



February 25, 2016

*The Senate and House of Representatives remain adjourned until March 14 as the Senate and House Appropriations Committees convene hearings on specific components of Gov. Wolf's budget proposal. On Tuesday, March 8, the House and Senate Appropriations Committees will meet separately with the Department of Education.*



**Budget Update: PDE issues considerations for districts considering closure**

This week the PA Department of Education (PDE) sent to school districts a checklist of 11 issues to consider if contemplating a closure due to the budgetary concerns. Noting that "closure of a school district for lack of funds is an unprecedented event that has not been contemplated in the Public School Code," the department's advisory list is intended to provide structure to the decision-making process. PDE says that completion of the suggested activities will need a minimum of 60 days and require at least one formal action by the school board prior to closure.

Those activities include calculating 180 day/990 hour requirements to be met and loss of state and federal funding if not met. Districts also should review collective bargaining agreements, vendor contracts and other agreements and plan for payments due. In addition, districts should develop a plan to meet educational and transportation needs of all students, including students with disabilities, those in private placements, and those enrolled in charter schools. Districts should work with their solicitors through the process and notify PDE of the school board votes in favor of closure.

PSBA's legal staff is currently reviewing the document.

[Click here to see PDE's District Closure Considerations.](#)



**Advocacy Forum: Come to the Capitol on April 4**

Join PSBA and your fellow school directors for the third annual Advocacy Forum on Monday, April 4, 2016, at the State Capitol in Harrisburg. This year's event will highlight school districts' exemplary student programs. Hear from legislators on how advocacy makes a difference.

Learn tips on how to be an effective public education advocate. Meet with your legislators on public education. More details on the day's events will be available soon.

[Online advanced registration](#) will close on April 1, 4 p.m. On-site registrants are welcome.

## Latest News

### Regulatory News

- [Federal ED proposes new rule to improve equity in special education law](#)

### PDE News

- [PDE offers high school equivalency exam options](#)

### Regulatory News

#### **Federal ED proposes new rule to improve equity in special education law**

This week the U.S. Department of Education (ED) announced it is planning to publish a Notice of Proposed Rulemaking regarding the establishment of a standard methodology for states to use in addressing disproportionality under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), such as the "misidentification" and "overidentification" of students.

The proposal applies to IDEA (part B) grants to states and IDEA Preschool Grants for Children with Disabilities programs. The proposed rule would require states to implement a standard approach to compare racial and ethnic groups, with thresholds for determining when disparities have become significant. A district identified as having a significant disproportionality must set aside 15% of its IDEA, Part B funds to provide comprehensive coordinated early intervening services. Further, the policies, practices, and procedures of the district must be reviewed, and, if necessary, revised to ensure compliance with IDEA.

The proposal would broaden the allowable uses of the 15% set aside, currently used to fund early intervening services, to include services to students with and without disabilities, from ages 3 through grade 12. Currently, identified districts may only use these funds to support students without disabilities, and only in grades K-12.

Here are some links for detailed information (you may need to open in a new window):

[Click here to see the Notice of Proposed Rulemaking](#)

[Click here to see a Feb. 2016 report from ED on this issue.](#)

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## PDE News

### PDE offers high school equivalency exam options

This week the PA Department of Education (PDE) announced that the state has entered into partnerships with Educational Testing Service (ETS) to offer the HiSET® equivalency exam and with GED Testing Services (GTS) to offer the GED® exam. Under the agreement, Pennsylvanians who did not graduate from high school will be able to choose between the HiSET® exam and the GED® exam when taking their high school equivalency test. Both state-approved tests measure the skills needed to obtain equivalency and are recognized and accepted by colleges, employers, and the U.S. military.

Those who pass either test will receive the Commonwealth Secondary School Diploma (CSSD), Pennsylvania's official high school equivalency credential offered by PDE. The CSSD is available to state residents who do not possess a high school diploma and who have met criteria specified in the Pennsylvania Code (22 PA Code § 4.72).

The HiSET® exam, developed in 2014 by ETS and Iowa Testing Programs, is offered in 17 other states and four U.S. territories and is both paper- and computer-based. The GED® exam, developed in 1942 to test veterans of World War II for postsecondary readiness, has until now been Pennsylvania's sole testing option. In 2014, more than 2,000 passed the GED® exam, granting them new opportunities at postsecondary institutions and in the workforce.

For more information about the HiSET® exam, please visit [www.hiset.ets.org](http://www.hiset.ets.org). For more information about the CSSD and the GED®, [click here](#).

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### Pennsylvania School Boards Association

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