



PAGE Legislative Updates November 2021

Note: The content and links in this PAGE Legislative Update are for informational purposes only

PA House Bill 2045

A House committee approved legislation on November 15, 2021, to create a statewide early literacy program using instructional methods that embrace a “Science of Reading” concept.

The Education Committee voted 17-8 by a mostly party line vote in favor of House Bill 2045 amid concerns about whether the wording of an amendment added to the bill creates an unfunded mandate for schools to implement the program starting in the 2022-23 academic year.

Source: [Pa. House panel approves early literacy bill | Pittsburgh Post-Gazette](#)

Pennsylvania Supreme Court Puts a Pin in Plans to End School Masks By December 4

As of November 30, 2021, the masking mandate for Pennsylvania’s schools remains in effect. While the Wolf Administration has previously stated that it expects to rescind the mandate in the middle of January, schools will need to continue to follow the moving target in the courts and consider prior guidance from the CDC and Commonwealth until the legal issues are resolved.

Source: [KingSpry | PA Supreme Court Puts Pins in Plans to End School Masks](#)

Source: [Pennsylvania’s school-mask mandate will stay in place for now, state Supreme Court says \(inquirer.com\)](#)

District to Reimburse Parents in Dyslexia Case

In [O.R. v. Clark County Schools](#), a federal judge determined that the school district violated the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act, and Title II of the Americans with Disabilities Act, and ordered Clark County School District to reimburse the parents **\$456,990.60**.

Source: [Big Win in Dyslexia Case: O.R. v. Clark County School District - Court Orders District to Reimburse Parents \\$456,990.60 \(wrightslaw.com\)](#)



PA House Resolution 152

This resolution calls on Congress to acknowledge the bus driver shortages and consider a school bus only Commercial Driver's License (CDL) and review other measures for this CDL license that would assist in more applicants.

The resolution calls for the State Department of Labor and Industry to create stronger efforts to match up unemployed workers with possible positions. The Department of Transportation as well as school boards are encouraged to work together to review split shifts, wages, student discipline and more to make bus driver employment attractive.

Source:

<https://www.legis.state.pa.us/cfdocs/billInfo/billInfo.cfm?sYear=2021&sInd=0&body=H&type=R&bn=0152>

Update - PA Education Funding Lawsuit

The PA Education Funding Lawsuit trial began on November 12, 2021. For seven years, since the case was filed in 2014, clients--school districts and parents from under-funded communities across the state--have persisted to address the hundreds of thousands of students who have been continuously denied the resources they need for a quality education. Six school districts, including the William Penn School District in Delaware County, sued state lawmakers in 2014 for what they say is a severe underfunding of the public school system.

The [lawsuit](#) alleges the state has failed to ensure all students receive an adequate and equitable education, as guaranteed by the state constitution. It claims inadequate funding has placed an unfair burden on students from low-income districts and created a disparity in access to quality education.

The trial is being held in Courtroom 3002 of the Pennsylvania Judicial Center in Harrisburg and is expected to continue through December. A livestream is available to the public. [Sign up at Fund Our Schools PA for the latest updates.](#)

As of this update, the first week of witness testimony has been completed. Testimony was provided by a school superintendent, a 5th grade teacher, an expert on the state constitution, and a school finance expert. These witnesses and others will testify in the coming weeks. Education Law Center attorneys will be back in Commonwealth Court to continue the trial beginning the week of November 29, 2021.

Source for highlights of the trial: [News — FundOurSchoolsPA.org](https://www.fundourschoolspa.org/news)



Update - Senate Bill 506

Pointing to a rise in anxiety orders and depression in school children, Pennsylvania lawmakers have proposed legislation that would allow K-12 students two mental health days per semester. The change is needed now more than ever, some officials argue, in the wake of the pandemic and all its attendant disruptions. State Senator Judith L. Schwank (D-Berks County) wrote in a co-sponsorship memorandum that, "This urgently requires further examination and immediate intervention." The bill is currently with the Education Committee, where it was referred to on April 9, 2021. No new movement is documented to date.

Source: [Bill Information - Senate Bill 506; Regular Session 2021-2022 - PA General Assembly \(state.pa.us\)](#)

Update - PA House Bill 1642

House lawmakers passed a measure October 5, 2021, that expands the size and scope of tuition vouchers for Pennsylvania's economically disadvantaged schools. Three Democrats joined all of the chamber's Republicans in approving **House Bill 1642**, which lowers the threshold for schools to qualify as economically disadvantaged under the law.

Currently, schools with 75% or more of students receiving tuition assistance through the Opportunity Tax Credit Scholarship (OSTC) program qualify for an additional \$1,000 credit. For additional information, refer to the link below. This bill was referred to the Education Committee October 18, 2021. It was subsequently reported as amended and for first consideration on November 8, 2021.

Source: [Bill Information \(History\) - House Bill 1642; Regular Session 2021-2022 - PA General Assembly \(state.pa.us\)](#)

Update - PA House Bill 1893

A bill that would make more state reporting on COVID-19 and other diseases available to the public was passed by the Pennsylvania House of Representatives in a party-line vote on October 4, 2021.

The [Republican-backed bill](#), sponsored by Bucks County's Rep. Craig Staats, would amend the 1950s-era Disease Prevention and Control Act to allow the public access to all state reports on diseases and any records of actions taken in response to those reports. This bill was referred to the House and Human Services Committee on October 25, 2021.

Source: [Bill Information - House Bill 1893; Regular Session 2021-2022 - PA General Assembly \(state.pa.us\)](#)



Update - PA House Bill 1332

Parents of public-school students would be able to access the contents of a school curriculum, textbook titles, and lesson plans with a few clicks on a computer keyboard under legislation that is advancing in the Pennsylvania House of Representatives.

[The bill](#), sponsored by Rep. Andrew Lewis, R-Dauphin County, would make this standard practice. Some public schools already conduct this approach, but Lewis wants to make it more consistent across all school districts, charter schools, career and technology centers, and intermediate units. The bill was referred to the Education Committee on October 6, 2021. It was subsequently reported as amended and for first consideration on October 18, 2021.

Source: [Bill Information \(History\) - House Bill 1332; Regular Session 2021-2022 - PA General Assembly \(state.pa.us\)](#)

Additional Articles and Resources:

Article: [Teaching Social-Emotional Skills is Hard, Time-Consuming, and Necessary, Report Says \(edweek.org\)](#)

Article: [School Shootings This Year: How Many and Where \(edweek.org\)](#)

Article: [Supreme Court Weighs a Type of Damages Schools Can Face in Civil Rights Lawsuits \(edweek.org\)](#)

Article: [IDEA Full Funding Act Reintroduced in the House and Senate | Council for Exceptional Children](#)

Article: [House Passes Build Back Better Act Including New Funds for Educators | Council for Exceptional Children](#)

Article: [States Look to Ed Department for Guidance on Restarting Testing and Accountability After Two Years of Pandemic-Related Interruptions | The 74 \(the74million.org\)](#)

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