



Pennsylvania Association of School Administrators  
*Proud Leadership for Pennsylvania Schools*

## Education Update January 7, 2019

### In Budget and Funding News...

**Money Matters** – “Throwing money at the problem” has long gotten a bad rap in education. “The notion that spending more money is going to bring about different results is ill-placed and ill-advised,” U.S. Secretary of Education Betsy DeVos said last year. But a string of recent studies have undermined that perspective. Now, a new review of research drives another nail into the argument’s coffin. The review looks closely at 13 studies focused on schools nationwide or in multiple states. Twelve found that spending more money meant statistically significant benefits for students, including rising test scores and high school graduation rates. “By and large, the question of whether money matters is essentially settled,” Northwestern economist Kirabo Jackson concludes. “Researchers should now focus on understanding what kinds of spending increases matter the most.” *Read the rest of the story:* [“Does Money Matter for Schools? Why One Researcher Says the Question Is ‘Essentially Settled’”](#) (from *chalkbeat.org*, 12/17/18).

**New Pension Benefit System** – Pennsylvania’s pension overhaul law went into effect on Jan. 1 for most new state government employees and on July 1 for all new school employees. Under the law, known as Act 5, the affected new public workers no longer will receive full guaranteed pensions backed by taxpayers and immune to the ups and downs of national and world economies. The law creates two new retirement plans that carry less risk for taxpayers and therefore lower retirement benefits for workers who enroll in them. Retirement benefits would fall 18 percent for new school employees, and 6 percent for affected state workers, compared to employees hired since 2010. Lawmakers, who were sworn into office on Jan. 1 for the 2019-20 legislative session, excluded themselves from mandatory participation in the reduced plans when they passed the pension bill in June 2017. Lawmakers also excluded state law enforcement and corrections officers. *Read the rest of the story:* [“Pa. Overhauls Pension Plans for New State Workers, Teachers”](#) (from *The Morning Call*, as published in *Education Week*, 1/2/19).

### State Revenues and Employment Data –

**\*Sports-Betting Revenue:** The Pennsylvania Gaming Control Board last month announced that, after just two weeks, legalized sports betting at the Hollywood Casino at Penn National Race Course generated more than \$183,000 in tax revenue. The casino was the first to launch a sports wagering facility in the Commonwealth. Additional facilities throughout Pennsylvania will soon launch sportsbooks.

**\*General Revenue:** According to the PA Department of Revenue, Pennsylvania collected \$2.9 billion in General Fund revenue in December, which was \$70.1 million, or 2.5 percent, more than anticipated. Fiscal year-to-date General Fund collections total \$15.3 billion, which is \$403.7 million, or 2.7 percent, above estimate. Since the start of the 2018-19 fiscal year, overall tax revenue is \$934.7 million, or 6.7 percent, more than was collected in the same period of the last fiscal year. (from a press release, 1/2/19)

**\*Unemployment Rate:** Pennsylvania’s unemployment rate was up one-tenth of a percentage point from October to 4.2 percent. This was the first over-the-month increase in the unemployment rate since July 2016. The Pennsylvania unemployment rate declined by six-tenths of a percentage point from November 2017. The estimated number of Pennsylvania residents working or looking for work, known as the civilian labor force, was up 21,000 over the month. The number of employed Pennsylvanians rose by 17,000 to a record high of 6,172,000. The number of unemployed residents was up 3,000 from October, but down 40,000 from last November. (from a PA Department of Labor & Industry press release, 12/21/18)

**2019-20 State Budget** – Gov. Wolf will unveil his 2019-20 state budget proposal on Tuesday, February 5 before a joint session of the General Assembly. Both the House and Senate have set dates for their Appropriations Committee hearings on various aspects of the budget, including education. Key hearings scheduled to date are as follows:

**\*PSERS/SERS**

Tuesday, Feb. 12 – House Appropriations (10 a.m.)

**\*Department of Education**

Monday, March 4 – House Appropriations (10 a.m.)

Tuesday, March 5 – Senate Appropriations (10 a.m., 1 p.m.)

**\*Department of Human Services**

Wednesday, Feb. 27 – Senate Appropriations (1 p.m., 3 p.m.)

Thursday, Feb. 28 – House Appropriations (10 a.m.)

**\*Department of Health**

Monday, Feb. 25 – House Appropriations (3 p.m.)

Wednesday, Feb. 27 – Senate Appropriations (10 a.m.)

## **In School Safety & Security News...**

**Senate Republican Report on School Safety** – The Senate Majority Policy Committee has released its [Report on School Safety](#). The report is based on ten public roundtable discussions held across the state, with input from safety professionals as well as students and local officials. According to the report, most of the participants from the roundtable discussions agreed that the school resource officers are the best deterrent against school violence and one of the most important investments districts can make to increase safety. Focusing on mental health was also a key point of discussion regarding new strategies to combat school violence, which also included information regarding the state's new bipartisan investment of \$60 million for school safety initiatives. (from a press release, 12/21/18)

### **Federal Commission Recommendations on School Safety –**

**\*Report and Recommendations:** A panel created by President Donald Trump to help prevent future school shootings called Tuesday for getting rid of Obama administration guidance aimed at making sure students of color and students with disabilities aren't disciplined more harshly than their peers. U.S. Secretary of Education Betsy DeVos, who leads the Federal Commission on School Safety, said the report encourages schools "to seriously consider the option of partnering with local law enforcement in the training and arming of school personnel." But the report did not suggest that arming school staff—something supported by Trump—become a federal mandate. Instead, it recommends that districts offer incentives for retired law enforcement officials, military veterans, and others with firearms training to serve as educators, as well as ease teacher certification so that they can more easily join the profession. *Read the rest of the story:* ["Scrap Discipline Guidance, Consider Arming School Staff, Trump Commission Says"](#) (from *Education Week*, 12/18/18).

**\*Recommendation – Update FERPA:** Confusion surrounding the nation's main federal law protecting students' privacy is hindering the ability of schools and law enforcement to prevent shootings and other violence, concludes the Federal Commission on School Safety. The commission called on Congress to modernize the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act, or FERPA, which generally prevents schools from sharing students' educational records without parental consent. The commission also wants the federal education department to clarify how schools may apply the law's existing provisions during safety emergencies. *Read the rest of the story:* ["Trump School Safety Commission: Time to Update FERPA"](#) (from *Education Week*, 12/18/18).

**\*AASA Response:** While acknowledging some positives in the report, AASA Executive Director Dan Domenech noted serious flaws with the recommendations. "While a compendium of

recommendations can be helpful to a well-resourced district, which can adopt and implement a multitude of best practices found in the report relatively easily, we are concerned the majority of districts in the U.S. cannot dedicate the resources to fulfilling some of the most basic recommendations of the report,” he said. Domenech also expressed disappointment with recommended policy changes related to the 2014 discipline guidance. [Click here](#) to read the complete statement.

## In Legislative News...

**New Session** – The new General Assembly returned to Harrisburg on Jan. 1 for swearing-in ceremonies, to formally reelect Mike Turzai (R-Allegheny) as House Speaker and Joe Scarnati (R-Jefferson) as Senate President Pro Temp, and to adopt the operational rules of both chambers. The House and Senate now stand in recess and are not scheduled to return to session until Monday, Jan. 15. However, no legislative business that involves committee consideration will be conducted before all chairs and committee assignments have been finalized.

**Legislative Reserves** – A recently released audit of legislative department and service agency reserve funds shows a reserve of nearly \$138 million, an increase of \$43 million since last year’s audit. Included in that amount is about \$53 million in House reserve funds and about \$27 million in Senate reserve funds.

**Special Elections** – House Speaker Mike Turzai last week announced March 12 as the date for special elections to fill two vacancies, one created by the recent passing of Rep. Sid Kavulich (D-Lackawanna) and the other the recent resignation of Rep. Vanessa Lowery Brown (D-Philadelphia) following conviction and sentencing on seven charges related to a bribery conviction. In addition, the special election to fill the state Senate seat previously held by Rep. Guy Reschenthaler (R-Allegheny) has been set for April 2. Reschenthaler is now serving in the U.S. House of Representatives.

## In State News...

**Revisions to CSPGs** – The PDE’s Bureau of School Leadership and Teacher Quality has reviewed and updated the following Certification Staffing Policies and Guidelines (CSPGs):

\*12: Voluntary Deletion of Certification Areas – Added information on applying through the Teacher Information Management System (TIMS) and clarified documents must be postmarked by December 31.

\*25: Vocational Emergency Permits – Occupational competency numbers were added, “Fire Science” was changed to “Firefighting,” and Protective Services Occupations was removed.

\*37: Cooperative Education – Information was added to clarify the two paths to obtaining this area of certification.

\*51: Middle Level English 6-9 – Clarified the Certification Assignment section and added that this Middle Level English certificate may not be used to teach reading.

\*61: Special Education PK-8 and 7-12 – Added the restriction for Special Education 7-12 to teach 6<sup>th</sup> grade.

\*45: World Languages – The CSPG was not changed. American Sign Language (ASL) was added to the list of World Language certificates on the website. The World Language link in the CSPG leads to this list.

CSPG information is found on the [PDE Website](#).

## In National News...

**Rescinding Civil Rights Guidance** – U.S. Secretary of Education Betsy DeVos has rescinded guidance created by the Obama administration to ensure that students of color aren’t disciplined more harshly than their peers. The 2014 guidance was jointly issued by the Obama-era Education and Justice Departments. A nonbinding document, the guidance suggested that schools could run

afoul of civil rights laws if they disciplined students of color at higher rates than other students. Perhaps its most controversial element was its assertion that schools' discipline policies could violate those laws if they had a "disparate impact" on disciplinary actions for different groups of students, even if the policies were written without discriminatory intent. *Read the rest of the story:* [“Betsy DeVos Revokes Obama Discipline Guidance Designed to Protect Students of Color”](#) (from *Education Week*, 12/31/18).

**Statistics on America's Schools** – How many students are in the nation's schools? Who are they? Where are they? *Education Week* offers a look at these and other education data (including a look at teachers and school spending). [Click here](#) for the overview.

### In News Across the Nation...

**Washington State: Changing School Start Times** – Many American teenagers try to put in a full day of school, homework, after-school activities, sports and college prep on too little sleep. As evidence grows that chronic sleep deprivation puts teens at risk for physical and mental health problems, there is increasing pressure on school districts around the country to consider a later start time. In Seattle, school and city officials recently made the shift. Beginning with the 2016-2017 school year, the district moved the official start times for middle and high schools nearly an hour later, from 7:50 a.m. to 8:45 a.m. This was no easy feat; it meant rescheduling extracurricular activities and bus routes. But the bottom line goal was met: Teenagers used the extra time to sleep in. The results: an improvement in grades and a reduction in tardiness and absences. *Read the rest of the story:* [“Sleepless No More In Seattle — Later School Start Time Pays Off For Teens”](#) (from NPR, 12/12/18).

### On the Calendar...

Jan. 8-9	New Superintendents' Academy Session 3 (PASA office)
Jan. 10	PASA Webinar: Path to Contemporary Content Creators
Jan. 15	PASA Technology Committee meeting (virtual)
Jan. 17	PA Superintendent of the Year Luncheon (Latrobe)
Jan. 21	PASA office closed