



September 21, 2015

**PSBA NOTE:** Our apologies! This report sent earlier today did not contain the "Read More" link to the article regarding the State Board of Education update on the recommendations for gifted education. The link is now included.

#### **Stopgap budget plan passes Senate, moves to House**

### **STATE BUDGET**

Last week the Senate passed a series of three key bills intended as stopgap state budget plan that would provide about four months of support to state agencies and public schools. The bills were introduced and moved by Republican leadership, and all passed with party-line votes of 30-19. The bills are expected to be considered quickly by the House of Representatives this week and could be on Gov. Wolf's desk by Friday. The governor, however, has said he will veto a stopgap bill as an alternative to a final budget.

[Senate Bill 1000](#), based on the previously enacted HB1192, serves as a stopgap budget and generally provides four months of support to Commonwealth agencies with some exceptions. The bill provides 100% of the federal funds, 100% of the special funds and 100% of the General Fund debt service appropriations. The bill also provides 100% of the General Funds for avian influenza preparedness and 100% of the General Fund appropriation for the papal visit to Philadelphia as well as 50% of the General Fund appropriation for the Pennsylvania Higher Education Assistance Agency and about 50% percent of the full-year allocation for the state's County Child Welfare appropriation. In total, Senate Bill 1000 appropriates about \$11.2 million dollars and authorizes the release of \$24.3 million in federal funds.

[Senate Bill 1001](#) amends the Fiscal Code providing for the implementation of the stopgap budget under Senate Bill 1000.

[House Bill 224](#) was amended to make changes to the School Code relating to the budget plan. As originally introduced, the bill contained the SchoolWATCH legislation that would make permanent the school financial reporting feature now included on the School Performance Profiles (SPP) website.

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### **Omnibus School Code bill contains distribution details**

[House Bill 224](#), the omnibus School Code bill passed by the Senate last week, provides for the distribution of state funds for schools under the stopgap budget plan contained in [Senate Bill 1000](#). The bill requires the state to make basic subsidy and special education payments no later than Oct. 29, 2015. Under the bill, each school district will receive the amount it received in fiscal year 2014-15 and a distribution of any future funding increases would be made using the formula recommended by the Basic Education Funding Commission. Special education dollars will be distributed using the formula recommended by the Special Education Funding Commission that currently contained in the Fiscal Code. [Read more...](#)

## **Latest News**

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### **PA State Board of Education News**

#### **State Board of Education meets**

The State Board of Education met on Sept. 16-17, 2015, voting to disapprove the application of the Washington Township Independent School District for the transfer from the Dover Area School District to the Northern County School District. In addition, the board received updates on a number of items, including issues relating to PSSA tests, recommendations for gifted education, a new voluntary NOCTI assessment and a new website with career and technical education resources, and information from the Professional Standards and Practices Commission on educator discipline cases and training for schools.

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#### **Disapproval of district transfer request**

The board disapproved a request from the Washington Township Independent School District created for the sole purpose to transfer its territory from the Dover Area School District to the Northern York School District. The board's decision followed a formal process to gather evidence, conduct a public hearing and receive and analyze information. The board compared the educational programs of both districts, and found no differences significant enough to approve a transfer. The board also found that the transfer would have a negative financial impact on Dover, and could cause the district to have to raise taxes, furlough staff or both.

Additionally, the board cautioned that emotional responses relating to the closing of an elementary school and the promise of lower taxes in Northern York were motivating factors for the transfer petition. Finally, the board considered the concerns of Northern York about administrative, staffing, facility and timing issues needed to accommodate the additional students.

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### **PSSA/SPP/PASA update**

The board received updates from Education Secretary Pedro Rivera and Deputy Secretary for Elementary and Secondary Education Matthew Stem regarding the new cut scores approved in July for the newly revised Pennsylvania System of School Assessment (PSSA) in grades 3-8 for English Language Arts (ELA) and mathematics. The tests were revised to be aligned with the new PA Core Standards in those subject areas.

The new cut scores as applied to the 2015 round of testing show large percentages of students reaching only basic and below basic achievement, especially in math. State Board members in July had voiced concerns and called on the PA Department of Education (PDE) to "swiftly engage in deliberative communication with diverse stakeholders regarding the revised PSSA, the impact of more rigorous academic standards and the effect on revised cut scores and performance level descriptors." [Read more...](#)

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### **Update on recommendations for gifted education**

The board received an update on the recommendations it approved in September 2014 for improvements for gifted education programs that can be done through actions of PDE without amending the current Chapter 16 regulations. The recommendations address issues that were brought to the board's attention in the following key areas: qualifications of professional personnel; the cost and frequency of evaluations for gifted services; compliance monitoring and enforcement of current regulations; planning requirements; and access to gifted education services for nonpublic school students. [Read more...](#)

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### **New NOCTI test, new CTE resources website**

PDE's Bureau of Career and Technical Education announced that the department, in conjunction with the National Occupational Competency Testing Institute (NOCTI), has developed a new assessment to measure student knowledge of the state's Career Education and Work (CEW) Standards under the Title 22, Chapter 4 regulations. The use of the new NOCTI assessment is voluntary and at no cost to schools that wish to use it. The new NOCTI is designed to be used as a summative assessment at the end of the senior year and is focused specifically on the 9-12 grade band of the CEW standards. The results of these assessments will provide school staff with the ability to analyze the results in an effort to strengthen the delivery of the mandated K-12 Comprehensive Guidance Plan.

The Bureau also announced the introduction of a new resource for career and technical education schools and educators. A new website at [www.pacteresources.com](http://www.pacteresources.com) is an easy-to-navigate compilation of tools and information contributed by CTE staff in 11 different areas, including

academic/technical skill integration, data reporting, college and career pathways, instructional supports and professional development. New resources are added regularly; anyone with questions or wishing to contribute a resource can contact the Bureau at [info@pacareertech.org](mailto:info@pacareertech.org).

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### **PSPC educator discipline, training course for schools**

The Professional Standards and Practices Commission (PSPC) provided the board with an update on its activities. Currently, the Office of Chief Counsel (OCC) has a total of 1313 open educator discipline cases, 210 of which are designated "high priority" because they involve allegations of sexual abuse or physical abuse of children. To date, the OCC has received 510 new educator misconduct complaints and 265 mandatory reports.

The commission is developing an e-learning training for school entities that will partially satisfy the mandatory training requirements under Act 126 of 2014, which requires all employees and independent contractors of public and private schools having direct contact with children to be trained on child abuse recognition and reporting, the Educator Discipline Act, sexual misconduct and maintaining appropriate relationships with children. The commission anticipates that the course will be available by the end of this year.

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#### **Pennsylvania School Boards Association**

400 Bent Creek Blvd.  
Mechanicsburg, PA 17050

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