In Budget & Finance News...

**Injunction on CARES Funding Distribution** – Last week Gov. Wolf announced he is dedicating approximately $17 million to help 220 local education agencies (LEAs), including school districts, to improve educational services for approximately 180,000 students at schools designated for Additional Targeted Support and Improvement (ATSI) under the federal Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA). ESSA requires states to develop plans to designate schools for support and improvement based on the performance of individual student groups in key areas, including academic achievement and growth; graduation rate and English learner progress; and student success factors such as regular attendance and chronic absenteeism. Student groups include race, economically disadvantaged, English language learners and students with disabilities. Grants were calculated based on elements of the federal Title I, Part A formula, including the number of economically disadvantaged students and other school enrollment data. Grant recipients will receive direct communication from PDE with eGrant application instructions.

Coronavirus Resources & Guidance...

**Web Resources** – PASA’s web page concerning the Coronavirus and Pandemic Preparation includes links to information about issues such as school athletics and return-to-school, along with updated guidance from the PDE, CDC and USDE, and other important updates from the state and federal levels.

Return-to-School Issues...

**Updated Guidance from the PDE** – The PDE recently updated guidance on two issues:
* Fire and School Safety Drills: clarifies that schools conducting in-person instruction for seven days or more a month are required to report all required drills, that a school that exceeds 250 students must ensure proper social distancing during the drill but can be flexible in how to conduct drills by involving certain sections of the building/grade levels/floors of the building on different days, and that reports are only required for the months in which the school provides seven or more days of in-person instruction. (additional guidance also provided)
* Contact Tracing: clarifies that K-12 schools are NOT expected to perform contact tracing when a case of COVID-19 in confirmed among staff or students.

Racial Injustice & Inequality...

**Moving Equity to Reality** – How should principals, superintendents, teachers, and policymakers move equity from a hazy goal to a reality for students, especially in a school year upended by the coronavirus pandemic? A coalition of groups representing students with disabilities, English-language learners, students of color, and others have created a rubric that covers four essential components: access, capacity, opportunities, and outcomes. All four of those components are needed for students to have equitable access to education, but they might take different forms depending on an individual student's needs, the coalition says. For students with disabilities, "access" may mean ensuring that instructional materials, both print and digital, can be used by students who rely on assistive technology. For English-language learners, "access" could mean connecting and collaborating with families in their home language. And for students in foster care, "access" could mean making sure students have the devices and internet access needed for online instruction. Read the rest of the story: “Four Equity Themes All School Leaders Should Address” (from Education Week, 8/21/20).

**Resources: Conversations about Racial Inequality** – In light of recent events in Pennsylvania and across the country, PASA has compiled and posted a list of resources to assist school leaders and educators to facilitate conversations and initiatives addressing racial inequality in schools and communities. Click here for the list.

In the PA Legislature...
**Session Schedule** – Now through mid-October, the House and Senate will be in voting session on opposite weeks. The House returns to session this week, with a non-voting session today followed by two voting session days. The Senate returns to session next Tuesday (September 8). Both chambers are not scheduled to be in session the same week until the week of October 19, which will be the last session week until the election.

**Committee Schedule** – The House Appropriations Committee is scheduled to meet off the floor both on Tuesday and Wednesday. The agenda has not yet been announced, but it is expected that the committee will move to the floor several bills related to the COVID-19 pandemic.

**House Floor Calendar** – While other education-related bills may come up for consideration this week, the bills listed below likely will be considered:

* **HB 2787**: Sports in 2020-21. The bill amends the School Code by adding a new section providing the governing authority of a school entity or nonpublic school to have the exclusive authority to determine whether to hold school sports activities, including competitions, intramural play and scrimmages and other in-person extracurricular activities during the 2020-21 school year. The bill also requires a school entity to develop an athletic, health and safety plan addressing school sports and other in-person extracurricular activities, and provides for the content of the plans.

* **HB 2788**: Option for Additional Year. Amends the School Code to add a new section allowing a parent for the 2021-22 school year to elect to have a child in a school entity repeat a grade level to make up any lost educational opportunities during the 2019-20 and 2020-21 school years, regardless of whether the child met the requirements to be promoted to the next grade level. The bill extends that option to include participation in all academic or extracurricular activities. In addition, the bill requires school entities to create a process for a parent to make the election and post the process on its publicly accessible website. The bill also provides a twelve-month extension of secondary school attendance, free of charge, for a student aged 20 to 21 before the governor’s disaster emergency proclamation or renewal. (Note: Testifying before the House and Senate Education Committees last month, Secretary of Education Pedro Rivera stated that there are regulatory and legal prohibitions to providing education services to special need students beyond age 21.)

* **SB 1216**: Certification Flexibility. The bill would provide temporary certification flexibility for up to one year (expiring June 30, 2021) as follows:
  - Allow the Pennsylvania Department of Education (PDE) to issue a temporary certificate to individuals that have completed all of their teacher preparation requirements except their final assessment (i.e. praxis).
  - Allow PDE to issue an exceptional case permit for current educators who are unable to take their assessment to move from an Instructional I certificate to an Instructional II certificate.
  - Allow PDE to issue a temporary certificate under limited circumstances for individuals who were seeking to add on a certification (physical education/health, cooperative education and special education are exempted). Individuals will have to provide proof to PDE that their assessment was cancelled.
  - Waive requirement for undergraduate sophomores to take the basic skills exam. This test is required for teacher preparation programs.
  - Extends the deadline for paraprofessionals to satisfy staff development requirements.
  - Creates a transition period for the Special Education-PK-8 and Special Education-7-12 certifications.

**In State News...**

**Resources to Assist Families During the Pandemic** – Pennsylvania’s secretaries of the departments of Health (DOH), Education and Human Services (HS) last week announced the availability of resources and supports for families with children to assist with overcoming challenges created by the COVID-19 pandemic.

HS announced that it is creating flexibilities in child care options, including temporarily suspending some regulatory policies on school-age child care to give families options on learning pods, and providing assistance to families struggling financially. HS announced the temporary suspension of some regulatory policies on school-age child care, with the goal of providing flexibilities for families who need safe child care options during traditional school hours for children who are distance learning. In addition, HS announced that families may create collectives – or learning pods – of other trusted families in their community who can depend on each other for supervised child care during school hours without needing a licensed child care certification. DHS is also collaborating with organizations...
across Pennsylvania, including the United Way and YMCA, to establish part-day child care programs for school-age children and will be launching a tool on its website where families can go for information about these programs.

The department also noted that anyone struggling with mental health and in need of referrals to helpful programs can call Pennsylvania’s new Support & Referral Helpline (1-855-284-2494), which is operated 24/7 by caseworkers who can provide emotional support. Another helpful resource they noted is the 2-1-1 hotline operated by the United Way, which can connect people and families to local resources that can help during the public health crisis. In addition, the Wolf Administration recently launched an online Mental Health Resources Guide to provide Pennsylvanians with a full complement of resources available to help everyone with their mental health needs.

The departments also reminded families about the availability of benefits under the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), Medicaid and CHIP, and the Women Infants & Children (WIC) program, stated the importance of reporting suspected child abuse to ChildLine, and encouraged families to seek information about immunizations and nearby centers to keep their children updated.

Transportation Challenge for HS Students – Pennsylvania Department of Transportation (PennDOT) announced last week that students in grades 9-12 are invited to participate in the fourth annual PennDOT Innovations Challenge, which encourages students to use their problem-solving, creative and strategic-thinking abilities to solve real-world transportation challenges in a competition among their peers. This year’s Innovations Challenge asks students to develop an innovative and implementable solution that helps address Pennsylvania’s transportation revenue shortfall by identifying potential new funding streams, aside from additional gas taxes, tolls or mileage-based user fees, to help ensure adequate transportation funding for the future. The Innovations Challenge is open to all students in grades 9-12, regardless of their school’s learning model. Regional Innovations Challenge winners will be selected and invited to compete for the state championship. The Transportation Policy and Education Foundation, an educational arm of the Associated Pennsylvania Constructors (APC), the American Council of Engineering Companies of PA (ACEC/PA) and the Pennsylvania Chapter of the American Traffic Safety Services Association (ATSSA) are providing a combined total award of $5,500 to be divided among the first, second and third place statewide winning teams. For complete Innovations Challenge details, visit www.penndot.gov/innovation. The submission deadline is December 18, 2020.

In National News…

2020 Election: Republican Platform on Education – At the Republican National Convention last week, speakers made the case for re-electing President Donald Trump. But they didn’t approve a platform that outlines in detail Trump’s priorities for a second term, including a vision for education. In a break from a decades-long norm, GOP delegates issued a resolution that leaves in place the 2016 platform and asserts that the party “enthusiastically supports President Trump and continues to reject the policy positions of the Obama-Biden Administration.” Instead, Trump’s campaign released a brief, bulleted list of his second-term priorities that included just two items under the heading for education: “Provide School Choice to Every Child in America” and “Teach American Exceptionalism.” Read the rest of the story: “What Are Trump’s Next K-12 Priorities? Don’t Look to a GOP Platform for Answers” (from Education Week, 8/24/20).

Florida: Injunction on Mandatory School Start – In a significant development in the debate over reopening schools during the COVID-19 pandemic, a Florida state judge on Monday issued an injunction that blocks a state order that required most school districts in the state to open their campuses five days a week by Aug. 31 or face a significant loss in state aid. Leon County Circuit Court Judge Charles W. Dodson said that the defendants in the lawsuit—Gov. Ron DeSantis, Education Commissioner Richard Corcoran, and the Florida Department of Education—“arbitrarily prioritized reopening schools statewide in August over safety and the advice of health experts.” The temporary injunction is a victory for the Florida Education Association, the NAACP and its Florida state conference, and several teachers and parents who filed two lawsuits to block Corcoran’s July 6 order. The plaintiffs had argued that the state order violated a provision of the state constitution requiring safe schools. (from Education Week, 8/24/20)

Resources from our 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 on the PASA website.

**On the PASA Calendar…**

Sept. 7.......PASA office closed  
Sept.10.......Board of Governors meeting  
Sept. 12......Superintendent Letter Exam Test Prep Session (Shippensburg)  
Sept. 15......Professional Development Committee meeting  
Sept. 16......PASA Webinar: Combating Hatred