Guidance and Resources…

Stay Granted on Event Capacity Ruling – Last Tuesday Gov. Wolf and Secretary of Health Dr. Rachel unveiled amended COVID-19 orders to allow for adjusted capacity to gathering limits while keeping in place the proven mitigation tools that include wearing masks and maintaining social distancing. The amended order went into effect on October 9.

“We will closely monitor cases and outbreaks and if our case investigation and contact tracing efforts determine that events or gatherings are the source of an outbreak, we can and will dial back these new limits,” Dr. Levine said. “Public health and safety are our first concern and will always remain as such.”

The orders amend two sections of the July 15 mitigation orders and include a “maximum occupancy calculator” for both indoor and outdoor events. Based on a venue’s established occupancy limit as defined by the National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) Life Safety Code, venues apply the appropriate percent of occupancy to determine how many attendees are permitted to attend an event or gathering.

Here are the calculators:

Maximum Occupancy Calculator for indoor events:
Maximum Occupancy / Allowable Indoor Rate
0-2,000 people / 20% of Maximum Occupancy
2,001 - 10,000 people / 15% of Maximum Occupancy
Over 10,000 people / 10% of Maximum Occupancy up to 3,750 people

Maximum Occupancy Calculator for outdoor events:
Maximum Occupancy / Allowable Outdoor Rate
0-2,000 people / 25% of Maximum Occupancy
2,001 - 10,000 people / 20% of Maximum Occupancy
Over 10,000 people / 15% of Maximum Occupancy up to 7,500 people

Venues must require attendees to comply with 6-foot social distancing requirements, to wear masks or face coverings, and to implement best practices such as timed entry, multiple entry and exit points, multiple restrooms and hygiene stations. Venues and event planners can review the CDC Events and Gatherings Readiness and Planning Tool for additional information regarding best practices. An FAQ about the amended order is also available.

Challenge to Wolf Orders Rejected – The U.S. Supreme Court determined last Monday that it will not hear a challenge to Gov. Tom Wolf's order that closed all non-life-sustaining businesses during the early months of the COVID-19 pandemic. The case was brought on by business owners and a state House candidate who considered the shutdown unconstitutional, however, earlier this spring the Pennsylvania Supreme Court ruled in favor of Wolf. (from The Patriot-News, 10/5/20)

Coronavirus Web Resources – PASA’s web page concerning the Coronavirus and Pandemic Preparation includes links to information about issues such as school athletics and return-to-school, along with updated guidance from the PDE, CDC and USDE, and other important updates from the state and federal levels.

Racism and Equity Resources – PASA has compiled and posted a list of resources to assist school leaders and educators to facilitate conversations and initiatives addressing racism and inequity in schools and communities. Click here for the list.

Resources from PASA Sponsors – PASA is grateful for the ongoing support of our Sponsors at all levels. Although PASA does not promote or endorse any product or service offered by our sponsors, we are pleased to
share information they offer that may be helpful to school leaders, particularly concerning return-to-school issues. Several of our sponsors have offered free webinars and other unique opportunities and resources to assist PASA members in planning for the school year. A recording of several of these webinars and a list of additional FREE resources and information is available on the PASA website.

Budget, Finance & Funding News…

**Assistance with E-Rate** – Confused about the E-Rate? The State Educational Technology Directors Association, a nonprofit which represents U.S. state and territorial tech leaders, is launching a new feature, E-Rate Training: Ask the State Experts. The trainings are aimed at supporting tech leaders with applications and implementation of the E-Rate program for schools, districts, and libraries so they can get the most for their money in fiscal year 2021, which started Oct. 1. The trainings will be offered through 90-minute online, interactive sessions beginning Oct. 22 and running monthly through April 2021. These trainings will be conducted by E-Rate experts, including state E-Rate coordinators and their staff. Registration and more information is available [online via this link](#). Participants will have access to both the live sessions and the event archives.

In Legislative News…

**Session Schedule** – This will be a quiet week in the Capitol as neither chamber will be in voting session. The House had been scheduled to be in Harrisburg this week but pushed that schedule back a week when one of its members tested positive for COVID two days after sitting in session for a day. The Senate was in Harrisburg only two days last week, and both chambers will be in the Capitol next week, the last session week before the general election.

**Last Week’s Legislative Action** –

* **SB 1230**: Back on Track Education Scholarship Program; public hearing held before the Senate Education Committee. The bill creates Back on Track Education Scholarship Accounts for students whose education was disrupted by the Coronavirus pandemic. Parents with school age children (K to 12) would receive funding in an account to offset educational costs. $500 million in CARES funding would be put into the program. Back on Track ESAs could only be used by families for students’ education-related needs like tutoring, online classes, curriculum, tuition, counseling, and services for students with special needs. The bill is identical to HB 2696. PASA shared opposition to the bill with the committee in advance of the hearing, noting the following:
  * While school closures caused a serious disruption to student learning last spring, and many students will need assistance to close learning gaps, giving parents funds to seek out their own assistance is an ineffective strategy at best.
  * Senate Bill 1230 provides no accountability for the scholarship funds provided to the parents.
  * As is HB 2696, the bill is clearly designed to send money to non-public schools, which the majority of American and Pennsylvanian taxpayers oppose.
  * The $500 million identified for the ESA Program in Senate Bill 1230 would do more good for more children if it was allocated to our public school districts.

**Committee Schedule** – There are no education-related bills scheduled for committee consideration this week.

In State News…

**Student Enrollment** – Over the spring and summer, polls hinted at school enrollment declines that could shake up the educational landscape. Burned out and disgruntled by the spring attempt at virtual learning, large groups of parents said they were ready to yank their kids out of public school for homeschool or private options. Fast forward to fall and early attendance data from the Philadelphia region indicates that the vast majority of students re-enrolled in traditional public school this fall — with a notable exception being a drop in would-be kindergartners. [Read the rest of the story: “Did COVID Closures Cause a Public School Exodus? Here’s What the Numbers Say”](#) (from WHYY, 10/9/20)

**COVID Alert PA App** – Last week Governor Tom Wolf announced that more than 165,000 Pennsylvanians have downloaded the COVID Alert PA exposure notification mobile app in the first week since the app was released to the [Apple](#) and [Google](#) app stores. “Thank you to all of the Pennsylvanians who have already downloaded the
COVID Alert PA app and added their phone to the fight against COVID-19," Gov. Wolf said. “This is a simple, secure way that each and every one of us can help protect our communities from COVID-19, and I encourage every Pennsylvanian to download the app today. When we unite to stop COVID-19, we accomplish much more than we ever could alone.” COVID Alert PA is a free, voluntary mobile app developed by the Pennsylvania Department of Health in partnership with NearForm, UPenn and MIT Lincoln Laboratory using the Apple and Google Exposure Notification System. The app’s features include an interactive COVID-19 symptom checker, alerts of potential exposures to the virus, updates on the latest public health data about COVID-19 in PA and public health guidance for what to do if you have a potential exposure to COVID-19. Find more information on the COVID Alert PA app [here](https://www.gov.pa.us). (from a press release)

**In News Across the Nation…**

**South Carolina: Using CARES Funds for Vouchers** – Congressional Democrats say South Carolina’s Republican governor seems to be violating the federal coronavirus relief law by sending federal aid directly to parents so they can pay for their children to attend private schools. In a Monday [letter](https://www.gov.pa.us) to U.S. Secretary of Education Betsy DeVos, Rep. Jim Clyburn, D-S.C., and Rep. Bobby Scott, D-Va., the chairman of the House education committee, say the Safe Access to Flexible Education (SAFE) program set up by Gov. Henry McMaster, which provides $32 million to fund scholarships to private schools, “appears to violate the plain text of the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security Act (CARES Act) as well as the Department’s related guidance.” Read the rest of the story: “Governor Accused of Improperly Using Federal COVID-19 Aid to Fund Vouchers” (from Education Week, 10/5/20).

**On the PASA Calendar…**

- Oct. 12-13….National Superintendent Certification Program (virtual)
- Oct. 14……..Women’s Caucus Board meeting (virtual)
- Oct. 19……..Women’s Caucus Virtual Networking Session
- Oct. 21……..PASA Webinar: Leading Students in Poverty to Success