

LEGISLATION

An Act relative to relative to the Mohawk Trail Regional School District and the Hawlemont School District

[Chapter 31 of the Acts of 2017](#)

Effective: 06/30/17

This follow-up legislation to a 1993 law was filed to confirm the Mohawk Trail Regional School District's budget process and their right to approve future amendments in accordance with law and the terms of their agreement after the participating towns approved a change in their regional agreement.

An Act relative to language opportunity for our kids

[Chapter 138 of the Acts of 2017](#)

Effective: 02/19/17 (90 days from enactment)

Sections 47 to 54 shall take effect on 05/01/18

The new LOOK law establishes language acquisition programming flexibility for districts and oversight requirements for the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education.

- Provides districts with flexibility in choosing a language acquisition program that best fits the needs of their English Learner (EL) population, while ensuring accountability through Department oversight.
- Requires districts that intend to offer new programs for ELs to submit specific information for review by the Department and the district's parent advisory council. All programs must be based on research and best practices.
- Directs the Department to notify a district and provide the corrective steps that a district must take before commencing a program if the Department finds that a proposed program fails to meet the applicable requirements.
- Districts that intend to offer a new sheltered English immersion or alternative instructional English learner program in the next academic year must submit the required information to the Department and the district's parent advisory council by January 1 of the current academic year, which means new EL programs may open no earlier than the 2019-2020 school year.

Increased Input from Parents and Guardians

- Requires districts that serve a significant population of ELs to create EL Parent Advisory Councils, made up of parents/guardians of ELs in the district.
- Requires districts to provide notification to parents/guardians of ELs regarding various topics, including their right to choose a language acquisition program among those offered by the district.
- Parents/guardians of ELs may select any language acquisition program offered by the district, provided that the program is appropriate for the age and grade level of the student.
- Parents/guardians may request a transfer of the student to another language acquisition program available in the district, subject to approval by the superintendent.

Educator Qualifications

- Requires the Department to establish licensure endorsements for various language acquisition program types (for example, Two-Way Immersion Programs).
- Requires the Department to annually provide districts with reports of all educators who have current language acquisition program endorsements.
- Requires districts to verify, prior to the beginning of each school year, that each educator in an English learner program is properly endorsed for that program.

Benchmarks, Guidelines and Templates

- Requires the Department to establish: (i) benchmarks for attaining English proficiency for ELs; (ii) guidelines to support districts in identifying ELs who do not meet benchmarks; and (iii) an EL success template for use by districts to assist ELs who are not meeting English proficiency benchmarks.
- Requires districts to provide a copy of these materials from the Department to parents/guardians of ELs within the timeframes specified in the law.
- Requires districts to adopt procedures to identify ELs who do not meet the English proficiency benchmarks and establish various processes relating to them.

Data and Reporting

- Expands EL related reporting requirements for districts to the Department.
- Establishes a data commission to study the collection and dissemination of data on ELs and to make recommendations on streamlining data reporting.

State Seal of Biliteracy

- Directs the Board to establish the State Seal of Biliteracy. Districts may award the seal to students who meet the state criteria in attaining a high level of proficiency in English and at least one other language.

Pre-K English Learners

- Expands the student census requirement for districts to include ELs who are in Pre-Kindergarten

BUDGET LAWS

FY17

[AN ACT MAKING CERTAIN APPROPRIATIONS FOR FISCAL YEAR 2018 BEFORE FINAL ACTION ON THE GENERAL APPROPRIATION BILL](#)

[Chapter 25 of the Acts of 2017](#)

Effective: 06/26/17

Directs the state treasurer shall make advance payments for some or all of periodic local reimbursement or assistance programs to any city, town, regional school district or independent agricultural and technical school that demonstrates an emergency cash shortfall, as certified by the commissioner of revenue and approved by the secretary of administration and finance, pursuant to guidelines issued by the secretary.

FY18 General Appropriations Act

[Chapter 47 of the Acts of 2017](#)

Effective: 07/17/17

The GAA includes total state spending of \$39.4 billion, representing a \$652 million (1.7%), increase over FY17 spending. This spending recommendation is based on a projected 3.4% increase in tax revenue for FY18.

The Department's recommended appropriations total \$5.324 billion, which represents an increase of \$113.5 million (2.2%), over FY17 spending. The GAA affirms a commitment to fund education aid for our districts but does include reduced spending to a number of DESE accounts due to the lowered revenue forecast for FY18. In signing the budget, the Governor vetoed spending of \$5.6 million in our accounts, most of which represented legislative earmarks for specific local projects. These vetoes were subsequently overridden by the Legislature.

I. Education Local Aid & Reimbursements

Chapter 70 aid (7061-0008) is increased by \$118.9M (2.6%) over FY17. The increase is designed to allow for a minimum aid increase of \$30 per pupil over FY17 for every school district and provides \$25 million to begin addressing the increased costs of employee and retiree health care.

GAA funding for the Special Education Circuit Breaker account (7061-0012) is increased by \$4 million over FY17. Regional School Transportation (7035-0006) has a \$500,000 increase. The METCO grant program (7010-0012), and Charter School Tuition Reimbursements (7061-9010) are level funded. We estimate the latter will cover 100% reimbursement for the capital facility component of charter tuition (\$893 per student) and 69.3% of first-year tuition increases.

Non-Resident Vocational Student Transportation (7035-0007) and Transportation Reimbursement for Homeless Students (7035-0008) were reduced by \$7,500 and \$250,500, respectively, from FY17 levels.

II. Student Assessment

The GAA funding for the Student Assessment account (7061-9400) was insufficient to meet our planned program spending for the upcoming school year. The governor made a reserve draw to bring the account total to the \$31.1 million.

III. Departmental Grant & Targeted Support Programs

The majority of our grant and targeted support programs were either level funded or reduced.

- The GAA reduces Targeted Assistance (7061-9408) by \$183,955 from FY17.
- Connecting Activities (7027-0019) received an increase of \$555,250 for both earmarks and additional grant funding.

- Adult Basic Education (7035-0002) received an increase of \$829,289 for both earmarks and additional grant funding.
- The Expanded Learning Time Grant Program (7061-9412) is reduced by \$197,685 from FY17.
- The After-School Grant Program (7061-9611) is funded at \$3.5 million to fund both earmarks and additional grants.
- The Consolidated Literacy Program (7010-0033) is \$76,907 higher than FY17 spending, while Bay State Reading received an increase of \$206,167.
- The Special Education in Institutional Settings account (7028-0031) received an increase of \$4 million over FY17 level.
- The Safe and Supportive Schools Grant program (7061-9612) is funded at \$500,000, a \$101,400 increase over FY17.
- The GAA transfers of the WPI Schools of Excellence (7061-9624) account from the Department of Higher Education to DESE, funded at \$1.4 million.

IV. DESE Administrative & Operational Resources

The GAA reduces DESE’s administrative funding below our maintenance level for FY18. This reduced funding totals \$756,764 in the following three accounts that fund agency staff.

- 7010-0005 Main Administration \$256,096
- 7028-0031 Special Education in Institutional Settings \$233,061
- 7061-9200 Education Data Services \$267,607

Outside sections that are of significance to the Department and to elementary and secondary schools:

Section 90. Designates the Secretary of Education as Chair of the Homeless Student Transportation Commission established by Chapter 133 of the Acts of 2017.

Section 126. Requires a feasibility study to be conducted by the Executive Office of Education on minimum number of instructional hours substituted for the minimum number of days as required by the board of education. As part of the study, the executive office of education shall determine cost savings associated with an instructional hours based system including, but not limited to, energy costs, administrative costs and transportation costs.

Section 127. Requires a feasibility study to be conducted by the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education on rural school district aid.