



Pennsylvania Association of School Administrators
Proud Leadership for Pennsylvania Schools

Education Update

March 11, 2019

In Funding and Finance News...

Appropriations Hearings on Education – A month after Governor Wolf gave his budget address to announce his proposed 2019-20 state budget, PDE sat down with the House and Senate Appropriations Committees to explain the governor's proposal and his education priorities. While each chamber's Appropriations Committee has its own personality in terms of the tone and tenor of the hearings, both hearings were relatively similar in terms of the scope of issues raised and discussed.

The proposed \$45,000 minimum teacher salary was discussed at length in both chambers with questions raised about the broad impact on LEAs. Basic education funding, special education funding and school construction were hot topics, along with charter school reform, transportation, early childhood education, safety and library funding.

If you missed the hearings, they are available online for viewing. Click on the links below to read PDE's testimony or to watch the videos:

* [PDE testimony](#)

* [House Appropriations budget hearing with PDE](#)

* Senate Appropriations budget hearing with PDE: [Part 1](#), [Part 2](#)

In Safety and Security News...

Student Support vs. Focus on Shootings – As policymakers call for more school police in response to safety concerns, a new analysis of federal data shows that many students don't have access to other kinds of staff necessary for safety and support—staff like school nurses, social workers, and psychologists. As a result of safety discussions that focus on shootings, rather than the broader range of safety concerns and student needs, "schools are under-resourced and students are over-criminalized," says the report, released Monday by the ACLU. The analysis also found that disproportionately high arrest rates for students of color and students with disabilities are continuing, while there was a 17 percent growth in school-based referrals to law enforcement from 2013-14 to 2015-16. "The consequences for these funding decisions fall on the most vulnerable students," the report says. *Read the rest of the story: ["1.7 Million Students Attend Schools With Police But No Counselors, New Data Show"](#)* (from *Education Week*, 3/4/19).

In Legislative News...

Legislative Schedule – With budget hearings concluded, the House is back in Harrisburg this week for three days of session. We're starting the long (but, hopefully, not too long) process of moving towards a final 2019-20 state budget, and while there are miles to go on the budget front, plenty of issues are percolating in the legislature to keep lawmakers busy until a final budget deal is reached (hopefully, on or before June 30). While only the House is back in town this week, they have plenty of issues on their plate in terms of Committee efforts.

This Week's Committee Schedule –

Monday, March 11

House Education: The House Education Committee will hold its first meeting of the new session today to consider a bipartisan career-and-technical education and workforce development bills. This will be the first formal meeting of the newly formed committee under the leadership of Rep. Curt Sonney (R-Erie). Bills on the agenda are:

* **[HB 265](#): Articulation Agreements.** The bill would expand an established database that allows students and potential students to plan where courses, programs, certificates, and diplomas transfer among public schools and institutions of higher education. ***PASA supports this bill but would like clarification as to what is expected from public school districts in the interim reports.*** *Most of the data that is required in HB 265 seems to be housed with the higher education institutions. We recommend that the public school district mandate be limited to uploading of district articulation agreements to the Department. All other data and reports should come from the higher education institutions.*

* **[HB 297](#): Workforce Information.** The bill would require the PA Department of Education to develop materials outlining workforce needs including training opportunities and future earning potential. In addition, school entities will allow for community colleges and other technical and/or trade schools to attend career/college fairs. ***PASA opposes this bill as written.*** *While we agree that students should be provided full access to information and materials regarding a variety of career options, including the military, skilled trades, and four-year degrees, the logistics of this bill are problematic. School officials must have discretion on how and when to distribute career information and schedule career presentations for students. Making it mandatory that all career area representatives will have an opportunity to speak with all students in grades 4-12 annually at their school or other location is a logistical concern for school leaders. The management of multiple requests for presentations by career representatives could significantly detract from instructional time in the classroom. We recommend that the language of the bill be modified to allow for local control of how career information is screened and distributed to students, and that presentations be scheduled in a manner that is not disruptive to the educational program of the school.*

* **[HB 334](#): Agriculture Education.** The bill would require PDE to establish a standard application for a public school entity to seek approval to establish or renew a CIP (classification of instructional programs) and establish guidelines for student credit. ***PASA supports this bill.***

* **[HB 393](#): Career Resources.** The bill would create an online career resource center.

* **[HB 394](#): Program Inventory.** The bill would require PDE to inventory workforce development programs offered at secondary and postsecondary institutions. ***PASA supports this bill.***

* **[HB 395](#): Advisory Committees.** The bill would require CTE programs to establish occupational advisory committees. ***PASA supports this bill.***

* **[HB 396](#): Workforce Development Boards.** The bill would add at least one member to each Workforce Development Board. ***PASA supports this bill.***

* **[HB 522](#): CTE Tax Credits.** The bill would provide tax credits to businesses that contribute to career and technical partnership organizations, including funds for scholarships or equipment purchases. (The program is modeled after the Educational Improvement Tax Credit Program.) ***PASA is neutral on this bill.*** *We are wary of tax credit programs as they take money from the general fund that could be used for BEF, SEF, and CTE funding. We appreciate that the latest version of this bill moves away from individual scholarship grants and provides tax credit donations to CTE's for the purchase of equipment and resources for their instructional programs. However, we would prefer that more money be placed in the CTE formula instead of initiating this new EITC program.*

Tuesday, March 12

House Judiciary, to consider the following:

* **[SB 113](#): Pension Forfeiture.** The bill provides for forfeiture of public pension benefits for offenses punishable by more than five years of imprisonment or classified as a felony.

* **[HB 97](#): Nicotine Products and School Property.** The bill amends the Criminal Code to make it an offense to sell nicotine products and electronic nicotine delivery systems to minors and for minors to purchase or attempt to purchase nicotine products or electronic nicotine delivery systems. It also makes it an offense to possess or use nicotine products or electronic nicotine delivery systems in a school, on a school bus or on school property. (The bill is aimed at controlling the sale of “vaping” products to minors and their use on school property.)

Wednesday, March 13

House Finance, to consider the following:

* **[HB 330](#): Taxpayer Relief.** The bill makes technical corrections to the Taxpayer Relief Act in recognition of the 2017 PA Constitutional amendment to allow for an increase in the homestead/farmstead allocation of up to 100% of the assessed value of an individual property.

In State News...

Petition Re: Charter Appeals Board – A petition calls for the Pennsylvania Charter Appeal Board (CAB) to suspend voting until Democratic Gov. Wolf has appointed new members. The board, which has the authority to reverse local school districts’ decisions to deny new charter schools or close existing charters, is still filled with appointees of former Gov. Tom Corbett, a Republican who lost to Wolf in November 2014. The sitting CAB members’ terms have all expired. Public education advocates are frustrated with Wolf for not replacing Corbett’s CAB appointees. One of those advocacy organizations, Public Citizens for Children & Youth, is now circulating a petition that demands that Wolf place a moratorium on all proceedings of the six-seat appeal board until Wolf has made new appointments. The board currently has five members; one seat is vacant. *Read the rest of the story:* [“Petition Calls for Pa. Charter Appeal Board To Cease Operating, Pending New Appointees”](#) (from *the notebook.org*, 3/6/19).

Discrepancies in Student Demographics – Philadelphia’s traditional charter schools enroll a smaller share of the city’s most disadvantaged students – those from the most poverty-stricken families, those who have special needs, and English language learners – than District-run schools do, according to a new report from the Education Law Center. The findings suggest that the 58 schools “are not sharing equitably in the responsibility of educating all students,” the report said. Charter proponents pushed back on the report’s conclusions and data analysis. “We share ELC’s concerns around segregation and equitable access to high-quality schools, but charter schools are part of the solution, not the problem,” wrote Stephen DeMaura, executive director of Excellent Schools PA, in an email. *Read the rest of the story:* [“ELC Report Says Charters Are More Segregated, Serve Relatively Fewer Students with the Highest Needs”](#) (from *the notebook.com*, 3/5/19).

In National News...

School ‘Choice’ / Backdoor Vouchers –

*** Sen. Toomey and School Choice:** Sen. Pat Toomey of Pennsylvania cosponsored legislation introduced last week by Sen. Ted Cruz, R-Texas, that encourages contributions to organizations providing scholarships to students seeking an education that better suits their needs. The “Education Freedom Scholarships and Opportunity Act” establishes an annual \$5 billion federal tax credit for donations to organizations that provide school choice scholarships to students. Under the proposal, Pennsylvania would receive \$161.3 million in tax credits per year. The credit is flexible for states, and could be used to fund, for example, tuition, tutoring costs, or homeschooling costs for Pennsylvania families. (from a press release, 3/6/19)

*** 'Inevitable' Backdoor Vouchers:** It's "inevitable" that Congress will, at some point, pass a proposal similar to the tax-credit scholarship plan that U.S. Secretary of Education Betsy DeVos supports a top department official told a conservative think tank. Jim Blew, the assistant secretary for planning, evaluation, and policy analysis, said he realizes the legislation, which would give individuals and companies a tax break for donating to scholarship granting organizations, won't pass "next month." "We know there's a longer battle here," Blew said on "The Report Card," a podcast run by the American Enterprise Institute. "We actually believe that enacting this bill is inevitable. The public, the constituents of our members of Congress are strong supporters of having more choices. ... Eventually we will win this battle." *Read the rest of the story: ["Top Trump Education Official: Federal Tax-Credit Scholarships Are 'Inevitable'"](#)* (from *Education Week*, 3/7/19).

Ruling on Delayed Special Education Rules – The U.S. Department of Education made an "arbitrary and capricious" decision when it decided last year to delay an Obama-era rule that would closely examine how minority students are identified and served in special education, a federal judge in Washington ruled last Thursday. U.S. District Court Judge Tanya Chutkan's decision vacates the Education Department's delaying action because it violates the Administrative Procedure Act, which governs how federal agencies propose and implement regulations. The decision is a win for the Council for Parent Advocates and Attorneys, which sued the Education Department after it announced the delay. COPAA said that putting the rules on hold would cut down on the number of districts that would be required to review their policies, practices, and procedures around special education identification and services for minority students. *Read the rest of the story: ["Education Department Can't Delay Special Education Bias Rule, Judge Says"](#)* (from *Education Week*, 3/7/19).

Climate Change, Politics and Curriculum – As climate change becomes a hotter topic in American classrooms, politicians around the country are pushing back against the solid scientific consensus that global warming is real, dire and man-made. Of the more than a dozen such measures proposed so far this year, some already have failed. But they have emerged this year in growing numbers, many of them inspired or directly encouraged by a pair of advocacy groups, the Discovery Institute and the Heartland Institute. Science education organizations and climate scientists have blasted such proposals for sowing confusion and doubt on a topic of global urgency. "These efforts are dangerous and require vigilance in the academic community to make sure that they don't succeed," said Michael Mann, director of the Earth System Science Center at Penn State University. *Read the rest of the story: ["School Lessons Targeted by Climate Change Doubters"](#)* (from the AP, as published on *triblive.com*, 3/6/19).

The Costs of Non-Immunization – The effects of an ongoing measles outbreak centered in Washington State have spread well beyond the patients who've contracted the virus, creating logistical challenges for schools and public health officials, who've spent \$1 million to contain the illness. School-age vaccine mandates have been credited with practically eradicating many severe illnesses. In 2000, for example, public health officials declared that measles had been eliminated. But some parents' refusal to vaccinate their children—fueled by misinformation and a distrust in public institutions—has once again given those diseases a foothold in some communities as vaccination rates fall below recommended thresholds, those officials say. *Read the rest of the*

story: [“When Measles Breaks Out, Unvaccinated Kids Send Schools Scrambling”](#) (from *Education Week*, 3/5/19).

Civics Education – While most states require students to study civics in some sort of capacity, just eight mandate a yearlong civics or government class as a graduation requirement, according to a 2018 50-state survey by *Education Week*. But that number may soon grow as a flurry of civics education bills inch through state legislatures this year and other states move to expand or implement civic education requirements already in place. *Education Week’s* survey last year found three states—Washington, Nevada and Pennsylvania—that are already on board to begin expanding their civics requirements as soon as this year. *Read the rest of the story: [“Civics Education Bills Are on Legislative Agendas in Seven States”](#)* (from *Education Week*, 3/5/19).

Across the Nation...

Texas: Financial Rewards for Achievement – Under a proposal being prepared by legislative leaders, the state would set aside \$800 million annually to reward districts that have various strong outcomes. In decades past, extra federal and state money across the nation has been distributed to districts that struggle academically. Texas is proposing to, in effect, flip that model on its head by spending more money on districts that meet certain state standards and less money on those that don’t. But critics in Texas say such an experiment would result in the state shoveling even more money toward already wealthy and academically successful districts, further punish impoverished and academically struggling districts, and give an incentive for superintendents to attempt to game the system. *Read the rest of the story: [“Texas Republicans Eye Cash Rewards for Districts”](#)* (from *Education Week*, 3/5/19).

On the Calendar...

March 12	Technology Committee meeting (virtual)
March 17-18	PASA Leadership Forum (Harrisburg)
March 21	PASA Webinar: Leadership Study – Changing School Start Time
March 26	Women’s Caucus Board meeting