



September
2020

PASA POINTS

The Pennsylvania Association of School Administrators

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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Schools have opened in a variety of learning models and with social distancing and mitigation protocols in place.

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Limited Liability Protection Needed

Schools are open across the Commonwealth using a variety of educational models, from full in-person learning to blended models to full remote learning. Each model of learning has its drawbacks and has been subject to criticism. PASA continues to be very concerned about the potential for significant litigation against school districts regarding decisions they are making to manage the Coronavirus in their schools. We request that the Governor and General Assembly take immediate action to provide limited liability protection for school districts during this unprecedented pandemic similar to that of medical professionals, as school leaders make hundreds of decisions that may impact the health of students and staff.

As professionals who are entrusted with the care of our most valuable assets in the Commonwealth, our children, we can assure you that school administrators take the safety of our students, their families and staff very seriously. Providing limited liability coverage to public schools will not change their dedication to student and staff safety. Our public schools are critical to our children, parents, communities and the local economy. They need protection from litigation that could result in the loss of time and resources that could be focused on educating children. We do not want to see local tax dollars being used to fight protracted legal battles when funds are scarce.

Please notice that PASA has continually advocated for "limited liability coverage." School leaders are not asking that you protect willful or criminal misconduct, gross negligence, reckless misconduct, or a conscious, flagrant indifference to the safety of individuals. What we are asking for is limited liability coverage that will ensure that, as school leaders work within the guidance issued by the Departments of Health and Education, and the CDC, they are protected from increasing liability insurance costs during a time when our resources are already limited. We respectfully request that action be taken soon to protect public schools as we work to educate the Commonwealth's children during this unprecedented pandemic.

Legislation Needed to Help Schools Succeed

School Staffing

- PASA continues to be concerned about the unknowns related to school staffing in the current year.
- PASA encourages the legislature to provide temporary assistance to school districts by creating an easier path for individuals to become certified teachers in Pennsylvania.
- We also suggest that Pennsylvania immediately re-evaluate its process to accept teaching certifications from outside of Pennsylvania.

Internet Connectivity for All Students

- Lack of connectivity needs immediate attention in our state for our students.
- Some remote parts of the state do not have access to the Internet even if they can afford to pay for it, as it is not profitable for providers to provide service to sparsely populated areas. Furthermore, we learned that even in densely populated areas, many students lacked connectivity because their families could not afford the service.
- Internet connectivity must become a mandatory and basic service for every student in the state. Those who are unable to afford such access must be provided this availability. An Internet connection and electronic device to use the Internet has replaced the textbook as a necessary resource for the education of every child in the Commonwealth.

Cyber Charter School Reform Is Needed Now More Than Ever

- The cyber charter school funding formula is long overdue for an update. PASA acknowledges that cyber charter schools are part of the educational landscape and are entitled to public dollars as they are public schools. However, the funding formula sends excessive money to cyber charter schools that is unnecessary and a misuse of taxpayer dollars.
- Traditional public school districts offer full-time, online learning through their own programs or an intermediate unit consortium for a fraction of the cost of cyber charter school tuition. District and intermediate unit programs offer more direct instruction online and produce better academic results than cyber charter schools at a much lower operating cost.
- The cyber charter school funding formula is extremely outdated and needs to be adjusted to reflect current economics of the cost to deliver online learning in an effective and efficient manner.