



Pennsylvania School Boards Association

# legislative report

September 29, 2016

*The Senate and House of Representatives were in session this week. Both chambers are now adjourned until Monday, Oct. 17.*



## **PSBA testifies on civics exit exam bill**

This week PSBA presented testimony at a joint hearing of the House Education and the House Veteran Affairs and Emergency Preparedness Committees on [House Bill 1858](#) (Rep. Kortz, D-Allegheny). The association raised concerns with the bill, which would mandate passage of the United States Citizenship Test on Civics as a graduation requirement for all students.

PSBA noted that Pennsylvania has established academic standards in social studies content areas, specifically including civics and government. The association believes that implementation of the standards and related assessments at the local level is critical and that current regulations address the policy objectives of House Bill 1858.

Further, PSBA opposes the creation of a new graduation exit exam at the very time the General Assembly, under Act 1 of 2016, has suspended the mandate for students to pass the series of high-stakes Keystone Exams in order to graduate. PSBA has consistently opposed high-stakes testing. Also raising objections to House Bill 1858 in their separate testimonies were the Pennsylvania Association of School Administrators (PASA), the Pennsylvania Principals Association, and the Pennsylvania State Education Association (PSEA).

[Click here to read PSBA's testimony.](#)

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Opiate Addiction

## **Gov. Wolf outlines priorities to address opioid epidemic, Senate passes opioid education bill**

This week Gov. Wolf addressed a joint session of the General Assembly to outline a collective plan to combat the opioid and heroin crisis facing Pennsylvania. The governor thanked legislators "for their dedication to ensuring that those suffering from the disease of addiction are getting the treatment that they need. With ten Pennsylvanians a day being lost to this horrible epidemic, working together for quick action is more important than ever." The governor outlined the following priorities:

- Strengthen the prescription drug monitoring program

- Improve and increase education
- Limit opioid prescriptions to emergency room patients and minors
- Insurance coverage for abuse deterrent opioids
- Establish a voluntary directive for patients if they do not want to be prescribed opioids.

Many of these issues have already been introduced as legislation and are moving through the General Assembly. [Click here for information about the bills introduced.](#)

In response, the Senate unanimously passed [Senate Bill 1212](#) (Sen Wozniak, D-Cambria) that creates the School Aged Children Opioid Awareness Education Program. Under the bill, school entities must develop an age-appropriate opioid awareness program into their existing curriculum for students in grades 6-12. The school also must provide four hours of training every five years to educators assigned to teach courses where such instruction has been incorporated. The state departments of Education, Health and Drug and Alcohol Programs, and at least one organization addressing child opioid education, will develop a model curriculum, guidelines and materials that school may choose to use.

PSBA supports Senate Bill 1212 because it will serve to benefit students, and it contains flexibility for school district implementation.

#### **PDE releases school-level PSSA and Keystone Exam results**



The PSSA is administered in grades 3 through 8 in English language arts and mathematics. The spring administration of the assessment was the second year that the test was aligned to the more rigorous PA Core Standards. The PSSA science assessments administered in grades 4 and 8 were unchanged.

The 2016 PSSA data indicates that more students are scoring proficient or advanced than in 2015 in nearly all categories of English language arts and math. Proficiency in math grew in every grade level, and 2016 was the first year there has been significant growth in math year over year since 2011. However, the statewide results also show there is more work to do to help the students scoring in the basic or below basic levels.

Student proficiency also rose on the state's three Keystone Exams in Literature, Biology, and Algebra I. While students continue to take the Keystone Exams to fulfill federal accountability requirements, there is a moratorium on their use as a statewide graduation requirement until 2019. The Department of Education recently recommended to the General Assembly its [recommendations](#) for replacing this requirement.

### **Latest News**

#### **Approved by the Senate Finance Committee**

- [Expanded earned income tax crediting](#)

#### **Approved by the Senate Appropriations Committee**

- [Task force on lead poisoning](#)

- [School attendance for children in foster care](#)

## **PDE News**

- [PDE reminds districts of need to submit transportation plans for foster care students](#)

## **PSBA News**

- [PSBA, education groups join to present statewide workshops on basic education funding](#)

## **Approved by the Senate Finance Committee**

### **Expanded earned income tax crediting**

[House Bill 245](#) (Rep. Dunbar, R-Westmoreland) amends the Local Tax Enabling Act to expand credits for earned income tax (EIT) payments to other states. As it was considered by the committee, the bill impacts school districts with residents working in other states in a manner that will cause districts to potentially lose millions of dollars. Any changes in EIT rates or any other earned income or net profits tax assessed under any other state law would be credited and allowed as a deduction from EIT liabilities.

The Senate Finance Committee amended the bill this week; PSBA is reviewing the latest version to determine the impact to districts and will continue to report on this issue.

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## **Approved by the Senate Appropriations Committee**

### **Task force on lead poisoning**

[Senate Bill 16](#) (Sen. Yudichak, D- Luzerne) creates a lead task force within the Joint State Government Commission to assess the prevalence of lead in schools, day-care centers, homes, pipelines and other places in which lead exposure is possible. The task force would make recommendations regarding legislative, regulatory or policy initiatives designed to protect the public health from lead exposure. Appointees to the task force would include one individual who works in maintenance in a school in an urban district and one who works in a school in a rural district. The report of the task force would be due by Dec. 31, 2017 and would be published in the *Pennsylvania Bulletin* for public access.

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## **School attendance for children in foster care**

[Senate Bill 1271](#) (Sen. Browne, R-Lehigh) creates a definition of "school stability" as the right of a child in foster care to attend either the school the child

currently attends or the school the child attended when initially placed by the courts. The bill requires the court to ensure that children in foster care remain in the school they attended immediately prior to placement, unless the court determines that remaining in the same school would be contrary to a child's safety or well-being. School districts must provide transportation in accordance with requirements of the School Code and any applicable contractual agreement. The provisions of Senate Bill 1271 are similar to federal law that requires child welfare agencies to coordinate with local education agencies to ensure that children remain in the school that they are enrolled in at the time of placement into foster care unless not in the child's best interest. ***See related story in PDE News.***

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## **PDE News**

### **PDE reminds districts of need to submit transportation plans for foster care students**

The PA Department of Education (PDE) recently issued a memo to school administrators regarding the need for them to establish transportation plans for foster care students by **Dec. 10, 2016**.

The federal [Every Student Succeeds Act \(ESSA\)](#) includes new provisions for children in foster care that complement requirements in the Fostering Connections Act of 2008. These provisions will take effect on Dec. 10, 2016. (Click here to read [joint guidance](#) released on June 23, 2016, from the U.S. Departments of Education and Health and Human Services.)

Prior to December 10, 2016, each school district will need to collaborate with local county Children and Youth agencies to establish a transportation plan for foster care youth. The PDE, in partnership with the PA Department of Human Services and the Center for Schools and Communities, will offer an informational webinar on Oct. 26, 2016, from 10:00 to 11:30 AM concerning transportation to foster care students. This webinar is approved for one hour of Act 48 credit. [Click here](#) to register for the webinar.

Questions should be directed to Ms. Carmen Medina, PDE Division Chief of Student Services, at 717-783-6464 or [cmedina@pa.gov](mailto:cmedina@pa.gov).

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## **PSBA News**

### **PSBA, education groups join to present statewide workshops on basic education funding**

After decades of haphazard education funding, PA now has a new permanent BEF formula to distribute state funding to school districts. PSBA, the PA Association of School Administrators (PASA), PA Association of School Business Officials (PASBO), the PA Principals Association, the PA Association of Rural and Small Schools (PARSS) and the PA Association of Intermediate Units (PAIU) are hosting 10 regional workshops for an in-depth discussion on the new formula.

[Click here for more information on the locations and to register.](#)

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**Pennsylvania School Boards Association**

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