

THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF PENNSYLVANIA

HOUSE BILL

No. 1618 Session of
2009

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MANN, MCGEEHAN, MUNDY, PASHINSKI, READSHAW, SIPTROTH, STURLA,
VULAKOVICH AND WATERS, JUNE 5, 2009

REFERRED TO COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION, JUNE 5, 2009

AN ACT

1 Providing for data collection relating to dropouts by the
2 Department of Education.

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14 Section 1101. Effective date.

15 The General Assembly of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania

16 hereby enacts as follows:

1 CHAPTER 1

2 PRELIMINARY PROVISIONS

3 Section 101. Short title.

4 This act shall be known and may be cited as the Drop-out Data
5 Collection Act.

6 Section 102. Findings.

7 The General Assembly finds and declares as follows:

8 (1) Significant discrepancies in school district
9 reporting, drop-out statistics and graduation rate formulas
10 exist nationwide.

11 (2) The United States Secretary of Education recently
12 announced that the United States Department of Education will
13 require all states to use a Federal formula for the
14 calculation of drop-out and graduation rates.

15 (3) The Pennsylvania Department of Education's
16 statistics between the 1995-1996 and 2005-2006 school years
17 show that drop-out rates in this Commonwealth may have
18 decreased Statewide, but serious questions exist regarding
19 the uniformity in reporting, and therefore, the reliability
20 of that data.

21 Section 103. Definitions.

22 The following words and phrases when used in this act shall
23 have the meanings given to them in this section unless the
24 context clearly indicates otherwise:

25 "Charter school." The term shall have the same meaning as in
26 section 1703-A of the act of March 10, 1949 (P.L.30, No.14),
27 known as the Public School Code of 1949.

28 "Cyber charter school." The term shall have the same meaning
29 as in section 1703-A of act of March 10, 1949 (P.L.30, No.14),
30 known as the Public School Code of 1949.

1 "Department." The Department of Education of the
2 Commonwealth.

3 "Graduation gap." The percentage of students who entered the
4 ninth grade and did not graduate from the same high school in
5 the same school district four years later.

6 "School district." The term shall have the same meaning as
7 in section 102 of the act of March 10, 1949 (P.L.30, No.14),
8 known as the Public School Code of 1949.

9 "School entity." The term shall have the same meaning as in
10 section 1101-A of the act of March 10, 1949 (P.L.30, No.14),
11 known as the Public School Code of 1949.

12 CHAPTER 3

13 DATA COLLECTION

14 Section 301. Powers and duties.

15 The department shall have the following powers and duties:

16 (1) To create by the 2009-2010 school year a Statewide
17 definition of "dropout," if none is provided by Federal
18 statute, regulation or guideline and, in accordance with any
19 Federal statute, regulation or guideline, report the
20 graduation rates, drop-out rates and graduation-gap rates in
21 this Commonwealth.

22 (2) To implement and maintain a high-quality data
23 collection and reporting system that accurately accounts for
24 all students when calculating high school graduation and
25 drop-out rates in accordance with Federal regulations or
26 guidelines. The reporting system shall include the
27 calculation of graduation rates, drop-out rates and the
28 graduation-gap rates in all school entities, charter schools
29 and cyber charter schools.

30 (3) To serve as a clearinghouse of information, policies

and strategies aimed at decreasing the number of dropouts.

(4) To require school entities, charter schools and cyber charter schools to report student drop-out information to the department using the department's data collection system.

Section 302. Data collection and reporting.

(a) Categories.--Pursuant to section 301, data collected by the department on drop-out rates, graduation rates and graduation-gap rates shall be disaggregated in the following categories:

(1) Limited English proficiency.

(2) Low income.

(3) Special education.

(4) Gifted education.

(5) Race/ethnicity.

(6) School entity.

(7) Charter school or cyber charter school.

(8) Gender.

(9) Geographic area.

(10) Other categories as determined by the department.

(b) Availability.--The department shall ensure that the data collection and reporting system be accurate, uniform and accessible to school entities, charter schools, cyber charter schools and Commonwealth residents via the department's publicly accessible Internet website.

CHAPTER 7

ADMINISTRATION

Section 701. Reporting.

Beginning in the 2010-2011 school year and each school year thereafter, the department shall annually prepare a report and

1 provide a copy of the report to the Education Committee of the
2 Senate and the Education Committee of the House of
3 Representatives and shall post a copy of the report on the
4 department's publicly accessible Internet website by September 1
5 of each year, that contains, at a minimum, the following:

6 (1) All drop-out rates, graduation rates and graduation-
7 gap rates reported by school entities, charter schools and
8 cyber charter schools, including school-level data,
9 disaggregated by the factors used to identify an at-risk
10 student and the following classifications:

11 (i) Limited English proficiency.

12 (ii) Low income.

13 (iii) Special education.

14 (iv) Gifted education.

15 (v) Race/ethnicity.

16 (vi) Gender.

17 (vii) School entity.

18 (viii) Geographic area.

19 (2) Highest grade level completed and age prior to
20 dropping out.

21 (b) Uniform reporting.--School entities, charter schools and
22 cyber charter schools shall use the definitions and formulas
23 established by the department if no Federal statute, regulation
24 or guideline exists when reporting the graduation rates,
25 drop-out rates and graduation-gap rates to the department.
26 School entities, charter schools and cyber charter schools shall
27 report these rates annually, as required by the department, on a
28 form to be developed and provided by the department.

29 (c) Guidelines and standards.--The department may develop
30 any guidelines or standards necessary to implement the

1 requirements of this act.

2 CHAPTER 11

3 MISCELLANEOUS PROVISIONS

4 Section 1101. Effective date.

5 This act shall take effect July 1, 2009, or immediately,
6 whichever is later.