

PASA POINTS

The Pennsylvania Association of School Administrators

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About PASA

The Pennsylvania Association of School Administrators (PASA) is an organization that is instrumental in developing successful school leadership through advocacy, support, sustainment of high quality school administrators and a statewide collegial network.

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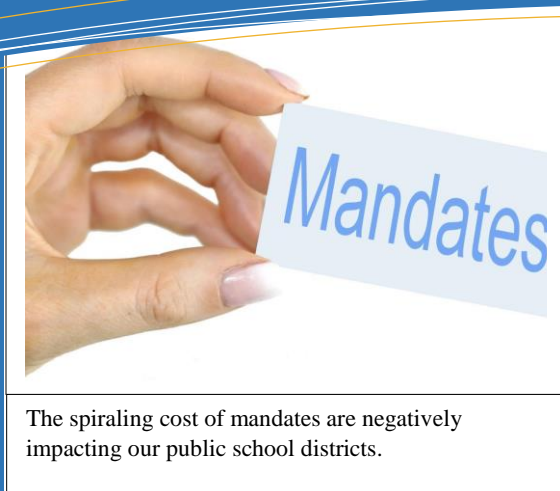
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The spiraling cost of mandates are negatively impacting our public school districts.

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The Spiraling Cost of Mandates

One of the issues that is the most frustrating for school leaders is the cost of state and federal mandates. Each year, more legislation is passed that requires districts to do more and report more without additional funds for the new mandates. While many new laws may seem inconsequential in cost, the cumulative effect can be significant to school district budgets. Below are just a few examples from the past two years:

- Secondary students must be administered a civics test and the results reported to PDE
- Training must be provided to educators and school board members on trauma-informed approaches to education
- Training must be provided for educators on situational awareness, behavioral health awareness, substance abuse awareness, and emergency training drills
- Threat Assessment Teams must be implemented in all school districts
- The position of School Safety and Security Administrator must be implemented in each district, and the individual must issue a report to the school board
- School security personnel must participate in NASRO training
- Implementation of the Safe2Say Something Program

PASA supported much of this legislation, and we believe these additions to the school code will be positive for students across the commonwealth. Unfortunately, these new laws have been implemented on top of what was already required of our public schools without additional funding. Although some districts have received Safe Schools Grant money to offset part of these expenses, most have not.

This becomes exceedingly frustrating when increases in basic subsidy and special education subsidy aren't enough to cover increased costs of the largest mandated expenditures for school districts:

- Charter School Tuition
- Pension Contributions
- Special Education Expenditures

The rising cost of these three mandates alone far exceed the increases provided to school districts in new subsidy allocations.

*"Beware of little expenses. A small leak will sink a great ship."
Benjamin Franklin*



**Pennsylvania Association
of School Administrators**

Proud Leadership for Pennsylvania's Schools

PASA Principles

All partners in education must stand accountable for their contributions to public schools and the impact their role has on student learning. This includes:

The Commonwealth's commitment to public education and recognition of shared responsibility with local communities for providing resources adequate to comply with laws and regulations regarding public education and essential to support student learning in Pennsylvania's public schools

The teaching profession's obligation to utilize evidence-based and research-based instructional strategies

Administrators' obligation to ensure that high quality leadership is in place to lead efforts to improve student learning

Student and family commitment to pursue, promote and support the value of education and life-long learning

Higher education's commitment to preparing future teachers, offering dual-enrollment courses for students and partnering with school districts to ensure student readiness

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

The greater business community's commitment to workforce development and career and college readiness

Exploding Mandated Expenditures (From the January 2020 PASBO-PASA School District Budget Report)

In 2017-18, school district expenditures totaled about \$30.2 billion, nearly \$300 million less than the prior year. While the overall total expenditures fell for the first time since 2011-12 (mostly due to the infusion of backlogged PlanCon funding in 2016-17), school districts across the state continued to face fiscal pressure due to the three mandated costs that are responsible for driving school district budgets from year to year: employee pension costs, charter school tuition costs and special education costs.

School districts spent more than 12% of their total expenditures on employee pension costs in 2017-18, or more than \$3.74 billion, an increase of more than \$360 million over the prior year—a 10% increase. Over the past five years (2012-13 to 2017-18), pension costs have increased by more than 180% for school districts, as the employer contribution rate has continued to increase every year.

Another major area of mandated cost growth for school districts that contributes to the growing Education Deficit continues to be special education costs. State and federal special education mandates drive the provision of special education services to eligible students, and as a result, school districts have limited flexibility in controlling these costs. If a student requires special education services, programs, transportation or private placements, school districts must cover those costs.

In 2017-18, school districts spent more than \$5.27 billion on special education programs and services. Of this total more than \$4.55 billion was spent on special education instructional costs—86% of the total expenditure. The remaining \$720 million represents the special education support services, which includes services such as special education transportation, guidance services, psychological services, social work and nursing services.

A third major cost driver of school district budgets and the growing Education Deficit is charter school tuition. We have been consistent in our message that school choice is here to stay; however, the controversy on this issue comes as a result of the commonwealth's policy on how to pay for it.

The current charter school funding policy continues to result in serious fiscal stress for school districts. In 2017-18, school districts paid \$1.82 billion in charter school tuition. The increase in this cost between 2016-17 and 2017-18 was 10.18% or just short of a \$170 million. During that same year, the increase in state basic education funding was \$100 million.

The scope of the increase in charter school tuition, especially in the context of state funding and property tax increases is startling. From 2011-12 to 2017-18, charter school tuition increased by more than \$1 billion. During that same time period, the state eliminated \$225 million in funding it had previously provided to school districts to help offset the impact of the mandated charter school costs on the local tax base, which had to absorb the growth regardless of the ability to pay.

These three mandates alone are creating debilitating effects on our traditional public schools. PASA implores the General Assembly and the Governor to factor the impact of mandated costs on all legislative matters affecting public education.