

New Year, New Rules: 2019 Pennsylvania Public School Code Revisions (Part 1)

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(Editor note: This is Part 1 of a two-part alert on the changes to the Pennsylvania Public School Code for the 2019-2020 school year. Part 1 details numerous changes that come from Act 16 of 2019. Part 2 of the alert, which will be released Thursday, will focus on other Gov. Tom Wolf-approved code changes.)

Pennsylvania legislative updates and new mandates that apply to public schools - and in some cases, even private schools - are sure to impact the way business is conducted in the 2019-2020 school year.

New requirements addressing funding, establishing new programs, and further addressing school security highlight a host of significant changes to the Public School Code.

As the summer winds to a close, now is the perfect time to take a few minutes for a deeper dive to better understand important changes that are sure to impact your schools in the coming year.

These particular changes come from [House Bill 1615](#), the Omnibus School Code Amendments (Act 16 of 2019) signed by Gov. Tom Wolf on June 28:

- Amends Section 122(K) of the school code by reconstituting the Special Education Funding Commission to review the funding formula for special education payments. The commission shall be reconstituted no later than August 15 and will issue a report by November 30. This amendment took effect immediately upon signing.
- Added Section 221.3 to the school code, changing the full academic year requirement by stating that the test scores for students that are absent for 20% of the school year shall not be included in the school accountability performance calculation. This addition will take effect within 60 days.
- Amends Section 1326 of the school code by redefining compulsory school age from ages eight to 17 as ages six to 18. This amendment will take effect within 90 days.
- Amends Section 1337 of the school code, providing that if a student is not eligible for participation in the school food program and owes more than \$50 in a school year for meals, a school may provide alternative meals to the student until the student's unpaid balance for school meals is paid, or a payment plan has been established. This amendment will take effect within 60 days.
- Establishes a new Article XIV-B to the code, entitled "Innovation Schools Program." This portion of the act designates two innovation schools to study and evaluate innovative approaches to help economically disadvantaged schools by creating programs such as workforce development programs, mentoring services, before-school and after-school programs, and implementing prevention measures and social wrap-around services. To serve as an innovation school a school must be in the bottom 5% of all schools in Pennsylvania based on income, partner with

behavioral health specialists or provided an integrated social service model, and be located in a designated Promise Zone. This addition took effect immediately upon signing.

- Amends Section 2502.53 of the school code related to basic education funding. The amendment accounts for the increase in education funding for the new fiscal year. This amendment took effect immediately upon signing.
- Adds Section 2599.8 to the school code, which states that the Pennsylvania Department of Education will provide advanced placement and International Baccalaureate exam fee assistance to students with financial need starting with the 2019-20 school year. This addition will take effect within 60 days.

If you have questions about any of the items discussed above or would like to discuss available training programs, please contact any of the attorneys in the [Education Practice Group](#).

Read Part 2 of this alert [here](#).