

February 12 deadline

PASA SEEKING NOMINATIONS FOR 'AWARDS OF ACHIEVEMENT'

Since March, school administrators have had to face a totally different reality for education, one that has required creative and inspiring leadership and out-of-the-box thinking. That work is continuing, with ongoing challenges along the way. One thing is clear: strong, positive leadership in education is essential to the success of public education, no matter how instruction is delivered and no matter the educational environment.

That is why it is important to recognize the good work that school administrators have been doing in 2020 to lead school systems in a positive direction, meet the needs of students and staff, and advocate for public education.

The PASA Awards of Achievement were developed for just this purpose. Although PASA postponed soliciting nominations due to pandemic disruptions, it may be more important than ever to recognize that leadership.

For that reason, PASA is now seeking nominations for the three special awards recognizing leadership in public education – and we need YOUR help in identifying those

among us who are deserving of special recognition for their work in 2020.

The awards fall into three categories:

SERVICE TO THE PROFESSION - Demonstrating commitment to excellence as evidenced through notable service to the profession. Examples of this service may include developing an effective professional development program for school district educators, demonstrating leadership in administrator preparation programs, school study councils or other professional development efforts, or promoting the education profession through research, writing or organizational service.

Sponsored by: Horace Mann

INSTRUCTIONAL LEADERSHIP - Demonstrating commitment to excellence in teaching and learning by developing, nurturing and supporting exemplary programs that support the academic achievement of particular student populations, enrich student learning in a particular content area, or implement strategies to enhance student learning across the curriculum.

Sponsored by: Lincoln Investment Planning, Inc.

LEADERSHIP IN PUBLIC EDUCATION

- Demonstrating commitment to school administration as a profession, to public education, and to one's colleagues, including participation in and leadership with the Pennsylvania Association of School Administrators.

Sponsored by: PLGIT/PFM

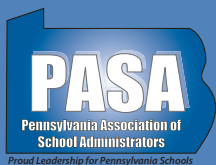
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from PASA

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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 1st of each month.

FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR DR. MARK DIROCCO

HOLIDAY REFLECTIONS ON PUBLIC EDUCATION AND THE PANDEMIC



During my time as a school administrator, I always treasured the winter holiday break between Christmas and New Year's Day. It was one of the few times during the school year where I could take time off to focus on my family and reflect on the past calendar year as well as look ahead to the new year.

As I have watched our school administrators lead their districts through this pandemic, I can only imagine that the winter break can't come soon enough to give a slight reprieve to the incredible stress and strain of conducting school while combating a deadly virus. As we near a holiday break, I find myself reflecting on the many positives that have come out of this horrific situation through the miracle of public education.

One of the most important things the pandemic has revealed is the importance of our public education system.

When the statewide closure of schools was instituted last March, it affected our entire nation. Suddenly, everyone realized the important social structure that public education provides to make our democracy possible and our economic system work. Even the most ardent critics of public education soon understood the critical role our public schools hold in our communities including the importance of in-person instruction, food security for students in poverty, the need to monitor the well-being of students, the custodial aspect of schools that enable a large portion of the population to go to work, and the wide array of services that special needs students must have in order to succeed in their learning.

Public education is truly a marvel and a modern-day miracle. It has carried America to worldwide prominence and helped us maintain our democracy and economic might for generations. Our nation has reached this status with 90% of our populace graduating from public schools. The return on invest for every dollar put into public education has been estimated at 7:1.

Public education has never been better or more important to America in the history of our nation. It is imperative that Congress and state legislatures move quickly to send desperately needed stimulus funds to our public schools.

School choice proponents often site that free-market forces should be implemented to produce the types of graduates we need to be competitive in the future. They refer to international test scores showing America's middle-of-the-pack standing as evidence. Yet, they fail to mention that none of our international counterparts achieving high test scores use market forces in their educational systems. They are all government operated. There is scant evidence that vouchers, tax credits, and scholarships that use public tax dollars for non-public schools are effective.

There is also great concern that many of these programs lack any effort to impart fairness or equity in the student selection process and are blatantly unaccountable to taxpayers. It is a travesty that continues to be perpetrated on a false premise.

Public education is part of the fabric of our local communities. In a non-pandemic year, our school auditoriums and cafeterias would be packed with parent, grandparents, friends, and family for holiday concerts. High school athletics bring an entire community together, especially if a team makes a deep playoff run. The arts, athletics and other extracurricular programs are enjoyed by local residents, making many schools one of the main focal points of the community. When the pandemic hit, many people realized just how important these events and experiences were to the children and the community. Let's hope that translates into more support for our public schools in the future.

Yet, despite all that the pandemic has taken from our public schools, they have been more resilient than ever thanks to great leadership. While there were some stumbles out of the gate when school closed last March, our public schools have responded with tremendous resolve to serve their students in a variety of educational learning models that are meeting the needs of their students to the greatest extent possible. It has been impressive to see the extra steps

See Executive Director's Message, page 3



NEWS RECAP

Don't forget to check the PASA website for the weekly **Education Update** that provides a summary of up-to-date legislative, state and national education news. For more information on the following news briefs, see the PASA Web site at www.pasa-net.org. (Click on "News and Advocacy" to access the current and archived updates.) And follow us

on **Twitter** for the latest updates @PASASupts.

In Budget & Finance News

PSERS Contribution Rate: Last week the PA Public School Employees' Retirement System (PSERS) Board of Trustees certified an increase in the 2021-22 employer contribution rate and flat member contribution rates for the next three years for certain employee classification groups. The annual employer contribution rate will be 34.94% for the FY 2021-22 fiscal year, which begins on July 1, 2021. Next year's rate is a 1.25% increase over the current FY 2020 rate of 34.51%.

State Revenue: Pennsylvania collected \$2.3 billion in General Fund revenue in November. Fiscal year-to-date General Fund collections total \$14.8 billion. According to the PA Department of Revenue, November collection data does not include a comparison against anticipated amounts because monthly revenue estimates for the fiscal year are not yet finalized.

State Budget: Lawmakers and Gov. Wolf reached agreement last month on Fiscal Code and appropriations bills that enact the remaining seven months of the 2020-21 state budget. The \$35.5 billion plan marks a 2.2% decrease from the 2019-20 budget, utilizing a projected \$2.1 billion in federal medical assistance reimbursements, \$1.3 billion in remaining state CARES Act funds, and \$531 million in one-time transfers from cash reserves in a number of state government's special funds. The plan also is predicated on expectations of \$2 billion in tax collection revenue for the fiscal year above what was estimated in the spring.

Fiscal Analysis: The Independent Fiscal Office (IFO) recently released a revenue and economic update for fiscal year 2020-21. The forecast assumes modest job recovery by the end of 2020 and only an additional 100,000 payroll jobs recouped in 2021. While the forecast estimates \$36.5 billion in revenue collection for FY 2020-21, it anticipates consumer expenditures will fall in the coming month, meaning less tax revenue.

Legislative News

Session Schedule: The House and Senate completed their work by Nov. 30 and closed by 2019-20 legislative session. The new two-year session begins in January.

Legislative Leadership: For the first time in its history, the General Assembly will have female legislators in the top leadership positions in two of the four caucuses for the 2021-22 session. Senate Republicans selected Kim Ward (Westmoreland) as Majority Leader, while House Democrats selected Joanna McClinton (Philadelphia/Delaware) for Minority Leader in that chamber. Senate Democrats reelected Jay Costa (Allegheny) as Minority Leader, and House Republicans reelected Kerry Benninghoff (Centre) as Majority Leader.

Signed into Law: Before closing session last month, the legislature passed and Gov. Wolf signed into law several bills impacting education. Among them are **HB 1342** (Act 122 of 2020), which creates PreK vision screenings and modifies the current school vision screening schedule by eliminating annual screenings for students after 5th grade in favor of screenings every two years.

Certification/Assessment Flexibility: Gov. Wolf also signed into law **SB 1216** (Act 136 of 2020), which amends the School Code to provide flexibility in teacher certification, delays to 2021-22 the graduation requirement for passing the Keystone Exams or the alternative project, grants to the Secretary of Education the authority to seek a waiver from federal testing requirements should that option become available, and provides that any student taking and passing a Keystone course shall be deemed proficient during years in which the federal government waives accountability assessments under ESSA.

Limited Liability Bill: Gov. Wolf vetoed **HB 1737**, which would have provided limited liability protection to health care providers, schools, businesses and others who followed COVID public health directives during the pandemic. The governor indicated that the bill was overly broad in extending protections and could lead to putting employees at risk.

National News

Agency Review Team: Former PA Secretary of Education Pedro Rivera was selected last month to serve on the agency review team for the U.S. Department of Education. The review teams are comprised of experts who will help to ensure a smooth transition of power to the Biden Administration.

COMING UP

The election is over, the 2019-20 Congress and PA General Assembly sessions are complete (or nearly so), and preparations are underway for January 2021, when a new Congress, a new White House Administration and a new PA General Assembly begin their work. A second federal CARES relief package doesn't appear to be coming soon. Meanwhile, Gov. Wolf will be presenting his budget proposal for 2021-22 just a month after lawmakers return to Harrisburg. With increasing COVID cases across the state and nation, policymakers will be facing numerous economic and policy challenges already in January, when COVID concerns likely will continue dictating legislative priorities. What that means for education policy and funding remains unknown. Stay tuned for the latest information by following us on **Twitter** @PASASupts.

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S MESSAGE

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and heroic efforts being undertaken by our schools to ensure their children are safe and being well served.

Just as we owe a debt of gratitude to the tremendous efforts of our healthcare and essential workers on the front lines of the pandemic, we need to thank our public school leaders, teachers, and personnel for all they have done on behalf of our children since last March. It has been an amazing effort and worthy of our thanks during this holiday season.

PASA extends a warm holiday greeting to everyone working in our public schools. We are grateful for your service and dedication to our children.

SUPERINTENDENT OF THE YEAR RECOGNITION



Dr. Mumin offered remarks during the event.

On November 12, the PASA and the PASA Board of Governors hosted a virtual Zoom event to recognize **Dr. Khalid Mumin**, superintendent of the Reading SD and the 2021 Pennsylvania Superintendent of the Year.

Members of the PASA Board, Reading staff and board members, community representatives, elected officials, and family, staff and peers of Dr. Mumin participated in the event. PASA President John Bell, superintendent of the Delaware Valley SD, introduced numerous guests, who gave remarks about Dr. Mumin and congratulated him for the award and his work in public education.

In addition to the live presenters, the Hon. Chrissy Houlahan, District 6 Representative to the U.S. House of Representatives, provided a video recognizing Dr. Mumin. Family, friends and peers of Dr. Mumin also were able to provide comments and congratulations via the chatroom. Some of those remarks included:

"Your leadership and commitment to students is an asset to the entire Commonwealth."

"Congratulations, Khalid ... a true and authentic brother in education and humanity."

"You are an inspiration to All!!"

"Thank you for your commitment to Reading."

In his remarks during the event, Dr. Mumin stated that "we have a wonderful opportunity to focus on **HOPE: Hope, Open advocacy, Positive action and Empathy.**"

"If we cannot create a sense of belonging, understanding and compassion, where else can our young people get that from in a safe place?" he said. "If we aren't the ones advocating with that HOPE, our kids do not stand a chance. HOPE is important for all of us and for this entire country."

Noting that he was blessed to have supports and a great team behind him, Mumin thanked his school board for "allowing me to

have the space to be creative, to have the support and confidence to be able to think outside the box, to roll up my sleeves, and stand on the front line for our kids."

He then challenged school leaders to "make 2021 something great."

Mumin will be among state superintendents of the year recognized during the AASA National Conference on Education, held virtually on Feb. 18-19. PASA will recognize him in person during a local event to be scheduled later in 2021.

RIGHT: Dr. John Bell said that "Dr. Mumin is a visionary, committed and dedicated to making the Reading School District the best it can be and ensuring that ALL students have a positive and equitable opportunity to succeed. He truly is a great example of caring and committed school district leadership."



LEFT: Acting PA Secretary of Education Noe Ortega noted that Mumin is working hard for underserved kids.

RIGHT: Robin Costenbader-Jacobson, president of the Reading School Board, said that Mumin "has created a public eminence like no other. He is our superhero."



LEFT: Hon. Judith Schwank, District 11 representative to the PA Senate, noted that she was not surprised when he was selected. "He has an amazing reputation in Reading, a shining example of community service – and the coolest superintendent we have had in Reading for years."

AWARDS

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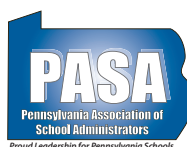
All PASA members are eligible for these awards. Individuals may self-nominate or be nominated by their peers, staff or board. Those nominating/self-nominating should complete the PASA Awards nomination form and include and/or attach further information that will provide a judging panel with sufficient evidence to support the nomination.

The PASA Awards of Achievement will be presented virtually during the PASA Leadership Forum scheduled for March 29. A monetary award of \$1,000 will be donated in each recipient's name to a scholarship fund of his/her choice or to the Pennsylvania administrator preparation program of his/her choice.

Deadline for nominations is FEBRUARY 12.

For more information on the Awards of Achievement, see the PASA web site at www.pasa-net.org/pasaawards.

PASA thanks our Awards of Achievement sponsors for their continuing support in recognizing outstanding public school administrators in Pennsylvania.



Contacting PASA

PASA staff continues to work remotely. However, we are available for you as we always have been. For urgent questions and concerns, call our alternative phone number: 717-514-8718. For general questions, contact PASA via the general email (pasa@pasa-net.org) and your question will be directed appropriately and promptly.

In addition, you may send an email directly to specific PASA staff members. ([Click here](#) for the staff list.) We monitor all correspondence and respond as quickly as possible. Please do not hesitate to contact us with your questions and concerns!

KEEP ROWING THE BOAT

BY DR. JOHN BELL, 2020-21 PASA PRESIDENT

It has been a long and unusual nine months since Governor Wolf closed all Pennsylvania schools on March 13. At first, it was like the motor fell off the boat and we were just floating for a few days. We then realized we had to quickly create fully online schools. In boating terms, that is when we decided that, since we no longer had a motor, we better use the oars and start rowing. Nine months later, we are still rowing.

I applaud all of you as captains of your boats. You have navigated uncharted waters and successfully led your employees, students and communities through this pandemic.

The second wave of the pandemic has reached us, and almost every county is in the substantial level of community spread. Many districts are online or in hybrid, while some of us are still offering five-days-per-week schooling. There is no right answer, and every

family has a different comfort level as it relates to the pandemic. Therefore, no matter what we decide, there will be people who disagree.

I sometimes wish we were treated like weathermen/women in that they are wrong quite often and everyone just shrugs their shoulders. The general public doesn't shrug their shoulders about our decisions because they have a vested interest in us getting it right. Whether they have family in the schools or are just worried about their property values, they count on us to get it right.

As 2020 comes to a close, there are many questions that we don't know the answers to just yet. How long will the second wave last? How soon will vaccines be available to school personnel? Will winter sports get shut down? Will the feds make a decision on state testing? Will there be another round of stimulus spending to help states balance their budgets? And who will be the next U.S. Secretary of Education? These questions will all be answered in due time. In the meantime, don't stress about things outside of your control. Just keep rowing the boat.

Last month, I talked about John Maxwell's *The 21 Irrefutable Laws of Leadership*. This month, I want to explore Liz Wiseman's *Multipliers*. The subtitle of this Wall Street Journal bestseller is "How the Best Leaders Make Everyone Smarter."

The inside front jacket cover of the book summarizes it beautifully by saying, "We've all had experience with two dramatically different types of leaders. The first type drains intelligence, energy and capability from the ones around them and always needs to be the smartest person in the room. These are the idea killers, the energy sappers, the diminishers of talent and commitment. On the other side of the spectrum are leaders who use their intelligence to amplify the smarts and capabilities of the people around them. When these leaders walk into a room, the lightbulbs go off over people's heads, ideas flow, and problems get solved. These are the leaders who inspire employees to stretch themselves to deliver results that surpass expectations. These are the multipliers."

We all have multiplier and diminisher tendencies. The trick is to identify these tendencies in ourselves and those we lead then grow our multiplier tendencies and reduce our diminisher tendencies. It is an excellent leadership book and one that can easily be used with your administrative teams.

Finally, I want to wish everyone happy holidays! May you find time to rest and recharge your batteries. Life is short, so make sure you have plenty of fun with your family and friends over the winter recess. Go forth and keep rowing!



HOLIDAY OFFICE CLOSING

The PASA office will be closed
Dec. 24 - Jan. 1 for the holidays.

SAVE THE DATE!



Friday, January 15
Virtual Workshop

HELP US GROW THE PIPELINE OF PENNSYLVANIA'S SCHOOL LEADERS!

This workshop is a **MUST** for those considering a move to the superintendency or assistant superintendency. It addresses topics essential to a deep understanding of the importance of high-performing superintendent and assistant superintendent leadership. Attendees will acquire the knowledge necessary to prepare for, obtain and be successful as they move toward and into a new district leadership role.

REGISTRATION IS OPEN!

<https://www.pasa-net.org/aspiring>

FROM THE PRESIDENT'S PEN

PREPARING FOR YEAR 2021: ADVOCATE OR ELSE

BY STEPHEN RODRIGUEZ, CAUCUS PRESIDENT
AND SUPERINTENDENT OF THE POTTSTOWN SD



The pandemic crisis in America and its effect on education has brought out the very best and worst in our culture and school communities. I think most people would agree that we are “getting through it,” but the potential financial challenges for the next year, 2021 and beyond, will put educational leaders and districts in very difficult positions.

All of our pre-pandemic Pennsylvania education funding issues are about to get worse. Cyber school funding reform is a clear example that negatively affects us all and has the potential for a disastrous effect on our collective budgets this year.

“Sideline Superintendency” is a phrase I have coined over the years for those educational leaders who can be involved in advocacy but simply don’t see it as a priority. They are happy to allow others to advocate on their behalf. I respectfully submit that the time for sideline superintendency is over. To put it bluntly, the old adage is still true: If you don’t have a seat at the table, chances are YOU are what’s for dinner.

Here are just a few of the things I’ve heard over the years:

- ♦ I am focused on my next contract.
- ♦ My legislator is a Republican; they are not for public education.
- ♦ I don’t have time for politics.
- ♦ I’ve gotten involved before, but there’s no pay off.
- ♦ It’s just a waste of time.
- ♦ I am focused on my own district needs.
- ♦ I just don’t have the time.
- ♦ My board is more worried about sports, finances, spending, etc., not Harrisburg.
- ♦ Don’t we (PASA) have a lobbyist? Isn’t that her job?

Certainly each one of these reasons had some measure of validity, but mostly they are rationalizations to avoid the reality of global issues that threaten public education and, if unchecked, will lead to students ill prepared to succeed in the world.

As a representative voice for urban educational leaders, I can honestly say that we probably step up more than most because we have greater need. However, if we all want to see real change, lasting change that actually helps the 1.7 million students in Pennsylvania, we all have to get off the sidelines. We all have to take our seat at the table and unite more, participate more, and advocate more.

Our caucus, PLUS, will be working on an event to highlight the needs and challenges of urban education early in the new year. But we will also talk about common sense solutions that, yes, will help urban districts, but frankly will help all districts. Like what? Like cyber school funding reform, less assessment through testing,

more technology resources, and a reduction in regulations that do not help students.

The 2021 calendar year will present unique challenges, and I predict most of them will be financial. Advocating after decisions are made or trying to create relationships to undo what has already been done is always 100% harder. Our time to advocate, our time to unite and support the work of education in the Commonwealth is right now. Our students, staff and community look to you to be their voice for change.

PASA is a great organization to help you get started, but don’t stop there. Work with other local districts. And don’t just advocate with legislators. Think about the influencers within your own community who can help you advocate for change.

The beauty of a democracy is that every vote counts. And when it comes to changing things, there is nothing like a new year to get the work started.



RESOURCES FROM PASA SPONSORS

PASA is grateful for the ongoing support of our Sponsors at all levels. Although PASA does not promote or endorse any product or service offered by our sponsors, we are pleased to share information they offer that may be helpful to school leaders, particularly concerning return-to-school issues.

Several of our sponsors have offered free webinars and other unique opportunities and resources to assist PASA members in planning for the school year. A recording of several of these webinars and a list of additional **FREE** resources and information is available at:

<https://www.pasa-net.org/sponsoropportunities>

IMPORTANT UPDATE ON PROFESSIONAL LIABILITY COVERAGE

PASA does not provide professional liability insurance to commissioned officers, as that coverage is available through an excellent professional benefit plan included with membership in AASA, The School Superintendents Association. As an Active member of AASA and a W-2 employed administrator, you automatically receive \$1 million in professional liability insurance plus legal assistance benefits. You can also increase your coverage for a nominal charge. [Click here](#) to read more about it. **PASA highly recommends that all commissioned officers have professional liability insurance beyond what is provided by your school district to ensure you are covered personally should your school board decide not to support you in a claim against you.**

****SAVE THE DATE****



Keynote Presenter: Dr. Bill Daggett

A one-day conference for superintendents, assistant superintendents, curriculum leaders, technology coordinators, principals, and student services & facility leaders

Details & Registration Coming Soon!

A MEMBERSHIP BENEFIT! PASA LEGAL SERVICES

PASA's legal staff offers a wide range of employment-related legal resources and services to PASA members who are Commissioned Officers. These services include consulting services, employment contract services, non-litigation dispute resolution, and assistance with the negotiation and development of separation agreements.



Go to:

www.pasa-net.org/legalservices
to read more about it.

YOUR LEADERSHIP INSPIRES

DR. FRANCINE ENDLER
CHAIR, PASA PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE



As we enter the month of December, it is customary to look back over the course of the year and reflect. There is no doubt that our recollections cover a wide range of emotions, experiences and events. It was a year that has impacted each and every one of us individually and collectively. We have been transformed.

Each of us have worked with our leadership teams, teachers, support staff and communities to navigate the educational landscape. While you have been leading, have you realized that you have also been *inspiring* those within your organization and your region? Those on your team who are considering the next steps in their leadership journey or contemplating entering a leadership role for the first time have been impacted by your guidance and direction. *What will do to encourage them?*

Now more than ever, we are compelled to ensure that the next generation of educational leaders are positioned to guide our districts, students and communities. Take a few moments to talk with those who you know are ready to lead or advance and encourage them to take the next step *toward the superintendency or assistant superintendency*.

PASA's upcoming Aspiring to Leadership Program offers an opportunity to learn about these leadership positions and prepare for the selection process. They will be inspired by PASA's 2021 Superintendent of the Year, Dr. Khalid Mumin, and others. Invite at least one person within your organization to register. Send them this link: <https://www.pasa-net.org/aspiring>. The program will be recorded for those who register and are unable to attend the live event.

Thank you for inspiring our future leaders!

Dr. Endler is executive director of Central Intermediate Unit 10.



The December issue of AASA's monthly magazine *School Administrator* focuses on the importance of positive, agile leadership – and building the future of administrative leadership. Not an AASA member? Check out options at www.aasa.org.

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

LOOKING AHEAD, LOOKING BACK

BY BARBARA WALVORT JEWETT, ASSISTANT TO THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR



It's the time of year when folks usually start thinking about making New Year's resolutions. My guess is most people this year are just going to skip the resolutions and instead say a little prayer that 2021 will be MUCH better than 2020. We really just want to put this year behind us, right?

What is already clear about 2021, at least the first quarter or half of the year, is that we likely will experience more of the same in our schools, homes and communities: growing concern about increasing COVID spread, complying with social distancing and mask mandates, figuring out how and where and when to shop or gather or run athletic events, and, for those of us with elderly parents or relatives and friends who are at high risk, functioning in our daily lives with great caution – and hope for a vaccine that works, will be readily available and can't come soon enough.

A new administration takes over in Washington next month, although that transition is proving to be one of the most contentious in the nation's history. Meanwhile, political machinations and gridlock continue to stymie approval of a second (and badly needed) federal CARES package for schools, communities and struggling Americans, among other issues.

The situation isn't much different in Pennsylvania. Republicans continue to hold the majority in both the House and Senate, while Gov. Wolf, a Democrat, has only two more years left in his term of office. That alone means his influence likely will be diminishing in 2021. Plus, continued wrangling between the governor and a good number of Republicans (particularly in the House) on COVID-related issues likely will carry over into every policy discussion in the next legislative session, including budget talks.

The Biden Administration, Congress and the Pennsylvania General Assembly begin their new terms and sessions next month. PASA and AASA are preparing to advocate broadly on crucial education issues right from the start. In a "normal" year, we would expect education policy issues to come forward at the beginning of a session. However, with the ongoing pandemic, there clearly will be other priorities, both economic and otherwise. While there is always a balancing act in advocacy when so many other priorities are on the front line, we will be focused, particularly when it comes to issues such as the crucial need for cyber charter funding reform.

But as we look ahead to and plan for what likely will be another challenging year, it also is important that we don't spend our entire December looking ahead to what we possibly could face in the new year. My grandmother often cited a Bible verse that can serve as a good reminder: "Do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about itself. Each day has enough trouble of

its own." (Matthew 6:34)

2021 is coming, and we know its start likely will be rocky. But instead of focusing on that, it might be better this month to look back, not ahead, and focus on finishing out 2020 on an optimistic note, despite the challenges. Instead of worrying about next year and making New Year's resolutions, resolve instead to do your own "year in review" and take time this month for just breathing and celebrating the positives of 2020: your hard-working teachers and administrators, your family and friends, significant milestones in your life, and the opportunity to appreciate your own strengths and creativity and leadership in unprecedented times.

Happy holidays.

ADVOCACY UPDATE

PASA continues to both provide information to members and advocate on their behalf. Some of these activities since the November issue of *The PASA Flyer* was published included the following:

Advocacy

- PASA was successful in urging lawmakers and the governor to support SB 1216, a bill that provides certification and assessment flexibility. The bill was signed into law at the end of session last month. Prior to the bill's final passage, PASA was able to convince lawmakers to remove two provisions in the bill, one that would have granted to parents the option of opting their children out of the Keystone or PSSA without any specific reason and another that would have required school entities to inform any parents, staff, volunteers or contracts in a building or on the same school property as a positive COVID case within 24 hours.
- Prior to lawmakers adjourning the 2019-20 legislative session, Mark continued to field calls from legislative staff on school issues and pending legislation. He continues to field questions from reporters.
- We are continuing to work with our lobbyist and other education associations on issues of mutual concern as we move into the new 2021-22 legislative session next month.
- Even though Gov. Wolf vetoed HB 1737, which would have provided limited liability to businesses and schools, PASA continues to keep the issue before lawmakers and is urging the governor to sign an executive order providing such liability to public school officials.
- Dr. DiRocco continues to meet via Zoom with AASA legislative advocacy staff and executives from other state superintendent associations to share information and updates related to school operations and state education policy.

Information

On Nov. 20 and 23 Dr. DiRocco provided a special Zoom briefing for superintendents on new state orders and updated recommendations concerning face coverings, event capacity and an attestation form concerning schools and COVID cases and method of instruction. In addition, PASA continues to update the coronavirus web page and provide additional education news and information through the weekly Update on Mondays and *The PASA Flyer*.

NAVIGATING THE SCHOOL YEAR: UPDATES & RESOURCES

Update on the Pandemic...

According to the PA Department of Health, the number of COVID-19 cases over the course of the pandemic has topped 425,000. That total was at 200,000 just six weeks ago.

Hospital beds are filling up and medical staffs are being stretched to the limit as Pennsylvania's health care system copes with a growing number of seriously ill COVID-19 patients. As of five days ago, nearly half of all hospitals in the south-central region of the state, and a third of those in the southwest, anticipate staffing shortages within a week, according to the state Department of Health. Nurses in the Philadelphia area say they're overloaded with COVID-19 patients, impacting the quality of care they can provide.

And Pennsylvania's top health official, Dr. Rachel Levine, said on December 3 she's worried about modeling that shows the state will run out of intensive care beds this month. More than 85% of the state's ICU beds are occupied amid an enormous statewide spike in COVID-19 hospitalizations this fall. (from WTAE)

As a result, both Gov. Tom Wolf and Secretary of Health Rachel Levine have warned residents to follow safety guidelines, including wearing masks, social distancing, quarantining and limiting time in public places, in order to slow the spread of COVID-19 across the commonwealth, and have indicated that there may be more restrictions coming if case numbers continue to increase.



Superintendent Forum: Leading in a Culture of Change Virtual Forum for Superintendents

Jan. 7, Feb. 4, March 11, April 8, May 6
2:00 - 3:30 p.m.

40 PIL Hours (approval pending)

(Registrants seeking PIL credit must participate in the sessions, participate in a community of learners group asynchronously via Canvas Instructure learning management system and complete a culminating project by August 1, 2020.)

The fallout of COVID-19, combined with continuing advances in digital technology and an increasing demand for authentic student-centered learning, presents an unprecedented opportunity to transform education across whole systems. Superintendents are invited to participate in this virtual interactive forum which has, as its focus and foundation **Leading in a Culture of Change**, 2nd edition (2020), by Michael Fullan. The program consists of the following components:

- Inquiry-based small and large group discussions about the leadership components within Fullan's book, facilitated during five 90-minute virtual sessions
- for those seeking PIL credit, job-embedded assignments due August 1

<https://www.pasa-net.org/suptforum>

When announcing the school attestation order prior to the Thanksgiving holiday, Gov. Wolf also warned that there could be some changes coming for schools unless the spread gets under control. Stay tuned....

Guidance and Orders Updates...

- The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recently issued [new guidance](#) on quarantining during the pandemic. The new recommendations allow for close contacts of people diagnosed with the virus to resume normal activity after 10 days if they don't show symptoms, or as little as seven days if they test negative. The PA Department of Health (DOH) has aligned its quarantine guidelines with the CDC update, although the incubation period remains 14 days in health care settings and prisons.
- Gov. Wolf and the DOH last month issued an order requiring all school districts to comply with actions intended to arrest the rising numbers of COVID cases in Pennsylvania and to require school superintendents and school board presidents to complete an [attestation form](#) by November 30 confirming how the district will proceed with instruction if it is located in a county that is in the Substantial level of COVID transmission for two or more weeks. The PDE reported last week that 99 percent of districts had complied with the order.
- The DOH and PA Department of Education have updated and posted on the PDE website [recommendations on procedures](#) following a positive COVID-19 case in schools and indicated that the PDE and DOH "anticipate making changes to our instructional model guidance to reflect new data and solid consensus within the scientific and educational communities."
- On Nov. 17 the DOH updated the [order on wearing face coverings](#) in indoor and outdoor public places and maintaining social distancing. The PDE also updated its [FAQ](#) on face coverings in schools and during athletic events.
- The DOH also updated the maximum capacity [calculator](#) for both indoor and outdoor events.
- The PIAA last month released "Return to Competition – Individual Sports," specifically to address [considerations for winter sports](#).

Employee Evaluation Update...

Last Week Acting PA Secretary of Education Noe Ortega signed an Order that continues flexibility from school year 2019-20 by waiving the requirement to include performance data in professional employee ratings, as authorized by the recent passage of SB 1216 in law (Act 136 of 2020).

PASA Resources...

We are providing on the PASA website links to updates, resources, information and strategies from both the state and federal level to help in school planning and management. Find the resources here: <https://www.pasa-net.org/coronavirus>. PASA updates this growing list as information and resources continue to develop. If you know of a website that provides useful ideas and guidance for school leaders, please let us know at pasa@pasa-net.org.



THE KALEIDOSCOPE OF COVID-19

BY DR. TINA KANE AND LYNN FUINI-HETTEN

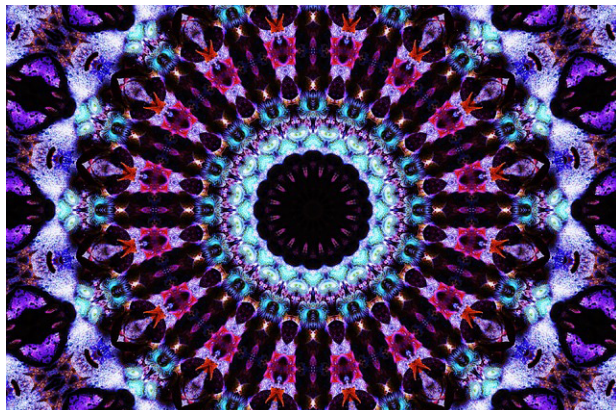


Now more than ever, it is important for us as leaders to develop personal and professional networks. Relating this theme to COVID-19 and how schools are managing the ever-changing circumstances, the Women's Caucus hosted their second virtual networking event on November 16.

The networking session was hosted by the Women's Caucus President, Lynn Fuini-Hetten, associate superintendent of Salisbury Township School District, and the Women's Caucus Secretary, Dr. Tina Kane, superintendent of Marple Newtown School District. The purpose of the session was to connect and collaborate with female leaders and administrators across the Commonwealth. The session was well attended with females holding positions in various levels in the field of education ranging from building principals, pupil services, central office, IU executives and superintendents.

Do you remember playing with a fascinating kaleidoscope when you were younger? While holding it up to light, and peeking inside, each twist and turn of the tube offered the viewer a colorful and beautiful image. The kaleidoscope was invented by David Brewster in 1816, who named the invention after the Greek words meaning "beautiful form watcher." The kaleidoscope constantly changes, revealing a new symmetrical pattern. This captivating process can intrigue the viewer to continue to engage the toy to see what pattern will be revealed. (If you need a reminder, [open this video](#) and just enjoy a meditative moment.)

The session began with a self-care check-in, where the attendees shared how they identified with various bitmoji emotions such as rainbows and sunshine, hitting the wall, or feeling overwhelmed. This lighthearted opportunity allowed for the attendees to relate to one another and validate the emotional toll managing COVID-19 and operating schools has taken on educational leaders. When we meet with leaders and teachers, we need to take the time to check in on each other and reflect on our own mental health.



Thematically, each small shift in the kaleidoscope can change the entire perspective for the viewer. With this in mind, each shift of COVID-19, whether it be contact tracing, quarantining timelines, community spread, or access to testing, educational leaders have needed to pivot and adjust academic plans in response to new information.

A breakout session organized by job-alike positions or a mixed group offered the participants the opportunity to discuss the challenges and opportunities COVID-19 has created in our daily work. The challenges were quickly identifiable as to how school and district leaders were managing the demands of safely opening and operating their schools. Although there were many challenges, there were also significant opportunities that emerged.

With each twist of the kaleidoscope, we experienced new changes and visions of new patterns and possibilities before us. The beauty of operating within these new circumstances has yielded new avenues for connecting with learners, engaging students, and collaborating with colleagues. The conversation allowed leaders to share the challenges and also elevate the opportunities this unique situation has afforded us.

The second breakout session offered the female leaders the chance to give a tip and take a tip. This sharing session provided time to share successful strategies, including quick ways to boost staff morale, fun ways to show your staff they are appreciated, strategies for managing feedback from parents, and methods for keeping the work-life balance. How many of you have had food trucks or therapy dogs visit your schools?

A follow-up survey offered the Women's Caucus Board with valuable feedback to apply for future planning. All of those responding shared that the networking session was worthwhile and that they would attend future sessions. One participant commented that she "liked the open format that allowed people to bring what is on their mind and in their heart." Another shared, "It was a nice chance to talk and laugh with women across the state." We need to make the time to connect with one another!

The Women's Caucus Virtual Networking Sessions have been free for female leaders. More sessions will be offered in the new year. Information regarding upcoming sessions will be shared through PASA. We hope more women will be able to join us for future events.

Our wish for the holiday season is for you to find the beauty and possibility of each twist of the kaleidoscope of life around you.

SAVE THE DATES

2021 Women's Caucus Conference
May 16 - 18
2021 Southeast Region Caucus Dinner
November 10



PASA VIRTUAL LEARNING PROGRAMS

See the PASA website for program updates at <https://www.pasa-net.org/programs>.

PASA/PASBO School Construction Workshop
December 14-15

Winter Webinar Series

"Leading Cultures that Prioritize the Well-Being of all Students, Staff and Leaders"

Noon to 1:00 p.m.

January 6, February 10, March 10 and April 14

Superintendent Forum: Leading in a Culture of Change
2:00 – 3:30 p.m.

January 7, February 4, March 11 and April 8

Aspiring to Leadership Workshop
January 15

**New Superintendents' Academy Part 3:
Professional & Community Leadership**
January 21-22

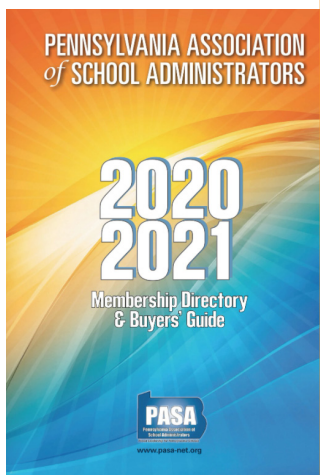
Superintendent Licensure Exam Prep Session
January 30

PASA MEMBERSHIP DIRECTORY

The 2020-21 PASA Membership Directory is being mailed to PASA members this month, and members also will receive an email providing a link to the [online version](#).

NOTE:

The directory includes the listing of members who paid their annual membership dues **by the Oct. 1 deadline**. The addendum includes the names of those who paid within a week of the deadline.



Virtual Program December 14 & 15

Whether you are facing a district construction project in the near future or just getting prepared for that eventuality, this workshop is for YOU! Learn the basics of the process from company representatives and experienced school leaders who have been-there/done-that, all focused on key elements of the process, including:

- ♦ How to do a Traditional Design/Bid/Build School Construction Project
- ♦ School Construction Without PlanCon
- ♦ Construction Contracts: Dos and Don'ts
- ♦ Construction Management Best Practices
- ♦ School Construction: What School Leaders Need To Know

Registration closes at 8 a.m. on Friday, December 11!

PASA members: You must use the code PASAMEM1920 at checkout to get the member discount.

<https://www.pasa-net.org/construction>



2021 Winter Series: "Leading Cultures that Prioritize the Well-Being of all Students, Staff and Leaders"

Take a short time out of your day - and take advantage of these four one-hour informational PASA webinars focused on what every school leader needs to understand about socially & emotionally rich cultures and the prevention of and response to trauma. Provided to school administrators online, this webinar series features both information and opportunity for Q & A.

JAN. 6: Responding to Trauma – Empowering Students Through Restorative Practices

FEB. 10: STEP UP Westmoreland: Mental Health Network of Best Practices

MARCH 10: Trauma: Science, Signs & Interventions for K-12 Schools

APRIL 14: Leading an Adult SEL Culture

All webinars offered from noon to 1 p.m.

Paid registrants will have access to all webinar recordings and will receive connection information prior to each webinar.

<https://www.pasa-net.org/webinars>

RECAP OF NOVEMBER PROGRAMS

PASA provided two virtual programs last month, one focused on social-emotional learning and the other as the second of three sessions for new superintendents and other school administrators.

PASA Summit for Assistant Superintendents and Supervisors



The November 6 program, "Bridging SEL Research and the Applied Implementation of SEL in Schools," provided an overview of SEL, its importance, and basic considerations for successfully implementing and sustaining SEL in districts, schools and the community. Featured presenter **Dr. Carol Paxton** (pictured), Director of the Center for the Promotion of Social and Emotional Learning (CPSEL), focused the program on the model of social and emotional learning utilized by CASEL and implementation considerations that rely on the latest SEL research.

New Superintendents' Academy, Session 2

Thirty-eight new and aspiring superintendents/CEOs participated in Part 2 of the 2020-21 New Superintendents' Academy, held November 16-17 virtually via Zoom, using Canvas Instructure, a learning management platform. The PIL-approved program focused on "Systems Leadership," and featured numerous a recorded session on collection bargaining, breakout discussions, and virtual sessions led by experienced administrators and other professionals:

- * *Governance and Policy Development* – **Dr. Mark DiRocco**, PASA executive director
- * *School District Finances* – **Dr. Wayne McCullough**, executive director of the PA Assn. of School Business Officials (PASBO)
- * *First Things First: An Organizational System That Works* – **Dr. Michael Snell**, superintendent, Central York
- * *Best Practices for the Management of the School Districts' Auxiliary Services* – **Dr. Alan Vandrew**, Associate Professor of Educational Leadership at Shippensburg University and former CFO, Mechanicsburg Area
- * *Human Resources Review* – **Dr. Tammy Wolick**, superintendent, and **Bob Reger**, director of human resources, Hempfield Area
- * *Rigorous and Coherent Systems of Curriculum, Instruction and Assessment* – **Dr. Brian Troop**, superintendent, Ephrata Area

THOUGHT FOR THE DAY

"People are our strength. As education leaders, it is our responsibility to develop and nurture future leaders. The more we can do to inspire investment and nurture the abilities of others as we build our teams, the higher our capacity to succeed with the unknown challenges we face. That is why developing team leadership through a human-centered approach is a necessity."
– Tom Hughes, a former superintendent and currently associate professor of educational leadership at Northern Arizona University, from "The Human Centering of Team Leadership," as published in the December issue of *School Administrator*

Academy Graduates

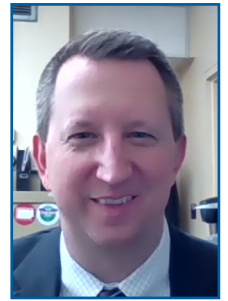
Three participants were recognized for completing all three parts of the New Superintendents' Academy. They are:



Dr. Chris Suppo,
Shippensburg Area



Eileen Cannistraci,
Insight PA Cyber
Charter School



Dr. Scott Eveslage,
Hatboro-Horsham

COMING UP:

Part 3 of the Academy (Professional & Community Leadership)
– Jan. 21-22



PASA WEBSITE: CAREER CENTER

Have an administrative position you need to fill? Or are you considering moving forward in your professional career?

As a courtesy to school administrators, public school employers, and those seeking positions in school administration, PASA provides on its website the "[PASA Career Center](#)," a listing of school administrator job openings, both in Pennsylvania and in the Mid-Atlantic region. Vacancies and available positions for public schools are posted at no charge upon request and review.

To request a vacancy announcement posting on this web site, send a message to the [Webmaster](#). Please include your phone number with your e-mail request. Information needed includes: position, entity, contact name/address, description of the position, application deadline and application process. Additional position information may be included, depending on length.

(PASA reserves the right not to publish an open position or to modify submitted information.)

Each month, PASA, in coordination with the Technology Committee and CoSN (Consortium for School Networking), will publish a monthly technology-focused news item of interest to members of PASA.



TOPIC: DIGITAL EQUITY

The COVID-19 crisis has brought to light many challenges within the nation's K-12 education systems. Some are new and others may have existed for a while. One of the more confounding current problems is the matter of digital equity.

As schools across the nation moved from their traditional in-school settings to both hybrid and fully remote teaching and learning, student access to appropriate digital devices and robust Internet access became even more critically urgent. Additionally, having the skills to leverage technology tools for learning is now essential for teachers and students – and to some degree, parents and families – in order for effective teaching and learning to continue.

The vision of anywhere, anytime learning depends on equitable access to devices and high-speed Internet for ALL students, as well as their families and guardians. In our current reality the issues around access go beyond the ability to continue learning. Today, everyone needs reliable broadband access in order to stay connected with family and friends, access health services, job opportunities and other critical resources.

For all these reasons, the issues involved in leading digital transformation and assuring that all students have reliable digital access are now more relevant than ever. CoSN is pleased to provide multiple resources to assist school leaders in navigating the challenges of digital equity.

EmpowerED Superintendent Monthly Webinar

The upcoming episode of the monthly EmpowerED Superintendent Webinar series, co-hosted by CoSN, AASA and edWeb.net, and sponsored by ClassLink, airs on Monday, **December 14**. The title and focus of this upcoming webinar, broadcast live at 5:00 p.m., is **“Achieving Digital Equity: Innovative Leadership Strategies for Today’s School Leaders.”**

Solving the problem of digital equity requires a focused vision and strategic implementation of multiple innovative strategies. In this engaging webinar Dr. A. Katrise Perera (superintendent, Gresham-Barlow SD in Oregon), Glenn Robbins (superintendent, Brigantine Public Schools, NJ) and Dr. Aaron Spence (superintendent, Virginia Beach City Public Schools, VA) share effective strategies for bringing their communities together to implement solutions that successfully address digital equity.

Free registration for this December 14, 2020 webinar is now available [online](https://home.edweb.net/supers/). Webinars in this series are also freely available as recordings at <https://home.edweb.net/supers/> and via podcast at <https://home.edweb.net/podcasts/> a day or two after the initial live broadcast.

CoSN Critical Focus Areas: Issue One-Pager - Creating Equitable Opportunities for All Learners: Digital Equity Strategies for Learning Inside and Outside the Classroom

The [CoSN EmpowerED Superintendents web page](#) presents a series of “one-pagers” to guide and empower superintendents and their leadership teams in leading digital transformations. CoSN’s one-page document on [Creating Equitable Opportunities for All Learners](#) describes four impactful strategies for “thinking outside the box” to achieve digital equity within a school system.

CoSN Digital Equity Initiative

For an in-depth look at a variety of strategies to address digital equity check out the resources provided through CoSN’s Digital Equity Initiative, including access to the [Digital Equity Toolkit](#).

The Consortium for School Networking ([CoSN](#)) and its state affiliate chapter, Pennsylvania Association for Educational Communications and Technology ([PAECT](#)) are honored to support the work of current and aspiring superintendents and district leadership teams in leading all aspects of digital learning transformations. If your school or district would like more information about joining CoSN or getting more involved with CoSN, please contact Brian Calvary, CAE, CoSN Director of Membership and Chapters, at bcalvary@cosn.org.



COMMUNICATIONS TIP OF THE MONTH

“Reflect on the power of your leadership and the good that you do. Remind yourself why you became an educator. Read or watch something that inspires you. Find a way to share some examples with the people that you lead. Model and encourage others to do the same. Share why you lead, and it will show how much you care.” – Jason Hay, assistant superintendent of the Linn Benton Lincoln Education Service District in Albany, Oregon, from “In Uncertain Times, Showcase Your Humanity,” as published in the December issue of *School Administrator*, AASA’s monthly publication. This month’s issue addresses agile leadership – shifting gears to make a difference in a time of uncertainty.

“ NOTEWORTHY QUOTES ”

“This is not a political issue, this is not a partisan issue, this is an urgent public health issue in Pennsylvania.” – Secretary of Health Rachel Levine, during a press conference on Nov. 16 focused on increasing cases statewide of COVID-19

“While 2020 has been a year unlike any one in history of public education, our school communities continue to show tremendous flexibility grit and resourcefulness. For that, I’d like to just take a moment to thank our schools and say how tremendously proud we are for their unwavering commitment to protecting their communities from the unpredictable virus and ensuring that students continue to have access to safe and quality education.” – Acting Secretary of Education Noe Ortega during a press conference on Nov. 30

“All of us are in this together, and the state needs to do whatever it can, and we will continue to do that. And if we need to do more, we will, and we will be making that decision very shortly.” – Gov. Tom Wolf during a Dec. 7 press conference on the rapidly increasing numbers of COVID cases in the commonwealth and a potential state response

On the Limited Liability Bill...

“Providing immunity for a business that does not rigorously comply with public health orders does not ensure the safety of the public, its employees, and is not in the public interest. At a time when the COVID-19 virus is spreading rapidly, we need to be taking measures to ensure compliance with public health order and improve safety practices. We should not be providing protection for noncompliance or carelessness.” – Gov. Tom Wolf, in a press release outlining reasons for his veto of a bill that would have provided limited liability to businesses as well as schools

On the State Budget...

“We’re not talking about new initiatives. We’re not talking about tax increases. We’re not talking about major cuts. Those are the things that make budgets difficult. We’re just trying to get through the year.” – Sen. Jake Corman (R-Centre), Senate Majority Leader, on passage of the seven-month state budget plan for the remainder of the 2020-21 fiscal year

“[T]his budget plan again puts off difficult decisions to the future. Given the reliance on one-time funds and the uncertain prospects for the economy, especially in light of the resurgence of COVID-19 which will lead to a slow recovery in state tax revenues, this budget plan again puts off difficult decisions to the future.” – Marc Stier, director of the Pennsylvania Budget and Policy Center

On a Change in Administration...

“We stand ready to support an administration that understands and highlights the importance of our nation’s public schools and the roles they play in preparing our students, bolstering our economy and securing our nation’s future. We welcome the chance to work with a new Secretary of Education who will support public schools and won’t shy away from working directly with the educators and school system leaders doing the important work of running our nation’s public schools, especially in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic.” – Daniel Domenech, AASA executive director, in a press release outlining AASA’s education policy recommendations for the Biden Administration

On the Current Pandemic Situation...

“I think it would help to reduce the anxiety level of some folks. But we have parents who do not want to vaccinate their children for things like chicken pox, measles, et cetera, so I think some folks are naturally going to be skeptical of a vaccine. I think other parents understand the importance of vaccinations. My personal fear is that it will cause folks to relax and reduce mask wearing, you know, reduce the social distancing, things that we’ve put in place in our school district because we really worked hard to keep our schools open as long as we could. But there’s no blueprint for this.” – Mike Porembka, assistant superintendent at Greater Latrobe SD, speaking about a possible COVID vaccine in a radio interview last month on “All Things Considered” (NPR)

“There’s a combination of some frustration and some not understanding why this order had to come out. We believe that public schools have been one of the most compliant agencies, if not the most compliant agency out of any entity in Pennsylvania. Schools have been taking this very seriously, so it was a bit concerning to superintendents as to why this directive needed to come out when they felt they were already doing those things.” – PASA Executive Dr. Mark DiRocco on the governor’s recent order requiring school officials to sign an attestation form, in an interview with *The Patriot-News* on Nov. 24

“Things have picked up drastically. It’s like a surge on top of a surge.” – Dr. Joseph Roy, superintendent of the Bethlehem Area SD, on the rising cases of COVID-19, as told to *The Morning Call* on Dec. 9.

“We are staying on top of new developments by consulting with medical professionals, engaging with the regional and state departments of health, and being attentive to the steady stream of mandates and updates coming from the Department of Health.... Schools are now in a position of enforcing a travel mandate that requires community members to call the school and report themselves. You don’t need to be a superintendent to know that is not going to end well.” – Dr. Carrie Rowe, superintendent of the Beaver Area SD, as told to *The Beaver County Times*, Nov. 27

As a non-partisan organization, AASA is committed to having a strong and collaborative professional relationship with any federal administration. With the election of Joe Biden as the next President of the United States, AASA sought to release a series of recommendations entitled *A New Vision for a New Administration*.

This set of guidelines contains concrete actions the Biden Administration can take to prioritize federal education programs and policies that support the nation's 50 million K-12 public school students. We created a similar document when President Trump was elected that urged him to prioritize funding for public schools and, in particular, the needs of rural school districts.

While we did not receive an invitation to connect with the transition team under the Trump Administration to discuss these priorities, we're encouraged that we've been able to connect with the Biden transition team, and we're looking forward to discussing these critical funding and policy matters with team members.

Our three key recommendations in the report include:

*** Support Public Schools and the 90% of the K-12 Students They Educate:** The COVID-19 pandemic has demonstrated the critical function that our public schools perform for children and families, as well as for businesses, industries and communities. Public schools are the hub of countless aspects of community life, and the closure of school buildings during the pandemic negatively impacted virtually every American citizen, regardless of whether they had children enrolled in the system.

*** Repeal Recent Regulations That Harm Public School Students and District Operations:** Over the past four years, we have seen a series of regulations introduced and finalized that have made it increasingly difficult to serve students, particularly students in poverty. These regulations have made it more difficult for administrators to efficiently manage federal programs in schools. In addition, the regulations adversely impact how schools provide critical services to students, as well as transform school district practices in a dramatic and unhelpful way.

*** Ensure Continuous and Direct Engagement Between Local Education Officials and the U.S. Department of Education:** Over the past 12 years, there has been minimal direct contact between federal education staff and superintendents to inform each other of their respective work, their worldview and their understanding of the immediate, short-term and long-term challenges experienced by students, educators and education leaders.

Specifically, AASA recommends that the Biden Administration commits to several K-12 educational investments, including:

- Champion the full funding of IDEA
- Take steps to eliminate funding for the D.C. voucher program
- Issue time-limited waivers related to federal assessments and accountability
- Prioritize funding for schools and student connectivity in any infrastructure plan
- Streamline the Medicaid reimbursement system and remove regulatory barriers for districts
- Repeal the Title IX regulation

- Ensure categorical eligibility can be used to qualify students for federal programs
- Create a professional learning community between staff at the U.S. Department of Education and members of AASA to ensure there is a meaningful feedback loop on how and where the Department should act and what actions could be helpful, harmful or neutral for students and districts.

The ties that bind children and families to schools have never been more important and more strained. It is time for a new, meaningful national conversation about a pandemic that predates COVID-19: the pandemic of educational inequity.

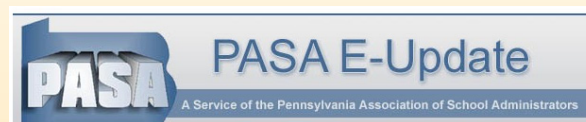
We hope that despite the divisive discourse on Capitol Hill and elsewhere, we can find common ground with our allies in both political parties and with the new Administration to set a new, positive course of public education that ensures America is a land of opportunity for every child.

WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW!



For breaking education news and the latest from the Capitol, follow us on Twitter @PASASupts.

Find what you need to know in the weekly "Education Update." Watch your email on **Mondays** for the E-Update and link to this weekly report, a source for the latest in education and budget news from Harrisburg, Pennsylvania and the nation.



Check the PASA website at www.pasa-net.org for reports, testimony, the program and meeting schedule, archived Updates, the PASA Career Center (job postings)...and more!



Reminder: AASA Superintendent Salary Survey

AASA's **2020 School Superintendent Salary and Benefits Survey** is open for one more week! The data AASA collects from this survey is of **critical importance**, as it serves as one of the few reliable and comprehensive data sources on the working conditions of school system leaders in the nation. To keep this work alive, and build upon the progress from previous years, AASA urges completion of the survey in its entirety **before December 11**. [Click here](#) to access the survey.

Schools and the COVID Vaccine

As part of its work with the [Learning First Alliance](#), AASA last month sent a [letter](#) to the Center for Disease Control (CDC) committee on vaccine priorities requesting that school personnel – including teachers, specialized instructional support personnel, aides, food service and custodial workers, and principals – are a priority group once the administration of a COVID-19 vaccine begins.

Specifically, the letter highlights the profound impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the economy and indicates that prioritizing school personnel for the initial distribution is critical for building public trust and reaching the vaccine target immunity goal.

Letter on IDEA Funding

AASA and twenty-eight other allied organizations have sent a [letter](#) to the Congressional Subcommittees on education funding urging leaders to provide the maximum increase possible in funding for the IDEA as part of a fair and proportional allocation for the final Fiscal Year (FY) 2021 LHHHS-Education appropriations bill. AASA, which chairs the Coalition for IDEA full funding, was proud to lead this effort and continue advocating for a prioritized and meaningful investment in IDEA that does not negatively impact funding for other education programs.

Letter on the Use of CARES Funding

Daniel A. Domenech, AASA executive director, recently issued a statement concerning the U.S. Dept. of Education's release of its CARES Act Education Fund Portal.

In unveiling the portal, U.S. Secretary of Education Betsy DeVos had voiced criticism about how schools were or were not using CARES funding. "States that neglected their obligations to provide full-time education, while complaining about a lack of resources, have left significant sums of money sitting in the bank," she said. "There may be valid reasons for states to be deliberate in how they spend CARES Act resources, but these data make clear there is little to support their claims of being cash-poor."

In response, Domenech stated that the portal falls short of its potential and mischaracterizes the situation. "It oversimplifies the complex reality of school funding, where schools are simultaneously responsible for managing funds from multiple sources of funding, each subject to its own rules, all of which impact the rate of spending," he said. "This tool reflects a mere slice of the true process of local school district expenditures. While a small portion of the funding has actually been liquidated, the truer narrative is that a far larger portion of the dollars have been obligated. And THAT is the narrative that matters."

"It is misleading to imply that schools are simply not spending the dollars, or to imply they are stockpiling cash. The reality is

that the costs incurred—and that will be accrued throughout the remainder of the 2020-21 school year—will exceed not only the CARES funding already available to states and districts, but will likely also fully exhaust any additional funding made available, should Congress move a second COVID response relief package with funding dedicated to K-12 education.

"Now, in 2020, with an unchecked pandemic and uncertainty whether CARES is the first or only source of federal support for schools, fiscal prudence at the local level should be encouraged and supported, not undermined or called into question."

Youth Apprenticeship Toolkit

AASA recently released a digital toolkit designed to encourage the creation of school and business partnerships to foster youth apprenticeships as a viable and expansive pathway to success in school, career and life. The [AASA Expanded Pathways Youth Apprenticeship Toolkit](#) contains detailed guidance and processes to launch an apprenticeship program, including videos, case studies, and other resources to provide school districts with the tools to start or expand youth apprenticeship programs. The timely resource is enhanced by follow-up interviews and conversations with leaders on youth apprenticeships in the COVID era.

Virtual Conference in 2021

Registration is open for the first ever virtual AASA National Conference on Education, which will be held over two days, February 18-19. The virtual format will provide convenience and safety for participants while still providing access to data, research and best practices shared among other superintendents and school districts across the nation. See the AASA website for information and updates at <https://nce.aasa.org>.

From AASA President Kristi Wilson

"Not everyone on the [district leadership] team is at the same place with regard to knowledge and experience. We need to guide members to the next level of development by assessing their prior knowledge as well as their areas of strength and potential points of refinement. Using this approach, rather than a one-size-fits-all strategy, helps district leaders strengthen each member of the team so that the group as a whole is more effective." (from "Leadership Teams That Share Credit," as published in the December issue of *School Administrator*)

AASA Coronavirus Resources

AASA continues to work with federal officials and members of Congress to influence legislation and policy concerning the coronavirus pandemic and its effect on schools. The AASA website offers school leaders updated information and resources from the federal levels, including Congress, the CDC, the Department of Education and the Department of Agriculture. [Click here](#) to see a list of resources and information provided by AASA.

Join AASA today and become part of a supported community of school leaders nationwide who advocate for public education. AASA, The School Superintendents Association, is the only national organization that represents and promotes the concerns of chief school administrators across the nation! **See the [AASA website](#) for details or contact the PASA office.**

MEMBER NEWS

REGION 1

Dr. Kevin Monaghan is now serving as superintendent of the Central Greene SD. He previously served a middle school principal and federal programs coordinator in the South Park SD. Monaghan replaces **Dr. Helen McCracken**, who has retired.

Randall Skrinjorich is currently serving as acting superintendent of the Ringgold SD.

REGION 3

Amy Pfender, assistant to the superintendent for the Upper St. Clair Township SD, is one of the finalists for the **2021 AASA Women in School Leadership Awards**. The awards, sponsored by Horace Mann and AASA, pay tribute to the talent, creativity and vision of outstanding women educational administrators in the nation's public schools. Candidates are judged on leadership in meeting the learning needs of students, personal and organizational communication strength, constant professional improvement of knowledge and skills, and active community involvement. Ms. Pfender is one of two finalists for the Central Office/Principal Award. The final award recipients in each category will be announced during the (virtual) AASA National Conference on Education scheduled for Feb. 18-19.

Dr. Melissa Friez has been appointed superintendent of the North Allegheny SD effective July 1, 2021 and has been promoted to deputy superintendent, effective immediately. Friez has been serving as the district's assistant superintendent of secondary education. **Dr. Patrick O'Toole** is serving as the district's interim superintendent through June 30.

REGION 9

Dr. G. Brian Toth, superintendent of the St. Marys Area SD, has announced his intention to retire, effective August 31, 2021. He has served 38 years in education, 20 in central office and 18 as a superintendent. Toth currently serves on the PASA Board of Governors, as PASA's representative on the PLGIT Board of Trustees, and as a Pennsylvania representative on the AASA Governing Board. He also is a PASA Past President.

REGION 12

Dr. Kelly Cartwright has been appointed superintendent of the Dover Area SD. She has been serving as assistant to the superintendent for elementary education for the Conestoga Valley SD in Lancaster County. She will begin her term as assistant superintendent in March before taking the superintendent position in May. Cartwright will replace **Dr. Tracy Krum**, who is retiring.

REGION 13

Ashley Mercado has been appointed superintendent of the Columbia Borough SD. She currently serves as an elementary principal in the Lancaster City SD. Mercado will replace **Tom Strickler**, who is leaving the position.

REGION 14

Dr. Robert Pleis, superintendent of the Twin Valley SD, will retire from that position, effective March 30 after 35 years in education and 14 as superintendent. Pleis serves on the PASA Board of Governors.

William McKay has been appointed superintendent of the

Governor Mifflin SD, effective the end of this month. He has been serving as assistant superintendent in the district. McKay will replace **Dr. Steven Gerhard**, who has accepted a position as assistant executive director with the Chester County I.U.

REGION 15

Kent Smith, superintendent of the Susquenita SD, has announced he will retire at the end of the 2020-21 school year. He has served as an educator for 40 years, the past eight years as the district's superintendent.

REGION 21

Richard Sniscak, superintendent of the Parkland SD, has announced he will retire in June. He has served in public education for 37 years, 26 with Parkland, and as the district's superintendent since 2011. Sniscak serves on the PASA Board of Governors.

REGION 22

Dr. Richard Gretzula, superintendent of the Pennsbury SD, has announced he will retire at the end of the 2020-21 school year. He has served as superintendent in the district the last four years.

Please report member news to PASA at pasa@pasa-net.org.

Announcements of professional vacancies across Pennsylvania and in neighboring states are posted on the PASA Web site at www.pasa-net.org (Click on the "Leadership Development" button and look for "Career Center.")

PASA CALENDAR

All programs and meetings through March are virtual.

See the PASA web site at www.pasa-net.org.

December

- 14-15 School Construction Workshop (virtual)
- 16 Webinar: Culturally Relevant Leadership
- 17 Superintendent Virtual Discussion: What's Next?
- 24-31 PASA office closed

January

- 1 PASA office closed
- 6 Winter Series Webinar #1
- 7 Superintendent Forum: Leading Change (Session 1)
- 13 National Superintendent Certification Program
- 15 Aspiring to Leadership Workshop
- 18 PASA office closed
- 21-22 New Superintendents' Academy Part 3
- 28 Board of Governors' meeting
- 30 Superintendent Licensure Exam Prep Session (virtual)

February

- 3 Professional Development Committee meeting
- 4 Superintendent Forum: Leading Change (Session 2)
- 10 Winter Webinar Series #2
- 15 PASA office closed
- 18-19 AASA National Conference on Education (virtual)