

Department of Public Instruction State Documents

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Finding aid written in English

Pennsylvania Department of Education, Bureau of the State Library

Forum Building
607 South Drive
Harrisburg, PA, 17120

Summary Information

Repository: Pennsylvania Department of Education, Bureau of the State Library

Creator: Pennsylvania Department of Public Instruction

Title: Department of Public Instruction State Documents

Identifier: PUB-INST

Date: 1873 - 1969

Date: Majority of material found within 1956 - 1967

Physical Description: 279 Megabytes (131 PDF files)

Language of English

Materials:

Scope and Contents

The Department of Public Instruction supervised the public school system, distributed State subsidies to school districts, administered teachers' colleges and vocational-education programs, issued licenses for certain professions, and operated the State Library. The Department was headed by the Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction, and these titles of Office and Department were occasionally used interchangeably.

The publications of the Department of Public Instruction contain newsletters and bulletins. Selected topics from these publications include teacher supply and demand, and agency happenings. The bulk of the current material is dated from 1956 to 1967.

Biographical / Historical

Following passage and signing of the Free School Law on April 1, 1834, the Secretary of the Commonwealth acted as head of the Common School System until 1837. In that year, a separate Department of Common Schools was created with a Superintendent of Common Schools as its chief officer. The Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction was established under the Constitution of 1874. It replaced the Office of Superintendent of Common Schools, which had been created in 1857 to assume the duties relating to the administration of public schools originally lodged with the Secretary of the Commonwealth by the Free School Act of 1834. By 1876, the officials working under the Superintendent were commonly known as the Department of Public Instruction. The powers and duties of this Department were greatly increased in 1923 when the State Library and Museum, the State Board of Censors, the Public School Employees' Retirement Board, the Pennsylvania Historical Commission, and the various State professional examining boards were made administrative units of Public Instruction. In keeping with its responsibility for administering the State's educational policies, the Department of Public Instruction supervised the public school system, distributed State subsidies to school districts, administered teachers' colleges and vocational-education programs, issued licenses for certain professions, and operated the State Library. Several administrative units were eventually separated from the Department. In 1945 the Historical Commission, the Museum and the State Archives were merged to form an independent agency, the Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission. The State Board of Censors was abolished in 1956 when the act creating it was declared unconstitutional by the State Supreme Court, and in 1963 the professional examining boards were transferred to the jurisdiction of the Department of State. In 1969 the name of the Department of Public Instruction was changed to the Department of Education.

Legacy Agency Names and Related Agencies

Department of Education (successor agency), Department of Schools (former agency name)

Other Finding Aids

For more information concerning the records of the Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction (as the head of the Department of Public Instruction) at the Pennsylvania State Archives, please visit:

<https://gencat.eloquent-systems.com/pennsylvania-state-archives/permalink.html?key=class540>.

Administrative Information

Publication Statement

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Controlled Access Headings

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