

CORONAVIRUS UPDATE...SCHOOL REOPENING

Determinations about Instructional Models

The Departments of Health and Education on August 9 released recommendations to Pre-K to 12 schools to use when making decisions related to the instructional models used during the 2020-21 school year.

The recommendations contained in [Guidance and Resources for Pre-K to 12 Schools](#) rely on two standard public health metrics: **incidence rate** and the **percent positivity** of diagnostic testing. Those metrics are available for every county in Pennsylvania on the [COVID-19 Early Warning Monitoring System Dashboard](#).

The PDE also released an [FAQ](#) related to the guidance.

According to the PDE website, additional guidance to assist school leaders when a case of COVID-19 is identified at a school is forthcoming.

Questions about School Athletics

To sport or not to sport – that is the question.

Gov. Tom Wolf’s announcement on August 6 that the PDE and Department of Health are commending that preK-12 school and recreational your sports be postponed until at least January 1 left school districts surprised and the PIAA uncertain about whether high school competition will move forward this fall.

In late July the PIAA had released [guidance](#) on how PIAA member schools could consider approaching the “return to competition” for high school athletics, drawing on the expertise of the National Federation of State High School Associations, the PDE, the DOH and the PIAA Sports Medicine Advisory Committee.

Following the announcement, the PIAA board announced that mandatory fall sports activities will be paused until the PIAA Board reconvenes on August 21.

“PIAA is asking the Governor, along with the Departments of Health and Education, to partner with us and work collaboratively to further discuss fall sports. We are also seeking insight and discussion from the Pennsylvania General Assembly.”

Suspending Immunization Requirements

The PA Department of Health recently announced that, in response to the impact of the COVID-19 disaster emergency on the availability of immunizations before the start of the school year, it is temporarily suspend-

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SECRETARY RIVERA TO LEAVE POST

Secretary of Education Pedro Rivera has announced that, after the start of the school year, he will be transitioning from his role as PDE secretary to the president of Thaddeus Stevens College of Technology in Lancaster.

Rivera, who has served as education secretary since the start of the Wolf Administration, previously served as superintendent of the Lancaster School District.

“I am extremely proud of all that we have accomplished together as an education community,” he said in the announcement. “Even sometimes when the odds seemed impossible and conditions insurmountable, together we focused on creating an



environment conducive to serving our learners through innovation, passion and partnership.”

Rivera was known for traveling throughout the commonwealth to visit schools and students and to underscore the importance of a partnership between state government and local school leaders. Always open to dialogue with

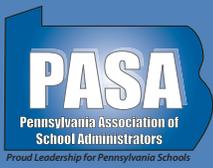
school leaders and with PASA, he regularly accepted invitations to present department updates during meetings of the PASA Board of Governors.

In his letter to colleagues, Rivera stressed the positive relationship with

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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**



**COURAGE IN
UNCERTAIN TIMES**

On August 20, 1940, United Kingdom Prime Minister Winston Churchill, in a speech to House of Commons, stated, "Never in the course of human conflict has so much been owed by so many to so few."

Churchill was speaking about the heroic performance of the Royal Air Force (RAF) and the Battle of Britain. Despite overwhelming odds, the RAF held their own in the air battles with Germany over England and prevented a large scale invasion of the country. It was a time of great uncertainty for the entire world, as no one really knew what would happen next or who would ultimately triumph. The courage to press forward amidst a backdrop of uncertainty bolstered the will of the small island nation, and they held on to ultimately win the war with the United States and the Allies.

Although public school leaders are not enduring a war that will determine the fate of the world, we are facing a serious global pandemic that has the same trademark of global uncertainty. While our medical professionals race to find a vaccine for COVID-19, public schools find themselves in a struggle with an issue that has not been encountered in over 100 years: How do we open schools in the middle of a global pandemic?

Frustration among school officials has never been greater. Anxiety of school stakeholders, from students to staff to parents, continues to grow as we get closer to opening. Information critical to decision-making is fluid at best, and often too vague to be of value. Many of our schools lack the resources, facilities and personnel to put suggested protocols in place for students and staff. Cyber charter school enrollments are exploding are syphoning much needed revenue from districts. The clock is running out and decisions must be made. The tension is palpable.

Guidance, best practices, suggestions and ideas have been provided by state and national agencies. The advice has been appreciated but lacking in detail. Answers to specific public health questions that need to be answered at an operational level for schools are not forthcoming. Decisions affecting the health and safety of students and staff will fall squarely on the shoulders of our school officials, which is difficult to comprehend. This responsibility has been thrust upon school leaders, and they will have to carry the burden of these decisions.

Superintendents will make final recommendations to their school boards within the next few weeks regarding how schools will open this fall. No matter what educational model is recommended, it will be an RAF moment, as much will be expected of our school leaders by many school stakeholders even though the odds of success are less than optimal. There are no good options for education delivery models this fall. Each option has serious drawbacks and risks. Many people will disagree with whatever option is selected to start the year. The longer it takes to find a vaccine, the more the tension will grow in our communities.

It will take tremendous courage, fortitude and resolve for administrators to lead their districts through the excruciating challenges ahead. All school leaders should remember that, throughout history, men and women have taken on extraordinary challenges against great odds armed with nothing but their own determination to succeed. If the coming school year is public education's version of the Battle of Britain, I'll take my chances with our public school leaders to come through against all odds for the students and staff we all serve.

You have my heartfelt gratitude and unyielding support for all you are doing.
Courage!



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 State Budget News

Early Intervention, CT Funding: Gov. Wolf announced last month that he is dedicating approximately \$3 million of the commonwealth's federal COVID-19 aid and \$10.5 million of that aid to pre-school/early intervention programs and career-technical centers. Funds will be used for additional staff and supplies to address health and safety concerns.

Legislative News

Session Schedule: Both the House and Senate remain in recess and are not scheduled to return to session until September. Legislative committees have been busy over the past month holding public hearings on return-to-school and other COVID-related issues.

Signed into Law: Last month Gov. Wolf signed into law legislation that would provide information to student athletes and families concerning sudden cardiac arrest (Act 73), legislation giving school districts the option to extend the property tax discount period through June 30, 2021 (Act 75) and legislation clarifying parental authority about decisions regarding a child's mental health treatment (Act 65).

State News

State Mitigation Order: Gov. Wolf last month signed new orders for targeted mitigation efforts in response to a rise in COVID cases, primarily in southwest Pennsylvania but also across the state. The order, which took effect on July 16, place restrictions on indoor gatherings and renews a requirement for wearing masks in public places and maintaining social distancing.

Safe2Say Report: According to the Office of the Attorney General, reports of suicidal or self-harming thoughts made to the Safe2Say reporting system increased after classrooms were shut down in March. Between March 13 and the end of June, tips related to suicide or self-harm jumped to 37% of all reports.

Chapter 49 Regulations: Last month the State Board of Education approved revisions to current Chapter 49 regulations concerning certification. The proposal makes numerous changes to Chapter 49 by adding new language and updating existing language to match practice, policy or statute or to provide clarity. A significant change is that Special Education Certification would return to a PreK-12 certificate. The proposal will now go through the regulatory review process.

National News

Additional Federal Relief: Talks between the U.S. House, U.S. Senate and the White House concerning additional federal aid to states and individuals broke down this month. The House earlier had passed legislation that would have provided nearly \$60 billion to K-12 school districts to help them address the coronavirus pandemic and extend the \$600 weekly emergency benefit to the unemployed. A Senate bill would provide significantly less to states and schools and reduce the monthly UC benefit to \$200. Pres. Trump is now attempting to use an executive order to provide relief in lieu of congressional action, although whether that is constitutional remains to be determined.

CARES Act Rule: The deadline for submitting comments on the USDE's proposed rule on equitable services and funding distribution has closed. AASA, PASA, and school leaders across the nation weighed in on the proposal to condemn the department's interpretation of the CARES Act, an interpretation that would distribute funds to public and private schools based on total student count rather than poverty, as is required under Title I and as was the intent of the CARES Act.

U.S. Census: The Trump Administration recently announced it will end the 2020 census count four weeks early, leaving census officials less than six weeks to count the nation's hardest-to-reach residents. Census counts impact reapportionment and federal funding for states and schools.

COMING UP

As the commonwealth's financial situation continues to unfold and pandemic issues remain politicized, lawmakers are preparing for the November election and, following that election, developing a state budget for the remainder of 2020-21 (December through June). Still unknown is what additional federal aid will be coming for the state and for schools – and how school reopening this fall will impact communities and, perhaps, the election. Stay tuned for the latest information by following us on **Twitter @PASASupts**.

RIVERA

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leaders in the field. "It saddens me that I will not be able to continue visiting you, your schools, your institutions and your communities across the Commonwealth," he said. "Engaging with students and practitioners was the absolute best part of the job. Please know that our interactions, big and small, have been a humbling reminder of the talent and commitment that exists here in Pennsylvania."

Noting that the pandemic "underscored the inequities that exist across our communities," Rivera said he looks forward to again becoming "a leader in the field and an educational stakeholder to join in the fight for equity, access and opportunity."

"Secretary Rivera has been an exemplary educational leader, and we will miss his presence at the Department," said PASA Executive Director Dr. Mark DiRocco. "His commitment to all of Pennsylvania's students has been at the forefront of his tireless work with educators and school stakeholders throughout the state. We wish him well as he embarks on a new leadership role at Thaddeus Stevens College."

CORONAVIRUS UPDATE

continued from page 1

ing immunization requirements for school entry and age groups for a two-month period after the beginning of the school year.

Student Assessments in 2020-21

Although some had speculated if the federal government would waive some federally mandated assessment requirements in the 2020-21 school year due to disruptions last spring and uncertainties with the start of school, officials with the U.S. Department of Education have indicated they are not inclined to offer such waivers. During a video call with reporters on July 24, Jim Blew, the assistant secretary for planning, evaluation, and policy analysis, said, "Accountability aside, we need to know where students are so we can address their needs."

Department of Health Guidance

In late July the PA Department of Health posted a new [FAQ](#) with answers to several questions regarding the Governor's recent [Targeted Mitigation Order](#) as it relates to schools. While addressing issues concerning businesses and events, the FAQ also addresses issues concerning school events, athletics, cafeterias, transportation, public meetings and other indoor events.

Virtual Connections for Students

According to a new [analysis](#), 16.9 million children under the age of 18 lack access to high-speed internet at home, and one in three Black, Latino and native American households lack such access, a deficit that has put many children even further behind during the pandemic.

PASA and AASA continue to advocate for expanded federal and state investment in broadband expansion to allow children in both rural and urban areas to have better access to virtual learning.

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 planning and management as schools prepare to reopen. 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 in planning for 2020-21, please let us know at pasa@pasa-net.org.

Daily Briefings

Although PASA no longer holds weekly web briefings on issues related to the pandemic, we will be providing special briefings as needed when issues arise or new guidance is issued to provide chief school administrators with the information they need.

SAMPLE SCRIPTS FOR THE FIRST DAY OF SCHOOL from the National Center for School Crisis and Bereavement (NCSCB)

This information was sent to PASA by David J Schonfeld, MD, FAAP; Director, NCSCB, Children's Hospital Los Angeles. Dr. Schonfeld had been scheduled to be one of the Keynote Speakers at our 2020 Leadership Forum that was canceled due to the pandemic. Your utilization of these resources will contribute to a positive start to your school year!

You are developing the playbook for this unprecedented time, and within it must be the acknowledgement and support of grieving and traumatized students.

Even from a distance, school professionals have a critical role in supporting their students during times of personal and family crisis and in response to school and community crisis events. Students may not be comfortable talking about their concerns, but this time in their lives will always be remembered. They will need the support of you and your professional staff.

To this end, the NCSCB provides sample scripts for classroom educators to share with students on the first day of school for the purpose of acknowledging and supporting their feelings about the pandemic. The scripts are posted on the NCSCB Covid-19 pandemic resources [web page](#). Four different options are included: middle/high school with in-person classes, middle/high school with remote classes, elementary school with in-person classes, and elementary school with remote classes.

They have also posted updated presentations and resources for school mental health professionals, educators, parents and other school staff on supporting students and staff with crisis and loss during the pandemic.



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!

A COVID-19 GUIDE: BACK-TO-SCHOOL TOOLS FOR HEALTH AND SAFETY

Information provided by SiteLogIQ, a PASA Diamond Sponsor

The unprecedented challenges presented by the COVID-19 pandemic will require a fundamental rethinking of building environments to ensure the health and safety of facility occupants. This includes the necessity for emergency expenditures, many of which are eligible for reimbursement assistance under Category B of FEMA's Public Assistance Program (with a 75% federal cost share).

To address the challenges posed by the pandemic, consider implementing one or more of these tools for school health and safety.

Pathogen Mitigation Solutions

While there is no "one-size-fits-all" solution to mitigating the transfer of pathogens, a multi-tiered approach to mitigating pathogens can address short-term and long-term sanitization goals. In the short term, Ultra-Low Volume (ULV) fogging, electrostatic fogging, and in-space portable Ultraviolet Germicidal Irradiation (UVGI) quickly treat for contaminants in large areas.

Buildings have natural high-traffic areas, and as a result, high-touch surfaces. Viruses like SARS, MERS, and COVID-19 can live up to 72 hours on stainless steel and plastic and 96 hours on glass. Implementing touchless sensor technology in restrooms, cafeterias, lobbies, and other high-traffic areas reduces the need to touch surfaces where pathogens live. Anti-microbial products such as copper alloy and biocidal hard surfaces also effectively mitigate the effect of exposure.

Engineered Infection Protection

Every individual that enters your doors brings a risk of possible virus exposure. Engineered Infection Protection (EIP) can add layers of protection to your mitigation efforts. Consider implementing one or more of these EIP solutions to assess the health of your occupants and protect them against infection:

* **Thermal Scanning:** Thermal screening solutions scan foot traffic and assess temperatures, allowing you to identify anyone who may unknowingly be sick. Non-contact technology for both high-traffic areas and on an individual level detects elevated temperatures, enabling rapid screening. The units can be calibrated to current Centers for Disease Control protocol and your specific guidelines for entry into your facility.

* **Ionization:** Ionization solutions are easily installed in existing HVAC units and are a cost-effective means to address indoor air quality. Bipolar ionization systems use steady-state ionization to kill mold, bacteria, and viruses, as well as eliminate odors, reduce airborne particles, and increase filtration effectiveness. The device circulates through an HVAC system on a continuous cycle, increasing its virus killing efficiency.

* **Ultraviolet Germicidal Irradiation (UVGI):** UVGI has been used successfully for many years. UV lights remove infectious microorganisms by inactivating them prior to air filtration. Duct-mounted UV systems do not burden an existing ventilation system and are recommended for rooms with an elevated risk of infection from supplied air. In-space UVGI systems use occupancy sensors and magnetic door contacts to prevent occupant exposure.

* **Filtration:** Most HVAC systems use filters with a Minimum Efficiency Reporting Value (MERV) of 8. To provide perspective,

hospital operating rooms use MERV 13 filters. MERV 8 filters can be combined with other technologies to effectively kill most airborne pathogens, including COVID-19. For example, ionization and ultraviolet technologies are cost-effective and proven to eradicate COVID-19 with over 95% efficacy.

Risk Assessment Planning (RASP)

What is a risk assessment plan? It is a flexible and scalable plan for mitigating risk and implementing proper protective measures. RASP captures stakeholder input, an analysis of local health and safety orders, and the cost of meeting both sets of expectations, and becomes a tool for preparedness and contingency planning.

It takes structure to effectively manage the challenges of disorder and confusion that the pandemic has introduced. It also takes a team of experts to navigate the wave of concerns, priorities, technologies, and risks associated with your response to the pandemic.

Here is where SiteLogIQ can help. Each of the solutions offered in this guide require professionals in design and engineering, procurement and construction management, master facility planning, and scheduling. These solutions are our core business offerings, and there are hundreds of us across the state to help with your plans. SiteLogIQ is your cavalry in finding a solution. [Contact us](#) today!

Although PASA does not promote or endorse any product or service offered by our sponsors, we are pleased to share information that may be helpful to school leaders.

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](http://www.pasa-net.org/legalservices)**
to read more about it.



ADVOCACY & COMMUNICATIONS UPDATE...

Advocacy and Information

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

- Dr. Mark DiRocco participated in virtual meetings with AASA and representatives from other state administrator associations to discuss return-to-school planning and concerns nationwide.
- Dr. Shane Hotchkiss (Bermudian Springs), chairman of the PASA Legislative Committee, testified before the House Education Committee on August 5 concerning school reopening.
- Dr. DiRocco joined AASA and executives from all 50 state superintendent associations to send a [joint letter](#) to the USDE expressing opposition to its interpretation of CARES Act funding distribution.
- Dr. DiRocco and I.U. representatives to the PASA Board of Governors participated in a virtual meeting with officials from the PDE, DOH and the Governor's Office concerning questions related to return-to-school guidance.
- Dr. DiRocco provided four special virtual briefings for school superintendents and executive directors focused on policy and guidance updates and sent post-briefing documents and links.
- PASA continued to advocate with the Governor's Office and legislative leaders for actions to address district liability issues involving return-to-school and the urgent need for charter school reform.
- Dr. DiRocco distributed to media an [op-ed](#) calling for policy-makers to support the work of school administrators in planning for a return-to-school and had numerous interviews with both TV and radio stations on return-to-school issues.

PASA will continue providing information and advocacy for and on behalf of public school administrators both during this challenging time and moving forward.

PASA Points

The latest edition of *PASA Points*, PASA's monthly two-page, issue-focused newsletter sent to members of the General Assembly, focuses on "The Evolving Challenges of Reopening Schools." [Click here](#) to see the July issue and past issues.

Reminder: Communicate Your Story

PASA urges school leaders to continue communicating with your parents, community and legislators concerning your plans for school opening and all that you and your district staff have been doing to retool education, ensure students have access to meals, and provide instruction and support for students during school closures. It is important that both the general public and state policymakers knows that, despite an unprecedented and unexpected course change in school operations for which there is no roadmap, your commitment to students is continuing into the 2020-21 school year.

Utilize [communication recommendations and tools](#) provided by AASA, [web resources](#) provided by the PA School Public Relations Association (PenSPRA), and [web resources](#) from the National School Public Relations Association (NSPRA).

Advocacy Tools

The PASA website provides you with resources for your own advocacy. Check it out: <https://www.pasa-net.org/advocacy>.

To learn more about the PA Schools Work Campaign, [click here](#).

PASA Membership Year Begins October 1

HAVE YOU RENEWED YOUR PASA MEMBERSHIP FOR 2020-21?

Stay connected to PASA and your peers across the commonwealth in 2020-21 as we work together to navigate through uncharted waters and an upcoming school year that will be anything but "normal."

PASA is working in Harrisburg and throughout the Commonwealth – and AASA is working for you in Washington D.C. – to influence policy, build support for public education, and provide school administrators with both the information and professional development they need, particularly now.



The virtual briefings PASA has provided to commissioned officers over the past three months are just one example of how your professional association seeks to support you with the vital information you need to manage your district, whether in a crisis or during any school year. Legal advice and assistance, weekly updates, and professional learning programs that meet your needs are all an essential component of PASA's mission: supporting school district leaders.

Membership in both PASA, your professional state organization, and in AASA, the only national organization representing the interests of school district superintendents, is vital for you personally, for the profession and for public education. And never has it been more important – and valuable – for school leaders to be part of their professional associations.

Recognizing that this is a unique time in Pennsylvania, the PASA Board of Governors has frozen membership dues in all categories for 2020-21. This ensures you will receive the same services and support next year at no additional cost.

See the PASA website at <https://www.pasa-net.org/join> for renewal information, including which membership option fits your current position. Membership questions should be directed to Jolene Zelinski at jolenez@pasa-net.org.

Renew your membership for 2020-21 – and **stay connected to YOUR professional associations!**

The PASA membership year runs from October 1 through September 30.

LEADERSHIP

BY DR. JEFFREY A. FULLER, SUPERINTENDENT OF THE FREEDOM AREA SD



Please join me in congratulating our Secretary of Education Pedro Rivera on his appointment to be the next president of Thaddeus Stevens College of Technology in Lancaster.

Secretary Rivera has served the students of Pennsylvania since being appointed by Governor Wolf in 2015.

A state educational system is rarely privileged to be led by the same individual for that long, especially a person who rose from the ranks as a teacher, principal and superintendent.

Throughout his tenure, Secretary Rivera has never forgotten his roots in K-12 public education - or his involvement in PASA. He and his leadership team have worked hard to create a better system of education in Pennsylvania. While we haven't always agreed with every decision or direction, we could always count on Mr. Rivera and his team to be accessible, to listen, and to explain.

Pennsylvania schools and their students are blessed to have had Pedro Rivera's leadership. Our loss is most certainly Thaddeus Stevens' gain.

Congratulations, Mr. Rivera. You will be missed.

In other news...

A Crisis of Confidence

I guess it is soul-baring time.

I realized late last night, as I was lying in bed pretending to sleep, that I am suffering from a crisis of confidence. Those of you who know me well know that a lack of confidence isn't necessarily the first thing that comes to mind about me. However, that is precisely what I am experiencing this summer while trying to make decisions about how to open schools, whether or not to play sports, how best to keep our students and staff safe.

With so much information coming at us on a daily basis, it is almost too much to read. It also has made it extremely difficult to make final decisions because every time we think we have something settled, new information comes out that forces a change. As a result, we end up with a case of "paralysis by analysis."

This feeling has extended itself to several other areas of my life as well - for instance, this article. I have written several different versions of my summer article over the last two months. Each was wildly different from the other. I didn't believe the words in any of them, which is why you didn't see an article from me last month. If I couldn't convince myself, I certainly wasn't going to put it out there for others to read. But, I believe in this - if I am feeling this crisis of confidence, I can't possibly be alone.

So, let me share some words of encouragement. Several times over the last year, I have shared the thoughts of Pastor Andy Stanley. While I have struggled to put the concepts from last week's message into practice, they are appropriate to the crisis that we are currently facing and leadership that we are trying to provide. The bottom line is this, "When you can't be certain, be clear. Clarity is leadership, even if you don't know what's coming next."

What does that look like for us as school superintendents?

We still really have no idea what is in front of us for the coming year. Some districts have elected to open for all students fully, some have chosen to open in with a hybrid model, and some have selected an entirely virtual opening. We all know that whatever decision we make will change, likely several times, once the school year begins. We understand that the students that are returning to our classrooms will not have the same learning experience that they and their parents desire, especially with social distancing and mask requirements in place. Still, we also know that we all want to have kids in school.

A simple but appropriate analogy that Stanley used was the idea of driving your car down a dark road at night. The only way to see what is in front of you is to keep moving forward. While you are doing that, be honest and hopeful, realistic and reassuring, candid and clear. Seek wise counsel. Make a decision and own it. But above all else, keep moving forward. It is the only way to see what is coming next, and it is the only way through what is coming next.

Our students, staff and communities are looking to us for leadership. I hope I can live these words myself.

Be well, my friends.

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!





BY BARBARA WALVORT JEWETT, ASSISTANT TO THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

It's been a long time – a VERY long time – since my college years. I don't remember all the details, but some events stand out.

I recall being a pretty confident junior acing numerous literature and composition classes, along with music history and various history courses. It was a good year for my GPA. But, as I was also immersed in

college life, particularly theater, I sometimes procrastinated a bit much. One such time involved the book *Gulliver's Travels* by Jonathan Swift.

The assignment? Write a paper (minimum 20 pages) analyzing a novel of your choice from 17th and 18th English literature in light of the societal, economic and cultural shifts of the time.

The complication? We got the assignment at the beginning of the year but, on the day before the paper was due, I hadn't yet chosen a book.

Oops.

I rushed to the library in the early afternoon, frantically searching for a book – any book – that fit the criteria and grabbed the first one I saw: *Gulliver's Travels*.

I had never read it. So, beginning at 3 p.m. that afternoon, I was speed-reading through Swift, furiously taking notes about Gulliver's encounters with Lilliputians, the giants of Brobdingnag, Laputians, Houyhnhnms and Yahoos. (Yes, that word is in the book.)

As "satire" is my middle name, I found the book fun to read, even though my enjoyment was dulled by the need to analyze the satire and social commentary Swift intended. By the time I was done (after taking a break for dinner), I had probably 20 pages of notes.

I will spare you the details, but I literally was up all night with the novel, my English history textbook, my notes and numerous bottles of Coke, planning, organizing and finally typing out my paper, literally composing it as I went. No first hand-written draft, just an outline.

Fortunately for me, my roommate had similarly put off a major musical theory paper, so we kept each other company as the long March night in Iowa settled in. Comrades in arms. Unfortunately for me, as it was 1973, my typewriter was a manual, there was no copy/paste (obviously), and there was no room for mistakes. You had to know what you were going to say and where you were going with it before you even started or it was going to be a long, bumpy night.

But I did it. I was exhausted, but my 36-page paper was done. (OK. I got carried away.) It was off to breakfast, then to my 7:30 a.m. class (killer), where I turned in my paper.

Oh, did I mention I also had a music history test that day? I fit in studying for that between moments of literary inspiration concerning Swift's glass-is-mostly-empty perspective on life and humanity and politics. And after I finished the test at 11 a.m., I grabbed a quick lunch and

SUCCESS

headed to my work-study job for a three-hour stretch of typing and paper sorting, followed by an hour in the student newspaper office to meet another deadline, dinner and – crashing.

Oh, the things we do when we are young and rather foolish.

So what does this have to do with anything other than highlighting an exhausting and totally preventable event during my college experience?

Only this: Sometimes it is during the whirling dervishes of life, when we are exhausted and continuously challenged, when that long, cold Iowa night seems to never end but simultaneously goes too fast, when the deadlines we have to meet and the goals we have to reach feel like an eternity away but need to be met yesterday – when we think we've reached the limit, that is when we actually succeed beyond where we thought we could.

For me, the goal was a good grade and maintaining my GPA. For you, it's teaching and learning and student safety and success, under any circumstance – a much more important goal. And unlike my experience, this was not a challenge of your own making.

But you will succeed in that goal. I have no doubt about it. There will be a lot of criticism, complaints and carrying-on, but, as Brian Toth writes in his column this month, you'll find a new way to do things, a new way to shape education, you will stay focused, and you'll find success, making something great out of confusion.

Swift wrote, "And he gave it for his opinion, that whoever could make two ears of corn, or two blades of grass, to grow upon a spot of ground where only one grew before, would deserve better of mankind, and do more essential service to his country, than the whole race of politicians put together."

Amen.

COMMUNICATIONS TIP OF THE MONTH

"As a servant leader in the coming months, ask the adults in your community questions that are focused on balance, wellness and self-care. Have you exercised today? Are you taking time for yourself? Are you eating and sleeping well? Have you talked to a loved one today? If not, why not? By asking these questions, you are modeling the behavior you want the adults in your community to show the young people. At the same time, model for others the behavior that promotes self-care. Exercise. Take breaks. Stay in touch with loved ones. Lead your district with a sense of hope balanced with a dose of reality. Never has that kind of leadership been more important than right now." – Kristi Wilson, AASA President and superintendent of the Buckeye Elementary School District (Arizona), from "Embracing Hope and Self-Care," as published in the August issue of *School Administrator*, AASA's monthly publication. This month's issue describes the opportunities to transform schools amid much uncertainty and volatility and also takes a full look at how school accreditation has changed markedly over time.



10 TIPS FOR MANAGING YOUR OWN WELL-BEING WHILE MANAGING THIS CHASM OF UNCERTAINTY

BY CONNIE KINDLER, CONSULTANT FOR PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT



The 2020-21 school year presents unprecedented challenges for superintendents and others who are ultimately responsible for the well-being and education of students. Usually you have a portfolio of tools, like strategic plans and metrics, to manage change. Navigating the politics and emotions associated with change is less structured and, if left unattended, causes fear and anxiety.

While I do not have answers to assure you that all will go well, I can help to remind you of a few simple tips.

1. Referencing Simon Sinek's Golden Circle, start with your "why." Staying true to your own values and beliefs will help to guide your "what" and "how." When you know your "why" and are able to communicate it, you will be better able to lead through this time of uncertainty.

2. You cannot manage this situation alone. Establish a crisis team to manage changing circumstances and immediate needs in terms of instruction, wellness, communications, etc. Identify team members by talents and skills, in addition to the roles that are closest to the decisions. Integrate community experts, as needed.
3. Schedule "huddles" with your crisis team. Start these short daily meetings prior to the start of the school year to address each next 24 hours. Assure all team members understand the priorities of the day. As stages of the the pandemic stabilize, you can reduce the frequency of the meetings.
4. With your team, plan for Day 1, Week 1, 30 days, 60, 90, etc., but continue to review various scenarios that could require rapid implementation.
5. Realize that no perfect answer exists, and forgive yourself when you make a mistake. Admit it, quickly pivot, and, based upon the best data available, adjust the plan.
6. Overcome "time poverty." Plan your day intentionally, taking 15 minutes at the beginning and end of the day to plan. Identify the results you want to achieve and assess whether or not you met your objectives. Do not allow yourself to become governed by everyone else's priorities. Follow the carpenter's rule: "Measure twice, and cut once." Keep moving.
7. Assure clear communications. Keep them simple and encouraging. Run important messages by others to be sure they are understandable.
8. Lift someone else. Share gratitude and care. Enjoy the satisfaction that goes with making someone's day.
9. Referencing Jim Collins' *Good to Great*, remember that Level 5 Executive Leadership is about the paradoxical combination of being humble, while being ambitious for the cause and its purpose.
10. As soon as you are able, get out of the weeds and enjoy the growing flowers that lie ahead via the opportunities for innovation and dynamic education models you are creating.

Remember: "To admit uncertainty is to admit to weakness, to powerlessness, and to believe in yourself despite both. It is a frailty, but in this frailty there is strength: the conviction to live in your own mind, and not in someone else's." (Tara Westover, *Educated: A Memoir*)

COMING UP...

Fall Webinar Series: "Cultivating a Culture of Social Justice and Equity"

Noon to 1:00 p.m.

This series of webinars will focus on enhancing school leaders' capacity for the creation of fair and just environments in which all learners experience equity and excellence. Participants will explore leadership strategies to combat biases and hatred through responsive practices that encompass, recognize and value the experiences and cultures of all learners.

September 16: Combating Hatred: Transformational Educators Striving for Social Justice

October 21: Problem Child: Leading Students Living in Poverty Toward Infinite Possibilities of Success

November 18: Implicit Bias in Schools

December 16: Culturally Relevant Leadership for Equitable Schools

Series Fee: No fee for PASA members (pre-registration required); \$120 for nonmembers

"Building Culture from the Inside Out"

Monday, September 28: 10:00 – 11:30 a.m.

Presenter: JC Pohl, co-founder of TEEN TRUTH

The Coronavirus pandemic has made it challenging, but building a strong school culture should still be the first priority of every school leader. It is proven to decrease SEL issues, enhance academic performance, and increase student engagement. Whether you are working in a traditional, hybrid, or remote learning model, this interactive workshop reveals a framework for giving students a voice and empowering them to take ownership of their school culture.

Fee: \$49 for PASA and PA Principals Assn. members; \$59 for nonmembers

See the [PASA website](#) for more information.





WE WILL LEAD THE WORK

BY LYNN FUINI-HETTEN, CAUCUS PRESIDENT AND ASSOCIATE SUPERINTENDENT, SALISBURY TOWNSHIP



This week I was working with one of our principals on the many operational challenges of our district's hybrid learning plan. How many students can fit per cafeteria table if they are seated six feet apart from each other? How many cafeteria tables do we have? Ugh, it looks like we need to order more cafeteria tables. Where will we find the funding for additional tables?

Like many other districts, spacing in the cafeteria is just one of the many challenges our building leaders are navigating as they work to operationalize this plan. It feels like many of these challenges result in more challenges and additional expenses. At the end of the conversation, I thanked him for his work and mentioned how frustrating this work can be. He replied, "This isn't what we signed up for."

Over the last month, we have spent significant time planning and solving operational challenges. How many students can we have in the classroom with the desks 6 feet apart? How will our teachers provide instruction to face-to-face learners and support for virtual learners at the same time? Will we livestream instruction? Did we order all the PPE? What does the latest guidance require? More guidance arrives, and decisions need to be re-evaluated again. And again.

Largely, our conversations aren't as focused on teaching and learning. These operational challenges need to be solved, and these questions need to be answered for us, our staff and our community members. We have spent hours on calls with partners to better understand their guidance and recommendations. We have spent hours developing FAQs and responding to questions. We haven't spent the summer thinking about realizing our learning beliefs and/or the district's "Profile of a Graduate." This has been a different kind of summer. More difficult. More stressful. Less rewarding.

This job really feels thankless right now. Regardless of our options, none of them is ideal. None of the options truly represents what we want teaching and learning to look like in Salisbury Township School District. I have faith that regardless of what plan we implement, our teachers, staff members and leaders will work diligently to be sure our learners will have the best experience possible.

Like all of us as parents, our families want their kids to really enjoy their schooling experience. They want them to keep learning, engage with other students, become curious about more topics, and much more! And for most of our families, blended learning (or even fully remote) is not what everyone signed up for.

Parents/guardians are on different sides of the fence on the issue of returning to school. We have worked

diligently to create a health and safety plan to best protect our staff and our learners, but will it work? We don't know. We have

staff members who are concerned about their health and/or the health of their family members. Some staff members may choose not to return to their classrooms this year. We have many families who have decided their students will attend school online. We appreciate that our families are willing to try our cyber program. But, even with the implementation of our own cyber program, this will be another significant unbudgeted expense.

I have received many emails from parents with questions and concerns. Although at times, teachers and leaders have been criticized on social media, there have been bright spots along the way. I am so appreciative of the few parents who have taken the time to share positive thoughts, although the criticism is much more prevalent.

As leaders, we need to persevere. This is what we signed up for. Others are looking to us to stay positive and lead the way. Jon Gordon shared on a Facebook post, "If they praise you, show up and do the work.... If they criticize you, show up and do the work. If no one even notices you, just show up and do the work. Just keep showing up, doing the work, and leading the work."

That is what we will do in public education. We see the value of providing these opportunities for every learner every day. We will show up. We will do the work. We will lead the work.

SAVE THE DATE

2021 Women's Caucus Conference

May 16 - 18
Hershey

2021 Southeast Region Caucus Dinner

November 10



Part 1: "Strategic & Cultural Leadership"
September 22-23
(PIL/Act 45 approved for 25 hours)

New superintendents will learn strategies for developing and enacting a mission, vision and core values for the academic success and well-being of all students. Facilitated discussions led by experienced school leaders will focus on prioritizing safety, developing a positive relationship with the school board, creating an organizational structure based on the district's needs and priorities, developing an appropriate superintendent evaluation process, and assuring equitable opportunities for all students.

Part 2: *Systems Leadership* (Nov. 16-17)

Part 3: *Professional & Community Leadership* (Jan. 21-22)



October 14-15

A **virtual** conference, with eight concurrent session blocks, virtual exhibits, online student performances

and keynote presentations. **Registration is open!**

Featured Presenters:

Baruti Kafele – "Diversity, Race and Equity: Considering All of the Learners"

Dr. John Hodge – "Helping Students to Bounce Back: Effective Strategies in Traditional and Virtual Learning Environments"

<https://www.paschoolladers.org>

PASA Summit "Bridging SEL Research and the Applied Implementation of SEL in Schools"

for Assistant Superintendents & Supervisors

November 6 - 9:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m.

Presenter: **Carol Paxton, Ph.D.**, Director of the Center for the Promotion of Social and Emotional Learning

(PIL/Act 45 approved for 25 hours)

Focused on the model of social and emotional learning utilized by the Collaborative for Academic, Social and Emotional Learning (CASEL) and implementation considerations that rely on the latest SEL research, the Summit will provide an overview of SEL, its importance, and basic considerations for successfully implementing and sustaining SEL in districts, schools and the community. Learn how to: increase district-wide awareness of SEL particularly during the COVID pandemic, with its emphasis on virtual learning and parent support, and during a time of racial tension; establish an SEL committee(s) within your district; create SEL action plans for implementation; develop strategies for supporting the SEL of those who are supporting staff and students (including self-care and self-efficacy); and seek SEL funding.

<https://www.pasa-net.org/2020pasasummit>

See the PASA website for program updates at

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

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: EMPOWERED SUPERINTENDENT WEBINAR SERIES, DIVERSITY IN IT

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.

EmpowerED Superintendent Webinar Series – Season 3 Launch

On Monday, September 14, 2020 at 5:00 pm Eastern Time, the EmpowerED Superintendent Webinar Series, co-hosted by CoSN, AASA and edWeb.net and sponsored by ClassLink, begins its third season.

The initial broadcast for Season 3 is titled "School Leadership 2020-2021: Unprecedented Challenges in a COVID-19 World." Guest panelists include Dr. Dan Domenech, Executive Director, AASA, Keith Krueger, CEO of CoSN and Dr. David Schuler, Superintendent, Township High School District 214, IL and Chair of the CoSN Superintendent Advisory Panel. Ann McMullan, CoSN EmpowerED Superintendent Initiative Project Director, returns as the host/moderator for the series. Free registration for the September 14 webinar is available at: <https://home.edweb.net/webinar/supers20200914/>.

FREE WEBINAR RECORDINGS

The free recording of the July 13 webinar broadcast on *Smart Education Networks by Design: The CoSN SEND Initiative* which featured a lively discussion with Dr. Mark Benigni, Superintendent, Meriden Public Schools, Dr. John Marcus, Superintendent, Stoughton Public Schools, MA and Matthew Miller, Superintendent Lakota Local Schools, OH can be accessed at <https://home.edweb.net/webinar/supers20200713/>.

The complete list of free recordings of all previously broadcast EmpowerED Superintendent webinars is also available at <https://home.edweb.net/supers/>. In addition to the free access to live and recorded webinars, the EmpowerED Superintendent webinars are now also available via podcast. Learn more at <https://home.edweb.net/podcasts/>.

SUPER POWER OF TECHNI-COLOR IN IT

If you missed this session during the CoSN 2020 Virtual Conference, you can now view the recording of this wonderfully engaging and timely panel conversation about diversity in the IT sector at this link: <https://tinyurl.com/cosn2020diversity>.

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.





MAKING A PARADIGM SHIFT

BY DR. G. BRIAN TOTH, SUPERINTENDENT OF THE ST. MARYS AREA SD

As of today, Pandemic Week 21 is almost completed. I am still alive. I still have food, water, toilet paper and internet. My car mechanic is starving because there is no travel. I have discovered a lady living in my home. She says she is my wife. Seems like a nice

person.

I have not yet gone crazy, but those of you who know me may disagree.

This article is to be about the opening of school. Obviously, the 2020-21 school year is very unique. This is an exciting time, a frustrating time, a sleepless time, and has channeled our creative energies toward new models of education. We have learned to use our modern communication skills more often. We have collaborated locally, regionally and at the state level, using technology that has been in existence but utilized only on "special" occasions. Zoom, Google Hangouts and Microsoft Teams are now more of a part of our daily lives. Needless to say, our critical thinking skills have been stretched.

I am proud to have been part of traditional public schools pivoting on a dime to virtual education.

We have a chance to make a paradigm shift in education. The historians will write about us and what we did, did not do and just stayed away from. We will not have this opportunity again. In my mind, we finally have a chance to break away from the agrarian

model of education. Will public education take on this societal issue? I hope we will, but we are up against public pressure to go back to the "good ol' days."

Many of us have promoted personalized learning, blended teaching and flipped classrooms. I have attended many conference sessions on these very topics and have also presented for PASA on personalized learning. Am I up to what I preach? I am, but the public may not be ready.

Society is one of those "weight-bearing walls" that we are up against again. Marzano says that second order change is dramatic rather than incremental. A break from the past conflicts with values and norms, is a paradigm change, requires the acquisition of new knowledge and skills, and may be resisted because only those who have a broad perspective of the school see the innovation as necessary.

This is who we are as superintendents. We have and are needed to make changes to provide the best education possible for all children.

The time to change our ways is now. We may not get this opportunity again. Think about the following quote from Chuck Schwahn: "If you study the research of the best practices of the most effective out-of-date schools, and then combine that research into a meta-analysis of the most effective practices of out-of-date schools, you will end with a convincing list of best practices of the best out-of-date schools."

Be well, my friends.

Brian is a member of the PASA Professional Development Committee.

The ADVOCATE

As we've previously highlighted on the [Leading Edge Blog](#), school leaders, nutrition directors, and advocates are beginning to sound the alarm on impending threats to districts' ability to operate the federal school meals programs this fall.

The current concerns are with the decision by U.S. Secretary of Agriculture Sonny Perdue not to extend or establish any new Family First Coronavirus Act (FFCRA) waivers/flexibilities for the 2020-21 school year (SY).

As background, the passage of the FFCRA enabled the U.S. Dept. of Agriculture (USDA) to pass flexibilities and waivers associated with the federal school meals programs. Most notably for school districts, this work resulted in USDA's (1) Unexpected School Closures, (2) Nationwide Meal Times, (3) Non-congregate Feeding, (4) Meal Pattern, (5) Parent/Guardian Meal Pick-Up, (6) Afterschool Activity, (7) Area Eligibility, (8) Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Program (FFVP) Parent Pick Up, (9) FFVP Alternate Sites, (10) Community Eligibility Provision (CEP) Data, and (11) 60-Day Reporting waivers. Additionally, the passage of the Family First Coronavirus Response Act granted USDA the authority to create the Pandemic EBT program.

A comprehensive chart of all of USDA's COVID-19 waivers is available [here](#). It includes a description and expiration date for

USDA COVID-19 SCHOOL NUTRITION WAIVERS

each of the department's previously mentioned waiver or program.

Although Sec. Perdue has elected to extend the non-congregate, meal service time, meal pattern flexibility, and parent pick-up waivers until August 31, 2021, at this stage in the game, it is clear that more extensions and flexibilities will be necessary for school districts to sustain their nutritional services next year. This is the case because many students will not be in the building five days a week or have access to school breakfast and lunch each day, and districts are still in the process of establishing what "school" will look like next year.

Therefore, to preserve the feasibility of school districts operating the federal meals programs, AASA is requesting the following policy changes from USDA.

1. Allow the Summer Food Service Program (SFSP) and Seamless Summer Option (SSO) to be used to feed children during the upcoming school year, so that students may receive meals in the event of unexpected closures.
2. Expand the non-congregate waiver to include the Summer Food Service Program (SFSP) and the Seamless Summer Option (SSO), so that schools that choose remote learning may still serve students through the federal school meals programs.

See The Advocate, page 13

PASA Flyer - August 2020

Virtual Conference in 2021

AASA announced last week that the 2021 National Conference on Education, scheduled for New Orleans, will instead be VIRTUAL and held over two days, February 18-19. The decision was informed by concerns about continuing challenges and uncertainties going into the 2020-21 school year.

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.

AASA is already hard at work ensuring a seamless transition to an online platform filled with top-notch speakers, rich content sessions and plenty of opportunity to engage with peers and leaders. Watch the [AASA website](#) for information and updates.

CARES Funding Update

AASA joined 31 other educational associations and organizations to submit a [letter](#) to the USDE in opposition to its flawed interpretation of equitable services under the CARES Act, an interpretation that diverts badly needed resources to private schools based on a student population count rather than by the Title I eligibility formula. In addition, AASA submitted its own letter to the Department

IDEA and COVID-19

AASA, the National School Boards Association, and the Association of Educational Service Agencies have released a report, [“School Leader Voices, Concerns and Challenges to Providing Meaningful IDEA-related Services During COVID-19;”](#) which sheds light on how potential and actual special education litigation can impact schools’ budgets and operations. Using data gathered by the three organizations demonstrates the need for Congress to provide flexibility to districts and educational service agencies in complying with IDEA in the upcoming school year. Specifically, the

legal understanding of FAPE during a pandemic cannot be the same thing as FAPE under normal educational circumstances

As schools prepare to reopen in the fall, there is a growing concern that school districts and educational service agencies will face unparalleled rates of litigation for their inability to meet IDEA requirements during the pandemic. AASA is stressing how critical it is that the next COVID-19 package Congress passes contains liability protection for districts and educational service agencies to protect them from incredibly high levels of special education litigation that will result from their inability to meet every requirement in IDEA.

New AASA President

During last month’s virtual Legislative Advocacy Conference, Kristi Wilson, superintendent of the Buckeye Elementary School District in Arizona, was sworn in as AASA President. Paul Imhoff, superintendent of the Upper Arlington Schools in Ohio was sworn in as AASA President-Elect.

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 at <http://www.aasa.org> for details or contact the PASA office.**

The **ADVOCATE**

Continued from page 12

3. Extend the Area Eligibility waiver for SFSP and SSO through the school year to enable districts to operate food services in communities that did not meet the 50% free and reduced-price lunch area eligibility threshold.
4. Waive the activity requirement for the Afterschool Meal and Snack Programs so districts can serve additional meals through the Child Adult Care Food Program (CACFP) and NSLP.
5. Enable districts providing meals through the SFSP or SSO to utilize the Afterschool Meal and Snack Programs.
6. Extend the FFVP flexibilities and waivers through the school year, so districts can use innovative methods to serve fresh produce (e.g., multi-day servings and fresh-produce packs) and rollover unspent FY 19-20 dollars to the 2020-21 SY.

Considering the amount of time left on the calendar before federal legislators return home for the August recess, it is likely that the nutrition-related aid in COVID-5 will not be allocated in time for the start of the school year. As such, it is imperative that USDA grant the previously mentioned policy changes for the upcoming school year.

We are facing an uphill battle on this issue because U.S. Sec. Perdue has insisted that he will not pass any additional flexibilities associated with the federal meals programs in an apparent attempt to align with the Trump administration’s push to re-open schools. Although there are legislative school nutrition champions in the House - like Nydia M. Velazquez (D-NY-7), who recently introduced [legislation](#) to extend the FFCRA waivers - it is anyone’s best guess to whether these provisions will be included in the final COVID-5 bill or when/if the next package will be signed into law.

Accordingly, we urge you to stay tuned to see how it plays out and learn how to get involved. Regardless, AASA will continue advocating for these critical waivers and flexibilities.



HOW CAN WE LEAD THROUGH CHAOS AND STRESS?

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



I'm guessing I was not the only one who took a few short vacation days this summer, barely unplugged, felt completely overwhelmed, and a little bit disgusted about the current predicament our students, staff and communities are in, all because of a health crisis we really have no control over.

These were the questions that stole sleep from us all:

- ◆ How do we open up schools?
- ◆ Can we get students 6 feet apart?
- ◆ If we open, will the disease spread?
- ◆ If we open, will we have staff for students?
- ◆ What about sports?
- ◆ How do we improve race relations?
- ◆ Should we go virtual?
- ◆ How are we going to pay for all these unforeseen expenses?

My district, like many other urban and suburban districts, has decided to start the school year virtually. Lots of other districts are going with a hybrid model. Either way, someone will be very unhappy.

And now we know that the use of digital devices will be more a part of education than ever before. This means retraining almost all our staff, keeping desks 6 feet apart, and going into the dreaded unknown, which is scary for anyone, but especially concrete-sequential thinking educators!

Other than early retirement, is there a way to get through this without becoming public enemy number one? Here are a few tips that have helped me tremendously:

Learn from Your Teams...

Back when this pandemic started, I took great solace when a board member sent me information on how schools closed and generally dealt with the Spanish Flu. Yes, they had mask compliance problems too. The press called them "mask slackers," and there were constant protests as well.

I digress.

Team members, including the school board, my fellow county superintendents, and the district staff are critical.

But this is a pandemic. The "team" got extended to parents, community members, and key business leaders. Each of these groups, that make up your incredibly intelligent team, can and will give you great advice. Take it! Which leads to the second point.

Communicate, Communicate, Communicate...

Information relieves stress, even when the information is bad. That's the theory I operated under, and I can't say I wasn't nervous about it. We did large staff meetings, town-hall style meetings, sent texts, emails and video, all in an effort to communicate. And words were not minced, no rosy platitudes.

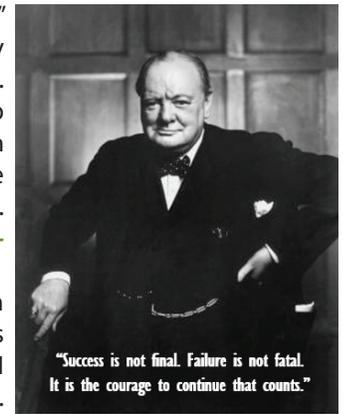
Communication has to be truthful and compassionate.

Tune Out the Noise...

Superintendents, urban district or not, are constantly tugged and pulled on by all the different factions who want a certain outcome. We will never please everyone. We will definitely not please everyone during a pandemic. These are once-in-a-generation events, but don't let that cloud your judgement or stop you from doing what is right.

Finally...

We should all remember this from Winston Churchill, who faced some of the worst odds of the century, and who had the very fate of Great Britain on his shoulders: **"Success is not final. Failure is not fatal. IT IS THE COURAGE TO CONTINUE THAT COUNTS."**



NOTEWORTHY QUOTES

About High School Sports...

"The recommendation is that we don't do any sports until January 1st.... The guidance is that we ought to avoid any congregate settings. And that means anything that brings people together is going to help that virus get us, and we ought to do everything we can to defeat that virus. So any time we get together for any reason, that's a problem because it makes it easier for that virus to spread." – Gov. Wolf during a press conference on August 6, 2020

"The Board believes that the Governor's strong recommendation to delay sports to January 1, 2021 has a potential negative impact on the students' physical, social, emotional and mental health." – from a PIAA statement in response to the governor's recommendation

“NOTEWORTHY QUOTES”

PASA Voices...

“Unfortunately, there are no exact or concrete steps that are being provided by the state or federal government as to exactly how to do these things, so many of the decisions, if not most of the decisions, have to be made at a local level by the local administrative team and school board. And so, therefore, there is a lot of concern and anxiety that, if we make the wrong decision, here, if we put process in place and someone gets sick, who is going to be responsible for that? Where is the liability going to fall?” – Dr. Mark DiRocco, PASA Executive Director, from the PLS Reporter, 7/24/20

“The latest parent survey data in West Chester Area School District asked if parents preferred hybrid, cyber, or full in-person education this fall. More than 8,000 parents completed the survey. 40% want hybrid, 40% want in-person for all students, and 20% want cyber. No matter what our board chooses, at least 60% of the people won't be happy.” – Dr. Jim Scanlon, district superintendent during testimony before the Senate Republican Policy Committee on July 28

“While school leaders appreciate the efforts of the CDC, PDE, DOH and other agencies to provide support and guidance, this guidance has often been conflicting or left to localities to interpret the true meaning. This has left local schools in the unenviable task of making public health policy decisions – which is clearly not our wheelhouse.” – Dr. John Sanville, superintendent of the Unionville-Chadds Ford SD, during the July 28 hearing

“Because an internet connection and electronic device to use the internet has replaced the textbook as a necessary resource for the education of every child in the Commonwealth, whether during a pandemic or a normal school year, PASA implores the General Assembly and the Governor to ensure that every school-aged child has internet capability in their home and an electronic device to learn through online means. We understand this may incur a significant cost, but we know that students who did not have internet access during the statewide shutdown had to incur significant loss of academic instruction. We can't allow that tragedy to be repeated.” – Dr. Shane Hotchkiss, superintendent of the Bermudian Springs SD and chairman of the PASA Legislative Committee, during testimony before the House Education Committee on August 5

“While the state has emphasized a need for local decision-making, school leaders have questioned time and again why decisions about public health have been placed in the hands of educators.... We must do better. We must stand behind our public schools and create better supports. If school re-openings are less than ideal, schools should not be blamed. We must adequately fund them, provide clear direction, offer strong support, and find a way to move forward, collectively.” – Dr. DiRocco, in a recent op-ed

Other Voices...

“Educators want to be back in their classrooms—and they agree with the CDC that remote learning isn't ideal—but the safety and health of students and staff must be paramount, particularly given the surge of COVID-19 in the South and West, and the new research about young people spreading the virus. Let's stop the debate about whether safety matters and start rolling up our sleeves so we

get the resources to meet the needs of students, whether we are teaching remotely or in person.” – Randi Weingarten, president of the American Federation of Teachers (from a press release)

“Since unveiling initial public health guidance for schools earlier in the summer, both the departments of Education and Health have engaged with superintendents and other education leaders regarding their questions and concerns. With the continued uncertainty and varying infection rates across the state, school leaders have asked for additional guidance to help them make decisions about reopening schools. This tool responds to those requests by aligning public health conditions in counties directly to recommendations for the delivery of instruction.” – Deputy Secretary for Elementary and Secondary Education Matthew Stem on the new dashboard developed by the PDE and DOH

“Family physicians understand the importance and benefits of in-person education for primary and secondary students, yet we also understand the risks involved during this pandemic. In considering the interests of parents and students alike, we know the Pennsylvania health and education departments, local school districts, colleges and universities are doing their best to ensure everyone's health and safety as classes are soon to resume.” – Tracey Conti, MD, in a statement from the Pennsylvania Academy of Family Physicians

“From my perspective, COVID-19 did what millions of parents, students, policymakers, and taxpayers could not. The shutdown, caused by the pandemic, forced traditional education to finally embrace the digital tools they have resisted for the past 20 years. Consequently, school districts and their lesson plans, technology budgets, course offerings, and online platforms are finally being updated to meet the demands and expectations of families. In many ways, all schools are becoming cyber schools; this means policymakers and education leaders should stop trying to legislate cyber charter schools out of existence. One major question that has yet to be answered is, “How long will it take school districts to catch-up?”” – Brian Hayden, CEO of The Pennsylvania Cyber Charter School, in testimony before the House Education Committee on August 4 concerning safely reopening schools

From Secretary Rivera...

“This pandemic underscored the inequities that exist across our communities, which was intensified by civil unrest and backlash over systemic racism and biases against our black and brown friends, neighbors and communities. We continue to have much work to do in this space as a collective education community, and I know it will continue to be a focused priority of the administration and PDE. The importance of our work has never been more important than it is today. This feeling is what drove me, not to say goodbye, but to again become a leader in the field and an educational stakeholder to join in the fight for equity, access and opportunity.” – Pedro Rivera, in a letter announcing he will leave his post as Secretary of Education after the start of the school year to become president of Thaddeus Stevens College of Technology in Lancaster

MEMBER NEWS

REGION 1

Dr. Erica Kolat recently resigned from her position as superintendent of the McGuffey SD. She had served in the position since 2014. **Amy Todd** is currently serving as the district's interim superintendent.

REGION 4

Dr. Joseph Mancini has retired from his position as superintendent of the Ellwood City SD. **Wes Shipley**, most recently superintendent in the Mars Area SD, is currently serving as the district's acting superintendent.

REGION 12

Dr. Linda Brown has retired from her position as assistant superintendent for special education in the York City SD.

REGION 14

Michael Mitchell, Jr., is now serving as superintendent of the Schuylkill Valley SD. He previously served as the district's high school principal. Mitchell replaces **Cindy Mierzejewski**, who has retired.

REGION 15

Patricia Craig, superintendent of the Camp Hill SD, has announced her intention to retire, effective September 30.

REGION 16

Dr. Frank Jankowski is now serving as superintendent of the Selinsgrove Area SD. He previously served as the district's assistant superintendent. Jankowski replaces **Dr. Chad Cohrs**, who has retired.

REGION 19

Dr. William King, superintendent of the Lakeland SD, has announced he will retire from the position, effective September 7.

REGION 22

Dr. Dana Bedden has been appointed superintendent of the Centennial SD. He has been serving as superintendent in the Boyertown SD. Bedden will replace **Dr. David Baugh**, who left the district to be superintendent of the Aspen SD in Colorado.

REGION 24

Dr. Daniel Goffredo is now serving as superintendent of the Great Valley SD. He previously served as assistant superintendent in the district. Goffredo replaces **Dr. Regina Speaker Palubinsky**, who is now executive director of Montgomery County I.U. 23.

REGION 25

Dr. Carol Birks is now serving as superintendent of the Chester-Upland SD. She previously served as a superintendent in New Haven, Connecticut.

Dr. Brenda Wynder has been appointed superintendent of the Southeast Delco SD. She previously served as superintendent in the Lake Forest SD in Delaware.

Dr. Eric Becoats is now serving as superintendent of the William Penn SD. He most recently served as adjunct professor for curriculum models in the Drexel University School of Education. Becoats replaces **Jane Ann Harbert**, who has retired.

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

PASA continues to closely monitor the coronavirus outbreak and its implications for our schools, our students and our communities. We also want to make the health and well-being of Pennsylvania's school leaders a high priority and are sensitive to the need for our members to be in their districts as these challenging situations continue. For that reason, some programs and meetings listed here may be canceled or rescheduled, reshaped and reimagined, and new ones added as necessary. Please watch the PASA website for updates. See the PASA web site at www.pasa-net.org.

SEPTEMBER

- 7 *PASA office closed*
- 10 Board of Governors' meeting
- 15 Professional Development Committee
- 16 Webinar: Combating Hatred
- 22-23 New Superintendents' Academy Part 1
- 28 Webinar: Building Culture from the Inside Out

OCTOBER

- 1 **PASA membership year begins**
- 7 Professional Development Committee
- 12-13 National Superintendent Certification Program (PASA office)
- 14-16 PASA/PSBA School Leadership Conference (virtual)
- 21 Webinar: Leading Students in Poverty to Success

NOVEMBER

- 6 PA Summit for Assistant Superintendents and Supervisors (CAIU)
- 12 Board of Governors' meeting
- 16-17 New Superintendents' Academy Part 2
- 18 Webinar: Implicit Bias in Schools
- 26-27 *PASA office closed*

DECEMBER

- 2 Professional Development Committee
- 16 Webinar: Culturally Relevant Leadership
- 24-31 *PASA office closed*