

THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF PENNSYLVANIA

HOUSE BILL

No. 2637 Session of
2000

INTRODUCED BY DeWEESE, COLAFELLA, CAPPABIANCA, PISTELLA,
BELARDI, PESCI, LAUGHLIN, FRANKEL, MELIO, MARKOSEK, M. COHEN,
MANN, CORRIGAN, BELFANTI, LUCYK, SHANER, JOSEPHS, STABACK,
MANDERINO, TIGUE, TRAVAGLIO, SOLOBAY, EVANS, YOUNGBLOOD,
GRUCELA, MUNDY, SURRA, McCALL, WALKO, HORSEY, WILLIAMS,
RUFFING, THOMAS, KIRKLAND, SAINATO, FREEMAN, LEVDANSKY,
STEELMAN, VEON, PLATTS, STURLA, BATTISTO, RAMOS, GRUITZA,
CURRY, BISHOP, SCRIMENTI, TRICH, HARHAI AND BROWNE,
JUNE 14, 2000

REFERRED TO COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION, JUNE 14, 2000

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," providing grants to school districts
6 for early childhood education programs.

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

9 Section 1. The act of March 10, 1949 (P.L.30, No.14), known
10 as the Public School Code of 1949, is amended by adding an
11 article to read:

12 ARTICLE XV-C

13 GREAT START PROGRAM

14 Section 1501-C. Legislative Findings.--The General Assembly
15 finds and declares as follows:

16 (1) A well-trained and well-educated work force is essential

1 to the economic well-being of this Commonwealth and its
2 citizens.

3 (2) A system of public education that provides a quality
4 education for all the children of the Commonwealth is essential
5 in maintaining a well-trained and well-educated work force.

6 (3) Children, particularly poor children, benefit
7 academically and socially from quality early childhood
8 education. These early learning experiences and opportunities
9 lay the groundwork for future learning and success.

10 (4) School districts need flexibility and financial support
11 to design and implement early childhood education programs that
12 promote student achievement. To this end, it is recognized that
13 not any one specific program or instructional approach can
14 accomplish this goal.

15 (5) Student success is determined by many factors such as
16 meaningful parental involvement, quality early childhood
17 education programs that emphasize early literacy awareness and
18 parent training programs that support student learning.

19 Section 1502-C. Definitions.--As used in this article.--

20 "Department" shall mean the Department of Education of the
21 Commonwealth.

22 "School district" shall have the same meaning as in section
23 102.

24 "School entity" shall mean any public school district,
25 intermediate unit or area vocational-technical school.

26 Section 1503-C. Establishment of Program.--There is hereby
27 established in the Department of Education the Great Start
28 Program. The program shall provide Great Start Grants to
29 financially challenged school districts for the purpose of
30 establishing early childhood education programs designed to

improve school readiness and the academic performance of elementary students.

Section 1504-C. Great Start Grants.--School districts in which at least twenty-five per centum (25%) of the Average Daily Membership is eligible to receive free lunches under the National School Lunch act of 1946 (60 Stat. 230, 42 U.S.C. § 1751 et seq.) shall receive an amount equal to forty-five dollars (\$45) per free lunch eligible student. School district in which at least fifty per centum (50%) of the Average Daily Membership is eligible to receive free lunches under the National School Lunch Act of 1946 shall receive an additional amount equal to forty-five dollars (\$45) per free lunch eligible student. School districts eligible to receive Great Start Grants under this section shall receive an amount not less than thirty-two thousand five-hundred dollars (\$32,500).

Section 1505-C. Applications.--(a) Each school district eligible for Great Start Grants under section 1504-C shall submit an application at the time, in the manner and containing or accompanied by such information as the Department of Education may prescribe but in any case, shall include, but not be limited to, a plan for the expenditure of grant funds that documents the following:

(1) That the plan indicates how the grant funds will be allocated for eligible uses under section 1506-C and how grant funds will be allocated to school entities within the school district.

(2) That the plan provide qualitative and quantitative measures that will be used to determine whether the eligible uses of grant funds have improved the school readiness of pre-school children and academic performance of elementary school

1 students benefiting from the grant funds.

2 (3) That the plan fosters meaningful parent involvement,
3 which results in greater student achievement.

4 (4) That the plan established partnerships with local
5 community based services and programs that assist children and
6 their families.

7 (b) Two or more school districts eligible for funding under
8 section 1504-C may submit a joint application.

9 Section 1506-C. Eligible Uses of Funds.--(a) School
10 districts applying for Great Start Grants may use the funding
11 for the following purposes:

12 (1) To increase parental involvement through home visits and
13 other services that support parents and emphasize the
14 intellectual development of children.

15 (2) To offer full-day kindergarten.

16 (3) To reduce class sizes in grades kindergarten through
17 third.

18 (4) To employ and train reading aides and tutors.

19 (5) To expand enrollment in Head Start programs.

20 Section 1507-C. Reports.--(a) All school districts
21 receiving funding under section 1504-C shall on an annual basis
22 submit a report to the Department of Education detailing the
23 allocation of grant funds by eligible uses under section 1506-C
24 and by school entity within the school district. The report
25 shall also document both qualitatively and quantitatively the
26 impact of the grant funding on improving the school readiness of
27 pre-school children and academic performance of elementary
28 school students benefiting from the grant funds and foster
29 meaningful parent involvement in their children's education. The
30 department shall develop the procedures and format that school

1 districts will use in preparing their report.

2 (b) The department shall submit to the General Assembly and
3 make public a report on the allocation of grant funds by school
4 district and by eligible uses under section 1506-C. The report
5 shall also document both qualitatively and quantitatively the
6 impact both Statewide and by school district of the grant
7 funding on improving the school readiness of pre-school children
8 and academic performance of elementary school students
9 benefiting from the grant funds and foster meaningful parent
10 involvement in their children's education.

11 Section 1508-C. State Funding.--The sum of twenty-five
12 million dollars (\$25,000,000), or as much thereof as may be
13 necessary, is hereby appropriated to the Department of Education
14 for each fiscal year from fiscal year July 1, 2000, to June 30,
15 2001, through fiscal year July 1, 2004, to June 30, 2005, for
16 the purposes of this article.

17 Section 2. This act shall take effect immediately.