

2025–26 School Code: Implementation Guide

Phase 1: Immediate (Now–January 2026)

Action	Full Details	Effective Date
Section 511.1	<p>If a public or nonpublic school collects a fee for admission to a school-sponsored activity, cash must be accepted as a form of payment for admission.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Schools may refuse to accept payment that is in a denomination significantly exceeding the amount of the fee. 	Immediate
Section 1201 Certificates Qualifying Persons to Teach	<p>Experience-Based Certificate:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Intern Certificate is renamed Experience-Based Certificate (EBC). • Terms of all EBCs are extended from three years to five years. 	Immediate
Section 1204.2 Career and Technical Instructional Certificate	<p>Experience-Based Certificate (Career and Technical):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Extends the time that individuals with a Career and Technical Experience-based Certification have to complete the required 18 credit hours of CTE preparation coursework from three years to five years; and • Allows individuals pursuing the Career and Technical Experience-based Certification and the Career and Technical Instructional Certificate to demonstrate occupational competency based on a review of their credentials and work experience, regardless of whether an occupational competency exam exists. 	Immediate
Section 1202.2 Instructional Certificate Grade Spans and Age Levels	<p>The grade spans and age levels for Instructional Certificates shall be as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Primary – prekindergarten, kindergarten, grades 1 through 6 or ages 3 through 11 • Secondary – grades 7 through 12 or ages 11 through 21 • Specialized areas – prekindergarten through grade 12 or ages 3 through 21 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Immediately allows educators holding a PK-4 certificate to teach 5th and 6th grade. ○ Immediately allows educators holding a 7-12 secondary school certificate to teach 6th grade in the 	Immediate

	<p>subject area for which the secondary certificate is endorsed.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Requires PDE to develop alternative pathways for teachers with an elementary/middle instructional certificate to expand the scope of their current certificate to include the secondary grades through add-on testing or professional development. More information to follow. 	
Section 913-A IU Staff	<p>IU Assistant Executive Director and Executive Director:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Individuals holding a Letter of Eligibility or Commission Qualification Letter (CQL) may be employed to serve as an IU Executive Director or IU Assistant Executive Director. 	Immediate
Section 1221 Career and Technical Administrative Director Certification Flexibility	<p>CTE Director:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • School districts, CTCs, charter schools or IUs with at least three PDE-approved CTE programs may hire a superintendent to serve as a Career and Technical Administrative Director when there is a vacancy, and the superintendent meets one of the following requirements: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Has a minimum of three years of relevant CTE experience; ○ Completed a PDE-approved postbaccalaureate program that prepares the individual to lead CTE in a school; or ○ Agrees to complete a CTE leadership program within three years. 	Immediate
Section 1725.1-A Cyber Charter Funding	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A cyber charter school student's school district of residence is responsible for the statutorily set tuition rate. • The nonspecial education tuition rate is based upon the school district of residence's selected expenditures per student. Selected expenditures are the total expenditures net of deductions for spending categories that cyber charter schools receive directly (e.g., federal funding), that are accounted for separately (i.e., special education), or that cyber charters are either not responsible for (e.g., pupil transportation) or prohibited from (e.g., pre-kindergarten). • The changes reduce the cyber charter nonspecial education tuition rate by adding additional spending category deductions for 	Immediate

	<p>tax assessment and collection services, 60% of student activities, and 60% of operations and maintenance of plant services.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Nonspecial education cyber charter school costs and cyber charter school ADM are also excluded from the calculation. • PDE must make redirection payments based upon the most recently available rates required to be posted by the Department. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Note: A revised PDE-363 form will be available soon. 	
Section 1748.1-A Cyber Charter Wellness Checks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Each cyber charter school must submit to PDE a wellness check policy that demonstrates compliance with the requirement that, at least once during each instructional week, the school must visibly see and communicate in real time with each of its students. • If a cyber charter school fails to comply with wellness check requirements, PDE may do the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Impose additional reporting requirements; ○ Mandate child abuse recognition and prevention training for staff; ○ Require the cyber charter school to meet in person with each student at least once during the following school year; and ○ Prohibit the cyber charter school from being awarded a State grant by PDE until the school demonstrates compliance. 	Immediate
Section 1309-B School Safety and Security Coordinator	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • School safety and security coordinators must coordinate school safety and security meetings with school and building leadership at least quarterly; and by June 30 of each year, include in their annual safety report who attended the quarterly meetings. • School safety and security coordinators must complete the seven hours of training within one year of being appointed and annually, including continuing education requirements adopted by the School Safety and Security Committee. 	Immediate
Section 1306-B	Grants through the Pennsylvania Commission on Crime and Delinquency (PCCD):	Immediate

<p>School Safety and Security Grant Program</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • \$100 million for school safety and mental health grants. • \$20.7 million for targeted school safety grants to school entities and nonpublic schools which shall be used to fund programs that address school violence and mental health. 	
<p>Section 1333 Procedure When Child is Truant Section 1333(A)(2.2)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A child who is habitually truant is prohibited from transferring, during the school year, to a cyber charter school unless a judge determines that the transfer is in the best interest of the child. • When a school notifies a parent/guardian that their child is truant, the notification must include resources to assist the child with returning to compliant compulsory school attendance. 	<p>December 12, 2025</p>
<p>Section 1303.2-A Parental and Employee Notification of Weapon Incidents</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • School districts, charter schools, cyber charter schools, CTCs, IUs, private schools, and nonpublic schools are required to notify parents, guardians, and school employees of incidents involving the possession of a weapon on school property within 24 hours of the incident occurring. 	<p>January 6, 2026</p>
<p>Section 1333.2 Procedure Upon Filing of Citation (24 PS § 1333.2(i))</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If a judge enters a sentence for truancy after the completion of the school year, the penalties shall be limited to community service or completion of an attendance improvement plan. 	<p>January 11, 2026</p>
<p>Section 1748-A Cyber Charter Residency Verification</p>	<p>Proof of Residency:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The parent/guardian of a student enrolled in a cyber charter school must submit: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ continued proof of the student's residence to the cyber charter school and the student's school district of residence by November 1 and March 1 of each school year. ○ Note: Parents/guardians of homeless students are not subject to this requirement. <p>Dispute of Residency:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • School districts and cyber charter schools have ten days, rather than seven days, to send residency dispute notifications and responses. • A cyber charter school is prohibited from retaliating against an employee who has made a good faith report that a student does not reside within the school district 	<p>January 11, 2026</p>

	<p>that has been notified that it is the student’s school district of residence.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • PDE must add proof of residency to the form notifying a school district of the enrollment of a resident student in a cyber charter school. Acceptable forms of proof of residency include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ A document containing the parent or guardian's name and address, on any of the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ an active residential lease agreement or a mortgage statement no more than three months old; ▪ a bank statement no more than three months old; ▪ a utility or internet bill no more than three months old; ▪ a tax bill no more than three months old; ▪ an insurance document no more than three months old; ▪ any other document determined acceptable by the Department. • A school administrator, employee, or representative of an educational entity who knowingly falsifies data reported to PDE shall be guilty of a misdemeanor of the third degree. 	
<p>Section 1301-D Intent; Section 1302-D Definitions (Safe2Say Something Program)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Changes the name of the “Safe2Say Program” to “Safe2Say Something Program”. • Requires the Office of the Attorney General to develop a Safe2Say Something training program for school entities and to track trainings. 	<p>January 11, 2026</p>
<p>Section 1303-D Safe2Say Something Program</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Requires the Office of the Attorney General to develop a Safe2Say Something training program for school entities and to track trainings. • Requires schools to develop a process for assessing, responding to, and disposing of reports within 30 days of receiving them and, for a life safety event, provide a final disposition within 48 hours. • Adds noncompliance provisions, including posting a list of noncompliant schools online and not allowing noncompliant schools to receive School Safety and Security Committee grant money. 	<p>January 11, 2026</p>

<p>Section 1333.3 Penalties for Violating Compulsory School Attendance Requirements (24 PS § 1333.3(j))</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If the court requires a student convicted of violating compulsory school attendance to perform community service or complete an attendance improvement course, program, or plan, the court shall retain jurisdiction of the matter until completion of the penalty. 	<p>January 11, 2026</p>
<p>Section 1327.2 Attendance Policy at Charter, Regional Charter, and Cyber Charter Schools</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All charter schools, regional charter schools and cyber charter schools must explain in their attendance policies how they will accurately determine when a student has an unexcused or excused absence or is present for instruction. • Cyber charter schools must add the following to their attendance policies: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ A policy to determine when a child has an absence or is present for synchronous instruction. To be present for synchronous instruction, a child must be present and visible to the teacher on camera during each synchronous instructional period for each course. ○ A policy to determine when a child has an absence or is present for asynchronous instruction. To be present for asynchronous instruction, a child must complete weekly benchmarks. The weekly benchmarks must be sufficient to demonstrate the student is making adequate and consistent progress toward completion of each course. If a student does not complete the weekly benchmark, the student shall receive an absence or other consequence in accordance with the cyber charter school's attendance policy. 	<p>January 11, 2026</p>

Phase 2: February–August 2026

Action	Full Details	Effective Date
<p>Section 1503-N School Duties Related to Evidence-based Reading</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • LEAs must report to PDE the reading instruction curricula they are using during the 2025-2026 school year. More information to follow. 	<p>March 31, 2026</p>
<p>Section 1333.1 Procedure by</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Regardless of whether a child who is habitually truant transfers schools, the 	<p>August 1, 2026</p>

School When Child Habitually Truant (24 PS § 1333.1(a)(2.1), (2.2) and (c.1))	school in which the child is currently enrolled must provide an attendance improvement plan and pursue remedies to the child's habitual truancy until the child is no longer truant or is no longer of compulsory school age.	
Section 1333.5 Department Supports to Prevent Truancy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> PDE & Department of Human Services must develop best practices for student supports to prevent truancy and habitual truancy. 	August 1, 2026
Section 1339 Reports to Secretary of Education	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> School entities must report information related to student attendance and PDE must post reports related to the enforcement of compulsory attendance quarterly. 	August 1, 2026
Section 1327.2 Attendance Policy at Charter, Regional Charter, and Cyber Charter Schools	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> All charter schools, regional charter schools and cyber charter schools must report all unexcused absences to PDE via PIMS. Cyber charter schools must submit information related to the completion of weekly benchmarks annually through PIMS. For students who have been found to be truant or habitually truant, cyber charter schools must submit this information monthly. 	August 1, 2026

Phase 3: SY 2026–27

Action	Full Details	Effective Date
Section 1617 Free Application for Federal Student Aid	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Beginning with the Class of 2027, students must submit a FAFSA or opt-out form. Schools may not withhold graduation based on FAFSA status. 	SY 2026–27

Phase 4: SY 2027–28

Action	Full Details	Effective Date
Section 1202.2 Instructional Certificate Grade Spans and Age Levels	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Educator preparation programs must ensure all new candidates are pursuing the new certification bands. Educator preparation programs may permit an individual enrolled in a program prior to July 1, 2028, and remain continuously enrolled, to complete the program for the current grade level limitations. 	July 1, 2028
Section 1503-N School Duties Related to Evidence-based Reading	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> LEAs must do the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Adopt an evidence-based reading curriculum - a comprehensive program of literacy instruction that integrates Structured Literacy 	SY 2027–28

	<p>practices with High-Quality Instructional Materials (HQIM). Such a curriculum:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Aligns with the Pennsylvania Standards and the Science of Reading; ▪ Includes a logical scope and sequence for explicit, systematic, and cumulative instruction; and ▪ Incorporates phonemic awareness, the alphabetic principle, decoding, encoding, fluency, vocabulary, comprehension, and building content knowledge. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Identify a lead educator to assist each school with implementing the new curriculum. ○ Approve professional development training from the list developed by PDE in consultation with the Reading Leadership Council. Professional development that is aligned with academic standards and the Science of Reading includes evidence-based intervention practices in Structured Literacy, explicit and systematic instruction in phonological and phonemic awareness, the alphabetic principle, decoding and encoding, fluency and vocabulary, reading comprehension and building content knowledge. ○ Demonstrate that each educator is in the process of completing the approved professional development by the beginning of the 2028-2029 SY. 	
<p>Section 1504-N Universal Reading Screener</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • LEAs must screen K-3 students for reading competency three times per school year (beginning, middle, and end of school year) using a universal screener chosen from the list developed by PDE. Students with limited English proficiency, students with disabilities, and gifted students must be screened unless assessment conflicts with their IEP. A universal reading screener is 	<p>SY 2027–28</p>

	an assessment tool given to all students in order to determine if a student is at risk for developing reading difficulties.	
Section 1505-N Reading Deficiency ID/Notification	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If a student is identified by a screener as having a reading deficiency using at least three data points, the following apply: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ The student shall remain identified as having a reading deficiency until the student performs at or above an identified threshold level; ○ LEAs must notify parents of kindergarten students who exhibit a reading deficiency in the third screening at the end of the school year; and ○ LEAs must notify parents of 1st through 3rd grade students who exhibit a deficiency in reading during the school year after the identification of the reading deficiency. 	SY 2027–28
Section 1506-N Reading Intervention Plans	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • LEAs must provide a reading intervention plan for each student identified as having a reading deficiency. 	SY 2027–28
Section 1509-N Reporting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • LEAs must submit annual literacy reports each year, including curriculum, PD completion, screening data. 	Effective July 31, 2028, and recurring annually on July 31

Phase 5: Full Compliance (2028–29)

Action	Full Details	Effective Date
Section 1503-N School Duties Related to Evidence-based Reading	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Educators must complete the professional development program training from the list developed by PDE in consultation with the Reading Leadership Council. 	SY 2028–29