

# ADVANCED

## SCHOOL DIRECTOR TRAINING



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# TABLE OF CONTENTS



<b>CHAPTER TITLE</b>	<b>PAGE</b>
<a href="#">About PSBA</a> .....	4
<a href="#">Policy and Legal Update</a> .....	6
<a href="#">Policy and Legal Scenarios</a> .....	16
<a href="#">Trauma-Informed Education</a> .....	23
<a href="#">2021-22 Finance Update</a> .....	41

## ABOUT PSBA

The Pennsylvania School Boards Association (PSBA) is a nonprofit statewide association of public school boards created to support local governance and advocate on behalf of PA public school districts and school entities. PSBA was founded in 1895 as the first school boards association established in the United States. Pennsylvania’s 4,500 school directors become members by virtue of election to their local board — the board joins as a whole. Membership in PSBA is by school district or other eligible local education agency such as an intermediate unit, career and technical center or community college. Over the past several decades, voluntary membership by local school entities has been virtually 100%. PSBA has been providing a form of New School Director Training for over 50 years. When Pennsylvania passed a law requiring school director training in 2017, PSBA was the first approved provider of training for school directors across the state.

## PSBA’S MISSION

To provide school board directors with services, support and counsel as they navigate relationships, lead their districts, and promote public education across Pennsylvania.

## PSBA’S VISION

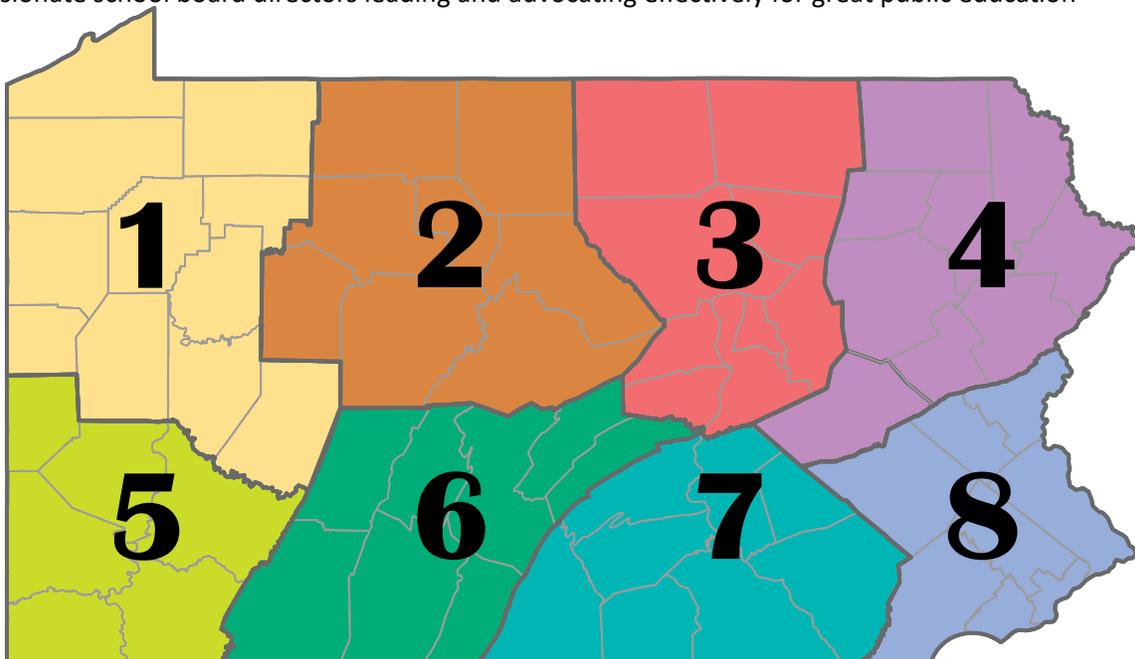
Informed, engaged, and passionate school board directors leading and advocating effectively for great public education across Pennsylvania.

## PSBA’S VALUES

- Honesty & Integrity
- Member Focus
- Working Together
- Innovation

## PSBA MEMBER SERVICES MANAGERS

Member services managers are PSBA staff who work directly with districts within their sections — listening to their challenges and needs in order to connect them with vital resources and services that support them. Member services managers are your primary points of connection to PSBA.



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## PSBA ADVOCACY AMBASSADORS

Advocacy ambassadors are individuals who are on a limited contract with PSBA and have the goal to facilitate stronger relationships among district administration, school boards and state legislators. Their role is to keep boards informed of key legislation affecting public education.



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# POLICY AND LEGAL **UPDATE**



Act 55 of 2017 and Act 18 of 2019 revised the PA Public School Code to include a three-hour training requirement for reelected school directors. The Pennsylvania Department of Education (PDE) approved PSBA as the only statewide provider of this training, which includes the following components:

- » Updates on board policy changes and recommendations
- » Implications of recent case law that may impact board policy and procedures
- » Updates on establishing and implementing trauma-informed education systems
- » Updates on school finance

Thank you for trusting your association for your required training. We have worked hard to provide you with the most relevant information to support your ongoing local leadership and to secure session presenters and facilitators who are statewide experts and experienced practitioners.

For more information about the topics you are learning today, please visit your exclusive membership portal at [myPSBA.org](http://myPSBA.org) for online courses, publications and many other resources.

## AMENDMENT TO SUNSHINE ACT (ACT 65 OF 2021)

### Quick Review

- » The Sunshine Act has long required school boards to deliberate and take official action in public.
- » School boards or school board committees have also been subject to publish/post/notify requirements that identify the date, place and time of all open meetings of the board.
- » An open meeting (of the full board or a board committee) is a meeting at which deliberation or official action may take place.

### Types of Meetings

- » **Conference:** any training program or seminar, or any session arranged by state or federal agencies for local agencies, organized and conducted for the sole purpose of providing information to agency members on matters directly related to their official responsibilities.
- » **Emergency Meeting:** meeting called for the purpose of dealing with a real or potential emergency involving a clear and present danger to life or property.
- » **Special Meeting:** meeting not listed on the board's annually published schedule of regular meetings.
- » **Executive Session:** meeting not open to members of the public or news media.

### Exceptions to the 24-Hour Posting Requirement for Board Agendas

The board may deliberate or take official action on matters not included in a posted agenda only under the following circumstances:

1. **Emergencies** – The matter of business relates to a real or potential emergency involving a clear and present danger to life or property.
2. **Business Arising Within 24 Hours Prior to the Meeting** – The matter of business has arisen within 24 hours prior to the meeting, is minor in nature, and does not involve the expenditure of funds or entering into a contract or agreement.
3. **Business Raised by Residents or Taxpayers During the Meeting** – When a matter of board business is raised by a resident or taxpayer during a meeting.

**If a matter of board business is raised by a resident or taxpayer during a meeting, the board has the following options:**

- » The board may take official action to refer the matter to staff, if applicable, to conduct research and include on a future board meeting agenda.
- » If the matter is minor in nature and does not involve the expenditure of funds or entering into a contract or agreement, the board may take official action.

#### **4. Majority Vote**

- » During a meeting, the board may also add a matter of business to the posted agenda by a majority vote of the school directors present and voting.
- » The reason for adding an item to the posted agenda must be announced at the meeting before conducting the vote.
- » Once announced and approved by majority vote, the board may take official action on the item of business.
- » The unanimous consent procedure may not be used in place of majority vote for this purpose.
  - When an addition to the agenda does not require a majority vote under the foregoing exceptions, the addition may be made during the meeting in the customary manner, including unanimous consent or prior to the meeting by the officials tasked with agenda preparation.
  - The agenda will be amended to reflect the new item of business and the amended agenda will be posted to the district's website and at the administration office no later than the first business day following the meeting at which the agenda was amended.
  - When an item is added to the agenda after the public comment period has ended, the board should offer a further public comment opportunity limited to the added item(s).

#### **Updates to board policy related to Act 65 of 2021**

issued in PNN/PNN+ Volume IV 2021

- » Policy 006. Meetings, 006-BOG-0 Publish, Post and Notify Board Meetings/Agendas
- » Policy 903. Public Participation in Board Meetings

#### **The Board's Role**

- » The board secretary is typically responsible for ensuring compliance with the Sunshine Act's publish/post/notify requirements including posting of board agendas.
- » The school solicitor appointed by the board is often present or consulted on questions to ensure compliance with the Sunshine Act during open meetings and executive sessions.
- » The board is expected to actively monitor its own discussions and actions:
  - To ensure that all deliberations and official actions are conducted at open board meetings in compliance with the Sunshine Act
  - To maintain the public's trust, and to ensure that confidentiality of matters discussed in executive session is maintained

#### **Key Takeaways for Act 65 of 2021, Changes to Sunshine Act Requirements**

- » Prior to Act 65 of 2021, school boards were only required to publicly advertise and post the notice of date, place and time of all open meetings of the board.
- » As of August 29, 2021, the agenda must also be posted on the district website, at the location of the meeting and at the administrative office no later than 24 hours prior to the time of the meeting.
- » Additions to the posted agenda are permitted only within allowable exceptions.



## COVID-RELATED POLICY UPDATES

The COVID pandemic has had a dramatic impact on K-12 school district operations, board governance and student learning.

To meet the unprecedented conditions of schooling and meeting during a pandemic, some board policies required a swift update.

### **KEY TERM:** Health and Safety Plan

The PA Department of Education (PDE) originally required each school entity to develop a **health and safety plan** prior to the start of school programs for the 2020-21 school year, to document health and safety and mitigation strategies for addressing COVID.

Federal funding provided through the American Rescue Plan (ARP) and Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief (ESSER) programs also required each school entity receiving federal funds to develop a health and safety plan by July 30, 2021, which must address in-person instruction and continuity of services.

### **The Board's Role**

The school board plays a decisive role in how a district copes with the COVID pandemic. These are some of the key responsibilities of the board as it relates to the consequences of a health and/or safety crisis:

- » Ensure the district has strong compliance with state and federal law and regulations and official guidance, as well as adopted board policy.
- » Adopt policies that best serve the health and safety of the school community, based on current federal, state, and local law/regulations and guidance from state and local health officials.
- » Consult with the school solicitor to ensure board policy is compliant with all applicable law and regulations, guidance, case law, collective bargaining agreements, etc.
- » Review and approve both board policies and the health and safety plan, which should work together to address the needs and safety of the school community.

### **Policy Revisions: Health and Safety Plans**

Several board policies required updated language to address ongoing health and safety plans as well as the impact on students and staff.

The language revisions in policies were written in a general way so that policies will remain pertinent for potential future emergency public health situations beyond the current pandemic.

### **Policy Revisions: Student and Staff Health Monitoring**

Here are some of the specific policy changes related to health monitoring for students and staff:

- » Notification to parents/guardians of the potential need to exclude students for communicable disease during the school year
- » Requests for updated emergency contact information
- » The requirement for parents/guardians or another emergency contact to come to school to transport the student if exclusion is necessary
- » The parameters surrounding return to school attendance policy and the need to quarantine
- » Potential need to exclude staff for symptoms of communicable disease
- » The following of school health and safety plans by members of the public who are visiting schools or attending school events

## KEY TAKEAWAYS

- 1 PSBA-recommended policy updates related to health monitoring and the health and safety plan are based around guidance from state and local health officials throughout the pandemic.
- 2 The health and safety plan and applicable policies need to work together.
- 3 The health and safety plan is designed to be reviewed and updated continuously to quickly address shifting needs of the school community when conditions change.
- 4 Board policy requires a more formal review and approval process, and policy language should be broad enough to reflect and reference the health and safety plan, but not contain the specific details.

## COVID UPDATES – REMOTE WORK AND DIGITAL ENVIRONMENTS

While changes to remote work and electronic signature policies had already been suggestions for future development, the pandemic created a more immediate need for policies on these topics. Although there was already a policy regarding remote attendance for school directors at board meetings, updates were needed to incorporate the necessity for most of or the entire board to attend the meeting remotely under certain emergency circumstances. Additional updates were made to policies and administrative regulations related to establishment of the school calendar and required hours and days of instruction based on PA Department of Education guidance to apply special emergency provisions of the School Code for instructional time.

Remote work/digital environment – policy updates included:

- » The ability to switch to electronic communications more easily for school board meetings when operating under emergency conditions.
- » The allowance of remote notarization by a notary public for school directors' Oath of Office. Please note that this is for commissioned notaries who have complied with specific requirements only---there is no provision of law that allows an oath of office to be administered remotely by any other official otherwise empowered to do so in person.
- » Maintaining continuity of district programs and operations through teleworking, when necessary.
- » Establishing expectations and direction for monitoring student welfare and maintaining appropriate relationships with students in digital learning environments.
- » Alterations to the school calendar based on temporary emergency provisions so that schools may still appropriately meet the instructional needs as well as the health and safety of students and staff.
- » Guidelines for use and acceptance of electronic signatures and records in connection with school programs and operations.



## TITLE IX POLICY AND LEGAL UPDATES

### **KEY TERM:** Sexual Harassment

Definition: Title IX sexual harassment means conduct on the basis of sex that satisfies one or more of the following:

1. A district employee conditioning the provision of an aid, benefit or district service on an individual's participation in unwelcome sexual conduct, commonly referred to as quid pro quo sexual harassment.
2. Unwelcome conduct determined by a reasonable person to be so severe, pervasive and objectively offensive that it effectively denies a person equal access to a district education program or activity.
3. Sexual assault, dating violence, domestic violence or stalking.

### **What qualifies as Title IX?**

To qualify under Title IX, sexual harassment must have taken place during a district education program or activity and against a person in the United States.

Title IX regulations apply to all district education programs or activities, whether on campus or off campus.

### **KEY TERM:** Education Program or Activity

An education program or activity includes the locations, events or circumstances over which the district exercises substantial control over both the alleged perpetrator and the context in which the harassment occurs.

### **Title IX Coordinator**

The Title IX Coordinator is a key position and federal regulations require the school board policy to identify who is the Title IX Coordinator for the district.

The policy should identify the Title IX Coordinator by his or her position (i.e., director of student services, human resources director, etc.) rather than the individual's name, so that policy language does not get outdated during staffing changes.

The Title IX Coordinator may be, but is not required to be, the same individual designated as the compliance officer who addresses issues related to other forms of discrimination.

PSBA recommends consulting with your solicitor when considering designation of staff to be involved with the Title IX process. It is also helpful to have staff trained in several roles so that if, for any reason, the designated staff member is not able to serve in that role, there is another staff member who is trained and ready to step in as needed.

### **Title IX Policies FAQ**

#### **Where should these policies be posted?**

The policies affected by Title IX regulations must be placed on the school entity's website.

Notice of these policies must also be published with a link to the policy in student and staff handbooks or other schoolwide publications such as a school calendar.

#### **Who should be directly provided with these policies?**

- » Students and parents/guardians
- » Current employees and applicants for employment
- » Unions and professional employees' organizations

### What information must be published in the policy?

The specific contact information of the Title IX Coordinator including:

- » Office address
- » Telephone
- » Email

### The Board's Role

When it comes to Title IX, the board must:

1. Ensure that applicable board policies have been revised and updated.
2. Ensure that policies that could potentially fall under Title IX sexual harassment investigative processes have language directing when a concurrent investigation should take place. Such policies include hazing, bullying/cyberbullying and dating violence.
3. Ensure that adequate funding is available for the proper training of the compliance officer, Title IX Coordinator and other personnel involved in the Title IX process.
4. Understand that federal guidance broadly defines the term “sex” to include “sexual orientation” and “gender identity.”

### Implications of case law: *Bostock v. Clayton County 2020*

- » June 2020, the U.S. Supreme Court issued a decision in *Bostock v. Clayton County* prohibiting employers from firing individuals on the basis of their sex.
- » In the disputes before the court, longtime employees were fired shortly after revealing to their employers that they were homosexual or transgender. There were no alleged other explanations for the terminations.
- » Title VII of the Civil Rights Act prohibits employment discrimination based on race, color, religion, sex and national origin. The Court held that “because discrimination on the basis of homosexuality or transgender status requires an employer to intentionally treat individual employees differently because of their sex, an employer who intentionally penalizes an employee for being homosexual or transgender also violates Title VII.”
- » Effectively, this decision incorporated sexual orientation and gender identity into the word “sex” under Title VII. It prohibited employers from hiring, firing or taking other adverse employment action against employees because of their sexual orientation or gender identity.
- » March 26, 2021, the Civil Rights Division at the U.S. Department of Justice issued a letter explaining that *Bostock's* holding on the meaning of discrimination based on sex applies to Title IX.
- » June 22, 2021, the U.S. Department of Education Office for Civil Rights (OCR) issued an interpretation that “[c]onsistent with *Bostock*, [OCR] interprets Title IX’s prohibition on discrimination, ‘on the basis of sex’ to encompass discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation and gender identity.”
- » In *Adams v. Sch. Bd. of St. Johns Cty* and *Grimm v. Gloucester Cty. Sch. Bd.*, two Federal Courts of Appeal – 4th and 11th circuits, respectively - reviewing cases after the *Bostock* decision was rendered, determined that Title IX prohibits discrimination against transgender students on the basis of their sexual identity and approvingly cite to *Bostock's* reasoning and language regarding the meaning of “sex” under Title VII as guidance for interpreting “sex” under Title IX.



## KEY TAKEAWAYS

- 1 Revised regulations reflect a more specific definition of sexual harassment and affect how elementary and secondary schools report on and address complaints of sexual harassment in education programs and activities.
- 2 Title IX regulations and requirements apply to all district education programs or activities both on and off campus.
- 3 Federal regulations require the school board policy to identify a Title IX Coordinator for the district and require specific training for individuals involved in the Title IX process.
- 4 As a result of updated regulations and requirements, PSBA sent recommended revisions to six board policies within the programs (100), pupils (200) and operations (800) sections of the board policy manual. Several templates for required forms and procedures were also sent by PSBA as attachments to policies.



## FURTHER LEARNING

- » Title IX Sexual Harassment Overview accessed through [myPSBA.org](https://myPSBA.org).
- » PNN/PNN+ Volume IV 2020
- » PSBA Transgender Legal Update (February 2021) [PSBA.org](https://PSBA.org)

## SPECIAL EDUCATION AND CYCLICAL COMPLIANCE MONITORING

### KEY TERM: Compliance Monitoring

Like auditing, compliance monitoring is a function performed by regulatory or government agencies that review the procedures and functions of the school district to determine whether they have processes established and are operating in a way that will enable them to meet the requirements of law and regulations. It is not only focused on whether a school district has met certain requirements, but also how likely the district is to meet those requirements based on the processes the district has in place.

### Federally Funded Programs

Most often, compliance monitoring is conducted by the Pennsylvania Department of Education (PDE) and compliance often focuses on a district's use of different funding streams.

Because districts often receive federal funding in the following areas, the policies and **procedures related to these programs are typically what are more closely monitored:**

- » **Title I** provides funding for school programs designed to increase achievement of disadvantaged students.
- » **Title III** provides funding for programs to benefit English learners such as Language Instruction Educational Programs.
- » **The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA)** provides funds for special education programs.
- » **Federal Division of Food and Nutrition** includes the National School Lunch Program, National School Breakfast Program and Summer Food Service Program.



### The Board's Role

While the district administration and staff are implementing and monitoring procedures, programs and processes, the board is responsible for:

1. Ensuring that the board policies provide accurate and updated direction for the district administration and staff
2. Providing the necessary staff and other resources
3. Evaluating feedback from any audit or compliance evaluation

### Board Policy Revisions

In 2020, three policies related to special education programs were revised. These revisions weren't proposed based on any changes to law or regulations. Instead, the revisions were made to reflect the processes and specific language compliance monitors expected to see in board policy in order to ensure administrators and staff were taking the correct steps to comply with law.

## KEY TAKEAWAYS

1

The board is responsible for ensuring the district has strong compliance with state and federal law, regulations and guidance.

2

The board adopts policies that require compliance with legal standards and ensures the availability of sufficient staff and other resources necessary for achieving compliance.

3

If a district is found out of compliance, the potential consequences may include citations or restrictions from regulatory agencies, loss of funding, increased legal liability, and loss of trust and confidence of education stakeholders.



## FURTHER LEARNING

100-level online course Special Education accessed through [myPSBA.org](https://myPSBA.org), "Store," and search by title.

## Other Policy Updates of Note

### Senior Tax Reduction: Policy 916 Volunteers

Act 20 of 2020 (Taxpayer Relief Act) provides legislative authority to the board to establish a Senior Tax Reduction Incentive Volunteer Exchange Program to allow individuals who are at least 60 years of age, who own real property in the district and have resided within the district for at least 90 days, to receive a real property tax credit in exchange for volunteer service in the district. This is reflected in new optional language in Policy 916 "Volunteers."

- » Senior volunteers are still subject to the same rules as other district volunteers, which may include background check certifications, certain reporting responsibilities, certain training requirements and confidentiality.
- » Senior volunteers cannot replace or supplant existing employee positions.
- » Tax credit may not exceed the total amount of real property taxes owed by the volunteer.
- » The board may adopt and enforce reasonable rules around the acceptance and participation of individuals, and the board reserves the right to suspend or discontinue the program at any time.



### **Tobacco and Vaping**

PSBA had already updated policy guides to include vaping, but Act 93 of 2019 and Act 111 of 2019 took it a step further and made modifications to the Pennsylvania Crimes Code regarding use and sale of tobacco and vaping products on school property. Both laws contained similar language. As a result, PSBA has updated the definitions and provisions in the policies and administrative regulations.

- » A new, comprehensive definition for “tobacco product” now incorporates vaping products, including the product marked as “Juul” and other types of electronic cigarettes.
- » Updated policies also contain language stating that the students tampering with devices installed to detect use of tobacco or vaping products will be deemed in violation.
- » Four policies and administrative regulations were updated, including policies that address tobacco products for employees and students, rental of school facilities, and public attendance at school events.

### **Transportation**

PSBA updated policy guides related to transportation. Your director of transportation or other designated personnel will be responsible for procedures related to hiring drivers and purchasing or contracting for transportation vehicles or services. The following is to make school directors aware of some changes that may require board oversight.

- » The Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration developed an online clearinghouse that is a database where drug and alcohol tests, refusals to be tested, and reports of actual knowledge of a violation are reported and maintained.
- » Schools are required to make pre-employment and annual queries for employees of the district that drive a school bus or commercial motor vehicle. If your transportation is contracted, it will be the responsibility of the contractor to complete these queries. There is a cost associated with each query, so this is an additional expense the board should be aware of, whether it is paid directly by the district or as part of the contract.
- » Changes were made to the policy language regarding reporting by drivers of arrests, charges, citations or convictions for violations of designated traffic safety laws. The law outlines specific time frames in which drivers must make reports to their employers; school boards may establish timelines that are more restrictive through board policy.

# POLICY AND LEGAL **SCENARIOS**







## 3 SCENARIO: THREAT ASSESSMENT TEAM REQUIREMENTS

### Background Knowledge and Context

Act 18 of 2019 created a new section of the School Code, which among other provisions, established requirements for school entities related to threat assessment. School entities must establish at least one threat assessment team or assign threat assessment duties to an existing team that includes individuals with specific backgrounds and expertise. The board may determine whether to appoint a threat assessment team for the entire district, multiple school-based teams, or assign the threat assessment team responsibilities to an existing district team, such as the Student Assistance Program or Safe2Say Something response team, while also ensuring that the team includes members that meet the criteria specified in law. The district must provide training to the team, and also inform staff, students and families of the team's existence and provide information on how to identify and report at-risk behavior. The district must develop procedures and processes for the assessment of and intervention with students whose behavior may indicate a threat to the safety of the student, other students, school employees, school facilities, the community or others. The threat assessment team is required to report information annually to the school board on the threat assessment process in the district – that report may be provided as part of the annual school safety and security board report. These new requirements took effect the beginning of the 2021-22 school year.

Requirements for Team Members	Optional Team Members
Individuals with expertise in: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>» School health</li> <li>» Counseling, school psychology or social work</li> <li>» Special education</li> <li>» School administration</li> </ul> School Safety and Security Coordinator	Other school staff or community resources who can assist with the threat assessment process (for example, school security personnel, law enforcement, behavioral health agency personnel, SAP team members, juvenile probation professionals, etc.)

### Scenario

Your School Safety and Security Coordinator is preparing to assign the district's threat assessment team and would like the board's input on the following options:

**Option A** – Create a single threat assessment team for the entire district, composed of individuals in specific positions, including the high school principal, the school psychologist, the School Resource Officer (SRO), the middle school guidance counselor, local juvenile probation officer and the School Safety and Security Coordinator.

**Option B** – Create separate threat assessment teams for each school building in the district, composed of the building principal, a guidance counselor, school security officer/SRO, a special education teacher and the School Safety and Security Coordinator.

**Option C** – Assign the Safe2Say Something program team as the threat assessment team, which is currently made up of the high school principal, a guidance counselor, the School Resource Officer, the director of student services and the School Safety and Security Coordinator.





## 4 SCENARIO: SOCIAL MEDIA IMPACT ON DISTRICTS AND SCHOOL GOVERNANCE

### Background Knowledge and Context

The following information is excerpted from *A Social Media Guide for Pennsylvania School Board Directors* published in 2021. This resource is available to PSBA members for download at [myPSBA.org](https://myPSBA.org).

PSBA recommends that all official district information should be distributed through district-owned, board-approved and staff-monitored social media accounts, which should be clearly marked with district identification and a district contact person. District social media accounts should be monitored by district staff who have been trained to address confidentiality requirements, copyright protection and accessibility standards. The board should determine whether district social media accounts will be maintained as a designated public forum or nonpublic forum.

If the district allows public comments and posts on its social media accounts, the board should work with the school solicitor to establish rules or guidelines on what types of comments and posts may be prohibited and addressed by the district.

Individual school directors, district staff and students often have their own personal social media accounts, which do not officially represent the board or school district. As private citizens, individuals have free speech rights under the First Amendment of the Constitution, including on their social media accounts. School directors should be aware that as individuals, they have no authority to represent the district or board unless appointed by the board to do so, and their comments on personal social media may have community engagement and legal implications for the district and board. Personal social media use by staff is addressed under board policies specific to the rights and responsibilities of staff as employees of the district. Student social media use is addressed under board policies related to student expression, bullying/cyberbullying and the responsibility of the district to educate students on appropriate online behavior.

**Designated public forum** – created when a district-operated platform (physical or virtual) is intentionally opened for use by the public as a place for expressive activity where members of the public may communicate, post or comment on information, subject to viewpoint-neutral rules designated by the district. In terms of social media, this would include the ability to comment on or reply to social media posts, pictures or videos.

**Nonpublic forum** – a district-operated platform (physical or virtual) where members of the public may read and receive district information, but the district has not designated opportunity for expressive activity by the public, and no commenting or posting of information by members of the public is permitted. In terms of social media, the ability to comment, post or reply is disabled on the district’s platform for public users.

### Scenario

While scrolling your favorite social media site at home, you come across a discussion on a neighbor’s social media account. There are several comments escalating into a heated debate with misinformation stated and reiterated. The topic of debate relates to a recent board agenda item concerning an alleged hazing incident that occurred at a district extracurricular activity.



# TRAUMA-INFORMED **EDUCATION**



It is important that we create a space for safety by recognizing that there may be people in this room who have experienced or are experiencing trauma and that these visuals, terms and discussion may have an emotional impact. We want you to please take care of yourself. If you need to stand up or leave the room to process your own responses, please do so.

## WHY IS TRAUMA-INFORMED TRAINING INCLUDED IN RQD ADVANCED SCHOOL DIRECTOR TRAINING?

The PA General Assembly passed a law in 2019 to require all certificated staff and school directors of a district to have training on trauma-informed approach in education. Districtwide implementation of trauma-informed approaches to education require coordination and support from district leadership, professional and support staff, and child support services that intersect with students in the district.

It is likely your district is in some stage of implementing trauma-informed approaches in curriculum, instruction, student services, student discipline and staff professional development.

While this topic is extensive and dynamic and professional staff in your district will likely receive more training, the law requires new school directors to have one hour of trauma-informed training as part of the five hours of new school director training and it requires reelected school directors to receive an update about trauma-informed education systems as part of your required three hours.

If you have not had the initial one hour of training to understand the wide-reaching negative impact of trauma, you can catch up on this training by taking PSBA’s free series of online courses.

This session will provide:

- » High-level summary of some key points from initial one hour trauma-informed education training
- » Summary of different kinds of policies including optional policies
- » Discussion of the trauma-informed policy guide as a mechanism to address the effects of trauma in schools
- » Small-group discussion for how trauma-informed policy guide may work in your district

## KEY TERMS

TERMS	DEFINITION
<b>Trauma</b>	PA legislative definition: Includes results from an event, series of events or set of circumstances that is experienced by an individual as physically or emotionally harmful or threatening and that has lasting adverse effects on the individual’s cognitive functioning and physical, social, emotional, mental or spiritual well-being. 24 P.S. § 1-102 (PA Public School Code)  Alternative definition: Trauma arises from an inescapable stressful event that overwhelms an individual’s coping mechanisms.  Citation: van der Kolk, Bessel. <i>The Body Keeps the Score</i> . New York, Penguin Books, 2014. Print.
<b>Acute Trama</b>	Derives from a single event. For example, physical or sexual assault, loss of family member, natural disaster.
<b>Complex Trauma</b>	Multiple, recurring or long-lasting exposure. Prolonged physical or sexual abuse, neglect, community violence, untreated mental illness in the home. Trauma that happens repetitively and may result in direct harm to the individual and/or interfere with the child’s ability to form a secure attachment. Complex trauma usually occurs early in life and can disrupt many aspects of the child’s development and sense of self.

<p><b>Trauma-Informed Approach</b></p>	<p>Includes a schoolwide approach to education and a classroom-based approach to student learning that recognizes the signs and symptoms of trauma and responds by fully integrating knowledge about trauma into policies, professional learning, procedures and practices for the purposes of recognizing the presence and onset of trauma, resisting the reoccurrence of trauma and promoting resiliency tailored to a school entity’s culture, climate and demographics and the community. 24 P.S. § 1-102 (PA Public School Code)</p>
<p><b>Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs)</b></p>	<p>A term associated with a 1995 Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and Kaiser Foundation study which identified three common forms of adversity that affect children: physical and emotional abuse, neglect and household challenges. The study found strong positive correlations between the number of ACEs a person experienced and the likelihood of negative outcomes later in life.</p>
<p><b>Secondary Traumatic Stress</b></p>	<p>The emotional distress that results when an individual hears about the traumatic experiences of another individual. Distress may result from hearing someone’s trauma stories, seeing high levels of distress in the aftermath of a traumatic event, needing to retell a student’s story, and/or seeing photos or images related to the trauma. Other terms commonly used to refer to secondary traumatic stress include burnout and/or compassion fatigue.</p> <p>Citation: “Building Trauma-Sensitive Schools, National Center on Safe Supportive Learning Environments” U.S. Department of Education</p>
<p><b>Toxic Stress</b></p>	<p>Excessive or prolonged activation of stress response systems in the body and brain. Toxic stress can negatively impact healthy development. “Toxic stress responses include a prolonged or permanent abnormal physiologic response to a stressor with risk of end organ dysfunction.”</p> <p>Citation: “Toxic Stress: Effects, Prevention, and Treatment, Children” U.S. National Institute of Health</p>
<p><b>Equity</b></p>	<p>Educational equity is the just and fair distribution of resources based upon each individual student’s needs. Equitable resources include funding, programs, policies, initiatives and supports that target each student’s unique background and school context to guarantee that all students have equal access to a high-quality education.</p> <p>Citation: PSBA Equity Statement 2018</p>
<p><b>Social-Emotional Learning</b></p>	<p>The process through which children and adults understand and manage emotions, set and achieve positive goals, feel and show empathy for others, establish and maintain positive relationships, and make responsible decisions. Social-emotional learning is positively correlated with improved academic achievement and other developmental outcomes.</p> <p>Citation: “What is SEL?” Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL)</p>
<p><b>Culturally Responsive</b></p>	<p>The valuation, consideration and integration of individuals’ culture, language, heritage and experiences leading to supported learning and development.</p> <p>Pennsylvania Training and Technical Assistance Network (PaTTAN)</p>
<p><b>Universal Screening</b></p>	<p>Screening conducted to identify the prevalence of adverse childhood experiences (ACEs) among students to assist in informing a school entity’s trauma-informed approach plan.</p> <p>Universal screening assessments are typically brief, conducted with all students at a grade level or school, and may be followed by additional individual assessments or supports provided by trained behavioral health personnel.</p>

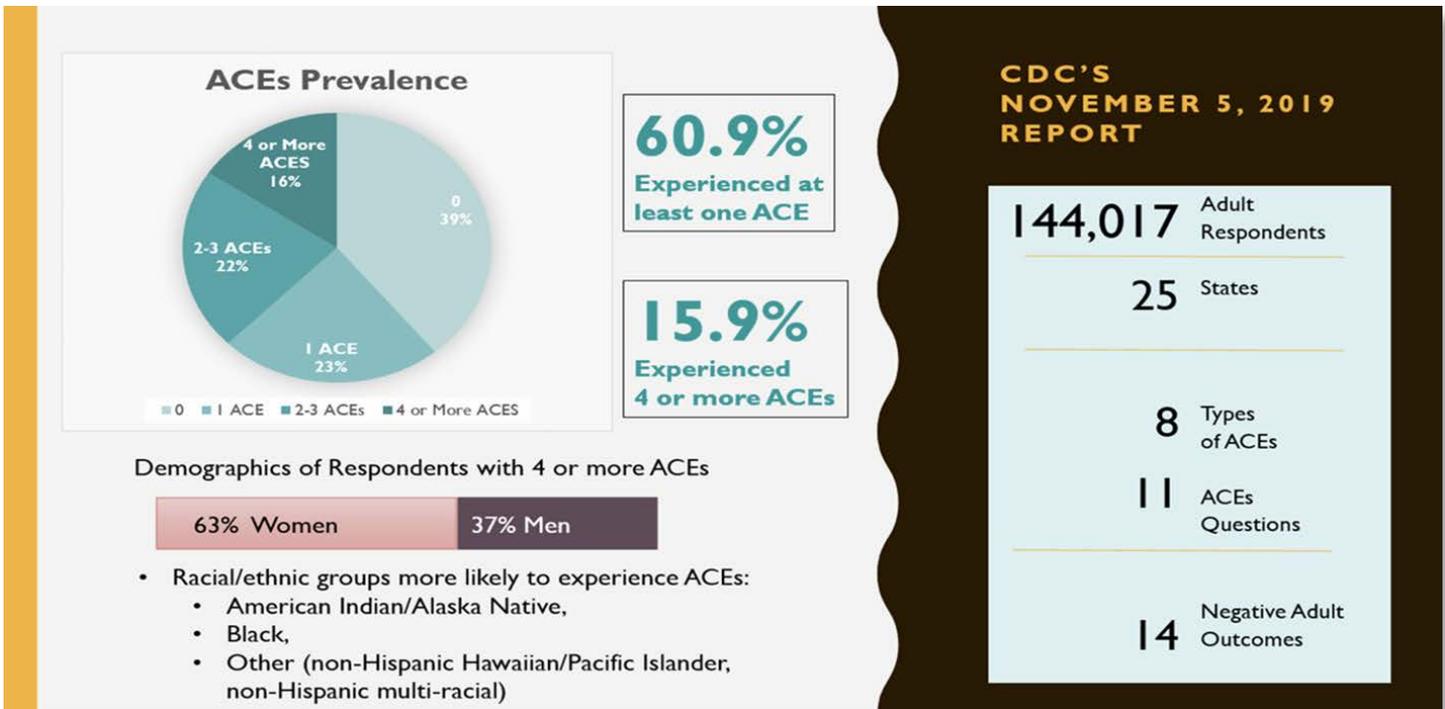
<p><b>Pennsylvania School Climate Survey</b></p>	<p>The PDE Office for Safe Schools developed free, online school climate surveys for use by school entities in Pennsylvania. These surveys provide schools with formative and summative climate data for use with needs assessments, program development, and short- and long-term planning. The domains measured by the surveys include: social-emotional learning, student support, high expectations and academic rigor/challenge, and safe and respectful school climate.</p>
<p><b>Pennsylvania Youth Survey (PAYS)</b></p>	<p>A biennial survey of Pennsylvania school students in the 6th, 8th, 10th and 12th grades to learn about their behavior, attitudes and knowledge concerning alcohol, tobacco, other drugs and violence. Since 1989, the Pennsylvania Commission on Crime and Delinquency has sponsored and conducted the PAYS to assess use/misuse of harmful substances and behaviors as well as risk factors related to these behaviors and the protective factors that help guard against them.</p>
<p><b>Youth Risk Behavior Surveillance System (YRBSS)</b></p>	<p>Developed in 1990 by the CDC to monitor health behaviors that contribute markedly to the leading causes of death, disability and social problems among youth and adults in the United States, the YRBSS includes national, state, territorial, tribal government and local school-based surveys of representative samples of 9th through 12th grade students. Surveys are administered every two years, conducted by relevant departments of health and education.</p>
<p><b>Multi-Tiered Systems of Support (MTSS)</b></p>	<p>A standards-aligned, comprehensive school improvement framework for enhancing academic, behavioral and social-emotional outcomes for all students. A continuum of supports and services exist across three tiers.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Tier 1 (Universal): Provide preventive, proactive and universal interventions to support academic instruction for all students.</li> <li>• Tier 2 (Secondary): Provide targeted interventions to support students classified as academically “at risk,” who require more intervention than is typically provided within Tier 1 (Universal) supports.</li> <li>• Tier 3 (Tertiary): Requires the most intensive level of intervention for students with the most significant, high intensity academic support needs (assessment based).</li> </ul>
<p><b>Positive Behavior Interventions and Support (PBIS)</b></p>	<p>A proactive, multi-tiered approach to student discipline that promotes appropriate student behavior and increased learning. PBIS is based on a three-tiered model.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Tier 1 (Universal): Provides a system of supports to all students in a school based on preventative practices which emphasize teaching and reinforce expected student behaviors.</li> <li>• Tier 2 (Secondary): Provides targeted interventions to support students classified as “at risk,” who require more intervention than is typically provided within Tier 1 (Universal) supports.</li> <li>• Tier 3 (Tertiary): Requires the most intensive level of intervention for students with the most significant behavioral/emotional support needs (assessment based).</li> </ul>
<p><b>Student Assistance Program (SAP)</b></p>	<p>Established under Section 1547 of PA Public School Code, SAP is designed to assist school personnel in identifying issues including alcohol, tobacco and other drugs as well as mental health issues which pose a barrier to a student’s success. Pennsylvania requires all school entities (school districts, charter schools and cyber charter schools) to have SAP programs for all grades (elementary and secondary).</p>



## THE IMPACT OF TRAUMA AND THE URGENCY FOR TRAUMA-INFORMED EDUCATION SYSTEMS

The term “trauma” has a legislative definition written into the PA School Code as well as broader academic and medical definitions. Broadly, trauma can arise from one event, a series of events, or a set of ongoing circumstances that overwhelm an individual’s coping mechanisms and have lasting adverse effects on an individual’s brain development and cognitive functioning, as well as their physical, social and emotional well-being.

Two key studies, one in 1995 and another in 2019, as well as other published research, have identified certain types of events as adverse childhood experiences (ACEs) and demonstrated a correlation between ACEs and negative outcomes later in life.

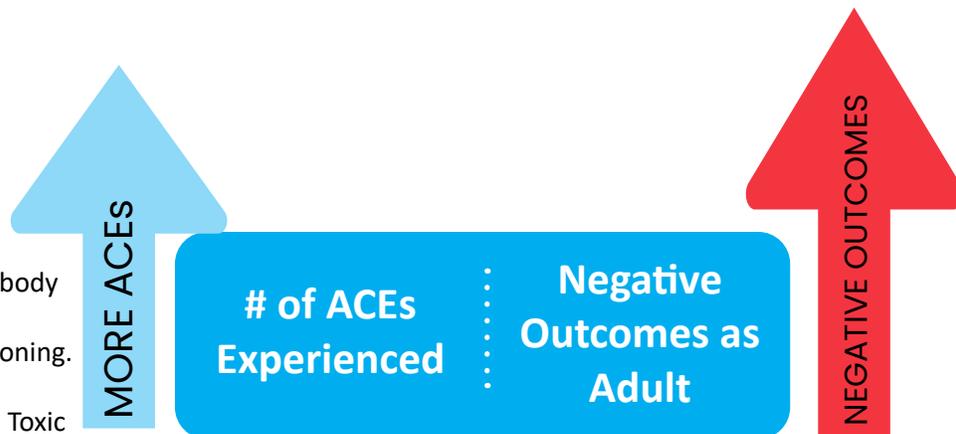


These negative outcomes include greater instances of:

- » Chronic disease such as cancer and diabetes
- » Greater maternal complications
- » More struggles with mental health including substance abuse
- » A shorter life expectancy
- » Higher suicide rates

Trauma is a stress deregulation problem – the body can neither regulate its fight, flight or freeze response nor return the body to normal functioning.

This type of stress is referred to as toxic stress. Toxic stress can be triggered by a strong/extreme event (acute trauma) as well as frequent or prolonged adversity (complex trauma).



Trauma impacts childhood brain development by creating a stress response that overdevelops the brain’s emotional center, the amygdala.

## Trauma-Informed EDUCATION

The amygdala and limbic or “doing” brain overpowers the “thinking” brain. This results in children who struggle with executive functioning, emotional regulation and creating long-term memory, all of which are crucial for learning.

Trauma may manifest in academic, emotional, psychological, behavioral and/or biological ways.

Students who have experienced acute or complex trauma may likely have:

- » Difficulty focusing, processing and retaining new information
- » Difficulty sorting relevant from irrelevant information
- » An inability to engage in independent choices or initiate independent work
- » Struggle with the process of problem-solving, collaborating with peers, taking constructive advice from teachers, and working through conflict to resolution
- » Have both clingy behavior and higher absenteeism

Protective factors have been proven to mitigate the harm of trauma in children. Some include:

- » Supportive family environment
- » Supportive social networks
- » Support for basic needs (food stability, safe shelter, hygiene, etc.)
- » Stable relationships with trusted adults (including teachers, coaches, bus drivers, school counselors, food service employees and recess/classroom aids)

Because two-thirds of U.S. adults have been exposed to at least one ACE and 1 in 5 children have two or more ACEs, education systems must have a better understanding of both the causes of trauma and the best practices for mitigating trauma in the school setting.

While schools can't be the only system mitigating trauma, they can play a role in:

- » Providing meals (for example, offering breakfast and providing free and reduced lunch)
- » Some medical care (for example, hearing and vision screenings)
- » Allowing students to create stable relationships with trusted adults

With protective factors in place, schools can work to meet the learning needs of students who are experiencing the impacts of trauma.

Because children spend so much time in school, evolving our education systems to implement trauma-informed approaches within the classroom and school setting can have a huge impact on increasing success for students who experienced adverse childhood experiences resulting in trauma.

Educators can apply a trauma lens, seeking to understand the root cause of children's behavior or feelings. A trauma lens helps us shift from asking “What's wrong with you?” to “What happened to you?”

Trauma-informed education systems will be able to:

- » **R**ecognize the widespread impact of trauma and understand the potential paths for recovery.
- » **R**ecognize the signs and symptoms of trauma.
- » **R**espond by fully integrating a trauma lens into policies, procedures and practices.
- » **R**esist retraumatization by ensuring schools are not creating environments of toxic stress and events of acute trauma.
- » Promote **R**esiliency.



Some effective school-based interventions that have been shown to mitigate the harm to children experiencing trauma are the following (also provided in your key terms table):

- » Educational equity
- » Social and emotional learning
- » Cultural responsiveness
- » Teaching the skill and mindsets of resilience
- » Both individual intervention measures (such as individual counseling or Student Assistance Program services) and schoolwide approaches (such as Multi-Tiered Systems of Support or Positive Behavioral Interventions and Support)

How do we know any of these strategies and approaches work? Trauma-informed systems have been shown to produce the following education results:

- » Lower absenteeism
- » Higher graduation rates
- » Reduced bullying
- » Reduced violence and aggression in schools

The Pennsylvania Commission on Crime and Delinquency (PCCD), through the state's appointed School Safety and Security Committee, created a model trauma-informed approach plan as a guide for PA school districts that recognize and embrace the need for a comprehensive and effective trauma-informed education system.

An emphasis within this plan is for districts to evaluate the student support systems and interventions already in place, recognizing how they provide protective factors, and consider how they can improve their approaches with a trauma-informed lens.

Recent school safety-related requirements for districts can also be key resources and factors for shifting systems to be more trauma-informed.

Moving schools and districts to becoming more trauma-informed is a process that will take several years and stages.

Given the legislative priority for trauma-informed care surfaced in 2019, your district may be in the beginning stages. If it started this work before the law and funding allocations, it may be in an implementation stage or sustaining phase with some programs.

**The school board must understand the far-reaching impacts of moving toward a trauma-informed system. Board decisions include final approval of curriculum, hiring of staff, and the district budget as well as reviewing and adopting board policies that can be read through a trauma-informed lens.**

## OPTIONAL POLICIES OVERVIEW

PSBA categorizes policy guides into four different areas:

- » **Mandated policies** – those required based on law or regulations
- » **Recommended for legal liability or audit purposes** – those policies critical to demonstrating compliance or reducing the district’s exposure to liability or other legal concerns
- » **Recommended** – those policies based on best practices
- » **Optional policies** – those policies designed to be useful for supporting a board’s goals and processes, but not required or recommended for specific purposes

Critical considerations for adopting optional policies include the following:

- » It is important to gather input from various stakeholders when reviewing optional policies.
- » It is always essential to review optional policies and policy language with the school solicitor, especially if the language is something that is outside the scope of the law, is controversial in your community, or if the district has had past litigation in that area.
- » The policy should reflect the district’s goals from the comprehensive plan as well as any additional board goals.
- » Funding considerations are an important part of reviewing an optional policy guide.

## TRAUMA-INFORMED POLICY

The board policy guide on trauma-informed approach is an optional policy, which means that it is not mandated by law for the board to adopt a policy on this subject. School boards who use school safety and security grant funding for trauma-informed approach initiatives are required to adopt a plan, but the policy is still optional.

For school boards that decide to approve trauma-informed educational programs or are required to adopt a plan, the policy provides a mechanism for directing staff to complete key steps to establish and maintain programs. The policy guide reflects the recommendations of the PCCD Model Trauma-Informed Approach Plan.

It’s important for school boards to examine each element of the policy and determine what should be added or revised to reflect the resources, programs and culture of your local school district, in order to meet the needs of your students and community.



### ACTIVITY

Please review the information below and discuss the Authority and Delegation of Responsibility sections with your group. Additionally, a portion of the Guidelines section will be assigned to each group for discussion.

#### Authority

The Authority section of the policy is where the board states its specific direction for what should occur in the district related to trauma-informed approach to education. It specifically charges district staff with developing and implementing a trauma-informed approach plan based on evidence-based practices. It also states the different areas where the district should use a trauma-informed lens to review and make decisions about modifying or implementing programming to support students and staff. The board can choose to use very general language here or select options for where it wants to focus when reviewing policies. Pause and discuss some of these areas that are listed as options in the policy:

- » Attendance policy and practices – how might we view student attendance differently through a trauma-informed lens?



- » Student discipline and code of conduct – what are restorative practices and how do they support students who have experienced trauma?
- » Policies and training on building and maintaining appropriate, supportive relationships between adults and students – what does this look like in your district? How do your staff and students communicate and interact? What safeguards and supports are in place? Have you adopted policy on maintaining professional adult/student boundaries?

### Delegation of Responsibility

This is the section of the policy where the board designates **who** will be primarily responsible for carrying out the trauma-informed approach work and lists some of their key responsibilities.

Consider which staff member has the expertise, time and resources to carry out this work. While the superintendent generally has primary responsibility for carrying out all board policies, heading up the trauma-informed approach plan work might require someone with different education and experience specific to this topic. Who is best poised in the district to lead this work and develop and implement the plan and programs?

### Guidelines

The guidelines section of the policy addresses key areas and actions that the board should consider and address to move forward with trauma-informed educational programs. A school board may decide to include each of these areas in the policy or select only specific items that should be addressed, based on the resources of the district and the board's planned timeline in implementing a trauma-informed approach plan and programs. Review the section below assigned to your group for discussion:

### Training

How will evidence-based training and professional development be provided to staff?

- » Training is required by PA School Code for new and reelected school directors (that's why you're here!) and also required to be included in the Professional Education Plan for certificated professional staff.
- » Who else should be trained? Will trauma-informed approach training be available to all staff, including support staff such as coaches, transportation staff, food services staff, paraprofessionals? *It's important to note that trauma-informed approach is one of the areas that qualifies as school safety and security training that is required for all staff by School Code.*
- » Will trauma-informed approach training be available to volunteers and contracted providers?
- » Will information be made available more broadly to parents and families, and the school community? Many districts have communitywide screenings of films such as *Resilience*, with an opportunity to connect with community partners who provide behavioral health services. Has your district considered these initiatives? Who could lead this work in your district?

### Screening

Do you know how prevalent Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) are among your student population?

- » Screening individual students for ACEs requires specifically trained behavioral health support staff such as guidance counselors, social workers or school psychologists who have been trained with specific assessment tools, and also parental consent in most cases if students will be individually identified. It also requires a commitment by the district to provide individual follow-up with students who are identified to be in need of support, and may in some cases trigger Child Find responsibilities for students who may be identified through this process as students with disabilities in need of specially designed instruction or specific accommodations and services.
- » For these reasons, the generally recommended practice for screening related to trauma-informed approach is to screen for the prevalence of ACEs among the student population at particular schools or grade levels. Screening can also focus more broadly than on just ACEs and could include screening on general social-emotional health of students, overall school climate (the state has excellent school climate survey resources), or could also look at data from broader state initiatives, such as the Pennsylvania Youth Survey (PAYS) administered every other year.

## Trauma-Informed EDUCATION

- » One of the key commitments the board must make in conducting any type of screening is to ensure that screening results will be reviewed by trained personnel or outside providers with whom the district has a contract or agreement, and that follow-up or referrals for services will be made for students when indicated by a screening.
- » Does your district currently conduct screening for the prevalence of ACEs or use other screening tools on overall behavioral health or school climate?
- » What tools are used and what does the district do with that information?

### Services

- » The district's plan and programs should identify what internal and external services will be available to address identified student needs. These could be district services and supports identified in the Student Services Plan such as school counseling, Student Assistance Program, special education and related services, or other medical or behavioral supports.
- » The district may also already have programs in place that can be easily used to provide baseline services to all students, with higher tiered focus on individual identified students or small groups of students who need additional support – what does your district already use?
  - Multi-Tiered Systems of Support (MTSS)?
  - Positive Behavioral Interventions and Support (PBIS)?
  - Are these frameworks used in every school or only certain schools?
- » When partnering with outside agencies and services or referring students to these services, what should the district consider:
  - Have we developed a memorandum of understanding or other contracts or agreements with these partner providers?
  - What are the financial implications?
  - What should we look for in a partner and what staff can best research these programs?

### Education

- » How should the district integrate education about trauma into the curriculum for students in developmentally and age-appropriate ways?
- » Will this be integrated into health curriculum or other current curriculum?
- » Do we already embed social-emotional learning into curriculum, such as self-awareness, self-management, responsible decision-making, relationship skills and social awareness?
- » Is this provided through assemblies or embedded in classroom activities daily?
- » How are students taught about coping strategies and seeking help for self and others?
- » Can this be included in training through the Safe2Say Something program or in other required awareness materials related to threat assessment?

### Staff Wellness and Support

See the definition in key terms table for secondary traumatic stress (also referred to as “secondary trauma”).

- » What general supports are provided to district staff that may also be helpful in addressing secondary trauma (e.g., Employee Assistance Program, peer mentoring or peer support programs)?
- » Do staff have a specific space delegated where they can take a break, separated from students, to engage in self-regulation?
- » What training is provided for staff on caring for themselves or developing self-care plans?



# SAMPLE POLICY



Book	Policy Manual
Section	100 Programs
Title	Trauma-Informed Approach
Code	146.1
Status	From PSBA

## **Purpose**

The Board recognizes the impact that trauma may have on the educational environment of the schools, individual student achievement, and the school community as a whole. The Board desires to address the effects of trauma in order to meet the academic, behavioral and professional needs of students and staff. The purpose of this policy is to direct district staff to develop and implement a plan for trauma-informed approaches to education throughout the district.

## **Definitions**

**Trauma** - for purposes of this policy, includes effects of an event, series of events or set of circumstances that is experienced by an individual as physically or emotionally harmful or threatening and that has lasting adverse effects on the individual's cognitive functioning and physical, social, emotional, mental or spiritual well-being.[1]

**Trauma-informed approach** - for purposes of this policy, includes a school-wide approach to education and a classroom-based approach to student learning that recognizes the signs and symptoms of trauma and responds by fully integrating knowledge about trauma into policies, professional learning, procedures and practices for the purposes of recognizing the presence and onset of trauma, resisting the reoccurrence of trauma and promoting resilience tailored to the district's culture, climate and demographics and the community as a whole.[1]

**Secondary trauma** - the impact of working with students experiencing trauma on a regular basis, which may cause traumatic responses and/or burnout on the individual providing support and care.

## **Authority**

The Board directs district staff to develop and implement a trauma-informed approach plan that uses evidence-based practices and reflects the needs and resources of the district and school community.[2]

The Board shall review current district resources, programs, school climate measures, partnerships with outside agencies, procedures and Board policies through a trauma-informed lens, and shall make revisions or determinations as necessary to facilitate implementation of the district's trauma-informed approach plan.

{ } This shall include, but not be limited to:

1. { } Student attendance policy and practices that focus on reasons for absence and school attendance improvement.[3]



2. { } Student disciplinary policies, practices and a Code of Student Conduct that incorporate restorative practices.[4][5][6][7]
3. { } Curriculum and planned instruction that embed social and emotional learning.[8][9]
4. { } Student services policies and programs that focus on development and support of students.[10][11][12][13][14][15]
5. { } Policies and training that focus on building and maintaining appropriate, supportive relationships between adults and students in the school community.[16][17][18][19]
6. { } School wellness policy, instruction and practices that promote healthy behaviors.[20]
7. { } Policies and practices that promote student safety and security, and build positive relationships with law enforcement agencies.[21][22][23][24][25]
8. { } Threat assessment policy and practices that focus on understanding a student's background in order to appropriately assess behavior and address the student's needs.[26]
9. { } Review of the annual budget to ensure fiscal resources for training and programs related to the trauma-informed approach plan.[27]
10. { } Review of the facilities and future facilities planning to provide environments that are attentive to the needs of students and staff with transition and sensory sensitivities.[28]
11. { } Culturally responsive practices that focus on identifying, valuing and integrating the cultures, languages, heritage and experiences of all students and staff to ensure a supportive school climate and community.[29]

### **Delegation of Responsibility**

The Board designates the

{ } Superintendent

{ } Director of Student Services

{ } school psychologist

{ } guidance counselor

{ } Other \_\_\_\_\_ (must be assigned to the school district)

to oversee the implementation of the district's trauma-informed approach plan and integrate the coordination of services and professional development into the district's comprehensive plan. The \_\_\_\_\_ shall serve as a member of the district's Student Assistance Program team.[2][13][15][16][21][30]

{ } The Board directs the Superintendent or designee to research and apply for available funding opportunities for implementation of the district's trauma-informed approach plan aligned with the provisions of law.[2]

{ } The Board directs the School Safety and Security Coordinator to include information regarding the district's implementation of the trauma-informed approach plan into the annual report to the Board on school safety and security practices.[23]

### **Guidelines**

#### Training



The district's trauma-informed approach plan shall include provisions for evidence-based training and professional development, based on assigned roles and responsibilities, including but not limited to: [2]

1. Required training for newly elected/appointed or re-elected/appointed school directors on best practices related to trauma-informed approach, in accordance with applicable law and Board policy. [31][32]
2. Required training on trauma-informed approach for certificated administrative and professional employees as part of the professional education plan, in accordance with applicable law and Board policy. [16][33]
3. { } Training on trauma-informed approach and trauma-related topics for all district staff and contracted service personnel to increase knowledge and understanding of trauma's impact on students and staff. [16][34]
4. { ) Training on trauma-informed approach for all school security personnel employed or contracted by the district, as well as invitation to training for local law enforcement agencies with which the district maintains a Memorandum of Understanding to increase knowledge and awareness in interacting with students who may have experienced trauma. [22][23]
5. { } Opportunities for volunteers, parents/guardians and other community members to obtain resources or attend training or information sessions on trauma-related approach and trauma-related topics impacting the school community. [18][19][35]

### Screening

The Board directs district staff to identify and implement evidence-based screening tools for students and the school community based on the trauma-informed approach plan, and in accordance with applicable law and regulations, including obtaining parental consent where appropriate or required. Screening tools may include, but are not limited to, those identifying the prevalence of Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs), social-emotional needs, and school climate indicators. Screening shall be conducted by qualified district staff or community agencies with which the district has a contract or other agreement. [13][15][26][36]

The trauma-informed approach plan shall require that screening results are reviewed by appropriate district staff or other contracted providers, and referrals for individual educational and behavioral services or evaluation for such services are made when indicated by individual or universal screening. Identification and referrals for special education and related services evaluations shall comply with applicable state and federal laws and regulations, and Board policy. [11][12][37][38]

### Services

The district's trauma-informed approach plan shall include provisions for identification of student needs, a referral system for individual assessments and coordination of services among the student and student's family, the school, and county-based services, community care organizations, public health entities, nonprofit youth service providers, community-based organizations, before-school or after-school care providers, or other similar community groups. [2]

Coordinated student services shall be based on the district's approved trauma-informed approach plan, which shall address recognition and response to the effects of trauma on education and instruction, absenteeism and school completion, and the secondary impact of trauma on school employees. [2]

{ } The district's trauma-informed approach plan shall be implemented within the current framework for

{ } Multi-Tiered Systems of Support (MTSS).

{ } Positive Behavioral Interventions and Support (PBIS).

The trauma-informed approach plan shall address coordination with designated district staff and teams responsible for implementing the district’s approved plan for K-12 student services and other district programs including, but not limited to, special education and related services, gifted education, guidance counseling, Student Assistance Program, threat assessment team, health services, and home and school visitor services.[10][11][12][13][14][15][26][30][37]

Parental notification and consent may be required prior to referral for or implementation of student services, in accordance with applicable law and regulations.[13][14][15]

The district shall develop partnerships with community-based services and organizations, public health entities, nonprofit youth service providers and other community groups to implement the trauma-informed approach plan and provide referrals and/or services to address and mitigate the impact of trauma for students and staff in accordance with the district’s approved plan and framework for support.

The Board shall, where appropriate, review and approve a Memorandum of Understanding or other agreement with each partnering organization or entity for the provision of services, in accordance with the resources of the district and the approved trauma-informed approach plan.

Education

The district’s trauma-informed approach plan shall integrate age-appropriate instruction for students related to trauma-informed topics and social-emotional learning as part of the district’s approved curriculum. Instructional topics may include, but not be limited to [8][25]

{ } resilience;

{ } self-awareness, self-management, responsible decision-making, relationship skills and social awareness;

{ } safe and healthy choices and behaviors;

{ } coping strategies;

{ } seeking help for self or others;

{ } Other \_\_\_\_\_.

Staff Wellness and Support

The district shall monitor and address the impact of trauma, including secondary trauma, on school employees as part of the trauma-informed approach plan. The plan shall include training and resources to identify the warning signs of trauma and provide confidential support and services to promote staff wellness, including but not limited to

{ } Employee Assistance Program,

{ } work environment that provides space for separation and self-regulation,

{ } training on development of self-care plans and peer support,

{ } Other \_\_\_\_\_.

Data Collection and Plan Review

The district shall review and revise the trauma-informed approach plan

{ } annually,

{ } periodically,

{ } as needed,

{ } as part of the district's K-12 student services plan,

based on a review of relevant data, district resources and programs, and the needs of students and staff. Such data may include, but not be limited to:

1. { } Aggregate data from evidence-based screening tools administered as part of the trauma-informed approach plan.
2. { } Anecdotal information from staff and students related to trauma and secondary trauma impact in the school environment.
3. { } Feedback from parents/guardians and the community on the district's implementation of trauma-informed approach to education.
4. { } Results of school climate surveys and other student or staff surveys on school environment.
5. { } Aggregate data on student absences, Student Assistance Program referrals, health and school nurse services, student removal discipline and graduation rates.
6. { } Aggregate data on Employee Assistance Program use and staff feedback on training related to trauma-informed approach.
7. { } Office for Safe Schools reports.
8. { } Safe2Say Something aggregate data.
9. { } PBIS inventories and surveys.

**PSBA Revision 6/21 © 2021 PSBA**

Legal

1. [24 P.S. 102](#)
2. [24 P.S. 1311-B](#)
3. Pol. 204
4. Pol. 113.1
5. Pol. 113.2
6. Pol. 218
7. Pol. 233
8. Pol. 105
9. Pol. 107
10. Pol. 112
11. Pol. 113
12. Pol. 114
13. Pol. 146
14. Pol. 209
15. Pol. 236
16. Pol. 333
17. Pol. 824
18. Pol. 917
19. Pol. 918
20. Pol. 246
21. Pol. 805
22. Pol. 805.1
23. Pol. 805.2
24. Pol. 806
25. Pol. 819
26. Pol. 236.1
27. Pol. 602
28. Pol. 701
29. Pol. 832
30. Pol. 100
31. [24 P.S. 328](#)
32. Pol. 004
33. [24 P.S. 1205.7](#)
34. Pol. 818
35. Pol. 916
36. Pol. 235.1
37. Pol. 103.1
38. Pol. 113.3

[PA Commission on Crime and Delinquency, School Safety and Security Committee - Model Trauma-Informed Approach Plan](#)





## Further Learning on Trauma-Informed Education

### PSBA Online Courses

To access, sign into [myPSBA.org](https://myPSBA.org), click on “Store” and search for these titles to add to your cart.

- » Trauma 1 - Trauma and its Impact
- » Trauma 2 – Mitigating Harm of ACEs
- » Trauma 3 – The Role of Schools
- » Trauma 4 – PCCD’s Model Plan

### Recorded Webinars

To access, sign into [myPSBA.org](https://myPSBA.org), click on “Store” and search for these titles to add to your cart.

- » Dr. Donna Beegle: “Becoming poverty-informed” (Keynote I series, May 2020)
- » Dr. Will Miller: “Mental Health in a Time of Pandemic” (Keynote I series, May 2020)
- » Trauma-Informed Approaches: “Crafting an Education Practice that Supports Students with Trauma” (Equity Webinar Series, 2018)

### PSBA Media and Publications

- » [Commonwealth Education Blueprint - SuccessStartsHere.org](https://SuccessStartsHere.org)
- » PSBA *Bulletin* article “[Fostering Social-Emotional Learning Through Board Development](https://PSBA.org)” March/April 2021 - [PSBA.org](https://PSBA.org)
- » PSBA *Bulletin* article “[Addressing Trauma During COVID-19](https://PSBA.org)” September/October 2020 - [PSBA.org](https://PSBA.org)
- » PSBA *Bulletin*, issue theme: students and trauma November/December 2018 (Keynote I series, May 2020) - [PSBA.org](https://PSBA.org)

### Keystone Education Radio Podcasts - KeyEdRadio.org

- » [Empowering Students through Mentor Relationships](https://KeyEdRadio.org). October 19, 2021
- » [The Effects of Nature and its Role in Social-Emotional Learning](https://KeyEdRadio.org). October 5, 2021
- » [Building Inclusive, Poverty Informed School Communities](https://KeyEdRadio.org). September 21, 2021
- » [Why it’s Important to Talk about Suicide—Prevention Among Students](https://KeyEdRadio.org). May 4, 2021
- » [Instilling Resiliency in Kids and Closing the Achievement Gap](https://KeyEdRadio.org). September 15, 2020
- » [Therapeutic Emotional Support: An Award-Winning Program at Upper St. Clair SD](https://KeyEdRadio.org). July 21, 2020
- » [Students Emotional Well-Being and Academics: A Hand in Hand Approach](https://KeyEdRadio.org). June 9, 2020
- » [Flourish or Fail: A conversation about Grit with Angela Duckworth](https://KeyEdRadio.org). March 3, 2020
- » [Commonwealth Education Blueprint-Vision Plan Realized](https://KeyEdRadio.org). December 10, 2019



### Other Resources to extend your learning

- » [“Fundamentals of Social and Emotional Learning”](#) - casel.org
- » [“How childhood trauma affects health across a lifetime”](#) - ted.com
- » *The Body Keeps the Score* by Bessel Van Der Kolk, M.D. (book)
- » PA Commission on Crime and Delinquency (PCCD) [Model Trauma-Informed Approach Plan](#) - pccd.pa.gov
- » [“As Schools Reopen, trauma-informed teaching might be more important than ever”](#) - mashable.com
- » Meg Walkley, Tory L. Cox [Building Trauma-Informed Schools and Communities, \*Children & Schools\*](#), Volume 35, Issue 2, April 2013, Pages 123–126
- » Overview of Restorative Practices – National Conflict Resolution Center: [Restorative Practices in the San Diego School District](#) - [ncrconline.com](#)
- » [List of restorative practices resources from Restorative Solutions-](#) [restorativesolutions.us](#)
- » [Information on Youth Courts from the PA Bar Association](#) - [pabar.org](#)



# 2021-22 FINANCE **UPDATE**



## KEY TERMS

TERMS	DEFINITION
<b>ARP (ESSER III)</b>	American Rescue Plan was signed into law by the United States Congress in March 2021 to provide additional emergency funding to support the long-term work of education recovery from the impacts of the coronavirus pandemic. These funds are not Title I-A funds, but instead their own separate program distributed to public school districts and charter schools.  Pennsylvania's ESSER III allocation was \$5 billion.
<b>CARES Act (ESSER I)</b>	Coronavirus Aid Relief and Economic Security Act (CARES) was signed into law by the United States Congress March 2020. It awarded grants to state educational agencies for the purpose of providing local educational agencies, including charter schools that are LEAs, with emergency relief funds to address the impact of the coronavirus pandemic on elementary and secondary schools across the nation. These funds are considered Title I-A funds and distributed to public school districts and charter schools based on the fiscal year 2019 formula.  On May 12, 2020, the U.S. Department of Education (ED) approved PA's application to obtain \$523.8 million in one-time federal emergency funds.
<b>CRRSA Act (ESSER II)</b>	Coronavirus Response and Relief Supplemental Appropriations Act (CRRSA) was signed into law by the United States Congress December 2020. It provided an additional \$53.4 billion for the Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief Fund (ESSER Fund II). These funds are considered Title I-A funds and distributed to public school districts and charter schools based on the fiscal year 2020 formula.  Pennsylvania's ESSER II allocation was \$2.22 billion.
<b>ESSER</b>	Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief program
<b>GEER</b>	Governor's Emergency Education Relief program
<b>Health and Safety Plan</b>	The PA Department of Education originally required each school entity to develop a health and safety plan prior to the start of school programs for the 2020-21 school year, in order to document health and safety and mitigation strategies for addressing COVID. Federal funding provided through the American Rescue Plan (ARP) and Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief (ESSER) programs also required each school entity receiving federal funds to develop a health and safety plan by July 30, 2021, which must address in-person instruction and continuity of services.
<b>School Board Governance Loop</b>	A model that highlights the decision-making process between the school board and administration in their operation of a school district. The governance loops breaks down this process into four steps: plan, develop, actualize, evaluate.
<b>Stakeholders</b>	Include students, parents and families, district administrators and staff, unions and local organizations representing the rights of underserved children.

## UPDATE ON FEDERAL FUNDING AND RELATED BOARD POLICIES

**1 Key takeaway 1:** ESSER funding is a one-time infusion into a school district's budget and should not be used to cover ongoing costs or to fill a budgetary gap for operational expenditures.

In 2020 and 2021, school districts received significant amounts of additional federal funding opportunities through the federal and state legislation. Federal funding was to aid school districts in preparing school buildings and staff to safely return to in-person education.

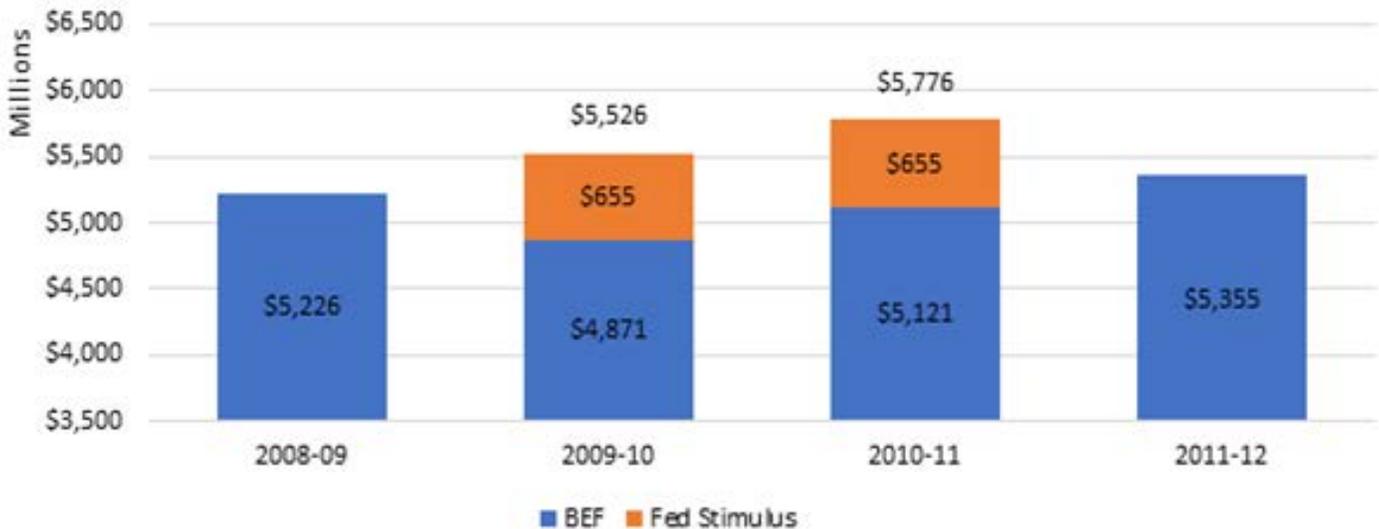
There were three distributions of federal funding via three separate federal bills. Each federal funding allotment specified how the funds could be used, by when the money should be spent and which institutions were eligible. Each federal funding allotment had a specific process outlined for funding distribution.



The funding can be used for a variety of purposes, from building and operational upgrades to temporary programs to combat learning loss due to the pandemic. While the temptation may be to use this money to plug budgetary holes instead of a tax increase, history shows that using one-time funds in this manner can be devastating.

In 2009, the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania used federal money to fund basic education subsidies for school districts. When the funding ended, school district budgets were hit with decreased revenue and were forced into austerity measures that included layoffs of teachers and staff and a wide range of program cutbacks and cuts. Using the ESSER funding in the same manner would have the same effect only on a localized scope within those districts that chose to use the one-time money to fund ongoing operational expenditures.

### Basic Education Funding Levels



The Pennsylvania Department of Education (PDE) has been charged with monitoring the use of ESSER funds.

Local education agencies apply for their federal funding allocation through PDE's eGrants system, and as with all federal funding, PDE disburses payments on a monthly schedule.

The funding from each of these allotments (ESSER I, II, and III) is required to be tracked separately.

Your district's federal programs coordinator and likely your business manager address many of the day-to-day requirements for federal funding compliance. However, it is the board's role to:

- » Approve changes to policies that reflect the district's compliance with funding requirements.
- » Approve health and safety plans as part of the ARP ESSER funding, which involves required stakeholder engagement during the development, review and revisions.
- » Receive updates from district administration on the outcomes of the use of funds.
- » Help the community to understand the benefits, limitations and outcomes of the funding.



### FURTHER LEARNING

To learn more about COVID federal funding and board policy updates related to school finance, visit [myPSBA.org](https://myPSBA.org) to take the online course: Finance Updates 2021, Advanced School Director Training badge. Additionally, you can take 100-level PSBA courses on school audits and funding streams for schools.

## INTRODUCTION TO THE GOVERNING LOOP

**2** **Key takeaway 2:** School boards are most effective when they concentrate their time and energy to govern at a strategic level. Working with the superintendent, the district's leadership Team of 10 makes decisions that distributes the responsibilities between the board and the administration.

To highlight how this relationship works, PSBA created a governance loop framework. The School Board Governance Loop breaks down the decision-making process into four steps: plan, develop, actualize and evaluate.

### STEP #1: PLAN

“Plan” is both a verb and a noun, however the first stage of the governing loop uses “plan” as a verb, where governance and management decide the direction for the district.

Sometimes the administration will set an objective or goal, bringing it to the board for approval or providing it for greater context. Sometimes the board will set an objective or goal as a Team of 10, directing the superintendent to communicate the objective or goal to district administration for implementation.

At times, the board and administration may decide objectives and goals together. The board should work closely with the superintendent and administration to set objectives and goals for the effective operation of the school district.

### STEP #2: DEVELOP

The administration is usually responsible to research, gather information and to develop a recommendation for board consideration. In other words, the administration constructs a plan of action. The board reviews the recommendations, (presented by the administration or in a board committee report) and then deliberates. The board considers the recommendations by weighing the information presented, asking questions, and requesting more information or additional options, if needed.

Once the board feels it has the information necessary to make a decision, it votes to approve or not approve.

### STEP #3: ACTUALIZE

Once a decision is made by the board, implementation becomes the responsibility of the administration. While it may be difficult for those who like to be hands-on to release the work of implementation, this is how governance should work. The school board makes the final decision and the administration implements that decision.

School directors are not expected and should not attempt to assist with implementing a decision or otherwise performing the role delegated to the district administration.

There should be a process in place for the board to receive timely updates from the administration about the progress made in implementing board decisions.

This may include but is not limited to:

- » Updates on the comprehensive and/or strategic plan, budget
- » Student achievement initiatives
- » Building renovations
- » Updates typically come in the form of reports or presentations by the administration

### STEP #4: EVALUATE

Administration reviews the impact of implementation and recommends adjustments if needed and whether a program is ultimately effective.

Boards assess past decisions based on the analysis presented by the administration.



Boards must continuously be engaged in evaluating the academic and operational performance of the district, including delivery of the educational program, student achievement, fiscal management, district facilities, and staff and stakeholder feedback.

One of the most important responsibilities of a school board is to annually evaluate the superintendent and assistant superintendent.

School boards are also encouraged to conduct a board self-assessment (BSA) at least every two years, if not annually.

## DISTRICT BUDGET PROCESS

In the budget process, school boards should focus on the following:

- » Clearly stating board priorities as to what programs are most important to them. If full-day kindergarten is a priority, increasing tax revenue may be needed to cover the additional staffing and facilities.
- » Communicating with your superintendent if you have specific questions that you feel need to be addressed in budget presentations.
- » Recognizing the decisions made by previous boards because they affect your current budget cycle.
- » Recognizing your board's decisions will affect future boards. Decisions on tax increases, bargaining agreements and debt service will affect all budgets moving forward.

It is the job of the district's business manager and the superintendent to present the board with a budget that adheres to all requirements while being fiscally responsible to the community.

One of the most important powers of a school board is the power to levy local taxes. Any time you hear the phrase "tax reform," you should think "tax shift."

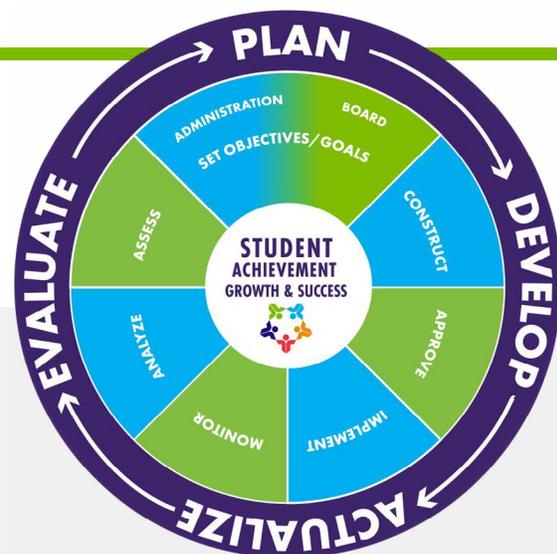
Any change in taxation shifts who bears the funding responsibility; from state to local; from property owners to wage earners; from businesses to individuals (or vice versa).

Ultimately, public funding comes from the public; the decision of legislators and school boards is how much to ask of each segment of the public — wage earners, property owners and businesses.

School boards need to take a long-term view of tax increases, and the lack of tax increases, to see the effects on future budgets and future school boards.

# GOVERNANCE LOOP SCENARIO

## DISTRICT BUDGET



PLAN

Following the initial presentation by the business manager, it appears a 3.5% tax increase may be necessary to balance the budget. A majority of school directors show concern due to the current economic environment and believe local constituents may not be able to afford such an increase. Understanding the importance of balancing the responsibility of providing educational programs with being good stewards of community resources, the board asks the administration to come back with additional information. Specifically, the board would like to review options showing the changes that would be required to the budget to have only a 1.5%, 2% or 2.5% tax increase.

DEVELOP

The administration, led by the business manager and superintendent, work together to develop the three options requested by the board. The administration shares with the board what cuts would be required to reduce the tax increase to 1.5%, 2% and 2.5%. Additionally, the administration shows what the budget would look like minus the two new positions recently approved by the board. During deliberations, the board asks if the second position could be delayed until the following year in order to keep the tax increase to a reasonable amount. The superintendent agrees to hold off on the second position and the board approves the proposed final budget.

ACTUALIZE

After final approval, the budget is implemented at the beginning of the fiscal year. The board monitors the district's budget monthly through the finance report and in the budget transfers it approves.

EVALUATE

Following the close of the fiscal year, the business manager provides a report to the board regarding how the proposed budget compared with actual income and expenditures. The board uses the analysis and the auditor's report to consider the accuracy of the budget and the unanticipated revenues and expenditures.







# THANK YOU

Thank you for completing your required school director training with PSBA. A certificate of completion will be uploaded to your transcript page on myPSBA.org within the next few weeks. You may download this certificate and submit it to your district for record-keeping. For guidance on printing your certificate, please click [here](#).

We would appreciate your feedback about this training event. Please scan the QR code below with your smartphone or click [here](#) to access a brief online survey.





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