of actual expenditures.
- Supports changes to the system for supporting the medical needs of children through ACCESS and Medical Assistance to ensure that adequate funding from those systems is available and dispersed in a timely manner to meet the actual medical needs of those
children in schools, and that procedures for school districts to draw-down and utilize those funds are simplified.

- Concerning Act 1:
  - Support revising the timeline for passing school district budgets to allow districts to have relevant and accurate data on which to base funding/budget decisions.
  - Supports restoring previous exceptions to referendum requirements that account for the actual costs incurred by the school district to provide mandatory programs and services for students with special needs and the school district’s share of mandated employee pension costs.
  - Supports including expenditures for school and student health, safety and security as an exception under Act 1, including expenditures needed to address student mental, social and emotional needs.
  - Support recalculations under Act 1 that fully meet a school district’s ability to ensure that school programs and services are adequately supported with local revenues.

- Urges the development of state and federal policy, resources and actions to ensure students and families in all communities across the commonwealth have access to online learning.

- Supports regular, statewide and uniform property assessment.

- Supports sustainable state and local funding structures that ensure that districts have guaranteed revenues that reflect annual cost increases and do not restrict school districts from raising local revenue to support the locally determined fiscal needs of the district and the educational needs of its students.

- Urges policymakers, lawmakers and media to focus not so much on the total amount of state funding annually provided to public schools but rather on whether that funding is adequate and equitable to support the work of public schools and the actual costs incurred for doing that work, particularly mandated costs.

- Supports an equitable federal funding formula targeted to low-income and minority children.

- Urges state and federal policy and resources that will ensure all students have equal access to online learning.

- Supports consistent and comprehensive state commitment to an investment in early childhood and preschool education opportunities as part of the education continuum to help prepare students to be ready for school. This investment should be in addition to the investment supporting K-12 education.

- Supports continued increases in funding for career and technical education and programs, with increases commensurate with growth in student enrollment.

**Mandates and Policy**

**General Principles:**

- Unfunded mandates do not work. Rather, they impose both an increasing administrative and financial burden on public schools that distracts from the primary mission of providing core educational services and programs to students.

- State policymakers must follow a consistent and rational approach to decision-making on new or expanded education mandates before new requirements on school districts are
enacted. This must include careful and thorough research, collaboration with superintendents, review of existing mandates, and necessary modifications in mandates and regulation to reflect the changing educational landscape, as well as consideration of the financial, staffing, educational and operational impact of the proposal within the broader view of existing requirements and the overall educational mission of public education. In addition, state policymakers should establish a consistent process to solicit feedback from local school officials on the impact of proposed mandates before they are enacted into law.

PASA:

- Supports efforts to establish a true cost model of charter school funding reflective of relevant factors such as actual or tiered costs, an audit of charters, or demonstrated district costs for in-house cyber programs.
- Supports funded policy changes that benefit students and do not include unrealistic expectations or pull resources from the core business of the school district.
- Supports efforts to ensure that state departments and agencies, as well as intermediate units and school districts, have the adequate support and capacity necessary to comply with mandates and requirements.
- Urges a state commitment to providing funding for public school infrastructure, including expansion of broadband access in all communities throughout the commonwealth, and a continuation of state support obligations through an updated PlanCon formula to ensure public school infrastructure is able to meet the educational, health and safety needs of students in all communities.
- Urges changes in law concerning the 180-day and attendance calculation requirements to allow public schools the flexibility to redesign instructional models and provide appropriate instructional delivery – synchronous or asynchronous - that best meet the needs of each child, whether in an emergency situation or in today’s changing educational environment.
- Supports appropriate transparency and essential data reporting requirements to inform state policymakers and taxpayers as to the effectiveness of public schools. However, state policymakers need to consider the need for and cost and burdens of additional reporting requirements that redirects the focus away from delivering educational services to students.
- Urges support for workforce development in public schools, addressing deficits in that training due to the pandemic and providing sufficient resources for public schools to ensure students have access to career/technical programs that will help meet the needs of a changing workforce environment.
- Supports a streamlined and more efficient system (one-stop shop) of implementing employee verification checks and reporting.
- Supports amending state laws governing school construction to allow for cost-savings (i.e. prevailing wage, single contract rule, etc.).
- Supports increased and adequate state funding for necessary school renovation and the costs of deferred maintenance to ensure that students in all communities can learn in healthy and safe environments that meet the needs of today’s students.
- Supports changes in the PSERS system to provide both short- and long-term relief to school districts while maintaining the system adequately, basing decisions concerning the future of the system and system benefits on real data, and ensuring the integrity of the system
through decision-making focused on realistic investments.

- Supports limiting the requirement for transporting nonpublic and private schools students to that provided within the district’s boundaries.
- Supports increasing pupil transportation reimbursement to reflect actual costs incurred in providing student transportation both during the regular school year and during nationwide emergency situations.
- Supports re-establishing and expanding the Mandate Waiver program, to include prevailing wage, graduation requirements, certification requirements, school construction contracting requirements and non-public and charter school student transportation.
- Supports revisions to current requirements that require “host” school districts to shoulder the full responsibility for billing and educating all students placed in public or private juvenile corrections programs and residential treatment facilities within their jurisdiction and instead place that responsibility either with the state, through the Department of Education, or with the local intermediate unit.
- Supports review and efforts to provide healthcare relief and keep costs under control.
- Encourages a gradual phase-in of increases to the statewide minimum wage.

Healthy, Safe and Supportive School Environments

**General Principles:**

- A healthy, safe, secure and positive learning environment that is inclusive, accepting and supportive of all students is critical to the overall mission of public schools.
- School and student health and safety is a public responsibility and requires the commitment and positive actions of all stakeholders.
- Safe and healthy school initiatives must address the physical, social/emotional and mental health of all students, whether in traditional classrooms or in virtual environments.
- The Commonwealth must be committed to ensuring sufficient resources for all aspects of student education, safety and health without imposing costly laws and regulations concerning school health and safety issues.

**PASA:**

- Supports a collaborative effort between PCCD and the PDE concerning healthy and safe school initiatives.
- Supports new, sustainable and flexible funding for safe and healthy schools initiatives, including equipment and supplies, personnel, curriculum, training and infrastructure.
- Supports providing adequate and equitable funding to school districts for health and safety initiatives based on need and not distributed through competitive grants.
- Supports a review of requirements in Safe2Say and Act 44 to better meet the efforts of school districts to keep students, staff and schools secure and provide sufficient flexibility on the local level in making decisions on safety issues.
- Supports utilizing the Department of Education as a major partner in current and future legislative and regulatory initiatives promoting school health and safety.
- Expresses a willingness to assist in the development and evaluation of legislation and policy
regarding school health and safety.

- Opposes any legislation that reduces local control for decisions concerning security measures without comparable and ongoing state funding.
- Promotes legislation that allows public schools to declare expenditures for school and student health, safety and security as an exemption under Act 1.
- Urges better coordination among state and county agencies focused on comprehensive mental health services within the public school setting to more adequately and effectively meet the needs of the growing number of students facing mental health challenges.
- Promotes the development of comprehensive programs that target drug and alcohol issues with an emphasis on prevention and rehabilitative services.
- Supports a review of truancy requirements

**Professional Staff and Supports**

**General Principles:**

- Hiring, developing, supporting and retaining new professional educators are essential not only to the future of the profession but to the future of public education and the workforce as well. Toward that end, PASA believes that policymakers must not establish or retain statutory or regulatory roadblocks that would keep the “best and the brightest” from either considering education as a profession or leaving the profession early in their careers. Rather, state officials should encourage input from PASA and those working in public schools to help develop flexible and realistic policies and regulations that will promote the profession and offer a better outcome for young people with an interest in teaching.
- High quality professional development of professional staff and leaders, provided annually, is essential to raising student achievement aligned with the standards targets.
- Research shows that strong education leadership both at the district and school building levels is essential to raising student achievement. Those who serve in central administration, led by the superintendent, are key to providing the leadership and support necessary to ensure the seamless integration of effective and efficient district management, communications, curriculum development and policy implementation. For that reason, it is imperative that school district leaders be fully certificated as educators or obtain a broad base of experience and training in education leadership principles.
- Educational training and skills in both management and educational leadership are essential for a superintendent’s success as a school system leader who is both an effective manager and a professional leader focused on raising student achievement.
- A cooperative effort among local school districts, institutions of higher education and the Pennsylvania Department of Education is essential to assure the preparation of high quality management and other personnel to meet present and future educational needs. For that reason, it is essential that all stakeholders work together with institutions of higher education to ensure that teacher preparation programs adequately prepare future educators for the changing learning environment.

**PASA:**

- Supports a concerted effort on the federal and state level to examine reasons why qualified
individuals do not pursue an education career and develop strategies to encourage them to enter the education profession.

- Supports changes to current certification reciprocity requirements and developing strategies to provide more flexibility for those coming from out-of-state to earn Pennsylvania certification.
- Supports loan forgiveness for teachers.
- Supports a reduction in state mandates for staff training in favor of increased flexibility at the local level for targeted staff development.
- Supports a reduction in mandates under PIL/Act 48 (Act 45) requirements in favor of increased flexibility in providing meaningful professional development options for administrators.
- Supports the Pennsylvania Department of Education to continue to permit districts and intermediate units to train noncertificated college graduates to provide a broader pool of substitutes and allow the limited use of students currently enrolled in certification programs to serve as substitutes for professional employees.
- Supports the creation of incentives for the recruitment, development and retention of all district employees, as well as substitute teachers, and to eliminate impediments to serving as a substitute teacher.
- Supports updates to and flexibility in granting certification to CTE instructors based on experience and skills utilized in the workplace environment.
- Supports alternative entry qualifications for paraprofessionals.
- Supports the authority of a locally elected school board to make decisions on salary and benefits for school administrators based on the characteristics and needs within the community, the level and scope of responsibility in the school district, and the experience and expertise of the school district leader, rather than on any state-imposed arbitrary salary caps.
- Urges superintendents and school boards to develop systems to identify educators who have the potential to be outstanding school leaders and to provide them with mentoring and support so that they can grow into positions of increasing responsibility.
- Urges state policymakers, local school officials and local school boards to work collaboratively in establishing systems and policies that increase incentives to attract and support qualified administrators, including competitive benefits, adjusted compensation plans, and revised retirement policies, and decrease barriers to attract those candidates, such as restrictions on pension benefits.
- Supports continued tenure for principals and other professional administrators as a tool for attracting and retaining qualified education leaders.
- Supports local school district control by opposing proposals to restrict school board authority to contract with commissioned officers and the right to renew a commissioned officer.
- Supports allowing school districts to hire professionals licensed by other agencies when shortages exist in the availability of dental hygienists, school nurses, speech/language therapists/specialists, etc.
- Encourages state officials to broaden the range of professional development opportunities for administrators under Pennsylvania Inspired Leadership (PIL) requirements that are appropriate to the responsibilities of the job.
• Promotes increased flexibility within the specificity of STEAM-related certificates.

Educator Effectiveness

General Principles:
• Professional staff evaluation systems must include multiple measures, support a differentiated approach for evaluation that focuses on meeting the professional needs of teachers and principals, must not place an excessive burden on administrative staff time, and must provide tools necessary to ensure students have access to highly effective teaching and well managed public schools.

PASA:
• Supports a teacher evaluation system that provides authentic teacher accountability and measures that will remove ineffective and persistently unsuccessful teachers from the classroom in a timely manner.
• Supports the overall goal of providing appropriately increased accountability and improving professional performance with an evaluation process that includes conversations around instruction and educational improvement at the building level.

Collective Bargaining

PASA:
• Encourages a reasonable and gradual phase-in of increases to the statewide teacher minimum wage.
• Strongly urges the legislature to consider a method whereby neither teachers nor school districts have a financial advantage during a work stoppage.
• Supports efforts to explore ways to reduce disruptions due to labor-management impasses.
• Supports the requirement for a secret ballot vote for strike action.
• Supports professional development for negotiations.
ASSURING OPPORTUNITIES FOR EQUITABLE PUBLIC EDUCATION

Charter Schools and Cyber Charter Schools

General Principles

- Because all charter schools are public school governance and responsibilities must be equitable, and the funding formula for charter schools must be revised to reflect the actual cost of providing education.
- Laws and regulations governing operations and funding of nontraditional public schools must ensure a balanced system of public education in Pennsylvania that does not create separate and unequal schools or school systems for our students.
- Pennsylvania law concerning charter school accountability and funding is woefully inadequate. A large number of charter schools, both building-based and online, provide limited evidence of academic success based on state-established accountability measures. In addition, cases of questionable, if not criminal, business and personnel practices, a lack of transparency concerning management and financial operations, and an inequitable funding mechanism that does not fairly reflect actual costs of instruction continue to be a great concern. For that reason, state policymakers must make changes in the state’s charter school law and policies to provide assurance to taxpayers that limited public resources are being utilized in a transparent and cost-effective manner and to ensure that the primary beneficiaries of charter schools are the students they are intended to serve.

PASA:

- Supports a revision of Pennsylvania’s charter school law and funding system that:
  - provides an exemption for districts from paying tuition for cyber charter schools when a school district offers a comprehensive cyber education to its students.
  - provides adequate resources to those schools for actual, audited costs of instruction and services.
  - changes charter school funding calculations that do not take into account differing programs and services offered by traditional public schools and charter/cyber charter schools.
  - strengthens accountability for student achievement and use of taxpayer funds to ensure that available funds are focused on student needs and not on building fund balances and expending funds for purposes unrelated to education.
  - places limits on unchecked fund balances.
  - revises the process for writing and submitting charter school applications by requiring an initial submission first to be reviewed by the PDE to ensure the application meets minimum criteria and is revised as needed before the application is submitted to a school district for review.
  - requires full compliance with state requirements, including state ethics, transparency, conflict of interest and audit requirements.
  - revises the current process for tuition payments and student accounting practices, to include utilization of PDE Form 363, including appropriate deductions.
  - addresses over-identification of students as eligible for special education services
upon entrance to a charter or cyber charter school.
  o ensures that students who choose to attend a charter school are not denied
  enrollment due to student level of need.
  • Opposes transferring local tax dollars raised for public education to for-profit management
    companies and organizations.
  • Supports legislation that would require equitable per-student tuition for charter schools
    based on how districts are funded and a statewide flat fee for cyber charter schools.
  • Supports a review of student achievement at all levels to gauge appropriateness of cyber
    instruction.
  • Supports timely appointments to the Charter School Appeal Board.

Nonpublic Schools, Tuition Vouchers and Opportunity Scholarships

General Principle

  • Research and data indicate that the vast majority of public schools consistently provide a fair
    and appropriate education to the Commonwealth’s children.

PASA:

  • Calls for removing from public schools the responsibility and accountability for monitoring
    student attendance and enforcing existing student truancy requirements in nonpublic, private and parochial schools.
  • Strongly opposes the use of public funding to provide tuition vouchers or opportunity
    scholarships.
  • Strongly opposes state and federal legislation which would allow for or expand voucher or
    tuition tax credit plans.
  • Strongly supports adoption of accountability measures to determine the effectiveness of the
    investment of state tax credits (EITC) to support enrollment of students in private schools.
  • Strongly opposes federal or state legislation and regulations which would expand school
    districts' financial obligation in support of programs for nonpublic school students.
  • Strongly urges that policies, in the form of laws, regulations and standards that apply to
    public schools, should apply also to nonpublic schools whose students accept public funds.