



Pennsylvania Association of School Administrators
Proud Leadership for Pennsylvania Schools

Education Update

June 10, 2019

In Funding & Finance News...

PASBO/PASA School District Report – Last week PASA and the PA Association of School Business Officials (PASBO) released the latest iteration of their school district budget report, which reveals that the financial condition in many districts remains tenuous and that greater state support for education is needed. The budget report is based on survey responses from school districts along with the publicly available data pulled from the Annual Financial Reports and General Fund Budgets submitted by all 500 school districts.

The data tells the story of growing school district fiscal stress tied most significantly to rising mandated costs for charter school tuition, special education and employee pensions. The report highlights the \$704 million increase in just these three costs alone in 2017-18, costs that outpaced increases in state funding and accounted for \$0.87 of every new dollar in state funding *and* local property tax revenue last year.

Between 2016-17 and 2017-18, charter school tuition grew by 10% to \$1.8 billion, pension costs increased by nearly 11% to \$3.7 billion, and special education costs grew by 4.26% to \$4.6 billion. The resulting education deficit – the difference between mandated cost increases and related state funding increases – grew to \$2.43 billion, with those increased costs covered through property tax increases and program and staff reductions.

[Click here](#) to read the report.

Sobering Study of PA Charter and Cyber Charter Schools – Pennsylvania's charter school debate attracts a lot of heated rhetoric. But this week, the conversation got some cold, hard numbers. The Center for Research on Education Outcomes, a group based at Stanford University, released a [deep dive](#) into Pennsylvania's charter schools, which now serve roughly 140,000 students. CREDO found that students in charter schools did about as well as their public school peers in reading. And on math tests, charter students actually fared worse. A student at a charter school in Pennsylvania received the equivalent of "30 fewer days of learning in math" each school year, according to CREDO. Those middling results come at a cost. Taxpayers spend over \$1.5 billion each year on charter schools, and studies suggest increased charter enrollment creates a financial burden for traditional students. Also, in Pennsylvania, cyber charter schools educate about a quarter of all students who attend charter schools. CREDO's analysis suggests they don't educate these students well. The average student at a cyber charter in Pennsylvania lost 106 days of learning in reading and 118 days in math compared to their "twins" in traditional public schools. *Read the rest of the story: ["Cyber Charters in Pa. Are Wildly Ineffective, and 3 Other Takeaways from New Stanford Study"](#)* (from WHY, 6/5/19).

May Revenues – Pennsylvania collected \$2.6 billion in General Fund revenue in May, which was \$14.9 million, or 0.6 percent, less than anticipated. Fiscal year-to-date General Fund collections total \$31.8 billion, which is \$813.3 million, or 2.6 percent, above estimate. Since the start of the 2018-19 fiscal year, overall tax revenue is \$2 billion, or 6.8 percent, more than was collected in the same period of the last fiscal year. (from a PA Department of Revenue press release)

In Safety & Security News...

Arrest in the Parkland Shooting – Scot Peterson, the school security officer branded a coward for his inaction during the massacre at Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School, has been arrested for neglect of duty, Broward County Sheriff Gregory Tony announced last Tuesday. Peterson's arrest comes after a 15-month investigation by the Florida Department of Law Enforcement and the Broward State Attorney's Office. *Read the rest of the story: ["Ex-School Deputy Scot Peterson Arrested on Charges of Neglect of Duty in Parkland Massacre"](#)* (from *Education Week*, 6/4/19).

In Legislative News...

Legislative Schedule – Both the House and Senate are in session again this week – and legislative activity has definitely picked up speed, with numerous bills now on committee schedules this week and many others pending floor action. The list is long! Negotiations on the budget – including compromises on issues that will ensure budget passage – are beginning behind the scenes. The next three weeks are going to be hectic!

THIS WEEK: Charter School Bills – This week the House is expected to work on the four charter school bills pending in that chamber, specifically developing amendment language that would garner sufficient support to pass. [Click here](#) to access the May 20 Education Update to read a summary of the four bills as approved by the House Education Committee last month.

PASA supports HB 355, which concerns ethics requirements for charter school boards. However, **PASA opposes both HB 356 and HB 357**, as they restrict school board due-diligence regarding consideration of charter applications, restrict the ability of school boards in selling unused buildings, and provide charters with additional flexibility for expansion and less restrictions in applications. **PASA also is deeply concerned with HB 358**, as it has the potential for charter schools to profit from dual-enrollment contracts with higher education institutions.

PASA continues to oppose charter school reform that does not also include funding reform for charter schools. None of these bills address the funding issue.

Testimony on Compulsory School Age – During a public hearing last week before the House Education Committee, **Dr. Richard Fry**, Superintendent of the Big Spring SD and PASA President, testified in favor of Gov. Wolf’s proposal to lower the compulsory age of attendance from eight to six years of age and raise the age of dropout from 17 to 18 years of age. “Pennsylvania should join a growing number of states that have updated their compulsory attendance laws to ensure students receive a minimum of twelve years of education before having the ability to withdraw from their formal education,” he said. [Click here](#) to read his testimony.

Last Week’s Bill Action –

* **HB 49: Financial Literacy; amended on the House floor and re-referred to the House Appropriations Committee.** The bill would require public schools to allow students in grades 9-12 to apply up to one credit earned for successfully completing a personal financial literacy course to satisfy their social studies, family and consumer science, mathematics or business education credit requirement for graduation. The school has the discretion to determine the graduation credit requirement to which the credit earned shall be applied. As amended, the bill clarifies that a student would not be permitted to apply more than one credit earned in a personal financial literacy course toward the student’s mathematics credit requirement for graduation.
- **PASA supports this bill.**

* **HB 364: School Vehicle Lights; amended on the House floor and passed, 196-0.** The bill would authorize the use of revolving or flashing yellow lights for school vehicles smaller than school buses that transport school students, such as vans and mini-vans. The lights could only be activated when the vehicle is preparing to stop or is stopped to load and unload students.
- **PASA supports the option to utilize these lights.**

* **HB 672: Mental Health Treatment Age of Consent; passed unanimously by the House.** The bill clarifies age of consent authority related to inpatient mental health treatment by granting to parents and guardians of minors less than 18 the authority to consent to such treatment of the minor child and not require the minor’s consent to such treatment. The bill also clarifies that a minor between ages 14-18 may consent to their own voluntary inpatient health treatment without the consent of a parent or guardian.

* **HB 800: EITC Expansion; approved by the Senate Education Committee, 8-3.** The bill would increase the amount of tax credits available under the Educational Improvement Tax Credit (EITC) program by \$100 million to \$210 million in 2019-20 and also would provide for an annual increase of 10%. The prime sponsor of HB 800 is Rep. Mike Turzai (R-Allegheny), Speaker of the House, who indicates in the [sponsorship memo](#) circulated for the bill that the intention of increasing funds available for private school tuition is to “strengthen school choice opportunities.” [Click here](#) to see how committee members voted on this bill.

- **PASA opposes state and federal legislation that would expand voucher or tuition tax credit plans and**

strongly supports adoption of accountability measures to determine the effectiveness of the investment of state tax credits (EITC) to support enrollment of students in private schools.

* **[HB 1210](#)**: **Outdate Provisions in the School Code**; approved by the Senate Education Committee. The bills would repeal and remove provisions from the School Code that are outdated or inconsistent with current practice, regulation or law.

- **PASA supports this bill.**

* **[HB 1514](#)**: **Farm-to-School Program**; approved unanimously by the House Agriculture & Rural Affairs Committee. The bill would create a farm-to-school program to educate PreK-5th graders and their families about healthy eating and local agriculture awareness. The bill would allow school entities to apply for competitive grants of up to 75 percent of actual cost to school entities to develop those programs. However, the final grant award could be less than the requested amount.

* **[SB 115](#)**: **CPR Curriculum**; Senate concurred in a House amendment; bill to be sent to the governor. The bill, passed by the Senate 45-0, requires PDE and the Department of Health to develop a model curriculum and guidelines for CPR instruction for students in grades 9-12.

- **PASA supports this bill as it allows for optional instruction.**

* **[SB 116](#)**: **Limits on State Spending**; approved by the Senate Finance Committee in a partisan vote, with all Democrats voting in opposition. The bill would amend the Pennsylvania Constitution to establish the "Taxpayer Protection Act" to control future increases in state government spending by indexing it to two standards of measure, with the lower of the two determining the rate of spending. The standards of measure are: the average change in personal income for the three preceding calendar years or the average inflation rate plus the average percentage change in state population over the three preceding years (with exceptions for certain extraordinary circumstances). The General Assembly could exceed that limit in any year only through a supermajority vote in both chambers. As a proposed Constitutional amendment, the bill would require passage by the General Assembly in two consecutive legislative sessions before being placed on the ballot and receiving approval by voters.

- **PASA is concerned that limits on state spending could adversely affect state funding of public education.**

* **[SB 462](#)**: **Outdate School Code Provisions**; amended and approved by the Senate Education Committee. The bill would repeal provisions of the School Code that were enacted into law when the act was originally approved in 1949 and are no longer necessary or relevant and likewise repeal provisions that are antiquated or have been superseded by subsequent changes to the law.

- **PASA supports this bill.**

* **[SB 536](#)**: **Higher Education Funding Commission**; amended and approved by the Senate Education Committee. The bill would establish a higher education commission similar to the Basic Education Funding Commission to study the cost of and funding for higher education and make recommendations.

* **[SB 590](#)**: **Charter School Funding**; approved unanimously by the Senate Education Committee. The bill would create the Charter School Funding Advisory Commission to review and make recommendations concerning charter school funding and related issues.

- **PASA does not oppose the bill. However, PASA supports immediate action to address the cost of cyber charter tuition.**

* **[SB 700](#)**: **PlanCon System**; approved unanimously by the Senate Education Committee. The bill would provide for construction and renovation of buildings by school entities by utilizing [recommendations](#) from the 2018 PlanCon Advisory Committee.

- **PASA supports the recommendations of the advisory committee, but urges the General Assembly to appropriate corresponding funding to implement the program.**

This Week's Committee Schedule –

Monday, June 10

The **House Education Committee** is scheduled to consider:

* **HB 994: Dental Screenings.** The bill amends the School Code to allow school districts to utilize a Public Health Dental Hygiene Practitioner (PHDHP) to fulfill the requirements of Section 1403 of the Public School Code relating to dental screenings and dental hygiene.

- **PASA supports this bill.**

* **SB 144: Telepresence Grants.** The bill amends the School Code establishing the Keystone Telepresence Education Grant Program that will give intermediate units access to a maximum of \$300,000 in funds to purchase telepresence equipment to support homebound students facing serious medical conditions. This legislation requires that PDE utilize undistributed funds not expended, encumbered or committed from appropriations made to the department for grants and subsidies, and therefore would not create a new expenditure for the Commonwealth. (The bill was passed by the Senate unanimously.)

- **PASA supports this bill.**

The **House Finance Committee** is scheduled to consider:

* **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. (The bill was passed by the House unanimously.)

Tuesday, June 11

The **Senate Education Committee** is scheduled to consider:

* **SB 200: Trauma-Informed Education Initiative.** The bill would establish a new, trauma-informed system of education in Pennsylvania by increasing the required training hours for newly elected school board members from four hours to five hours and requiring training on evidence-based and evidence-informed trauma-informed approaches to education; increasing the advanced training requirement hours required for school board members from two to three hours, with a minimum of one hour of this training on trauma-informed approaches to education. The bill also would require a minimum of one hour of required continuing professional development for professional educators to be on trauma-informed approaches to education, make requirements on the content of in-service and pre-service training for educators.

- **PASA supports providing trauma-informed education training for school board members and school personnel but would like to work with the author to better operationalize the mandated training aspects of the bill and limit the responsibilities of school districts to student issues.**

* **SB 723: Personal Finance Course Credit.** The bill would require public schools to allow students in grades 9-12, to apply up to one personal finance credit towards satisfying their social studies, family and consumer science, mathematics or business education credit requirement for graduation. The public school has the discretion to determine the graduation credit requirement to which the credit earned shall be applied.

- **PASA supports this bill, but cautions school districts on granting a math credit for personal finance courses as they may not be congruent with the Pennsylvania Math Standards.**

* **SB 729: Threat Assessment Teams.** The bill would require all public schools to create at least one threat assessment team and require the School Safety and Security Committee in PCCD to create a threat assessment task force to support the development and ongoing work of threat assessment teams with a duty to develop best practices for public school entities to use in assessing and responding to threats, develop and offer training programs and informational materials, and create model procedures and guidelines for threat assessment teams.

- **PASA supports this bill and believes that the threat assessment team piece can be integrated as part of existing school team structures. PASA further supports the two-year implementation timeline to give school districts ample opportunity to properly train and prepare their staff to participate on Threat Assessment Teams.**

* **HB 297: Workforce Information.** As passed by the House, 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. The bill narrows the access requirement to those occupations defined as “publicly identified priority occupations.” These are defined as “high-wage and high-skill for which there is excess employer demand as may be included in the Department of Labor and Industry’s current year’s high-priority or in-demand occupations list or the State System of Higher Education’s workforce needs assessment, and require a credential, certification, licensing, postsecondary training, associate’s degree, Bachelor’s degree, Master’s Degree or Doctoral or first professional degree.” It also narrows the scope of the overall access requirement by requiring that materials concerning these occupations be “made available” to students and not require direct distribution.

- 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. Even with amendments to the bill, 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 522: CTE Tax Credits.** As passed by the House, 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.) The bill also provides an escalator clause for an automatic increase annually. While the bill provides an initial \$10M in tax credits initially, the amendment would increase the available amount annually by \$5M if at least 90 percent of those tax credits were claimed in the preceding year.

- 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.

Wednesday, June 12

The **House Aging and Older Adult Services Committee** will consider:

* **HB 298: Statewide Mentor Volunteer Program.** The bill would require the PDE to create and maintain a statewide mentor program for older adults by establishing a single certified list of retired volunteers with skills in specific areas who would be willing to share their life-lessons, experience and hobbies with junior and high school students interested in enhancing their knowledge and skill sets. Older adults wishing to participate would be required to undergo criminal background checks and any other necessary requirements put forth by their school district.

The **House State Government Committee** will consider:

* **HB 1069: Public Meeting Agendas.** The bill would amend the Sunshine Act to require public agencies, including school districts, to post the agenda of action items to be considered at least 24 hours prior to the public meeting and post that agenda on the agencies website and at the meeting and make copies available to individuals attending the meeting. No items could be considered if they are not posted 24 hours in advance except to address emergency business related to a “clear and present danger to life or property” or if the matter is de minimis in nature and does not involve contracts or the expenditure of funds.

The **Senate Education Committee** will hold a public hearing on innovation in education.

In State News...

Op-Ed: The Need for Charter School Reform – In a recent op-ed published in *The Morning Call*, superintendents **Thomas Parker** (Allentown) and **Joe Roy** (Bethlehem Area) call for charter school reform. “There is little that is more fundamental or more vital to Pennsylvania’s future prosperity than the quality of its public schools, both district and charter,” they write. “For Pennsylvania to attract new businesses and grow job opportunities for residents, its public schools must provide a high-quality education that prepares all students to become the leaders, innovators and entrepreneurs of tomorrow. But the commonwealth’s charter school law undermines this possibility for thousands of public school students. Auditor General Eugene DePasquale called the 1997 charter law ‘the worst in the nation.’ We couldn’t agree more. Our message to the General Assembly is clear: The need to overhaul Pennsylvania’s charter school law is real and urgent. School districts need better tools to hold charter school operators accountable to families and taxpayers.” *Read the rest of their op-ed: [“Your View by Allentown, Bethlehem Superintendents: Why Tighter Controls Are Needed for Charter Schools”](#)* (6/1/19).

In National News...

Quality Counts 2019: School Finance/State Report Cards – For policymakers and taxpayers alike, school finance is an uneasy balance between effort—how much they’re willing or able to spend—and equity, or how fairly that money gets spread around to schools and districts. The most recent analysis from the Education Week Research Center shows that the nation as a whole and many individual states are doing a far better job on the equity side of the equation than they are on the sheer spending side of things. The analysis, based on four measures of overall spending and four equity metrics, gives the nation a grade of C this year in school finance, with a score of 74.9 out of 100 possible points. That’s up 0.5 points since last year. Still, nearly half the states (24) finish with grades between C-minus and D-minus. *Read the rest of the story: [“Big Disconnect Between How Much Money K-12 Gets and How Fairly It’s Spent”](#)* (from *Education Week*, 6/4/19).

Privilege vs. Ability – In a fair society, people’s successes should reflect their talent and hard work. But that’s not the case in the United States today. Instead, a child’s likelihood of becoming a college graduate and achieving early career success depends more on his or her family’s bank account and social status than on talent. In short, in America, it is better to be born rich than smart. Whether affluent or poor, regardless of race or ethnicity, any student can stumble along the academic pathway. That said, affluent students have the best odds of never falling behind. But the fact that advantaged students regularly fall and recover and that some disadvantaged students do make it despite the odds gives us reason for optimism. Education quality does make a difference. *Read the rest of the story: [“Better to Be Born Rich Than Smart: Education Must Answer for Systemic Inequality”](#)* (from *Education Week*, 6/4/19).

Across the Nation...

California: Proposed Limits on Charter Start-Ups – California lawmakers stirred up a fierce debate about funding, accountability, and school choice by considering legislation that would put new limits on the state’s charter schools and give districts broader discretion to deny their applications. The four bills have been closely watched by state and national groups on both sides of the charter school debate, given fresh fire through local activism, charter-skeptical state leaders, and even presidential campaign rhetoric. *Read the rest of the story: [“Showdown in California over Proposed Charter School Curbs”](#)* (from *Education Week*, 6/3/19).

On the Calendar...

June 18	PASA Advocacy Day (Capitol)
June 19	PASA Retiree Luncheon (PASA office)
July 4	PASA office closed
July 11-12	New Superintendents’ Academy Part 1 (PASA office)