

# informED



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Welcome to the Winter 2019 issue of *InformED*, a publication from your school district and the Pennsylvania School Boards Association to keep you informed regarding the education issues affecting your students. *InformED* takes parents from the capitol, to the school district, to the classroom. Learn more and become an advocate for public education!

## New laws impact public education

*Parents should be aware of these recent changes in state law:*

**Anti-hazing:** Act 80 of 2018 expands Pennsylvania's anti-hazing law to apply to, in addition to institutions of higher education, public and private secondary schools, and organizations affiliated with these schools. Penalties for violating school policies regarding hazing include fines, withholding of diplomas or transcripts, no longer allowing an organization to operate under the recognition of the school, probation, suspension or expulsion.

**Sunscreen use for students:** Act 105 of 2018 allows students, during school hours or at a school-sponsored activity, to wear sun-protective clothing and use a topical sunscreen product

without a physician's note or prescription. Parents and students must fill out a form regarding applying sunscreen; students are responsible for applying the sunscreen to themselves.

**Support services for children of military members:** Act 119 of 2018 requires public schools to provide access to support services if a student's parent is deployed for active duty, notifies the school and requests additional supports. Services include school guidance counselors; school psychologists; school social workers; or home and school visitors; information regarding existing federal and state military support services; and other services or resources to assist the student and parent/guardian.

**School bus stop arm cameras:** Act 159 of 2018 allows for, but does not require, the installation of automated side stop arm cameras on school buses. School districts and bus drivers may use the photos or videos to capture violations of drivers failing to stop when the red

## Dates to Remember

signals are flashing, and the stop arms are activated. Act 159 includes numerous provisions regarding implementation and enforcement.

**Study of school start times:** The Pennsylvania Joint State Government Commission is directed to conduct a study on the establishment of later start times for high school students. A report of the study is due next fall.

## High school graduation reforms begin with Class of 2022

Students currently in ninth grade and moving forward now have new options to show that they are ready to graduate. Act 158 of 2018 establishes a performance-based system that provides rigorous assessment strategies under four options for students to demonstrate readiness. Measures of success are aligned to a student's individual career goals and reflect the expectations, coursework, grades, activities and achievements earned. In addition to the state Keystone Exams, alternative tests and other factors can be counted toward graduation.

It is important to know that school districts are still required under federal law to administer Keystone Exams for accountability purposes. While students will continue to be required to take them, passage of the exams is no longer the only pathway to graduate. These changes are effective beginning with the Class of 2022. Read a [detailed summary](#) of Act 158.



## Future Ready PA Index shows that schools, students are more than just test scores

The Pennsylvania Department of Education recently launched a new tool to evaluate schools. The new Future Ready PA Index replaces the former School Performance Profiles (SPP) to establish a more holistic

measure of school success. This is an improvement from the SPP that provided a performance score for each school building that was heavily reliant on standardized test scores, including the PSSA and Keystone Exams.

The Future Ready PA Index moves beyond the use of a single score to increase transparency around school and student group performance. It features a dashboard approach to present data and information. The index illustrates student and school success via three color-coded categories: academic performance, student progress, and college and career readiness. It provides parents and the public with a more comprehensive look at how Pennsylvania's schools are educating students.

[Click here to access the Future Ready PA Index.](#)

## Parent advocates: Proposed state budget impacts your schools, students

Gov. Tom Wolf presented his state budget proposal for the 2019-20 fiscal year to the General Assembly in early February. Legislators are examining the proposal and negotiations will continue until an agreement is reached on a new state budget by the June 30 deadline. Funding for public education will be part of the discussions, and legislators need to hear from you about the needs of your schools and students. This includes funding for overall operations (basic subsidy), special education, career and technical education, student programs, technology needs, school safety initiatives, and more.

How can parents advocate and influence the state budget? Here are some suggestions:

- Get the facts – Know what is being proposed at the state level for education and what it means at the local level for your school district and students. [Click here for details.](#)

- Identify your legislators – Know who to talk to, and how to reach them. Phone calls and emails are the best ways to reach them. Not sure who your legislators are or how to reach them? [Click here for help.](#)

- Tell your story – Talk about how important adequate state funding is to your schools. Use examples of specific programs and students helped, the work of your teachers and staff, and the resources you have, or don't have, available. Talk about what would happen if funding were increased, or if it were cut.

- Communicate effectively – Present your ideas clearly and concisely. It is important to build relationships with your legislators. Understand their position on key issues so that you can show how your position will benefit his or her constituents.

- Be persistent – Start the process early, keep at it, and be patient.