



Pennsylvania Association of School Administrators
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Education Update July 17, 2017

In State Budget News...

Budget Update – Nothing has changed since last week. Although a budget spending plan is now in effect (after the governor let it become law last week with without his signature), there still is not agreement on how to pay for it. As a result, while talks continue, everything else is on hold, including action on an omnibus School Code bill and numerous other code bills that are passed with the budget. Rumors are flying at the Capitol – among them that it is 50/50 if they get this done this summer or wait until fall. Anything can change at any time – and often does. Stay tuned....

Paying the Bills – State Treasurer Joe Torsella warned last Thursday that the commonwealth could run out of money to pay its bills by the end of August unless the legislature quickly passes a responsible revenue package to balance its budget. That's alarmingly early in the year, said Torsella, who said he also fears that the state's cash-flow problems could last for a worrisome eight straight months. "That's not some distant prospect," said Torsella, a Democrat. "There is going to come some real trouble soon." If the state did run out of money, Gov. Wolf could be forced to make dramatic cuts. *Read the rest of the story: ["Budget Mess May Mean 'Real Trouble Soon,' PA Treasurer Warns"](#) (from *The Philadelphia Inquirer*, 7/13/17).*

Charter School Reform...

Consider Reform Carefully – Bill White of *The Morning Call* urges lawmakers to consider charter school reform more deliberately. "Many of us have been talking for years about the need to reform our charter school system, so universally recognized as desperately flawed that HBO's John Oliver focused on some of the more outrageous examples of Pennsylvania charter school disasters, particularly in Philadelphia, in his [charter school segment](#) not long ago. There are plenty to choose from, and some of them still are unfolding. What scares me is that, whatever happens with this flawed HB 97, our Legislature may proclaim Mission Accomplished because it finally passed something. Not even close. Do it right." [Click here](#) to read the rest of his commentary (7/12/17).

Legislative Schedule...

The Senate is scheduled to return to Harrisburg for three days this week. At this point, there is no indication the House will do the same, which means that, unless something major happens with budget negotiations, not much will be going at the Capitol. Then again, you never know.

In National News...

Decreasing Staff at the USDOE – President Donald Trump came to Washington pledging to slash the federal workforce and drain the swamp. But he may be jumping on a train that's already left the station, at least as far as the U.S. Department of Education is concerned. Staffing at the department has dropped 36 percent over the past thirty-four years, from a high of 6,391 in federal fiscal year 1981, to 4,077 in fiscal year 2015, [according to a report](#) released Wednesday by the Government Accountability Office, Congress' investigative arm. Those numbers measure full-time employee positions, which isn't necessarily the same as the actual number of employees. However, over the same time period, which covers most of the department's lifespan, contracting levels has remained relatively stable, the GAO found. And fewer people hasn't necessarily translated to less work. *Read the rest of the story: ["Education Department Staffing Has Plummeted Over Time, Report Finds"](#) (from *Education Week*, 7/12/17).*

Implementing ESSA – Sen. Lamar Alexander, R-Tenn., one of the main architects of the Every Student Succeeds Act, thinks Jason Botel—the acting assistant secretary for elementary and secondary

education, and one of the education department's key point people on ESSA—should take a closer look at the law he's been charged with implementing. "I think we have a case of an assistant secretary who hasn't read the law carefully," Alexander, chairman of the Senate education committee, said in an interview. "The heart of the entire law ... was that it's the state's decision to set goals, to decide what 'ambitious' means, to make decisions to help schools that aren't performing well." Alexander was referring to a feedback letter Botel sent to Delaware on its ESSA plan, telling the state that it hadn't been "ambitious" enough in setting long-term goals for student achievement, sparking wonky outrage inside the Beltway and beyond. The education chairman noted in an interview that ESSA includes language specifically prohibiting the U.S. secretary of education from telling states what their goals can or can't be—and that 85 senators voted to approve the new law. *Read the rest of the story: ["Ed. Dept. Official Hasn't Read ESSA Carefully, Sen. Alexander Says"](#)* (from *Education Week*, 7/13/17).

Value of Social-Emotional Learning – Programs that teach students how to recognize their emotions, solve problems, and form healthy relationships may continue to show positive benefits for students months, or even years, after they complete them, a new meta-analysis finds. Students who completed social-emotional learning interventions fared better than their peers who didn't participate on a variety of indicators—including academic performance, social skills, and avoiding negative behaviors like drug use, finds the analysis, which examined follow-up data from dozens of published studies on specific interventions. The meta-analysis builds on previous research that found social-emotional learning participants outperformed their peers academically. That research is frequently cited by policymakers and educational leaders who are seeking to promote social-emotional learning programs, through which schools teach students about emotions, relationships, and conflict resolution alongside traditional academic subjects like math. *Read the rest of the story: ["Social-Emotional Learning Has Long-Lasting Positive Effects on Students, Study Says"](#)* (from *Education Week*, 7/12/17).

On the Calendar...

July 23-25 – PA Educational Leadership Summit (Altoona)
August 2 – Professional Development Committee meeting (virtual)
August 11 – Leadership for Learning Module 1 (PASA office)
Sept. 14-15 – Board of Governors' meetings (PASA office)
Sept. 27-28 – New Superintendents' Academy Part 2 (PASA office)