



February 5, 2016

The General Assembly was not in session this week; both chambers will reconvene on Monday, Feb. 8. Gov. Wolf will present his 2016-17 state budget plan to a joint session of the General Assembly on Tuesday, Feb. 9.

PSBA Victory

Gov. Wolf signs bill to "push pause" on graduation requirements

This week Gov. Tom Wolf signed into law [Senate Bill 880](#) (Sen. Smucker, R-Lancaster), now **Act 1 of 2016**, legislation supported by PSBA that creates a two-year delay in the implementation of the Keystone Exams in Algebra 1, Biology, and English/Language Arts as a graduation requirement or a benchmark for the need to participation in a project-based assessment (PBA) until 2019.

PSBA applauds the General Assembly and the governor for the passage and enactment of the legislation. PSBA also thanks the many local school officials who contacted their legislators seeking support of the measure. In signing the bill, the governor acknowledged that "while we should have high academic and educational standards in the commonwealth, there have been issues with the implementation of the Keystone exams."

Act 1 also requires the PA Department of Education to investigate alternatives to the use of the Keystone Exams as a requirement for graduation and issue a report within six months (Aug. 3) to the House and Senate Education Committees. The report must contain a plan to implement alternative methods to demonstrate proficiency for graduation in addition to the Keystone Exams and PBAs; and improve and expedite the evaluation of PBAs. The plan also must ensure that no student is prohibited from participating in vocational-technical education or elective courses as a result of taking required supplemental instruction.

Governor proposes \$200 million in new education funding; PSBA calls for joint commitment to educating students



This week Gov. Wolf announced a \$200 million increase to basic education funding as part of his 2016-17 budget proposal that will be unveiled next Tuesday, Feb. 9. The investment, which represents a 3.3% increase, is in addition to the \$377 million increase contained within a 2015-16 budget framework plan put forth last fall but never implemented. The money would be distributed using the Fair Funding Formula created and unanimously adopted by the bipartisan Basic Education Funding

Commission in June 2015.

PSBA responded to the announcement, saying that the association "would encourage all sides to stay true to their joint commitment to make sure every child in Pennsylvania has a first-rate education. Despite the differences among the various parties, we hope all can agree that adequate funding is needed now as we near eight months without a state budget."

PSBA will continue working with both the governor and General Assembly on fair school funding and the end to this historic budget impasse. In addition, we continue to push for adoption of the Basic Education Funding formula that will help distribute whatever funding is provided in a fair and equitable way. The association and its members look forward to hearing more details from the governor during his budget address next week.



Secretary Rivera to present 2016-17 budget webinar next Friday, Feb. 12

There's still time to register! On Feb. 12 at noon, PSBA members are invited to an exclusive webinar with state Education Secretary Pedro Rivera and PSBA Assistant Executive Director of Public Policy John Callahan as they discuss the 2016-17 state budget plan that will be proposed by Gov. Wolf on Feb. 9. Participants will also learn about issues impacting public education related to the budget impasse and the recent release of emergency funding to school districts during this live, complimentary members-only webinar. **Click here for more details and to register [online](#)**

Latest News

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ESSA Update

U.S. Department of Education issues new guidance to states to help reduce testing

In continuing efforts to provide guidance on the transition to the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA), this week the U.S. Department of Education issued a letter to chief state school officers with guidance to help states identify and eliminate

low-quality, redundant or unhelpful testing.

The guidance outlines how existing funds under the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) may be used to help reduce testing in schools, and ensure efficacy and quality of assessments until the 2017-18 school year when provisions of the new ESSA are effective. [Click here to read the Feb. 2 letter from the department to chief state school officers.](#)

Part of the President's Testing Action Plan announced last October, the guidance provides examples of federal funds that states and school districts can use, such as Title I A, Title II A, Title III and Sec 6111 (grants for state assessments) to conduct assessments audits, support the appropriate assessment literacy, and increase the quality, transparency and timeliness of assessments.

In addition, the guidance establishes seven Principles for Good Assessments that promote alignment, quality, equity, fairness, transparency, multiple measures and family engagement. In short, the guidance foreshadows many of the changes coming in ESSA, and the department plans to issue revised guidance for the 2017-18 school year when changes to the formula and competitive grants under ESSA go into effect.

Last week the department issued a "Dear Colleague" letter regarding ESSA transition that provides details about flexibilities available in the 2016-17 school year. [Click here to read the Jan. 28 letter.](#)

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Other News

Pennsylvania to offer free Narcan to public schools

This week Gov. Tom Wolf announced that his administration has partnered with Adapt Pharma to increase statewide access to the naloxone drug, which can reverse the effects of an opioid overdose. Adapt will provide a free carton of Narcan Nasal Spray, one brand of naloxone, to all Pennsylvania public schools.

Pennsylvania is the first state to implement this program, sponsored by Adapt Pharma in partnership with the Clinton Health Matters Initiative, an Initiative of the Clinton Foundation. Pennsylvania public high schools will also have access to new educational materials and training developed by the National Association of School Nurses as part of the program.

Under this program, Adapt Pharma and the Clinton Foundation are offering every public high school in the country one free carton of NARCAN Nasal Spray. The distribution of the cartons will be facilitated by the Pennsylvania Department of Health through school nurses. Adapt Pharma has provided a grant to the National Association of School Nurses (NASN) to support their educational efforts around opioid overdose in schools. The grant will allow NASN to develop and disseminate educational materials to the nation's school nurses and the students and families

they work with every day.

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PA Revenue Department reports January tax collections above estimate

This week the PA Department of Revenue reported that the state collected \$2.5 billion in General Fund revenue in January, which was \$6.2 million, or 0.3%, more than anticipated. Fiscal year-to-date General Fund collections total \$15.9 billion, which is \$9.2 million, or 0.1% percent, above estimate.

Sales tax receipts totaled \$890.2 million for January, \$12.4 million above estimate. Year-to-date sales tax collections total \$5.8 billion, which is \$12.4 million, or 0.2%, more than anticipated. Personal income tax (PIT) revenue in January was \$1.2 billion, \$9 million above estimate. This brings year-to-date PIT collections to \$6.7 billion, which is \$9 million, or 0.1 percent, above estimate. [Click here to read the department's news release that contains more details.](#)

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Pennsylvania School Boards Association

400 Bent Creek Blvd.
Mechanicsburg, PA 17050

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