Act 91 of 2021   
Report on Classroom Monitor Permits

***April 2023***



#### COMMONWEALTH OF PENNSYLVANIA DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

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# **Introduction**

Act 91 of 2021 (Act 91) amended the School Code to address the substitute teacher shortage in commonwealth schools. Act 91 gave schools more flexibility when employing annuitants, day-to-day substitutes, educators with inactive certification, graduates of educator preparation programs, and a subset of those serving as student teachers to be employed as substitutes. The law also temporarily established a new permit for schools to hire classroom monitors and directed the Pennsylvania Department of Education to issue a report on the effectiveness of the Classroom Monitor Permit and recommendations for improvement or continuation of the permit after June 30, 2023.

In accordance with Act 91, this report explains how the Department implemented the Classroom Monitor Permit, provides data reported by school entities to the Department regarding the use and utility of the Permits, and includes the evaluation conducted by third-party evaluators from Grove City College and Cabrini University.

# **Background**

The Classroom Monitor Permit is established in section 1218 of the School Code (24 P.S. §12-1218). The Classroom Monitor Permit (Type 9 Emergency Permit) allows individuals to deliver assignments preplanned by certified educators in schools; it does not allow those individuals to plan or create lessons or grade work or serve as substitute teachers.[[1]](#footnote-2) Rather, classroom monitors offer another way for schools to staff classrooms and provide future educators the field experience they need to be successful.

To qualify for a Classroom Monitor Permit, an individual must meet the following criteria:

* Be at least 25 years old;
* Have completed at least 60 semester hours or equivalent courses at an accredited college or university in this commonwealth, or have at least three years of school entity experience as a paraprofessional and be currently employed in a school;
* Meet background check and clearance requirements under the School Code and Child Protection Service Law; and
* Complete classroom management training developed by an intermediate unit and approved by the Department in accordance with 24 P.S. § 12-1218.

Intermediate units statewide developed and offered classroom management training for classroom monitors. The training included topics to prepare classroom monitors with basic classroom management skills along with other requirements, such as the need for some form of participant reflection ensuring the participants fulfilled the learning objectives and successfully completed the course. All training was approved by the Department. Intermediate units with approved training issued a certificate of completion to participants, as evidence of meeting the training requirement. Training and certificates are valid through June 30, 2023.

# **Issuance of Classroom Monitor Permits**

Since the enactment of Act 91 in December 2021, the Department has issued a total of 884 Classroom Monitor Permits to 125 school entities. As seen in Table 1, there were 403 permits issued in 2021-2022 and an additional 481 permits issued in 2022-2023 (as of March 31, 2023). See Appendix A for the full list of school entities.

**Table 1: Number of Classroom Monitor Permits Issued for School Years 2021-22 and 2022-23 (as of March 31, 2023)**

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | 2021-2022 | 2022-2023 (as of 3/31/23) | Total |
| Number of Permits | 403 | 481 | 884 |

Permits were issued to school entities from 46 of 67 Pennsylvania counties. The figures below show the number of Classroom Monitor Permits issued in each county during school years (SY) 2021-22 and 2022-23.

**Figure 1. Classroom Monitor Permits Requested During SY2021-22**

Diagram

Description automatically generated

**Figure 2: Classroom Monitor Permits Requested During SY2022-23 (as of March 31, 2023)**

Diagram

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# **Data Collection**

The Department developed a questionnaire and distributed it in February 2023 to obtain school entities’ input on the utility of the Classroom Monitor Permit and to collect the following information, as required by section 1218(e):

1. The number of individuals who served as classroom monitors under this section and the number of days on which the school entity used the services of classroom monitors.
2. The school entity's day-to-day substitute teacher compensation rates in the 2020-2021, 2021-2022 and 2022-2023 school years. For a school entity that uses a third-party entity to provide substitute teachers, the rate reported by the school entity is the take-home amount received by an individual.

The questionnaire was distributed to 778 school entities. Of the 629 entities (81 percent) that responded:

* 86 requested and used Classroom Monitor Permits (14 percent);
* 23 requested the permits but did not use them (3 percent); and
* 520 did not request the permits (83 percent).

Sixteen school entities that received Classroom Monitor Permits from the Department did not respond to the questionnaire.

Data collected from 629 questionnaire respondents showed that of the 86 school entities that requested and used Classroom Monitor Permits:

* 546 individuals served as classroom monitors during the 2021-22 and 2022-23 school years;[[2]](#footnote-3)
* Collectively, school entities used the services of classroom monitors for a total of 5,690 days. More than 60 percent of monitors were used from one to 15 days; and
* The average number of school days per school year that school entities used classroom monitors was 49.6 days, ranging from less than one day to 143.5 days in a school year.

Based on the questionnaire responses, in the 2020-2021, 2021-2022, and 2022-2023 school years, school entities that did not utilize the services of classroom monitors had a higher average day-to-day substitute pay rate than those who did utilize classroom monitors. The amount being paid for day-to-day substitutes rose each year from 2020-2021 to 2022-2023.[[3]](#footnote-4)

**Table 2. Day-to-Day Substitute Teacher Compensation Rates**

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| School Year | School Entities That Did Not Use Classroom Monitor Permits | | | School Entities That Used Classroom Monitor Permits | | |
|  | **Average** | **Low** | **High** | **Average** | **Low** | **High** |
| 2020-2021 | $110.79 | $30.00 | $250.00 | $107.53 | $80.00 | $150.00 |
| 2021-2022 | $119.54 | $40.00 | $250.00 | $116.76 | $44.00 | $200.00 |
| 2022-2023 | $127.67 | $40.00 | $262.50 | $127.07 | $44.00 | $200.00 |

**Overall, the majority of school entities recommended that Classroom Monitor Permits be allowed to continue past June 30, 2023.**

Sixty-three percent of respondents (397) stated that the Classroom Monitor Permit should not be allowed to expire, while 37 percent (232) stated that it should be allowed to expire. Figure 3 shows responses overall and by whether the school entity issued Classroom Monitor Permits.

**Figure 3: Responses Regarding Whether Classroom Monitor Permits Should Expire**

# **Independent Evaluation**

Act 91 required an evaluation of the permit and its effectiveness by an independent research organization which may include a college or university accredited by a regional accrediting agency. Accordingly, the Department partnered with evaluators from Grove City College and Cabrini University, both accredited by the Middle States Commission on Higher Education, to review the questionnaire data and provide recommendations for continuation of the Classroom Monitor Permit.

The evaluators’ findings are as follows:

* Classroom Monitor Permits provide an effective way to staff classrooms when certified substitutes are not available.
* The classroom monitor provision has existed for only a short time. However, given the number of permits issued rose 20 percent from SY2021-22 to SY2022-23 and the department received more than 375 responses in support of its continuance, the evidence strongly suggests that school entities would benefit from continuing to have the Classroom Monitor Permit as an option.
* The Department can improve use of the permits by providing stronger direction and oversight regarding how school entities obtain the Classroom Monitor Permit. This recommendation is based on the fact that 28 school entities replying to the questionnaire indicated that they are using classroom monitors, but the Department does not have a record of their permit applications.
* Data further indicates that most school entities that used the Classroom Monitor Permits did so for less than 15 days, with the majority using the permits for one to five days. One reviewer suggested the Department consider reducing the number of days that an individual can serve under a Classroom Monitor Permit to 20 days or less per school year.
* Finally, reviewers suggested that if the Classroom Monitor Permit is continued, the Department should collect more data to examine the permit’s effectiveness, as well as collect additional information to determine why school entities in certain counties are using Classroom Monitor Permits more than others.

# **Conclusion**

Overall, analysis of the use of the Classroom Monitor Permit, as well as feedback from the field, strongly suggests that those holding Classroom Monitor Permits filled critical personnel gaps in school districts across the Commonwealth over the last two school years. While the permits are not designed to be a permanent solution to shortages in classroom personnel, evidence suggests the permits should continue while the Department works on longer-term solutions to the teacher shortage.

# **Appendix A: School Entities that Requested Classroom Monitor Permits During SY2021-22 and SY2022-23 (as of March 31, 2023)**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| 1. Antietam SD 2. Appalachia IU 8 3. Arts Academy CS 4. Armstrong SD 5. Bangor Area SD 6. Beaver Valley IU 27 7. Berks County IU 14 8. Bellwood-Antis SD 9. Berlin Brothersvalley SD 10. BLaST IU 17 11. Blue Ridge SD 12. Bristol Township SD 13. Boyertown Area SD 14. Bradford Area SD 15. Bucks County Technical High School 16. Cameron County SD 17. Capital Area IU 15 18. Carlisle Area SD 19. Central Dauphin SD 20. Central Fulton SD 21. Central Susquehanna IU 16 22. Chester County IU 24 23. Children of Joy Christian Academy 24. Clairton City SD 25. Colonial IU 20 26. Conewago Valley SD 27. Council Rock SD 28. Cumberland Perry Area Career & Technical Center 29. Cumberland Valley SD 30. Dallas SD 31. Danville Area SD 32. Derry Area SD 33. Donegal SD 34. Dr Gertrude A Barber Center 35. DuBois Area SD 36. Duquesne City SD 37. East Lycoming SD 38. Eastern York SD 39. Executive Education Academy CS 40. Fairfield Area SD 41. Ferndale Area SD 42. Forbes Road SD 43. Forest Area SD 44. Galeton Area SD 45. George Crothers Memorial School 46. Gettysburg Area SD 47. Greater Nanticoke Area SD 48. Greenwood SD 49. Hanover Public SD 50. Harmony Area SD 51. Hatboro-Horsham SD 52. Hazleton Area SD 53. Kane Area SD 54. Karns City Area SD 55. Kutztown Area SD 56. Lakeview SD 57. Lancaster-Lebanon IU 13 58. Laurel Highlands SD 59. Ligonier Valley SD 60. Lincoln IU 12 61. Lincoln Leadership Academy CS 62. Luzerne IU 18 63. Manheim Central SD | 1. Mariana Bracetti Academy CS 2. Marion Center Area SD 3. Memphis Street Academy CS @ JP Jones 4. Midd-West SD 5. Millersburg Area SD 6. Millcreek Township SD 7. Montessori Regional CS 8. Northeast Bradford SD 9. North Hills SD 10. North Penn SD 11. Northern Bedford County SD 12. Northern Lebanon SD 13. Northern York County SD 14. Norwin SD 15. Old Forge SD 16. Oswayo Valley SD 17. Otto-Eldred SD 18. Pace School 19. Palisades SD 20. Palmyra Area SD 21. Philadelphia City SD 22. Philadelphia Hebrew Public CS 23. Port Allegany SD 24. Portage Area SD 25. Premier Arts and Science CS 26. Propel CS-Braddock Hills 27. Propel CS-Homestead 28. Propel CS-Northside 29. Quakertown Community SD 30. Rockwood Area SD 31. Salisbury Township SD 32. Salisbury-Elk Lick SD 33. Seneca Highlands IU 9 34. Seneca Valley SD 35. Seven Generations CS 36. Shade-Central City SD 37. Shanksville-Stonycreek SD 38. Shamokin Area SD 39. South Eastern SD 40. South Middleton SD 41. South Western SD 42. South Williamsport Area SD 43. Southern York County SD 44. Tidioute Community CS 45. Tri-Valley SD 46. Tuscarora SD 47. Uniontown Area SD 48. United SD 49. Warrior Run SD 50. Warwick SD 51. Wattsburg Area SD 52. Waynesboro Area SD 53. West Branch Area SD 54. West Phila. Achievement CES 55. Westmoreland IU 7 56. Wilkes-Barre Area SD 57. Williamsburg Community SD 58. Wilson Area SD 59. Wissahickon CS 60. Wyoming Area SD 61. Young Scholars CS 62. Young Scholars of Central PA CS |

1. [Act 91 of 2021 Guidance (pa.gov)](https://www.education.pa.gov/Educators/Certification/Pages/Act91of2021.aspx) [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
2. Sixteen school entities that issued permits did not respond to the Act 91 questionnaire and are not included in this number. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
3. The average represents the pay for beginner substitutes (many school entities base pay on day ranges that vary). [↑](#footnote-ref-4)