



Pennsylvania Association of School Administrators
Proud Leadership for Pennsylvania Schools

Education Update February 12, 2018

Due to the President's Day holiday, the Update will be on hiatus next week. The next Update will be published on Feb. 26.

Vouchers...

The Real Story about 'School Choice' – Since 1990, parents in Wisconsin have been given state-funded vouchers to be used to educate their children in private schools. (The initial plan barred religious schools.) To date, about one-quarter of students - nearly 29,000 - have participated. Have vouchers worked as intended? According to an analysis conducted by The Wall Street Journal, they have as long as enrollment of voucher students has been kept low. In short, there is a tipping point beyond which there is little difference in performance between public and private schools. *Read the rest of the story: ["Vouchers Are Still an Issue in Milwaukee"](#)* (from *Education Week*, 2/7/18).

In Budget & Finance News...

2018-19 State Budget – Governor Wolf delivered his budget address last Tuesday, outlining spending priorities for 2018-19 in line with what he had announced the week prior. The proposed \$32.9 billion budget plan includes a \$1 billion spending increase, or 3.1 percent, including increases for education as follows:

- \$100 million increase in Basic Education;
- \$40 million increase in Pre-K Counts and Head Start;
- \$20 million increase for Special Education;
- \$15 million increase for the State System of Higher Education; and
- \$10 million increase for Career and Technical Education.

In both his budget address and in subsequent budget documents, Gov. Wolf noted that, over the past three years, his administration has identified ways to streamline government and generate cost-savings while still addressing the growing pension deficits, underfunding of public schools during the recession and decreased revenues. He noted that the 2018-19 budget plan limits base expenditure growth to less than \$685 million, while fully funding new mandated pension contributions and prioritizing investments in education, job training, fighting opioid addiction, quality child care and services for individuals with intellectual disabilities and autism. He did call again for a severance tax on natural gas extraction, something Republican leaders, particularly in the House, have refused to consider.

Another priority in the 2018-19 budget plan is workforce development, with the governor proposing a "PAsmart" initiative (\$50 million), a phased approach to strengthening workforce efforts at multiple state agencies while aligning their work with K-12 and higher education. The budget plan also includes a \$40 million increase in funds for developing 21st century jobs and skills by enhancing CT programs, in-demand career pathways, employer engagement in postsecondary education and enhanced computer science education at all levels.

[Click here](#) for more information on the governor's proposal. [Click here](#) for budget documents from the Department of Education.

Republican Response to the Budget – In response to the governor's proposal, Republican leaders in the House and Senate indicated that the proposed spending increase needs to be pared do, while expressing support for career readiness proposals and funding.

Legislative Budget Hearings – The House and Senate Appropriations Committees will begin hearings to review the proposed budget on February 20. The hearings are an opportunity for the Appropriations Committees of the General Assembly to learn about Governor Wolf's budgetary priorities and to ask questions to his administration about the needs and resources available for 2018-19. Budget hearings are available to watch live. The schedule for education hearings is as follows:

Senate Appropriations Committee:

- *PA Intermediate Units: February 20 @ 4pm
- *PA Department of Education: March 6 @ 10am
- *Budget Secretary: March 8 @ 1pm

House Appropriations Committee:

- *Career and Technical Education: February 26 @ 10am
- *PA Department of Education: March 5 @ 10am
- *Budget Secretary: March 8 @ 10am

The State Budget and District Budgets – In announcing a budget plan that included more money for Pennsylvania schools, Gov. Wolf this week trumpeted the growth in state education spending during his tenure. “The first thing I did when I got to Harrisburg was to draw a line in the sand on education,” Wolf told lawmakers during Tuesday’s budget address, as he declared that investments in schools were paying off. But the tide of expenses continues to wash over that line, school officials say. “Districts are still pretty much just treading water,” said Mark DiRocco, executive director of the Pennsylvania Association of School Administrators, citing increasing costs for pensions, special education, and charter-school payments. For the 2018-19 school year, the Wolf budget would increase basic-education funding by \$100 million; however, a significant chunk of that would be earmarked for the financially distressed Erie School District. “We need a lot more than \$100 million,” DiRocco said. School district pension costs are expected to increase next year by \$150 million. And while Wolf’s budget would add \$20 million to special education funding, those costs could go up by \$260 million, according to the Pennsylvania School Boards Association. But “we understand the governor’s in a tough position,” said DiRocco. Education advocates said they appreciate what Wolf has done to steer money to schools, which endured deep cuts under former Gov. Tom Corbett as federal stimulus money ran out. *Read the rest of the story:* [“Despite Funding Increases under Wolf, Pa. School Districts Still ‘Treading Water’”](#) (from *philly.com*, 2/8/18).

In Legislative News...

Session Schedule – The House and Senate stand in recess now until mid-March for appropriations hearings on the budget. The House is scheduled to return to voting session on March 12 and the Senate on March 19.

Lawmaker Sworn In – Last week Rep. Austin Davis (D-Allegheny) was sworn into office to represent the 35th legislative district. Davis, who won a special election on Jan. 23, replaces Marc Gergely, who resigned from the position as part of a plea deal involved in a guilty plea for conspiracy and illegal campaign contribution charges.

Re-Doing the Congressional Maps – Following last month’s PA Supreme Court decision that the current Congressional maps are unconstitutional, and failing to gain a stay of that order from either the PA court or the U.S. Supreme Court, House and Senate Republicans last Friday submitted to Gov. Wolf a new congressional district map for his review. The governor now has until February 15 to either agree to the new map or reject it. If the latter, the Court will redraw the maps in time for them to be in effect for the May primary.

In Last Week’s Action – Most of last week was taken up with work on the congressional maps. Some bills that did see action included the following:

***Size of the House:** [HB 153](#); **amended in the House.** The bill as introduced amends the Pennsylvania Constitution to reduce the size of the PA House from 203 members to 151 members. However, the House last week amended the bill to include in it a reduction in the size of the Senate from 50 members to 38 members. Why is that a problem? A bill that addressed only the size of the House (and identical to the original version of HB 153) passed in the last legislative session. So now, in order for a proposed Constitutional amendment to go to the voters, an identical bill must pass this session. Unless the House amendment is removed from HB 153, this bill will not be identical, thus requiring the issue to be delayed into the 2019-20 legislative session before it can go to the voters.

***EIT Collection:** [House Resolution 291](#); amended by the House Finance Committee. As amended, the bill directs the Department of Revenue, in consultation with the Department of Community & Economic Development and the Independent Fiscal Office, to conduct a study to examine the efficacy of replacing local EIT collection under Act 32 with a statewide EIT collection orchestrated by the Department of Revenue.

***Dyslexia Pilot Program:** [SB 776](#); re-referred to the Senate Appropriations Committee. The bill extends the Dyslexia and Early Literacy Intervention Pilot Program for an additional two years and increases the number of pilot schools from three to eight.

*** Firefighter Training:** [SB 955](#); passed by the Senate. The bill establishes a firefighter training pilot program to provide high school students with instruction through a partnership with community colleges.

In National News...

Weighted Student Funding Pilot – The U.S. Department of Education is officially opening up the "Weighted Student Funding Pilot" in the Every Student Succeeds Act. The department can allow up to 50 districts to participate initially, and ESSA leaves open the possibility of opening that up to more districts down the line. Participating districts can combine federal, state, and local dollars into a single funding stream tied to individual students. English-language learners, kids in poverty, students in special education—who cost more to educate—would carry with them more money than other students. Some districts, including Denver, are already using this type of formula with state and local dollars. *Read the rest of the story:* ["Betsy DeVos Opens Up ESSA Pilot Allowing Federal Money to Follow Students"](#) (from *Education Week*, 2/2/18).

Questions about Graduation Rates – The headlines made a big splash, and yet they were strangely familiar: Another school system was reporting a higher graduation rate than it deserved. The most recent scandal—in the District of Columbia—is just the latest example in a growing case file of school systems where investigators have uncovered bogus graduation-rate practices. Those revelations have unleashed a wave of questions about the pressures and incentives built into U.S. high schools, and fueled nagging doubts that states' rising high school graduation rates—and the country's current all-time-high rate of 84 percent—aren't what they seem. *Read the rest of the story:* ["D.C.'s Scandal and the Nationwide Problem of Fudging Graduation Numbers"](#) (from *Education Week*, 2/9/18).

On the Calendar...

Feb. 13 – PASA/PASBO Commonwealth Budget Forum (CAIU)
Feb. 14 – PASA/PASBO Commonwealth Budget Forum (Berks Co. I.U. 14)
Feb. 15 – PASA/PASBO Commonwealth Budget Forum (webinar)
Feb. 15-17 – AASA National Conference on Education (Nashville)
Feb. 19 – PASA office closed
Feb. 21 – PASA Webinar: Digital Learning)