

THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF PENNSYLVANIA

HOUSE BILL

No. 1848 Session of
2023

INTRODUCED BY COOPER, BRIGGS, MIHALEK AND BRENNAN,
NOVEMBER 14, 2023

REFERRED TO COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION, NOVEMBER 14, 2023

AN ACT

1 Amending the act of March 10, 1949 (P.L.30, No.14), entitled "An
2 act relating to the public school system, including certain
3 provisions applicable as well to private and parochial
4 schools; amending, revising, consolidating and changing the
5 laws relating thereto," in terms and courses of study,
6 further providing for dates and times of school terms and
7 sessions and commencement.

8 The General Assembly of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania
9 hereby enacts as follows:

10 Section 1. Section 1504 of the act of March 10, 1949
11 (P.L.30, No.14), known as the Public School Code of 1949, is
12 amended to read:

13 Section 1504. Dates and Times of School Terms and Sessions;
14 Commencement.--(a) (1) The board of school directors of each
15 school district shall fix the date of the beginning of the
16 school term.

17 (2) Unless otherwise determined by the board, the daily
18 session of school shall open at [nine ante-meridian] 9:00 a.m.
19 and close at [four post-meridian] 4:00 p.m., with an
20 intermission of one hour at noon, and an intermission of fifteen

1 minutes in the forenoon and in the afternoon. Upon request of a
2 board of school directors for an exception to the aforesaid
3 daily schedule, the [Secretary of Education] secretary may, when
4 in his opinion a meritorious educational program warrants,
5 approve a school week containing a minimum of twenty seven and
6 one-half hours of instruction as the equivalent of five (5)
7 school days, or a school year containing a minimum of nine
8 hundred ninety hours of instruction at the secondary level or
9 nine hundred (900) hours of instruction at the elementary level
10 as the equivalent of one hundred eighty (180) school days.

11 (3) Beginning with the 2026-2027 school year, and each
12 school year thereafter, the instructional day for a secondary
13 school may not begin earlier than 8:15 a.m. By July 1, 2026, the
14 governing body of a public school entity shall inform its
15 community, including parents, students, school administrators,
16 school employes and other stakeholders, about the health, safety
17 and academic impacts of sleep deprivation on secondary school
18 students and the benefits of a later school start time, and
19 shall discuss with the community local strategies to
20 successfully implement the later school start time.

21 (4) Professional and temporary professional employes shall
22 be allowed a lunch period free of supervisory or other duties of
23 at least thirty minutes.

24 (5) The provisions of this subsection shall not be construed
25 to repeal any rule or regulation of any board of school
26 directors now in effect which provides for a lunch period longer
27 than the minimum prescribed [herein] in this section or to
28 repeal any action of any board of school directors taken in
29 compliance with section 7 of the act of July 25, 1913 (P.L.1024,
30 No.466), entitled "An act to protect the public health and

1 welfare, by regulating the employment of females in certain
2 establishments, with respect to their hours of labor and the
3 conditions of their employment; by establishing certain sanitary
4 regulations in the establishments in which they work; by
5 requiring certain abstracts and notices to be posted; by
6 providing for the enforcement of this act by the Commissioner of
7 Labor and Industry and others; by prescribing penalties for
8 violations thereof; by defining the procedure in prosecutions;
9 and by repealing all acts and parts of acts inconsistent with
10 the provisions thereof," as amended.

11 (b) If a school in any district due to crowded conditions is
12 unable to provide for the full time attendance of all pupils
13 during the school day, the board of school directors, with the
14 approval of the [Department of Public Instruction] department
15 first obtained, may provide for two half-day sessions. The
16 approval of the [Department of Public Instruction] department
17 shall not exceed a period of one year. Annual extensions may be
18 granted by the [Department] department upon review of the
19 circumstances of each case. Each half-day session shall be four
20 (4) hours in duration: Provided, That the [Superintendent of
21 Public Instruction] secretary may reduce the half-day session in
22 the first and second grades, at the request of a school
23 district, for cogent reasons relating to the health, safety or
24 welfare of the children, if, in [his] the secretary's opinion,
25 the school program submitted by the district shows that the
26 local program is adequate for these grades. Half-day sessions
27 shall be regarded as two regular sessions. Teachers employed for
28 one half-day session shall not be employed for the other on the
29 same day for the entire half-session, but may be required by the
30 school district to serve every school day for the same number of

1 hours prescribed by the board of school directors for regular
2 full-time teachers who teach full day sessions in the same
3 grades in the school district. Upon any violation or failure to
4 comply with the provisions of this subsection, the
5 [Superintendent of Public Instruction] secretary, on hearing,
6 after two (2) weeks' written notice to the board of school
7 directors, shall withhold and declare forfeited the State
8 appropriation for reimbursement on account of the instruction of
9 the pupils in average daily membership in the sessions in which
10 the requirements are not met.

11 (c) The board of school directors may fix the date of the
12 school commencement and shall pay such expenses in connection
13 therewith as it may determine.

14 (d) As used in this section, the following words and phrases
15 shall have the meanings given to them in this subsection unless
16 the context clearly indicates otherwise:

17 "Department." The Department of Education of the
18 Commonwealth.

19 "Public school entity." A school district, intermediate
20 unit, area career and technical school, charter school, regional
21 charter school or cyber charter school operating within this
22 Commonwealth.

23 "Secondary school." A building within a public school entity
24 that provides instruction in grades seven through twelve or any
25 combination of those grades.

26 "Secretary." The Secretary of Education of the Commonwealth.

27 Section 2. Any contractually agreed-upon school daily
28 schedule in effect on the effective date of this section between
29 a public school entity, as defined in section 1504 of the act,
30 and its professional or nonprofessional employees and that is in

1 conflict with the provisions of this act shall remain in effect
2 for the duration of the contract.

3 Section 3. This act shall take effect in 60 days.