



PARSS Legislative Update ***July 23, 2024***

Unpacking the School Code (Part 1)

The School Code amendments are contained in Senate Bill 700, now Act 55 of 2024. The new law is a massive combination of directions on how to distribute new state funds in the general appropriations bill, some fine-tuning of existing School Code language, and new policy initiatives that are outside of state budget line-items. It covers a lot of details in these categories in a bill of more than one hundred pages.

Not in Act 55 is any state-wide charter school tuition language. While there is significant language on charter schools, both operational and financial, the efforts to impose a uniform, state-wide tuition rate fell off the budget table. Likewise, there are no new voucher programs. The Pennsylvania Award for Student Success (PASS) voucher program failed to make the final cut.

Here are a few items in the School Code you should know. To keep this information concise, we will do a series of installments to get through all of the language. Here is Part 1:

A paid media advertisement by a public school entity or on behalf of a public school entity that refers to the cost of tuition, technology, transportation or other expenses shall not advertise those expenses as free, and any reference to tuition, technology, transportation or other expenses must indicate that the cost is covered by taxpayer dollars.

No later than August 1, 2025, each public school entity shall report to the Department of Education the entity's total expenditures for paid media advertisements and sponsorships of public events for the 2024-2025

school year. the Department shall compile the results of the reports and make the results available on the Department of Education's publicly accessible internet website by December 1, 2025.

Applies to: A public school district, charter school entity as defined in section 1703-a, intermediate unit or area career and technical school.

Definitions: "Paid media advertisement." The term includes a television, radio, newspaper, magazine or movie theater advertisement, billboard, bus poster or Internet-based or other commercial method that may promote enrollment in a public school entity.

"Public event." An activity, event or gathering that members of the public may attend, has been publicly announced or publicized in advance and for which an admission fee or cost may be required. The term includes concerts, performances, sporting events, fairs, festivals, parades, performances and other exhibitions. The term shall not include school-sponsored activities as defined in section 1318.1(j). (This section provides for these activities: any assemblies, field trips, class trips, graduation ceremonies, athletics, extracurricular activities, clubs, groups, teams or any activities sponsored, held or approved by the public school entity.)

[Section 1]

Every teacher employed to teach in the public schools of this Commonwealth must be a person of good moral character, must be at least eighteen years of age, and must be a citizen of the United States or authorized to work in the United States. (New language underlined).

[Section 3]

Renames the Educator Pipeline Grant Program the Student Teacher Support Grant Program [Section 6]

Expands eligibility for the Student Teacher Support Grant program to pre-kindergarten positions. [Section 8]

A school entity that applies for funding under this paragraph (the newly combined school mental health and safety and security grant program) must adopt a policy relating to prohibiting the use of cell phones during the school day. [Section 9]

School safety coordinators are required, no later than June 30, 2025, and each June 30 thereafter, to make a report to the school entity's board

of directors on the school entity's current school security personnel. The following apply:

- (i) Each report shall be presented to the school entity's board of directors at an executive session of the school entity's board of directors.
 - (ii) Each report shall be submitted to the committee and shall not be subject to the Right-to-Know Law.
 - (iii) Each report shall include:
 - (A) The number of school security personnel, as defined in section 1301-C, broken out by type.
 - (B) The number of each school security personnel, as defined in section 1301-C, which is armed, broken out by type.
 - (C) The school building at which each school security personnel, as defined in section 1301-C, is assigned, broken out by type.
 - (D) The training, including type of training and dates completed, by each school security personnel, as defined in section 1301-C, broken out by type.
 - (E) A listing of other individuals utilized for school-safety-related duties.
- [Section 10]

School Security Personnel: ...beginning with the 2024-2025 school year, a school entity (defined for this section as a school district) shall have at least one full-time school security personnel who has completed the training under section 1305-c, 1313-c(a.1) or 1314-c on duty during the school day unless the school entity has been granted a waiver.

Waiver: A school entity may apply for a waiver to the committee. The committee shall waive the requirements in the case of a school entity that provides an attestation that it acted in good faith and meets at least one of the criteria established under section 1315-c(5). A waiver shall expire one year after its approval by the committee. (emphasis added) [Section 12.2]

Waiver Criteria:

Documentation that the school entity does not have a municipal police department or law enforcement agency that is able to provide a school resource officer.

- Documentation that the school entity has been unable to hire or contract with a school police officer.
- Documentation that the school entity has been unable to hire or contract with a school security guard.

- Documentation that the school entity has been unable to hire or contract with a police officer from an accredited police force.
[Section 12.1]