

PASA FLYER

Proud Leadership for Pennsylvania Schools

Nominees sought for PASA officers, AASA Governing Board

Election for Pennsylvania Representative to the AASA Governing Board – two positions

Deadline for nominations: FEBRUARY 11

PASA is seeking nominations for two (2) three-year terms on the Board, beginning July 1, 2011 to June 30, 2014.

Responsibilities of the Board

The AASA Governing Board consists of representatives elected from each state. Pennsylvania has five members on the Board. The responsibilities of the Governing Board include the following:

- acting on resolutions submitted by the AASA Executive Committee or other resolutions approved for consideration with a 2/3 vote
- recommending policy to the Executive Committee
- serving as the liaison between state affiliates and AASA
- determining, on an annual basis, the Association dues for Active and Associate members
- recommending programs and activities for inclusion in the AASA budget
- reviewing the annual AASA budget
- affirming AASA’s legislative agenda

Eligibility/Requirements

1. Each eligible candidate must have been an eligible voting member of both AASA and PASA for at least three years. (“Voting members” of PASA are Active or Institutional Active members. “Voting members” of AASA are Active, Institutional Active, Life or College Professor members.)
2. Nominees must be committed to attending two AASA meetings per year (July and February). Travel expenses are provided for the July meeting. Governing Board members are responsible for their own expenses to the February meeting, which coincides with the AASA Annual Leadership Conference.

Nominations

Candidates may self-nominate or be nominated from among the active PASA membership. No signatures or petitions are required.

Deadlines

- **Feb. 11** – nominations due to the PASA office
- **Feb. 23** – deadline for submitting to the office a short biographical statement

(including involvement with AASA and PASA), goals for AASA and reason(s) for seeking the position

- **March 1** – ballot mailed to active PASA members
- **March 14** – last day for return of completed ballots

See Nominees Sought, page 4

Resolutions process to begin soon

PASA members soon will begin the process to identify “priority issues” as the first step in updating and revising the PASA Resolutions. The PASA Resolutions serve to guide the Board of Governors, Executive Director and committees in carrying out the work of PASA and identify specific actions that need to be taken in order to achieve the goals of the association:

1. Providing leadership in maintaining quality programs, seeking expanded opportunities, and exploring new avenues for curriculum development, instructional improvement and effective assessment.
2. Working with the General Assembly to secure desirable legislation affecting education.
3. Maintaining effective relationships with the Pennsylvania Department of Education and other education-oriented organizations for the purpose of improving education at the local, state and national levels.
4. Promoting the funding necessary to support high quality public education.
5. Emphasizing the need for effective local control of education.
6. Providing resources for managing problems in school administration.
7. Supporting the maintenance of high standards of ethical performance.
8. Recruiting administrators and supporting strong professional preparation and self-development

See Resolutions Process, page 4



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MEMBER NEWS



CALENDAR

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From the Executive Director...Jim Buckheit Salary Data in Pennsylvania



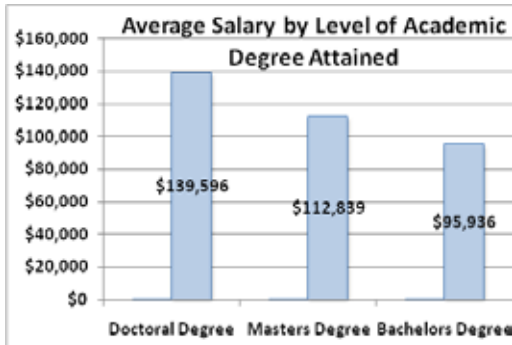
Since the PASA office was closed over the holiday break, I spent a good chunk of my time on my home computer analyzing superintendent salary data from 2009-10 that is now available from PDE through reports that have been produced using PIMS data.

The report now provides for each school district superintendent, IU executive director, CTC director and charter school CEO their salary, highest level of academic degree attained, total years of educational experience and years employed with current school entity. I believe you will find the findings of interest.

Of the 475 superintendents (95%) studied (excluded were interim, acting and substitute superintendents), the average salary is \$129,037. They have 28 years in total educational experience and 12 years experience with their current school district.

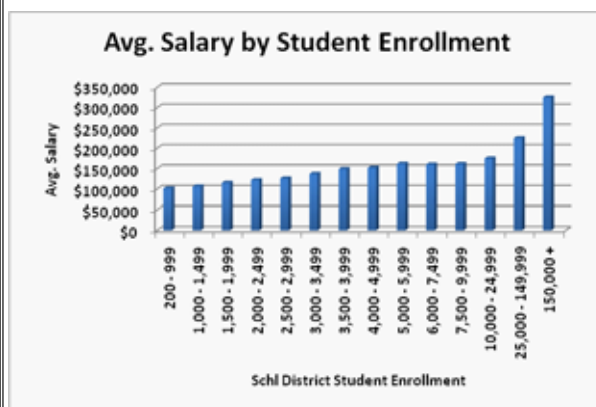
While the AASA 2010 survey of superintendents found that 24.1 percent of superintendents nationwide are female, the PDE PIMS data shows that 28.2 percent of superintendents in Pennsylvania are female. It is also noteworthy that, unlike salaries for CEOs in the private sector, there is little difference in average salaries for male and female superintendents. Factoring out acting, interim and substitute superintendents and also excluding those who earn token salaries, the average salary for male superintendents is \$130,170. The average for female superintendents is \$129,386.

Fifty-four percent of superintendents statewide hold a Doctoral degree, forty-three percent a Masters Degree and two percent a Bachelor's degree. There is a clear difference in the average salary based on highest level of education attained. For those with Doctoral degrees, the average salary is \$139,596, Masters Degree \$112,839 and Bachelors Degree \$95,936. This is no doubt due to the fact that many urban and suburban school districts, those that pay the highest salaries, require applicants to have a doctoral degree.



Excluding School Districts of the First Class (Philadelphia and Pittsburgh), the highest average salaries are found in Delaware, Chester, Montgomery, Bucks, Colonial IU (Northampton, Monroe, part Pike), Lancaster-Lebanon, Allegheny and Berks intermediate units. At the other end of the salary spectrum are Schuylkill, Luzerne, IU 1 (Fayette, Greene, Washington), Seneca Highlands (Cameron, Elk, McKean, Potter), Appalachia IU (Bedford, Blair, Cambria, Somerset) and Riverview IU (Clarion, Forest, Jefferson, Venango) intermediate units.

Superintendents with the longest educational experience can be found in Tuscarora (35 years-Fulton, Huntingdon, Juniata, Mifflin), Bucks (32 years), Colonial (31 years-Monroe, Northampton, Pike), Carbon-Lehigh (31 years), Luzerne (30 years), Seneca Highlands (30 years-Cameron, Elk, McKean, Potter), and Capital Area (29 years-Cumberland, Dauphin, Perry) intermediate units.



Superintendents with the longest employment longevity with their school district can be found in: Northeastern Educational (Lackawanna, Pike, Susquehanna, Wayne), Tuscarora (Fulton, Huntingdon, Juniata, Mifflin), Westmoreland, Appalachia (Bedford, Blair, Cambria Somerset) and Schuylkill intermediate units.

If you want to find the intermediate unit with the highest percentage of superintendents who hold Doctorate degrees, you need to visit Montgomery

See Executive Director's Message, page 5

PASA Members:

Please report your appointments, renewals, awards or special achievements, or that of others in your region to **Barbara Jewett** at PASA either by phone (717) 540-4448, by fax (717) 540-4405, or via email at pasa@pasa-net.org. Copy deadline is the 15th of each month.

The *PASA Flyer* is published monthly by the Pennsylvania Association of School Administrators.

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Visit our web site at
www.pasa-net.org

At the Capitol...

NEWS RECAP

The weekly Education Update posted on PASA-Net provides information on legislative, state and national news items. For more information on the following news briefs, see the PASA Web site at www.pasa-net.org. (Click on "Advocacy and Issues" to access a link to current and archived updates.)

Gubernatorial News

New Governor: Tom Corbett, former PA Attorney General, is now the 46th governor of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania. Corbett was sworn into office on Tuesday, Jan. 18, along with Lt. Gov. Jim Cawley.

Budget Secretary: Charles Zogby is the new Budget Secretary. Zogby served as PA Secretary of Education from 2001-2003 following over five years as Director of the Policy Office under former Gov. Tom Ridge. Most recently, he was Senior VP of Education and Policy for K12 Inc., a company offering online curriculum and education.

Education Secretary: Ron Tomalis is the nominee for PA Secretary of Education. Most recently, he was Director at Dutko Worldwide/Whiteboard Advisors, where he was the principle adviser to numerous nonprofit education groups and foundations, along with for-profit education-related companies. Tomalis has held various senior management, policy and operational positions in federal and state government, including the U.S. Department of Education and the PA Department of Education under Gov. Tom Ridge. The Senate must confirm his nomination.

Budget News

State Revenues: Pennsylvania collected \$2.3 billion in General Fund revenue in December, which was \$176.9 million, or 8.4 percent, more than anticipated. Fiscal year-to-date General Fund collections total \$11.5 billion, which is \$191.2 million, or 1.7 percent, above estimate.

Legislative News

General Assembly Schedule: The 2011-12 legislative session began on Jan. 4 with swearing-in ceremonies for members of the House and Senate.

'Best Practices' Report: The Joint State Government Commission late in December issued the final report of a study seeking to identify "best practices" of high-performing, low-spending school districts across the Commonwealth. The study identifies both academic and financial practices that increase student achievement and keep costs down, while also acknowledging that the districts studied "are significantly different in socio-economic demographics from the average Pennsylvania district."

State Senator: Sen. Michael O'Pake (D-Reading), long-time member of the Pennsylvania Senate, passed away in early January due to complications from recent surgery. A special election is scheduled for March 15 to fill the vacant seat.

Voucher Proposal: Sen. Jeffrey Piccola (R-Dauphin), chairman of the Senate Education Committee, and Sen. Anthony Williams (D-Philadelphia) recently outlined details of their plan to establish a school voucher program. The plan, which would be phased in over three years, would provide both a public school and private school option for low-income students in "persistently failing schools," with voucher funds taken directly from school district subsidies.

In State News

Keystone Awards: More than 2,100 Pennsylvania schools were honored last month with Keystone Achievement Awards for demonstrating sustained academic achievement over two school years. In all, 472 school districts, representing 94 percent of Pennsylvania's districts, received at least one Keystone Achievement Award this year.

In National News

"Quality Counts" Report: Pennsylvania ranked ninth among all 50 states and the District of Columbia with a "B-" overall and seventh in K-12 student achievement in the latest state rankings reported in the 15th annual "Quality Counts" report, considered the annual education report card. The nation's overall score was a "C".

Pennsylvania and Charter Schools – Pennsylvania earned a "B" on a newly released report from the Center for Education Reform concerning state support for charter schools. The Commonwealth was one of 11 states and the District of Columbia that, according to the Center "do not require significant improvements in order to allow for the effective creation and growth of these innovative school options." The state ranked as 12th strongest of the nation's 41 charter laws.

Proposed School Lunch Rules – The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) this month published proposed rules to update the nutrition standards for meals served through the National School Lunch and School Breakfast programs as part of the "Healthy, Hunger-Free Kids Act of 2010," signed into law by Pres. Obama on Dec. 13. The new proposed meal requirements, which would add more fruits, vegetables, whole grains, fat-free and low-fat milk to school meals, are based on recommendations released in October 2009 by the National Academies' Institute of Medicine. The USDA is accepting public comment on the proposed rules through April 13, 2011.

COMING UP

A Republican majority in both the Pennsylvania House and Senate will begin working with new Gov. Tom Corbett in addressing a wide range of issues, including the state budget deficit, state government reform and school vouchers, among others. Gov. Corbett will outline his proposed 2011-12 budget in early March.



A Helpful Reminder for Superintendents...

This is the time of the year when school boards must notify superintendents whose contract term will expire June 30 that they plan to enter into a new agreement or must provide written notification that they plan to seek other candidates to serve as the district superintendent. Failure to do so will mean that they must renew your contract under the same terms and conditions as contained in the existing agreement. According to my count, there are 52 superintendents whose employment contract will expire June 30, 2011. If you have questions about this requirement, contact the PASA office. - Jim Buckheit

**PASA Reception at AASA
National Conference
Friday, February 18, 2011
5:30-7:30 p.m.**

**Denver's Classic Historical Saloon
The Blake Street Vault
1526 Blake Street
Denver, CO**

Nominees Sought

Continued from page 1

Election for PASA Officers: President-Elect and Treasurer

Deadline for nomination petitions: **MARCH 16**

Positions

The **President-Elect** serves in the position for one year, beginning Oct. 1, 2011, and becomes the president at the conclusion of the 2011-12 President's term. The President-Elect also serves as chair of the Resolutions Committee during his/her term in that position.

The position of **Treasurer** is a one-year term. The Treasurer works with the Executive Director to oversee association finances and make reports to the Board of Governors. The elected treasurer's term begins on October 1, 2011.

Eligibility

Eligible candidates must have been an active member of the Association for at least three years prior to 10/1/10.

Nominations

Interested candidates must submit the following to the Association office, **no later than March 16**:

1. a nominating petition containing the endorsement of at least a majority of the active PASA members of the candidate's region
2. a nominating petition containing the endorsement of a total of at least 20 active members from a combination of no less than two other PASA regions.

PASA members may sign more than one nominating petition for each position. **Copies of nominating petitions may be downloaded from the PASA web site at: www.pasa-net.org/Elect2011-12.asp.**

Contact Jolene Zelinski in the PASA office for more information on these elections at (717) 540-4448.

Resolutions Process

Continued from page 1

- programs for school administrators.
9. Promoting the safety and general welfare of students, including their mental, social, emotional, physical and character development.
 10. Supporting the Pennsylvania Department of Education and the Pennsylvania State Board of Education to ensure that all schools, whether public or nonpublic, meet legal, educational and health standards as prescribed by law for the Commonwealth.

Members of the PASA Resolutions Committee, with the assistance of representatives from the Board of Governors, will coordinate regional discussions on the issues members identify as "priority" issues.

The 2010-11 PASA Resolutions currently includes priorities in four issues:

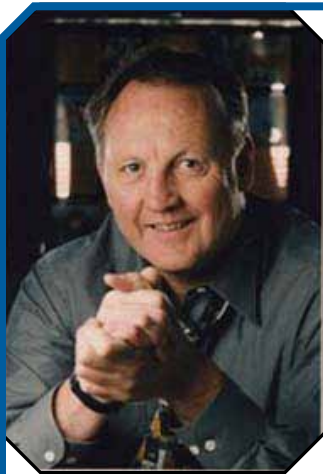
- Funding of Public Education
- Student Assessment
- ESEA Reauthorization
- Mandate Waivers

(A complete copy of the 2010-11 PASA Resolutions is available on the web at www.pasa-net.org/Res2010-11Final.pdf.)

Following regional discussions, committee members will submit priorities to the PASA office, where they will be compiled for committee discussion and review on April 14. During the April meeting, the committee will review the identified priorities and make recommendations for changes to the PASA Resolutions.

Following review by the Board of Governors, the 2011-12 draft resolutions will be presented to the membership for approval at the October 2011 conference in Hershey.

PASA members are encouraged to participate in regional meetings on the priority issues. Members who are unable to participate in those meetings may provide input to PASA by email at pasa@pasa-net.org.



ARE YOU REGISTERED?

PASA Education Congress

March 16-17, 2011
Holiday Inn Harrisburg/Hershey (Grantville)
Featuring: Dr. Michael Fullan

Approved for 36 hours of PIL/Act 48 credit

Program Focus: How and where whole systems reform has increased student achievement, how focused leadership can create the impetus to large-scale, improved student achievement, and how participants can lead the change process.

Registrants will receive in advance of the program copies of two of Dr. Fullan's books: *Motion Leadership: The Skinny on Becoming Change Savvy* and *All Systems Go: The Change Imperative for Whole Systems Reform*.

Register today for this professional development opportunity!

For more information, see the PASA web site at www.pasa-net.org.

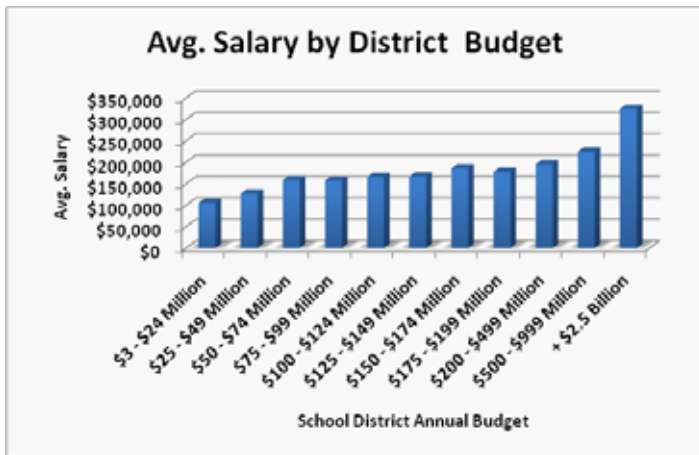
Executive Director's Message

Continued from page 2

(90%), Berks (89%), Allegheny (85%), Lincoln (81%-Adams, Franklin, York), Chester (75%) and Delaware (71%).

It appears there is a direct correlation between student enrollment and superintendent salary levels. Intermediate units that have school districts with student enrollments above the statewide average tend to have much higher salaries, although you will note on the graph that salary levels tend to level off in districts with student enrollments between 5,000 and 10,000 students.

Likewise, the larger the school district's budget, the higher the superintendent's salary, although the correlation is not consistent across the salary spectrum.



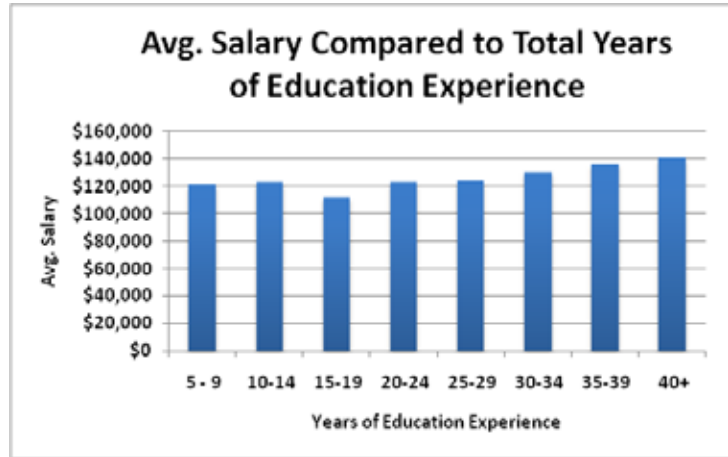
The same pattern holds for salary levels when compared to the total number of professional staff employed by the school district.



Nominees sought for PASA officers, AASA Governing Board

PASA is seeking nominations for the 2011-12 PASA President-Elect and Treasurer. In addition, PASA is seeking nominations for Pennsylvania representatives to the AASA Governing Board (two openings). PASA has five representatives on the Board. See page 1 for more information on these positions, deadlines and the nomination process.

One very interesting pattern can be found when looking at average salaries compared to the total years of educational experience. I would have expected a relatively straight-line progression upward. However, the bars are relatively flat, with the exception of 15 to 19 years, which actually drops slightly. A significant increase does not occur until 30 to 35 years experience. I would be very interested in hearing any theories about why this is the case.



These and other data items collected from school districts by PDE, and now provided as reports available to the public, provide new opportunities for study to better understand Pennsylvania's public education landscape.

PASA members will benefit from availability of this new data by allowing PASA and other organizations to study and report on the patterns and trends in the employment of school district leaders across the state. Once several years data is available we will be able to track individual terms of employment and track career movement of individuals as they move from one district to another. This will help to better inform the types of services that PASA offers and the direction for its professional development programs.

PASA Workshop Cancellation/Refund Policy

A \$25 service fee will be retained for cancellations received two (2) weeks or less prior to the scheduled program. NO REFUNDS will be given if cancellation is received five (5) business days or less prior to the scheduled program. Registrants who have not paid in advance of the program will be responsible for payment of any late fees.

In the event that a workshop is postponed due to weather conditions, registrants will receive full credit toward the rescheduled program. If the registrant is unable to attend the rescheduled workshop due to conflicts and informs PASA in advance (as per the above-listed cancellation/refund policy), PASA will apply the registration fee already paid toward the registration fee of a future PASA workshop.



2011 Education Congress - Book One Preview: All Systems Go

BY DR. PATRICK CRAWFORD, DIRECTOR OF PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

“If there is one that you should remember from page one and all the way through this book, it is the concept of collective capacity.”

This is the opening sentence in the preface of Michael Fullan’s book *All Systems Go*. The author clearly demonstrates

how it is only through collective capacity where emotional commitment and technical expertise comes together that whole-system school reform will occur. *All Systems Go* demonstrates how school reform comes down to doing a small number of critical components really well while avoiding the “distracters.”

We are pleased to bring Michael Fullan to the 2011 Educational Congress on March 16-17. Dr. Fullan’s works as adviser and consultant on major education reform initiatives around the world makes him an expert on school reform. His work in education and public sectors is based upon research and practice.

Fullan will bring real examples of where building collective capacity creating successful educational reforms. During the two days of the Education Congress, Dr. Fullan will merge his research and experience into practical ideas for school leaders.

When you register for the Education Congress, you will receive the two books Dr. Fullan recommended for study: *All Systems Go*

and *Motion Leadership*. This month I have prepared a power point on the contents of *All Systems Go* to stimulate your interested and nudge your curiosity. The power point slides takes your through the book with a series of highlights.

After previewing the slides, you will be anxious to read the book and consider how it applies to your school/district. You can find the PowerPoint at www.pasa-net.org/Systems.ppt. Next month I will provide a PowerPoint on *Motion Leadership*.

You won’t want to miss this important program. Register for the Congress today! See the PASA web site at www.pasa-net.org/workshopEdCon.asp or call the PASA office at (717) 540-4448.

MEMBER

NEWS

REGION 3

Thomas Washington has been appointed Superintendent of the Penn Hills SD, beginning next month. He has been serving as Assistant Superintendent in the Bethlehem Area SD. Washington will replace **Dr. Stephen Vak**, who has been serving as Interim Superintendent in the district following the retirement of **Dr. Joseph Carroll** in July.

Dr. Donald Lee, Superintendent of the Shaler Area SD, has announced his intention to retire, effective in June 2011. He has served as district superintendent for 14 years and is a member of the PASA Board of Governors.

REGION 14

Nicholas Lazo, Jr. has been named Superintendent of the Kutztown Area SD. He has been serving as Acting Superintendent for the past five months following the resignation of **Robert Gross**, who now is serving as Superintendent in the Salisbury Township SD.

REGION 15

Connie Kindler, Superintendent of the Camp Hill SD, has announced she will retire, effective June 30. Kindler has worked in the district for more than 20 years and as superintendent since 2003.

REGION 17

Keith Yarger has been appointed Superintendent of the Southern Tioga SD, effective March 1. He currently serves as a principal in the Northern York SD (I.U. 15). Yarger will replace **Joseph Kalata**, who is retiring.

REGION 22

Dr. Paul Long, CEO of the Pennsbury SD, has announced his intention to retire at the conclusion of the current school year, dependent on when a successor is chosen. Long has worked in the district since 1999, first as business administrator and then as CEO beginning in 2006.

REGION 23

Dr. Michael Pladus, Superintendent of the Upper Dublin SD, has been named Educator of the Year by the Montgomery County Chamber of Commerce. Pladus is in his seventh year as district superintendent.

Report member news to PASA at pasa@pasa-net.org by the 15th of each month. Announcements of professional vacancies across Pennsylvania and in neighboring states are posted on the PASA Web site at www.pasa-net.org/Vacancies.asp.

COMMUNICATIONS TIP OF THE MONTH

[describing a rezoning process in the Katy Independent School District in Texas] “We abandoned the traditional and always-contentious open forum, an open-microphone format of community feedback. Instead, the district opted for a strategy that pro-actively engaged stakeholders. The multi-phase approach included these features:

- public workshops in which structured and actionable suggestions were developed in small working groups;
- individual comments shared through an on-line forum;
- full transparency through the publishing of all comments on a public website;
- school district responses to suggestions and concerns raised by the public made available to the press and community members; and
- an Internet campaign that allowed the district’s message to go viral.

Scalable and flexible, this process now is used extensively by the Katy district for high-stakes community issues. The district has applied the same procedures for long-range facility planning, a public information campaign for a facility referendum and the development of recommendations for a recently approved bond election.” – from “Boundary Changing Without Acrimony” by Thomas Gunnell, as published in the January 2011 issue of *The School Administrator*, AASA’s monthly publication. The issue focuses on “fiscal fitness,” making the most of declining budgets by targeting district spending on academic needs. (*Become an AASA member today and join your colleagues in the only national organization focused on the needs of chief school administrators. Call PASA today for information.*)

Women's Caucus Update...

McDaniel Award Nominations

The PASA Women's Caucus is seeking nominations for the 2011 Wanda McDaniel Award.

This honor is awarded each spring to an aspiring school administrator who shows evidence of great leadership potential. The award is named for Dr. Wanda McDaniel, an outstanding administrator and superintendent who displayed a high quality of leadership.

The recipient will be recognized at the Women's Caucus Spring Conference in Hershey, scheduled for May 4-6.

Nominee information must include name, position, school district, address, daytime phone, email address, and a resume.

Each nominator (two per nominee) must include their name, position, daytime phone, date of nomination, and address four areas: the nominee's leadership, significant contributions in inspiring women and/or peers, significant accomplishments and evidence of continuing professional or personal growth.

Nominations are due by February 18. Forms are available on the PASA web site at www.pasa-net.org/McDaniel.pdf (or call PASA at 717-540-4448).

Conference Registration Open Soon!

PASA Women's Caucus Annual Spring Conference

May 4-6, 2011

Hotel Hershey

This annual conference features speakers, numerous educational sessions, and many opportunities for networking and professional growth.

Featured Presenters this year include:

- The Honorable **Linda Tarr-Whelan**, Demos Distinguished Senior Fellow, former ambassador to the United Nations Commission on the Status of Women, and author of *Women Lead the Way: Your Guide to Stepping Up Leadership and Changing the World*
- **Dr. Pam Robbins**, consultant in leadership and learning and co-author of *Learning from Lincoln: Leadership Lessons for School Success*
- **Dr. Arlene Ackerman**, Superintendent of the Philadelphia School District
- **Ron Tomalis**, PA Secretary of Education (INVITED)

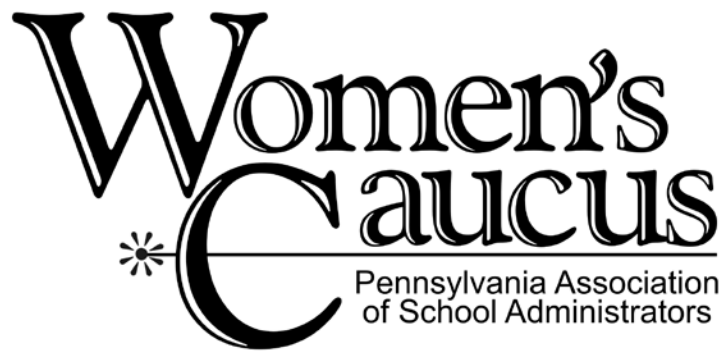


PASA Education Congress with Dr. Michael Fullan

March 16-17 - Harrisburg

(See the PASA web site at

www.pasa-net.org/workshopEdCon.asp.)



Breakout topics will focus on: handling crises in school districts, first-year experiences in the superintendency, job crafting, role of the Women's Caucus, advancement challenges, legal update, special education update, board-superintendent relationships, and job-alike discussion.

This conference is eligible for Act 48 credit. PIL/Act 48 (Act 45) approval for this program is pending. Final determination will be announced in mid-March. Should this program be approved, several sessions in the program will be mandatory for those seeking credit under PIL/Act 48 (Act 45) requirements, including a Friday afternoon session, a follow-up session to the conference, and completion of post-conference embedded activities. As it is available, more information on program status, requirements and subsequent schedule modifications (if needed) will be posted on the PASA web site at www.pasa-net.org/workshopWC.asp.

Registrations are due by **April 15**. Participants needing overnight accommodations are responsible for making their own reservations at the Hotel Hershey. All room reservations **must** be made by **April 4**.

Check the PASA web site for program, schedule and registration updates!



AASA News - Research

Available from AASA is a recently issued report on the superintendency across the nation.

This must-have study offers a definitive look at the state of school leadership in the United States. It provides a detailed picture of the men and women leading the nation's schools, based on a representative sample of school leaders nationwide.

The American Association of School Administrators has conducted an authoritative *State of the Superintendency* report every decade since 1923. This report provides research on American school superintendents in 2010. Data were collected via an electronic survey from just under 1,900 superintendents across the United States.

This report is a valuable resource for school leaders, aspiring school leaders, and those charged with preparing and supporting school leaders. It is essential reading for a range of audiences, including superintendents, aspiring superintendents, school board members, professors of education administration, superintendent search consultants, education researchers, and others looking for up-to-the-minute data on education leadership.

See the AASA web site for ordering information, www.aasa.org.

FROM THE PRESIDENT'S PEN

Opportunities to Learn: Equity, Access and Success for All!

By Dr. Amy F. Sichel, Superintendent, Abington School District



My wishes for the New Year include that all students will be healthy, successful, and very well prepared for college and careers. In Pennsylvania we have made strides in this direction, but there is still a great deal of work necessary to ensure that all students are prepared for the 21st century.

The requirement of “No Child Left Behind” legislation to review disaggregated data forced our school district to, in the words of Jim Collins in his book *Good to Great*, “confront the brutal facts.” While our overall performance on standardized and state-required achievement tests was above state and national averages, the disaggregated data revealed two distinct achievement gaps: the achievement levels of African-American students and the achievement levels of special education students.

Abington School District faces the same challenges as many other school districts.

In 2005 there were fifteen suburban school districts from southeastern Pennsylvania and southern New Jersey that partnered in the formation of the Delaware Valley Minority Student Achievement Consortium with the University of Pennsylvania as a means to learn from one another as well as from researchers in the field and to share ideas and initiatives.

To respond to this concern, Abington developed an *Opportunities to Learn* initiative as a pilot program in 2005. Although it is still a work in progress, the interim results show that *Opportunities to Learn* has been successful in helping to close our achievement gaps. It has prompted increased participation of minority students in our gifted program and Honors/Advanced Placement courses and has increased inclusion of special education students in the regular education program.

As we begin a New Year, I would like to share our journey.

Opportunities to Learn began with a district-wide task force comprised of over 100 teachers, administrators, students, parents, school board members, and community representatives. We were all aligned and committed to developing a plan that would help ensure success of all students in our district.

A steering committee directed and monitored the research and planning. Junior high school, senior high school, and elementary school taskforce teams fed into five sub-committees: research and data; professional development; placement procedures; support programs; and parent involvement. The sub-committees focused on issues related to identifying, collecting, and using student data to improve instruction and achievement; student placement in academic courses; support systems to help students achieve; and parental involvement.

Under the auspices of this initiative, we developed and implemented a plan to “de-track” the secondary school program -- grades 7 through 12 -- to include students with IEPs, to the maximum extent possible, in mainstreamed classes, and to organize the school day schedule to provide academic support opportunities, where needed, during the school day.

De-tracking was a bold step; it was understood that there might be challenges along the way, so the program was deemed a pilot program in the first year and was implemented only with tenth grade students. The plan called for offering only two levels of rigorous college preparatory instruction--a college preparatory course and an Honors/Advanced Placement course--in core subject areas.

Based on the success of the initiative with the tenth grade students, the program was expanded to grades 11 and 12 and to grades 7 to 9. Students were encouraged to take Honors/Advanced Placement courses. Courses in mathematics and science were strengthened, and expectations were raised so that students were required to complete both Algebra I and biology in one year rather than over two years.

Formative assessment for benchmarking was used to identify students’ needs so that those who were not proficient on the previous administration of the Pennsylvania State System of Assessment (PSSA) received individualized support. Those interventions included remedial courses during the school day in English/social studies and in mathematics/science, which complemented the college preparatory program and were included in students’ schedules, sometimes in lieu of elective options. Local assessments were used for progress monitoring. Planned courses of study were revised to emphasize state standards, with ongoing revision to reflect the common core curriculum.

Essentially, the goal of academic proficiency became the priority by providing rigorous college and career preparatory instruction.

Extensive professional development was needed to prepare for the demands imposed by de-tracking and by the inclusion of special education students in regular education, college preparatory courses.

Professional development was guided according to *Failure is Not an Option* by Alan M. Blankstein, and based on strategies to differentiate instruction, using Carol Ann Tomlinson’s and Cindy A. Strickland’s approach in *Differentiation in Practice: A Resource Guide for Differentiating Curriculum, Grades 9-12*. Professional learning communities were formed, and year-long inservice programs were created and connected to the goals of the *Opportunities to Learn* initiative.

Since the implementation of this initiative, the disparity between the performance of the district’s All-Student group and the district’s African-American and IEP disaggregated groups has been narrowed significantly, while the All-Student group has improved as well.

In particular, at the secondary level the disparity between the percentages of the All-Student group and those of the disaggregated groups achieving advanced/proficient scores on the PSSA reading and mathematics assessments has been reduced by anywhere from 5 to 19 percentage points. In three years, performance by the All-Student group on the grade 11 mathematics PSSA has improved from 77% to 81% proficient, the African-American group has improved from 55% to 65% proficient; and the IEP group has improved from 31% to 65% proficient. In reading, the All-Student group has increased from 82% to 85% proficient, the African-American group has improved from 67% to 73% proficient, and the IEP group has improved from 42% to 58% proficient.

In addition, cohort data for students with IEPs provides evidence that, as students moved from grade 8 to grade 11, the percentage of those who are advanced/proficient on the PSSA increased, as did the percentage of students passing courses.

Although the formal committee of the *Opportunities to Learn* initiative has completed its task, the work associated with implement-

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Noteworthy Quotes...

On school vouchers...

"Our education system is the last public monopoly in America. Taxpayers can no longer subsidize, support or ignore failure. Too many children are trapped by their zip code in schools that are not making the grade. We are robbing our kids of a fundamental right. ... Providing access to a quality education for every child is the most important issue facing our state and our nation today. The broad-based support for this bill transcends party and regional lines. The parents and taxpayers of this Commonwealth are speaking to us loudly and clearly. They cannot wait on more year or even one more day. They want school choice now. There can be no compromise on that. We must make school choice a reality with all deliberate speed.." - Sen. Anthony Williams (D-Philadelphia), co-sponsor of a newly introduced school voucher plan, from a January 12 press release

"In the end, school choice has the power to save taxpayers money because it has traditionally cost less to educate children in a nonpublic setting." – Sen. Jeffrey Piccola (R-Dauphin), co-sponsor of the school voucher bill

On the new Secretary of Education...

"Ron Tomalis brings a tremendous knowledge and understanding of education policy and procedures on both the state and federal levels, along with experience in the private sector. His expertise will be valuable as we focus on how to best serve the education needs of the children of Pennsylvania." – Gov. Tom Corbett, announcing he is nominating Ron Tomalis, former Deputy Secretary for the Department of Education under Gov. Tom Ridge, as Secretary of Education, from a January 13 press release

On proposed federal nutrition standards for school meals...

"Raising a healthier generation of kids will require hard work and commitment of a host of partners. We understand that these improved meal standards may present challenges for some school districts, but the new law provides important new resources, technical assistance and flexibility to help schools raise the bar for our kids." – U.S. Secretary of Agriculture Tom Vilsack, on newly proposed federal nutrition standards for school meals, developed in response to the recently passed Healthy, Hunger-Free Kids Act, from a January 13 press release

President's Message

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ing the plan and reaching the goal of all students achieving proficiency continues. Professional development continues to be important, focused on differentiated instruction and use of data to design instruction, and the staff continues to examine and utilize the integration of additional technology into instruction as a means to strengthen the academic program and provide individual student support, where needed.

I believe that **all** students deserve and need a rigorous and relevant college preparatory program. Our data and results show that it can be accomplished – and that you can accomplish this in your districts as well.

I hope that 2011 will offer you many opportunities in your districts for success and a truly happy and healthy New Year.

On the newly released "Quality Counts" report...

"Education is a key to our state's economic future and to the personal success of our children. It's perhaps the most important economic tool there is. Investments in education are critical to developing a workforce with the skills necessary for good-paying jobs, and one that will help attract and expand business here. I'm proud of the effort – and results – that the General Assembly and I have accomplished together over the past eight years." – former Gov. Ed Rendell, reacting to Pennsylvania ranking seventh among states for K-12 student achievement and ninth overall in the 15th annual "Quality Counts" report, from a January 11 press release

On a study of 'successful' school districts...

"While correlation does not equate to causation, it is probably safe to assume districts with a higher economic disadvantaged population need to work harder to obtain high PSSA scores. Additionally, since nearly all cities have a larger than average percentage of economically disadvantaged students, it would be logical to assert urban districts require additional resources to obtain PSSA test scores similar to districts with low poverty rates.... Of the 82 districts the Costing Out Study indicated were highly successful, 73.2 percent of them were from suburban school districts. In contrast, only 42 percent of all districts statewide are in suburban areas. In other words, suburban districts are significantly over-represented in the successful districts model." – from "High-Performing and Low-Spending School Districts: Best Practices and Other Factors," a report recently issued by the Joint State Government Commission in response to Senate Resolution 243, which required the commission to determine why 82 school districts identified in the Costing-Out Study are more successful than others



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PASA CALENDAR OF EVENTS 2011

For more information, see the PASA web site at www.pasa-net.org.

January 2011

- 21 Board of Governors meeting (PASA office)
- 26-27 Aspiring to Leadership Workshop (PASA office)

February

- 7-8 Leadership for Teaching Modules 2a-2b (I.U. 3)
- 17-19 AASA National Conference on Education (Denver)
- 21 *PASA office closed*

March

- 3 Women's Caucus Board meeting (PASA office)
- 9 Leadership for Teaching Module 4 (PASA office)
- 16-17 PASA Education Congress with Michael Fullan (Harrisburg)

April

- 4 Leadership for Teaching Module 4 (Abington)
- 14 Resolutions Committee meeting (PASA office)
- 14-15 Board of Governors meeting (PASA office)
- 22 *PASA office closed*
- 26 Legislative Committee meeting (PASA office)

May

- 4-6 Women's Caucus Annual Spring Conference (Hershey)
- 11 Leadership for Teaching Module 3 (I.U. 3)
- 30 *PASA office closed*