

Department of Education State Documents

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Pennsylvania Department of Education, Bureau of the State Library

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607 South Drive
Harrisburg, PA, 17120

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Summary Information

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Scope and Contents

The Department of Education administers school laws and assists school districts in providing educational programming to Pennsylvanians. The Department of Education functions to: develop and administer educational policies to improve the quality of education in Pennsylvania; conduct programs to assess the achievement of basic and higher education goals established by the General Assembly, the Governor, and the State Board of Education; provide advice and recommendations about education to the General Assembly, the Governor, and the State Board of Education; provide leadership to preschool, K-12, and higher education; provide service and technical assistance to Pennsylvania educators; administer the education laws enacted by the General Assembly and approved by the Governor, as well as the federal government; administer the regulations of the State Board of Education and the federal government, as well as standards established by the Secretary of Education; cooperate in the development of master plans for preschool, K-12, and higher education and administer those plans; manage a system of pre-service education and in-service professional development to ensure high-quality personnel in pre-school, elementary, and secondary education; plan and administer policies for the state library, public libraries, school libraries, and academic libraries; plan and administer, in cooperation with the State Board for Vocational Education and other state agencies, vocational training and retraining programs; develop and administer state policies concerned with public and non-public elementary, secondary, and higher education; compile educational research and/or development projects and use findings to make informed decisions and policies; develop and administer joint educational programs with other state, federal, local, and private agencies; provide leadership in assuring equal education opportunity; and collect and disseminate information about education in Pennsylvania. The Department also cooperates with independent groups concerned with public education including the State Tax Equalization Board, the State Public School Building Authority, the Pennsylvania Higher Education Assistance Agency, and the Pennsylvania Public School Employees Retirement Board.

The publications of the Department of Education contain annual reports, other reports, and educational guides. Selected topics from these publications include career technical centers and library statistics. The bulk of the current material is dated from 2011 to present.

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 Schools (former agency name), Department of Public Instruction (former agency name)

General

The Instructional Output and Faculty Salary Costs of the State-Related Universities and the Information Disclosure of the State-Related Universities, more commonly known as the Snyder and Stairs Reports (respectively), are required annual reports for Pennsylvania's public higher learning institutions. Though also published by the Department of Education, these reports can be accessed through the Joint State Government Commission, being the primary entity to which the data is originally reported for the General Assembly.

Other Finding Aids

For more information concerning the records of the Department of Education at the Pennsylvania State Archives, please visit:

<https://gencat.eloquent-systems.com/pennsylvania-state-archives/permalink.html?key=class489>.

Administrative Information

Publication Statement

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Controlled Access Headings

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