



ALLEGHENY INSTITUTE
FOR PUBLIC POLICY

*School Strikes in PA:
Measuring the Student Impact in
Days Out of Class*

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Key Findings

- Pennsylvania is one of eight states that permit school employees to strike. Of the 35 states that permit collective bargaining for school employees (which includes Pennsylvania), 22 prohibit school strikes.
- From the 1997-98 school year through the 2012-13 school year:
 - There were 115 teacher strikes in Pennsylvania
 - These strikes took place in 80 school districts located in 33 of the state's counties
 - In total these strikes lasted 1,177 days and affected more than 300,000 pupils
- The focus of this study was to measure the impact on students by way of days out of class. This was calculated by multiplying the number of days a strike lasted by the number of students affected. The statewide total was more than 3.8 million days.
- There were seven districts that had more than 100,000 cumulative student days out of class.
- When examined by region, students in Southwest Pennsylvania had over 1.4 million cumulative days out of class due to strikes over the time period. Only one region, Northcentral Pennsylvania, had no strikes.

Introduction

“‘Strike’ shall mean a concerted action in failing to report for duty, the willful absence from one’s position, the stoppage of work, slowdown or the abstinence in whole or in part from the full, faithful, and proper performance of the duties of employment for the purposes of inducing, influencing or coercing a change in the conditions or compensation or the rights, privileges, or obligations of employment...” Section 1101-A, Act 88 of 1992

Pennsylvanians know school strikes all too well as it is the perennial leader among the handful of states that actually allow strikes. Based on the most recent report of the Education Commission of the states, only eight states explicitly permit school strikes and our work has shown that Pennsylvania had more strikes in recent years than states that allow strikes but have more school districts.¹

Yet a most fascinating development may have occurred this year. Depending on a ruling on the merits of the dispute in northeastern Pennsylvania, the state may have had its first strike free year since the mid-1970s when reliable data on school strikes became made available.²

We have written extensively on school strikes in full-length reports, *Policy Briefs*, and editorials from both a general perspective as well as on specific strikes when they occurred.³

The purpose of this report is to analyze data from the Pennsylvania School Boards Association (PSBA) covering the last sixteen years of school strikes (1997-98 through 2012-13) and provide the reader with an examination of the student impact by calculating student days disrupted by strikes. There are, of course, many other effects of strikes, including hardships and costs for working parents who must arrange child care when there is no school because of a strike. This report does not attempt to gauge that impact, as important as it might be. Nor does it weigh in on the educational effects of a disrupted school year. Nor does it attempt to measure the impact on students, quality of education and family plans because of days added to the normal end of the school year. Those should be studied but are beyond the scope of the present work.

¹ Education Commission of the States “State Collective Bargaining Policies for Teachers” December 2011 <http://www.ecs.org/html/Document.asp?chouseid=9978> The report shows that 35 states permit collective bargaining. Of these 35, eight permit strikes, 22 prohibit them, and five are silent on the matter. Fifteen states prohibit collective bargaining: five prohibit school strikes and 10 are silent on the matter.

² For an explanation of Act 88 of 1992, what it meant to accomplish, and actual results, see the following: Pennsylvania State Education Association “Act 88: Collective Bargaining Legislation” <http://www.psea.org/general.aspx?id=1730> Pennsylvania School Boards Association, Testimony of Brian Boland to House Education Committee, August 2011 <http://www.psba.org/issues-advocacy/advocacy-services/legislative-testimony/2011/testimony-strike-free-education-boland-082511.asp> Allegheny Institute for Public Policy Testimony to Senate Education Committee, April 22, 2009. Allegheny Institute Blog “Was it a Strike or Not?” <http://www.alleghenyinstitute.org/component/content/article/9/1153.html> and “PA At a Half Dozen Strikes This Year” <http://www.alleghenyinstitute.org/component/content/article/9/380.html>

³ Allegheny Institute Summary Page on Teacher Strikes <http://www.alleghenyinstitute.org/education/teacherstrikes.html>

Methodology

Data on school strikes covering the period from the 1997-98 school year through the 2012-13 school year were obtained from the PSBA. This data show the district where the strike occurred, the bargaining unit that went on strike (teachers or support staff), the length of the strike, the number of teachers (if it was a teacher strike) and the number of pupils affected.

Four strikes that involved an entity other than a school district (such as an intermediate unit or a career or technical school) were omitted as were 33 strikes identified as being carried out by support staff. Our reasoning on this latter point was that a support staff strike likely did not close down a school the way a teacher strike would.

The key measurement was strike days multiplied by number of pupils affected to arrive at “student days out of class”. For instance, if a district with 1,000 students had a 10 day teacher strike the resulting “student days out of class” would be 10,000. We did this so as to make clear comparisons between districts—that way a district with a large enrollment that might have had a strike lasting a day or two could be measured alongside a district of small size that had a very long strike or multiple strikes and vice versa.

The data reveal that several districts experienced multiple teacher strikes over the period—some occurred in the same year, others in different years. When this occurred we totaled the number of days lost from each strike and averaged the number of pupils so that we could measure student days out of class due to strikes on the same basis for districts that had one strike in the time period as well as districts that had multiple strikes over the time period. Tables contain a column that notes the number of strikes carried out in each district over the time frame.

The state Department of Education’s Institution Finder tool was utilized to determine the county in which the school district was located.⁴ Regional maps of Pennsylvania’s counties were obtained from the Genealogical Society of Pennsylvania and used to divide the state into six compact regions.⁵

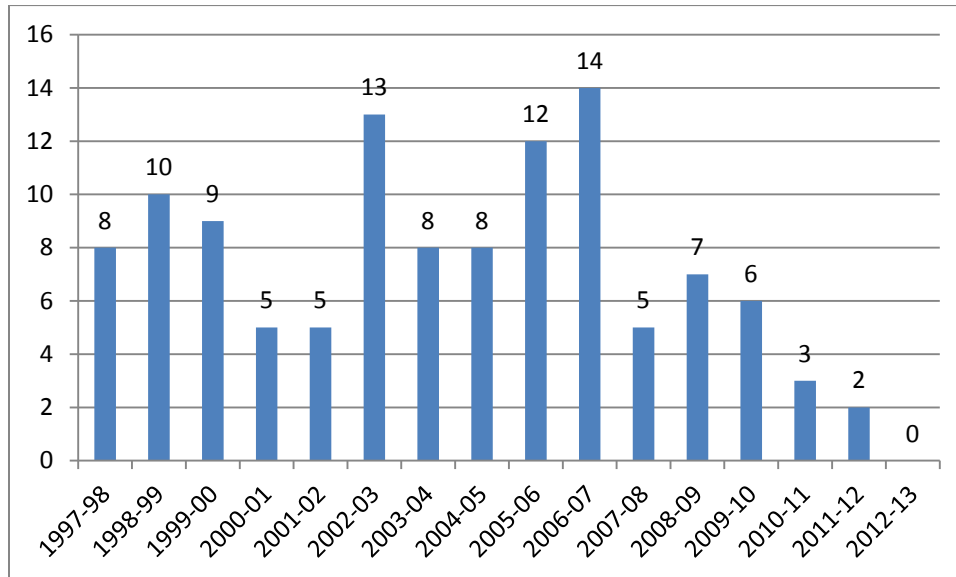
⁴ Pennsylvania School Boards Association, List of PA Public School Strikes. Pennsylvania Department of Education “Find an Institution” http://www.portal.state.pa.us/portal/server.pt/community/find_an_institution/7205

⁵ Genealogical Society of Pennsylvania <http://genpa.org/resources/regions-counties/pa-regions>

Teacher Strikes in Pennsylvania, 1997-2013

By the numbers, there were 115 strikes in total over the period. The high point came in the 2006-07 school year when there were 14 strikes, and the low point was the 2012-13 school year. If the dispute in Old Forge (Lackawanna) is ruled a strike, there would have been one strike that year. If it is ruled a lockout, there will have been no strikes that year, the lowest since reliable data has been made available.⁶

Teacher Strikes in PA, 1997-2013



⁶ In one theory as to why the number of strikes in Pennsylvania fell in recent years—the most recent high point was the 2008-09 school year with seven strikes—a now retired official of the Pennsylvania School Boards opined “The unions have recognized that the public is financially in a difficult position and now is not necessarily a good time to go on strike and look for sympathy from the voter/taxpayer. The economy is bad. It’s tough everywhere right now” <http://www.post-gazette.com/stories/news/education/pa-teachers-dont-want-to-strike-despite-expired-contracts-653711/#ixzz2XFVqYIGd>

By Region

There are 500 school districts spread across the Commonwealth's 67 counties. Based on the strike count from 1997-2013, the 115 strikes occurred in 33 counties. Data will initially be presented based by regional location.

Southwest Pennsylvania



This region had 44 strikes totaling 544 days. With 90,405 pupils affected by the strikes, the cumulative total of student days out of class was 1,485,851.

Southwest Pennsylvania—Cumulative Data

| # of Districts that Had Strikes | # of Strikes | Total # of Days | Total # of Pupils | Student Days Out of Class |
|---------------------------------|--------------|-----------------|-------------------|---------------------------|
| 31 | 44 | 544 | 90,405 | 1,485,851 |

The district with the most student days lost was Bethel Park (Allegheny): it had two strikes over the time period totaling 40 days. With close to 5,000 students, this resulted in 199,720 student days lost. The highest enrollment district with a strike was Seneca Valley with 7,579 students. It had one strike that lasted 24 days resulting in 181,986 student days lost. There were seven districts that had cumulative strike days of 30 or more.

Southwest Pennsylvania—District Level Detail

| District | County | # of Strikes | Total # of Days | Total # of Pupils | Student Days Out of Class |
|------------------------|-------------|--------------|-----------------|-------------------|---------------------------|
| Bethel Park | Allegheny | 2 | 40 | 4,993 | 199,720 |
| Seneca Valley | Butler | 1 | 24 | 7,579 | 181,896 |
| Highlands | Allegheny | 2 | 31 | 3,179 | 98,549 |
| Somerset | Somerset | 3 | 33 | 2,820 | 93,060 |
| South Butler | Butler | 2 | 30 | 2,805 | 84,150 |
| Ringgold | Washington | 2 | 21 | 3,650 | 76,650 |
| Wilkinsburg | Allegheny | 2 | 35 | 2,034 | 71,190 |
| Hempfield Area | Westmorland | 1 | 10 | 6,475 | 64,750 |
| Penn Trafford | Westmorland | 1 | 12 | 4,661 | 55,932 |
| Washington | Washington | 1 | 24 | 2,281 | 54,744 |
| Richland | Cambria | 2 | 32 | 1,583 | 50,656 |
| Moon Area | Allegheny | 1 | 13 | 3,700 | 48,100 |
| Merion Center Area | Indiana | 2 | 29 | 1,650 | 47,850 |
| Ambridge Area | Beaver | 2 | 12 | 3,174 | 38,088 |
| Indiana Area | Indiana | 1 | 10 | 3,705 | 37,050 |
| Homer-Center | Indiana | 3 | 30 | 1,130 | 33,900 |
| Riverview | Allegheny | 2 | 25 | 1,320 | 33,000 |
| Peters Twp | Washington | 1 | 9 | 3,307 | 29,763 |
| Baldwin Whitehall | Allegheny | 1 | 7 | 4,187 | 29,309 |
| Bethlehem Center | Washington | 1 | 19 | 1,369 | 26,011 |
| Brownsville Area | Fayette | 1 | 11 | 2,225 | 24,475 |
| Allegheny Valley | Allegheny | 1 | 20 | 1,041 | 20,820 |
| Berlin Brothers Valley | Somerset | 1 | 17 | 1,080 | 18,360 |
| Shaler Area | Allegheny | 1 | 3 | 5,500 | 16,500 |
| Penn Hills | Allegheny | 1 | 3 | 4,496 | 13,488 |
| Rochester Area | Beaver | 1 | 12 | 1,039 | 12,468 |
| Salisbury-Elk Lick | Somerset | 1 | 18 | 411 | 7,398 |
| Monaca | Beaver | 1 | 8 | 860 | 6,880 |
| Mt Lebanon | Allegheny | 1 | 1 | 5,670 | 5,670 |
| McGuffey | Washington | 1 | 2 | 2,019 | 4,038 |
| Duquesne City | Allegheny | 1 | 3 | 462 | 1,386 |
| | | 44 | 544 | 90,405 | 1,485,851 |

Southcentral Pennsylvania



Southcentral Pennsylvania—Cumulative Data

| # of Districts that Had Strikes | # of Strikes | Total # of Days | Total # of Pupils | Student Days Out of Class |
|---------------------------------|--------------|-----------------|-------------------|---------------------------|
| 5 | 6 | 53 | 14,373 | 165,590 |

This region had six strikes in five districts that totaled 53 days. With 14,373 pupils affected, the total number of student days lost was 165,590.

There were two strikes in the Juniata County School District, which is a countywide school district serving all pupils. With a cumulative 30 days of strikes affecting 3,405 pupils, the impact in student days lost was 102,150—about 60 percent of the total for the region.

Southcentral Pennsylvania—District Level Detail

| District | County | # of Strikes | Total # of Days | Total # of Pupils | Student Days Out of Class |
|------------------|------------|--------------|-----------------|-------------------|---------------------------|
| Juniata County | Juniata | 2 | 30 | 3,405 | 102,150 |
| Carlisle Area | Cumberland | 1 | 5 | 4,728 | 23,640 |
| Littlestown Area | Adams | 1 | 10 | 2,240 | 22,400 |
| Tuscarora | Franklin | 1 | 5 | 2,700 | 13,500 |
| Fairfield | Adams | 1 | 3 | 1,300 | 3,900 |
| | | 6 | 53 | 14,373 | 165,590 |

Southeast Pennsylvania



Southeast Pennsylvania—Cumulative Detail

| # of Districts that Had Strikes | # of Strikes | Total # of Days | Total # of Pupils | Student Days Out of Class |
|---------------------------------|--------------|-----------------|-------------------|---------------------------|
| 23 | 26 | 218 | 147,957 | 1,439,970 |

The Southeast Pennsylvania region (it includes Dauphin County, which is not pictured on the map) had 26 strikes in 23 districts totaling 218 days. With 147,957 pupils affected, the total student days lost for the region was 1,439,970.

This region had some very large school districts with enrollments over 10,000 students that went on strike over the time period. The Pennsbury District (Bucks) with 11,542 students that had 22 strike days resulted in 253,924 student days lost—the highest impact strike in the state over the time period when measured by this indicator of strike impact.

Southeast Pennsylvania—District Level Detail

| District | County | # of Strikes | Total # of Days | Total # of Pupils | Student Days Out of Class |
|------------------|-------------|--------------|-----------------|-------------------|---------------------------|
| Pennsbury | Bucks | 1 | 22 | 11,542 | 253,924 |
| Central Dauphin | Dauphin | 1 | 15 | 11,400 | 171,000 |
| West Chester | Chester | 1 | 8 | 11,646 | 93,168 |
| Souderton Area | Montgomery | 1 | 13 | 6,831 | 88,803 |
| Bensalem Twp | Bucks | 1 | 13 | 6,765 | 87,945 |
| Neshaminy | Bucks | 2 | 10 | 8,525 | 85,250 |
| Downingtown | Chester | 1 | 7 | 11,725 | 82,075 |
| North Penn | Montgomery | 1 | 6 | 12,693 | 76,158 |
| Phoenixville | Chester | 1 | 23 | 3,270 | 75,210 |
| Hatboro Horsham | Montgomery | 1 | 11 | 5,600 | 61,600 |
| Council Rock | Bucks | 1 | 4 | 12,400 | 49,600 |
| Saucon Valley | Northampton | 3 | 19 | 2,391 | 45,429 |
| Parkland Area | Lehigh | 1 | 5 | 8,800 | 44,000 |
| Perkomien Valley | Montgomery | 1 | 11 | 3,963 | 43,593 |
| Colonial | Montgomery | 1 | 8 | 4,600 | 36,800 |
| Wilson | Berks | 1 | 6 | 5,600 | 33,600 |
| Pottsgrove | Montgomery | 1 | 10 | 3,316 | 33,160 |
| Upper Moreland | Montgomery | 1 | 9 | 3,299 | 29,691 |
| Haverford | Delaware | 1 | 4 | 5,507 | 22,028 |
| Springfield Twp | Delaware | 1 | 4 | 2,100 | 8,400 |
| Tulpehocken | Berks | 1 | 4 | 1,681 | 6,724 |
| Annville Cleona | Lebanon | 1 | 4 | 1,603 | 6,412 |
| Conrad Weiser | Berks | 1 | 2 | 2,700 | 5,400 |
| | | 26 | 218 | 147,957 | 1,439,970 |

Northeast Pennsylvania



This region had 27 strikes in 13 districts totaling 218 days. With 44,316 pupils affected, the total number of student days lost was 449,756.

Northeast Pennsylvania—Cumulative Data

| # of Districts that Had Strikes | # of Strikes | Total # of Days | Total # of Pupils | Student Days Out of Class |
|---------------------------------|--------------|-----------------|-------------------|---------------------------|
| 13 | 27 | 218 | 44,136 | 449,756 |

This region had two districts that carried out four strikes apiece over the time frame—Abington Heights and Old Forge. As mentioned in the introduction, if the 2012-13 dispute in Old Forge is ruled a strike it will have had five strikes in the time frame.

Northeast Pennsylvania—District Level Detail

| District | County | # of Strikes | Total # of Days | Total # of Pupils | Student Days Out of Class |
|------------------|------------|--------------|-----------------|-------------------|---------------------------|
| Abington Heights | Lackawanna | 4 | 31 | 3,645 | 112,995 |
| Lake Lehman | Luzerne | 3 | 29 | 2,114 | 61,306 |
| Crestwood | Luzerne | 2 | 20 | 3,012 | 60,240 |
| North Schuylkill | Schuylkill | 2 | 27 | 2,019 | 54,513 |
| Old Forge | Lackawanna | 4 | 46 | 949 | 43,654 |
| Northwest Area | Luzerne | 3 | 20 | 1,375 | 27,500 |
| Scranton | Lackawanna | 1 | 3 | 9,100 | 27,300 |
| Weatherly Area | Carbon | 3 | 23 | 753 | 17,319 |
| Hazleton Area | Luzerne | 1 | 2 | 8,324 | 16,648 |
| Tri-Valley | Schuylkill | 1 | 11 | 1,144 | 12,584 |
| Pocono Mt | Monroe | 1 | 1 | 9,353 | 9,353 |
| Carbondale | Lackawanna | 1 | 3 | 1,648 | 4,944 |
| Lackawanna | Wyoming | 1 | 2 | 700 | 1,400 |
| | | 27 | 218 | 44,136 | 449,756 |

Northcentral Pennsylvania



There were no teacher strikes during this time period in this region.

Northwest Pennsylvania



Northwest Pennsylvania—Cumulative Data

| # of Districts that Had Strikes | # of Strikes | Total # of Days | Total # of Pupils | Student Days Out of Class |
|---------------------------------|--------------|-----------------|-------------------|---------------------------|
| 8 | 12 | 144 | 14,803 | 294,689 |

This region had twelve strikes in eight districts that lasted a cumulative 144 days. With 14,803 pupils affected, the student days lost amounted to 294,689.

Two districts—Brookville and Punxsutawney (both in Jefferson County) –had three strikes that exceeded more than thirty days when combined.

Northwest Pennsylvania—District Level Detail

| District | County | # of Strikes | Total # of Days | Total # of Pupils | Student Days Out of Class |
|--------------------|-----------|--------------|-----------------|-------------------|---------------------------|
| Punxsutawney | Jefferson | 3 | 37 | 2,779 | 102,823 |
| Brookville Area | Jefferson | 3 | 33 | 1,902 | 62,766 |
| Franklin Area | Venango | 1 | 23 | 2,389 | 54,947 |
| Redbank Valley | Clarion | 1 | 21 | 1,393 | 29,253 |
| Hermitage | Mercer | 1 | 7 | 2,300 | 16,100 |
| Reynolds | Mercer | 1 | 9 | 1,400 | 12,600 |
| All-Clarion Valley | Clarion | 1 | 10 | 940 | 9,400 |
| Wattsburg Area | Erie | 1 | 4 | 1,700 | 6,800 |
| | | 12 | 144 | 14,803 | 294,689 |

By Districts with More than 100,000 Student Days Out of Class

Moving away from geographic based analysis to looking at the characteristics of strikes statewide, we first see that seven districts had strikes that resulted in the loss of more than 100,000 student days.

Districts with More than 100,000 Student Days Out of Class Due to Strikes

| District | County | # of Strikes | Total # of Days | Total # of Pupils | Student Days Out of Class |
|------------------|------------|--------------|-----------------|-------------------|---------------------------|
| Pennsbury | Bucks | 1 | 22 | 11,542 | 253,924 |
| Bethel Park | Allegheny | 2 | 40 | 4,993 | 199,720 |
| Seneca Valley | Butler | 1 | 24 | 7,579 | 181,896 |
| Central Dauphin | Dauphin | 1 | 15 | 11,400 | 171,000 |
| Abington Heights | Lackawanna | 4 | 31 | 3,645 | 112,995 |
| Punxsutawney | Jefferson | 3 | 37 | 2,779 | 102,823 |
| Juniata County | Juniata | 2 | 30 | 3,405 | 102,150 |

These seven districts had thirteen strikes between them totaling almost 200 days.

By Districts by Number of Strikes

We can also see that 23 districts had more than one strike during the time frame. Two districts had four apiece, eight had three apiece, and the remainder had two apiece.

Districts with More than One Strike

| District | County | # of Strikes | Total # of Days | Total # of Pupils | Student Days Out of Class |
|--------------------|-------------|--------------|-----------------|-------------------|---------------------------|
| Abington Heights | Lackawanna | 4 | 31 | 3,645 | 112,995 |
| Old Forge | Lackawanna | 4 | 46 | 949 | 43,654 |
| Punxsutawney | Jefferson | 3 | 37 | 2,779 | 102,823 |
| Somerset | Somerset | 3 | 33 | 2,820 | 93,060 |
| Brookville Area | Jefferson | 3 | 33 | 1,902 | 62,766 |
| Lake Lehman | Luzerne | 3 | 29 | 2,114 | 61,306 |
| Saucon Valley | Northampton | 3 | 19 | 2,391 | 45,429 |
| Homer-Center | Indiana | 3 | 30 | 1,130 | 33,900 |
| Northwest Area | Luzerne | 3 | 20 | 1,375 | 27,500 |
| Weatherly Area | Carbon | 3 | 23 | 753 | 17,319 |
| Bethel Park | Allegheny | 2 | 40 | 4,993 | 199,720 |
| Juniata County | Juniata | 2 | 30 | 3,405 | 102,150 |
| Highlands | Allegheny | 2 | 31 | 3,179 | 98,549 |
| Neshaminy | Bucks | 2 | 10 | 8,525 | 85,250 |
| South Butler | Butler | 2 | 30 | 2,805 | 84,150 |
| Ringgold | Washington | 2 | 21 | 3,650 | 76,650 |
| Wilkinsburg | Allegheny | 2 | 35 | 2,034 | 71,190 |
| Crestwood | Luzerne | 2 | 20 | 3,012 | 60,240 |
| North Schuylkill | Schuylkill | 2 | 27 | 2,019 | 54,513 |
| Richland | Cambria | 2 | 32 | 1,583 | 50,656 |
| Merion Center Area | Indiana | 2 | 29 | 1,650 | 47,850 |
| Abmbriage Area | Beaver | 2 | 12 | 3,174 | 38,088 |
| Riverview | Allegheny | 2 | 25 | 1,320 | 33,000 |

Conclusion

We know that Pennsylvania has been the leader in school strikes among the small group of states that actually allow strikes to occur. We also know that previous legislative attempts to prohibit strikes and place Pennsylvania into a large cohort of states where there is collective bargaining but strikes are not permitted have failed. These efforts would have treated school employees the way police officers, firefighters, prison guards, and workers related to the functioning of the courts are treated in Pennsylvania: that it is illegal for them to strike and collective bargaining disputes must be resolved by other means.

The totals from 1997 through 2013 show the cumulative record of teacher strikes in Pennsylvania: 115 strikes in 80 districts located in 33 counties of the state. Altogether the strikes totaled 1,177 days and affected 311,674 pupils. When calculated as student days lost to strikes, the number is 3,835,856.