

THE PASA Flyer

Vol. 66, NO. 3- December 2023

Proud Leadership for
Pennsylvania Schools

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New Superintendent Induction Program

For educational leaders, by educational leaders

Looking for a mentor?

PASA's New Superintendent Induction Program will provide needed support and guidance for beginning superintendents to help them succeed with the transition into the superintendency. This program **facilitates a working relationship between the superintendent and an experienced mentor** that allows for open and private discussions and provides resources to sustain school system leaders.

This new program will include the following parameters:

- A Mentor will be matched with the leader for twelve consecutive months for the Comprehensive Program or as otherwise determined by the selected Program option.
- Regular contact mentor/superintendent meetings as needed to:
 - Review current progress and identify next steps throughout the year to accomplish the superintendent's desired results.
 - Assist with effective practices for communications with School Boards (e.g., agendas and information for school board meetings).
 - Assist with effective practices for working with the District's Administrative Team.
 - Assist with effective practices for communications to staff, parents, and the community.
 - Address current issues and concerns within District.
 - Review and help prioritize typical monthly tasks for Superintendents to accomplish, including budget development.
- Mentor will attend at least one board meeting (more if requested) to gain perspective of board and community climate (if part of the developed program).
- Mentor will attend at least one administrative team meeting (more if requested) to observe and advise as needed (if part of the developed program).
- Mentor will be available and on call for the leader to discuss any items or issues

Note: The program will be adapted to meet the individualized needs of the superintendent.

The program is open to PASA members who are current or acting superintendents. The superintendent applies to participate via the PASA New Superintendent Induction Program Application that requests information about the superintendent, the superintendent's district, and the superintendent's desired result(s).

For more information and pricing, [visit PASA's website.](#)

The PASA Flyer is published monthly

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Franklin Regional School District

PASA Members:

Please report your appointments, renewals, awards or special achievements, or that of others in your region to Adam Kulikowski 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.

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Director of Professional Development:

Dr. Michele M. Balliet

Director of Communications:

Adam Kulikowski



PASA Leadership Forum

March 13-15, 2024

Hershey Lodge

Unleashing Potential: Navigating the Continuum of Creativity & Innovation in Schools

The PASA Leadership Forum, *Unleashing Potential: Navigating the Continuum of Creativity and Innovation in Schools*, stands as a beacon for educational leaders dedicated to shaping the future of education. In this era, where education is more than just learning—it's the driving force behind progress and development—this forum represents a critical juncture for those who believe in the transformative power of knowledge and ideas.

Over the course of 2 1/2 inspiring days at the Hershey Lodge and Convention Center on March 13-15, 2024, this event promises to be a melting pot of innovative concepts and actionable strategies, all aimed at empowering students and educators alike. It's an opportunity to witness a gathering of minds, featuring nationally and internationally renowned keynote speakers, Kent Julian and Gregg Behr, set to ignite your passion and broaden your perspectives.

As participants, you'll be able to dive into a diverse array of breakout sessions, each orchestrated by respected colleagues from across Pennsylvania. These sessions are more than just talks; they're a shared journey through a landscape of fresh insights and groundbreaking approaches designed to enhance creativity and innovation in educational settings.

The PASA Leadership Forum is more than just a conference—it's a source for change. It's where connections are forged, ideas are nurtured, and the seeds of tomorrow's education are sown. By attending, you're not just expanding your professional network; you're becoming a part of a movement that's reshaping the educational landscape.

Featured Speakers:



Kent Julian

Dream to Do

Most leaders have big goals for their teams and organizations. But often, instead of achieving those dreams, they get stuck in dreamland. Each year the same goals get set, and each year the same goals go unmet. Yet, when leadership cultivates the right environment, any team can move from DREAM to DO. That's because the environment you create determines the results you produce.



Gregg Behr

When You Wonder, You're Learning

Playful and practical, *When You Wonder, You're Learning* explores the science behind Mister Rogers' Neighborhood, revealing what Fred Rogers called the "tools for learning": essential skills and mindsets that boost everything from academic performance to children's well-being. These tools, which cost next to nothing to develop, hinge on the very things that make life worthwhile: self-acceptance; close, loving relationships; and a deep regard for one's neighbor.

Conference Investment:

PASA Members:

Early Bird| Standard
(All Days) Full Event: \$399|\$449
(Day 1) W/Th: \$300|\$320
(Day 2) Th/F: \$300|\$320

Members may bring guests from their own district/organization at a discounted rate!

Guests of members:

Early Bird| Standard
(All Days) Full Event: \$379|\$429

Non-PASA Member:

Early Bird| Standard
(All Days) Full Event: \$499|\$549
(Day 1) W/Th: \$400|\$420
(Day 2) Th/F: \$400|\$420

[Click here](#) to register and book your hotel reservation!

From the Executive Director

Leaning Forward into 2024's Journey



By Dr. Sherri Smith
Executive Director, PASA



We have a completed PA State Budget. Good news for all our schools.

Included in the dozens of bills passed this week is House Bill 1507– a bill that allows our school districts, intermediate units, and career and technical schools to meet a minimum of 180 days OR 900/990 hours of instruction for our students.

A huge step forward for our schools as to focus on the instructional needs of our students to determine the best use of time instead of honoring seat time that is consistent for all our students.

As school leaders, you play a crucial role in shaping the educational experiences of students and this change in the law provides for greater opportunities to foster creativity and innovative practices in our schools.

In today's rapidly changing world, innovation is a key driver for forward progress and as leaders in education, we have the responsibility to cultivate an environment that not only imparts knowledge to our students but also nurtures their creativity and critical thinking skills.

We also have the responsibility to embed innovation in our educational practices and programs as it is through

these creative approaches that we can address the diverse challenges facing our students.

Moreover, fostering creativity contributes to the cultivation of a well-rounded individual, capable of adapting to an ever-changing world.

As we wind down this school year, I hope all of you take the time to enjoy a wonderful holiday break that is chock full of holiday traditions with your family and friends, as well as personal downtime for yourself.

With the start of the new year, there are many important decisions to be made for education in Pennsylvania.

By January 11, the Basic Education Funding Commission is to present a state funding report that addresses the Commonwealth Court's ruling declaring Pennsylvania's system for funding public education unconstitutional.

Governor Shapiro has also announced that he will address the state funding inequities in his February 6 Budget Address.

Knowing that there is potential to fix the funding concerns in our state is promising and exciting news.

However, this also creates an additional need for all our

schools to consider and begin to plan for how you will use the extra funding.

What is most important to improving the instructional programs and services for students? Something for all of us to think about should the funding become available for next school year!

The chance for equitable funding for our schools, as well as the increased conversations on removing barriers and developing new and innovative school programs, can be both overwhelming and exciting for school leaders and staff.

Where do we start? How does 180 days OR 900/990 days change our school schedules to meet the needs of our students?

Now that we have the money, how do we manage it responsibly?

All good questions that need thoughtful consideration and input from your educational partners.

PASA's Leadership Forum, to be held on March 13-15, at the Hershey Lodge, is focused on leading creativity and innovation in our schools.

Along with keynote speakers, Kent Julian- Dream to Do, and Gregg Behr- When You Wonder, You're Learning, there will be many breakout sessions to share some of the Pennsylvania-specific innovative practices happening in our schools.

There will also be networking time for brainstorming ways to reshape our school schedules to effectively meet the needs of our students.

As the demands on public education continue to shift, as leaders, we must proactively engage in reorganizing our schools to create environments that nurture innovation, foster creativity, and prepare students for the challenges of the future.

Your leadership this coming year is necessary to reshape current instructional practices to benefit today's students

PASA looks forward to collaborating with you and offering support and networking opportunities in planning for and implementing these initiatives.

Together, we can create an educational environment that engages our students and prepares them for the ever-changing world.

An exciting journey for us all!

My sincere wishes to all of you for a wonderful holiday season! I look forward to the work ahead in 2024.

Happy Holidays, Sherri

Region News:

Region 3:

Dr. John Mozzocio will become the next superintendent at Penn Hills School District on January 3. Dr. Mozzocio served more than 22 years in the New Castle district, most recently as the district's Director of Pupil Services.

Region 15:

Central Dauphin superintendent Norman Miller announced Dec. 4 that he will resign, effective Feb. 1. Assistant superintendent Aaron McConnell is expected to be appointed as the interim superintendent at Central Dauphin's January school board meeting.

Region 22:

The Pennridge School District hired Bradley Palmers as its new assistant superintendent. Palmer previously served as the assistant principal at Abington High School. He will replace Dr. Anthony Rybarcyk who resigned recently.

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 website at www.pasa-net.org (Click on the "Leadership Development" button and look for "Career Center.")



From the President's Pen

Approach this Holiday Season with Intentional Leadership



By Dr. George F. Fiore
2023-24 PASA President



As we joyfully anticipate the holiday season, I am reaching out with a message of positivity, reflection, and encouragement for our collective journey in educational leadership during this special time of the year. The holidays traditionally embody joy, celebration, and a spirit of togetherness.

However, it is important to acknowledge that each person's experience of this season may vary.

Seasonal depression and mental health challenges can cast shadows on what should be a joyous time.

Therefore, let us approach this season with intentional leadership, focusing on fostering an environment that nurtures the well-being of our valued staff, students, and community.

In the landscape of educational leadership, visibility plays a pivotal role, especially during the holidays.

Our presence holds significant weight, and being seen by both staff and students in our schools and buildings can make a great difference.

A simple acknowledgment or a warm greeting can create a sense of connection and community. By simply showing up, we convey a message of support and understanding,



recognizing that the holidays can be a time for celebration but may also pose challenges for some.

Our duty as leaders extends to creating a safe and inclusive space where everyone feels valued and supported, acknowledging the diversity of experiences during the holidays.

“Let us offer a compassionate ear to those facing personal challenges, reinforcing the idea that our educational community is a place of understanding and support. In line with this spirit, let us extend our support to those who may need it most.

Encourage open conversations about mental health and well-being, making resources readily available for those seeking assistance.

By fostering a culture of empathy and understanding, we contribute to a healthier and more supportive educational environment.”

My family and I have engaged in the tradition of donating to the Keystone Military Families Stockings for Soldiers campaign for the past 10 years.

Through this cause, we find ourselves deeply connected to a community that extends beyond our immediate surroundings but that is very meaningful to our families and students.

The commitment and collective effort to bring joy to those far from home emphasizes the power of compassion and unity during the holiday season.

Volunteer opportunities such as this prompt gratitude for the warmth and togetherness within our own family, fostering a sense of responsibility to contribute positively to the lives of others.

In turn, we strengthen our community which promotes a supportive environment for our students and staff to work, learn, and grow.

As we extend support to others, it is equally important to take care of ourselves.

The responsibilities of educational leadership can be demanding, and the holiday season often brings added stress.

Remember that self-care is not a luxury but a necessity. Take time to recharge, reflect, and engage in activities that bring you joy.

By prioritizing your well-being, you set a positive example



for others to do the same.

As we navigate this season, let's do so with intentionality, visibility, and a commitment to supporting the health and well-being of our educational community.

Together, let us foster a culture of compassion and understanding, ensuring that everyone feels seen, valued, and supported during this festive season.

Wishing you, your family, and your educational community a profoundly joyful and happy holiday season. Cheers!

Professional Development

National Superintendent Certification Program:

A Dynamic and Interactive Professional Development Opportunity



By Dr. Jodi Frankelli

Superintendent, Palmerton Area



Over the summer, all PASA members received information regarding how to become part of the PASA Cohort of AASA's National Superintendent Certification Program.

As one of the members of this current cohort, I wanted to provide some firsthand insight and information to those of you who may have been hesitant about applying for this program when you received the information earlier this year.

As of now, the current cohort just completed our fourth class, so we are halfway through the required sessions.

Thus far, I have found the sessions to be everything that a superintendent could hope for.

Our class agendas have been filled with relevant topics, dynamic speakers, and collaborative conversations.

I wanted to take some time to elaborate on these items and provide you with additional details as you consider future professional development (PD) opportunities that fit into your busy work life.

Relevant Topics

As I am sure you would agree, PD is most impactful when

To view upcoming professional learning opportunities, visit [PASA's website](#) or check out our calendar of events on Page 21.

it is truly relevant to our daily life. We have all attended PD workshops that left us feeling underwhelmed, disengaged, and uninspired.

Often this is because the topics were not relevant to what we do throughout the course of our workday. Included below are some of the course topics from the National Superintendent Certification Program:

- Ethics and Professional Norms
- Equity and Cultural Responsiveness
- Vision for Educational Leadership
- The Future Driven Superintendent
- Board Relations, Policies, and Procedures
- The Superintendent as the Instructional Leader

As you can see, these are all topics that are extremely important to us in our role of superintendent.

Dynamic Speakers

One of the benefits of an AASA/PASA sponsored program is the access to top-notch organizations and speakers. Included below is the list of high-quality and engaging speakers that we heard from during the first half of this program:

- Dr. Khalid Mumin, PA Secretary of Education
- Shari Camhi, NY Superintendent & former AASA President
- Virginia Montgomery, PASA General Counsel
- Keith Krueger, Executive Director of CoSN
- Brian Troop, PA Superintendent of the Year

What I appreciated most about each of these guest speakers was their ability and willingness to share real-life success stories and struggles. Our jobs are hard! The people on this list “get it”, can relate to us, and value the hard work that we do each and every day.

Collaborative Conversations

Above all else, I think that all cohort members enjoy the collaborative conversations that occur in our small-group sessions.

During these breakout sessions, cohort members have the opportunity to dive deeper into the day’s topics, share stories and experiences that have (and have not) been successful in our own professional life, and brainstorm ideas that may be beneficial to take back to our home districts.

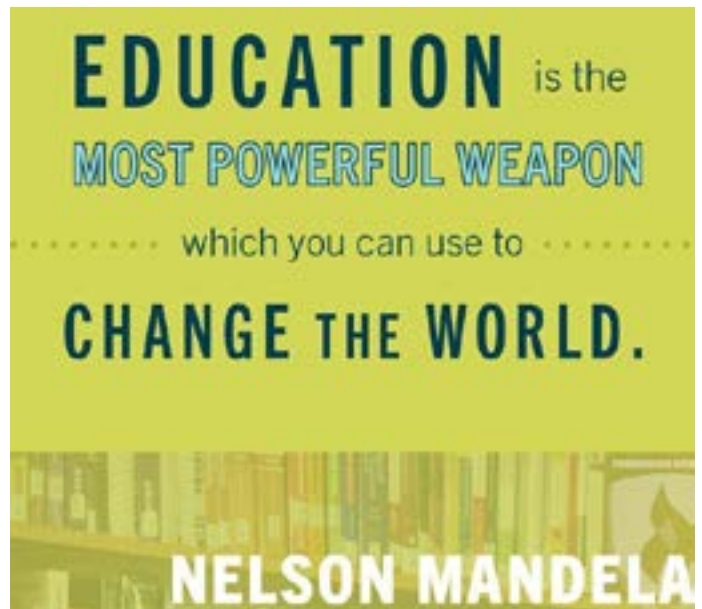
Let’s face it... Being a superintendent can be a challenging and isolating job. Through these breakout sessions, cohort members have the opportunity to get to know others and engage in honest, collaborative conversations with those who also know the job first-hand.

If you were on the fence about whether the National Superintendent Certification Program was for you, I would strongly recommend it.

It has been one of the most beneficial PD programs that I have ever participated in. If you have questions, you are welcome to reach out to me (jfrankelli@palmerton.org), and I will share my personal program experience with you in greater detail.

If you would like specific information on the National Superintendent Certification Program, please reach out to Dr. Amy Sichel, program leader (amy.sichel@aasa.org).

She would be more than happy to elaborate on the program and discuss possible future cohort opportunities with you.



Thank you to our Platinum Sponsors:



Writing Out Loud

Sharing our Holiday Traditions!



By Adam Kulikowski
Director of Communications



As the holiday season unfolds, I find myself immersed in the heartwarming rituals that define this time of year.

As I write this column, my wife wields scissors and tape and ribbons with precision cutting through festive wrapping paper as she wraps gifts for our loved ones. The aroma of freshly baked holiday cookies wafts through our home, tempting even the most diligent to enjoy just one more.

Whether you celebrate Christmas, Hanukkah, Kwanzaa, Festivus, or simply the joy of family and friends, the holidays are a time to rejoice, reflect and reconnect with those we love. It's a time to carry on family traditions—or begin new ones.

Our unique customs and traditions shape the way we celebrate this special time of year. Inside many traditions are shared values of family, love, and gratitude that reflect the values, histories, and identities of our communities or religious beliefs.

In the festive tone of the holiday season, I invited our PASA team to join in the spirit of celebration by sharing a holiday tradition that is meaningful to them.

Dr. Sherri Smith, Executive Director:

The Smith family has many traditions during the holidays, but my favorite is the decorating of our Christmas tree. Every ornament on our tree is a special memory of our family starting with the ornament my husband and I bought for our first Christmas together 36 years ago. We have ornaments from each of our vacations throughout the

years, special moments such as the birth of our children, of our pets, from our friends, and of course, the ones that the kids made during their school years. Decorating the tree each year is a special time as we all gather to walk down memory lane together!

Virginia Montgomery, General Counsel:

Our Family's "Prosperous Nachos" Holiday Tradition

In celebration of our Latina daughters, we always wrap up our Christmas Eve party with a rousing rendition of "Feliz Navidad" during which everyone selects a percussion instrument from an assortment of maracas, castanets, shakers, drums, and cymbals, and then plays, dances, and sings together along with José Feliciano's "Feliz Navidad." It is always a very energetic experience that everyone looks forward to and enjoys!

One year, when my daughters were around 10 and 11 years old, they asked if we could make "prosperous nachos" for Christmas. After some initial confusion, we realized that the rousing quality of our holiday singing far surpassed our Spanish fluency and pronunciation and our daughters thought that the song lyrics repeated "Feliz Navidad with prosperous nachos" so they wanted to add "prosperous nachos" to our Christmas party menu. We came up with a recipe that year and continue (twenty years later) to include "prosperous nachos" in our singing and celebration.

From my family to yours, may you and your loved ones enjoy a prosperous year and happiness (and maybe even some nachos)! Próspero año y felicidad!



Michele Balliet, Director of Professional Development:

I love holiday traditions! We have been blessed to have my in-laws and, on some occasions, my parents stay overnight with us on Christmas Eve. Since our daughter is now grown and we no longer leave out “reindeer food” and cookies and milk for Santa, we have been embracing a new tradition. After we eat our delicious Feast of Seven Fishes meal (another family tradition), prepared by my husband, everyone changes into matching pajamas that have been purchased especially for the year. These aren’t just any pajamas; these are a fun way to symbolize our unity and festive spirit. For me, this new tradition isn’t just about the pajamas; it’s a moment of togetherness. While at first, it took a little convincing of some family members to actually wear real pajamas, everyone who attends our Feast of Seven Fishes has come to anticipate and enjoy this tradition.

We typically spend the rest of the evening relaxing, singing karaoke, and sharing favorite family memories wearing our matching attire, wrapped in the warmth and the love of family and the bond we all share. This fun yet cherished tradition has now woven itself into the fabric of our family’s Christmas, creating memories that we’ll treasure for years to come. And in case you are wondering... this year’s theme is our love of college football---some of us will be outfitted in Penn State pjs and others in Alabama—same pattern, different colors.

Anna Maria Stankoczi, Administrative Assistant to the Executive Director & Member Services

My parents came to the U.S. as poor immigrants with three girls fleeing a civil revolution in 1956. They were so grateful for being alive and making a new home that Christmas was always a special season of gratitude and love. We always had a live Christmas tree decorated with seasonal candy, cookies, and even homemade decorations.

A few days before Christmas, my mother would prepare by baking cookies and pastries. Friends were always welcome, even if unannounced. These activities remained consistent

even after my sister and I were born in the U.S. (Yup, five daughters: my poor dad.)

On Christmas Eve, the preparations were complete and once we were all gathered, we would circle around the tree and sing carols (bilingually! Yes, I speak Hungarian as well as English). Only after that did we exchange gifts. Next, we would enjoy the delicious foods that my mother prepared and we would head to church for midnight mass. Christmas was almost a 36-hour event.

Although my beloved parents are no longer physically with us, my sisters and I continue to uphold these traditions—modified because of some constraints like distance, but the essential traditions are still upheld. Merry Christmas.

Adam Kulikowski, Communications Director

One of my favorite memories as a child came after most of the traditional festivities concluded. After visiting with family on a Christmas day with the traditional fixings, our family would pile into our fully loaded sleigh for a 45-minute drive home from my grandmother’s home in Dickson City. Through the city streets and back roads to our rural abode in Pleasant Mount, my mom, dad, sister and I would gaze at the Christmas lights adorning the homes we passed and compete to see who would spot the ‘Simpson Star on the mountain’ first. Each year, depending on the weather and cloud cover, you would see this brightly lit star on the mountain in a different place along the journey.

While ‘finding the star’ isn’t a tradition easily continued today, new traditions have taken its place.

Leading up to Christmas, my wife, our Goldendoodle Roosevelt and I make our annual pilgrimage to Henry’s Tree Farm to —and I quote from my wife—find the biggest fluffiest tree possible.

We adorn the chosen evergreen almost exclusively with ornaments of sentimental value—several beaded ornaments and an angel top handmade by my late grandmother, our favorite Christmas movies—The Christmas Story (undeniably the best) and Rudolf the Red-Nosed Reindeer, a personalize ceramic for each year we’ve been together (a tradition initiated the year we met) and trinkets we’ve picked up as we traveled to vacation destinations far and wide.

Our traditional foods include homemade pierogies and seafood on Christmas Eve after church—a tradition my wife and I still indulge in and Christmas Day fixing including ham, turkey kielbasa and more!

From our team to you and your families, we extend our heartfelt wishes for the very best during this holiday season. May it be filled with love, warmth, and the shared joy that comes from embracing the unique traditions that make this time of year so special.

A Night of Inspiration: Women's Caucus Fall Dinner Celebrates Educational Leadership



By Dr. Tina Kane
Superintendent, Marple Newtown



In a remarkable gathering that brought together over 160 female leaders in education, the Women's Caucus Annual Fall Dinner was a celebration of leadership, empowerment, collaboration, and philanthropy.

Attendees from more than 25 school districts, and three intermediate units, representing various levels of school administration ranging from several departments to include school principals, teaching and learning supervisors, pupil services administrators, supervisors of special education, Superintendents, and Executive Directors were a part of this distinguished group.

All these dedicated educational leaders gathered for an evening filled with inspiration and camaraderie.

As Women's Caucus President and Marple Newtown Superintendent, I kicked off the event with a warm welcome.

Drawing on the insightful lessons from the children's book, "She Leads: The Elephant Matriarch," I read the children's story aloud sharing its powerful theme of lessons learned from elephant leadership.

Attendees were reminded that wildlife can show remarkable leadership skills, none more so than the serene elephant.

The comparison to elephants emphasized the strength and wisdom found in nature, drawing a parallel between the animal kingdom and the leadership qualities that women bring to the field of education.

"It served as a poignant reminder that, like the elephant matriarch, women in leadership roles possess unique qualities that contribute to the harmony and success of their respective organizations."

The key principles of the story include team collaboration, emotional intelligence, resilience, effective communication, and matriarchal leadership. Through this creative approach, she set the tone for an evening centered around the strength and capabilities of women in educational leadership roles.

One of the defining features of the Women's Caucus Fall Dinner is its commitment to supporting non-profit organizations. This year, attendees actively contributed to the Purple House Project by bringing feminine products and undergarments.

The Purple House Project is dedicated to empowering women affected by intimate partner violence by connecting them to essential resources that facilitate the healing process. This philanthropic gesture underscored the Women's Caucus's dedication to making a positive impact beyond the realm of education.

The Women's Caucus Committee expressed deep gratitude to all those who played a role in making the event a success. A special acknowledgment was extended to the sponsor, Right at School, for their support in making the



evening memorable.

Dr. Judith Wilson, Educational Consultant, was the featured presenter. She is a prominent figure in education, who left attendees with a powerful takeaway: “Chief leader is the chief learner.”

This quote encapsulates the essence of the Women’s Caucus Annual Fall Dinner – a commitment to continuous learning, growth, and leadership that resonates not only in education but also in the broader context of women’s empowerment.

As the dinner concluded, participants left inspired and motivated, gifted with a sting bracelet with a miniature elephant charm serving as a reminder of the lessons of the evening as they returned to their respective roles in education.

The importance of fostering collaboration, emotional intelligence, resilience, effective communication, and embracing matriarchal leadership was evident throughout the event.

Looking ahead, the anticipation for the 2024 Women’s Caucus Fall Dinner is already building. Scheduled for Tuesday, November 5th, the event promises to continue its tradition of bringing together outstanding women leaders in education for an evening of inspiration, networking, and support for meaningful causes.

Thank you to Our Silver Sponsors!



State News:



Pennsylvania Legislature Passes Education Bills Without Level Up Funding

Nearly six months after the 2023-24 fiscal year began, the Legislature passed education funding code bills on Wednesday. The passage of House Bill 301 and Senate Bill 843 allocates millions in state dollars to various education-related initiatives. The previously stalled HB 301 allocates more than \$300 million to libraries and community colleges, \$100 million to school mental health services and \$175 million to school facility repairs. Of the \$175 million budgeted for school facility repairs, such as mold and asbestos abatement, \$100 million comes from funding previously earmarked for the Level Up program, which prioritizes the state's 100 poorest school districts.

Read the rest of the story: [“Pennsylvania Legislature Passes Education Bills Without Level Up Funding”](#) (from The74, 12/7/23)

Shorter Weeks, Longer Days? Pennsylvania Poised to Give Schools Flexibility on Minimum Requirements

A bill that would give Pennsylvania school districts greater flexibility to have shorter school weeks or longer days, as long as students meet an annual minimum of instructional time, is headed to the governor's desk for his approval. The legislation passed both chambers unanimously. It changes Pennsylvania law to allow for schools to complete the school year in either a minimum of 180 days or 900 hours at the elementary level and 990 at the secondary level. Currently, schools must do both.

Read the rest of the story: [“Shorter Weeks, Longer Days? Pennsylvania Poised to Give Schools Flexibility on Minimum Requirements”](#) (from NPR, 12/13/23)

Education Advocates Say Safeguards Against Discrimination Are Needed in PA School Voucher Programs

With Gov. Josh Shapiro and state lawmakers pushing to expand Pennsylvania's taxpayer-funded school voucher programs, an education advocacy group is calling for

safeguards to protect students from discriminatory private school admissions policies. Pennsylvania's Educational Investment Tax Credit (EITC) and Opportunity Scholarship Tax Credit (OSTC) programs provide more than \$400 million that students in poorly performing public school districts can use to pay tuition at private and religious schools.

Read the rest of the story: [“Education Advocates Say Safeguards Against Discrimination Are Needed In PA School Voucher Programs”](#) (from Pennsylvania Capital-Star, 12/7/23)

PA Supreme Court Will Consider Whether Officials' Facebook Posts Are Public Record

The Pennsylvania Supreme Court has agreed to consider whether homophobic Facebook posts shared by two northwest Pennsylvania school board members are public records under the state's Right-to-Know Law. In the first-of-its-kind case, a Crawford County resident filed a Right-to-Know request for Facebook posts and comments made by Penncrest School Board member David Valesky and board President Luigi DeFrancesco in response to a display of books addressing LGBTQ+ issues outside the Maplewood High School library.

Read the rest of the story: [“PA Supreme Court Will Consider Whether Officials' Facebook Posts Are Public Records”](#) (from Pennsylvania Capital-Star, 12/5/23)

Bucks Lawmakers Introduce Bills To Combat Antisemitism in Education

Citing the rise in antisemitism in Pennsylvania and that more needs to be done in Pennsylvania's education system following congressional testimony by former University of Pennsylvania President Liz Magill, House lawmakers this week announced an upcoming package of legislation aimed at combating antisemitism in Pennsylvania's education system.

Read the rest of the story: [“Bucks Lawmakers Introduce Bills to Combat Antisemitism in Education”](#) (from Patch, 12/15/23)

National News:

House Passes Bipartisan Push to Expand School Milk Options

The U.S. House passed the Whole Milk for Healthy Kids Act, a bipartisan bill allowing whole milk and 2% milk to return to school cafeteria menus as part of the National School Lunch Program, in a 330-99 vote Wednesday. If approved by the Senate, H.R. 1147 would reverse 2010 legislation that restricted schools to serving fat-free or 1% milk.

Read the rest of the story: [“House Passes Bipartisan Push to Expand School Milk Options”](#) (from, K-12 Dive, 12/14/23)

New Ed Dept Deadlines Revealed for Regulations Including Title IX, Section 504

The U.S. Department of Education is already past its due date for a number of significant regulatory proposals, according to an updated regulatory agenda for fall 2023.

That list includes two long-awaited and controversial Title IX regulations as well as a handful of other expected proposed rules that could significantly change school operations. When U.S. Secretary of Education Miguel Cardona took over the Education Department under the Biden administration in 2021, the department almost immediately overturned a handful of its predecessor’s initiatives.

In their place, it put in motion a to-do list rooted in a slew of Biden’s early executive orders around priorities like advancing racial equity and preventing LGBTQ+ discrimination.

Read the rest of the story: [“New Ed Dept Deadlines Revealed for Regulations Including Title IX, Section 504”](#) (from K-12 Dive, 12/8/23)

Rural Students Face Persistent Access Barriers to Counselors, Gifted Programming

Students attending rural schools have less access to school psychologists and counselors than their nonrural peers. They also may face other educational, mental and physical well-being barriers impacting rural areas, according to research from the National Rural Education Association.

The report, which is the latest in a series of research on rural students, also highlights areas of progress, including increased diversity of rural students and a slightly higher graduation rate than their nonrural peers.

Read the rest of the story: [“Rural Students Face Persistent Access Barriers to Counselors, Gifted Programming”](#) (from K-12Dive, 11/30/23)



5 Challenges School District Leaders Will Face in 2024

While the rest of us are buying gym memberships we probably won’t use, school leaders are facing far more ambitious New Year’s resolutions: regaining academic ground, tightening those belts, weathering divisive politics, and ensuring more students show up to class. Here’s a look at some of the challenges school systems will face (or continue to face) in 2024.

Read the rest of the story: [“5 Challenges School District Leaders Will Face in 2024”](#) (from K-12 Dive, 12/15/23)

What a Difference a Day Makes: How Schools Can Harness More Learning Time

To help students regain academic ground lost during the pandemic, schools have often rearranged their class schedules to eke out more time for instruction in individual subjects.

But new research suggests adding extra time to the school calendar—rather than rescheduling classes—is what really adds up for students over time. On average, K-12 public schools operate just under seven hours a day, for about 179 days a year, a total of about 1,200 hours, according to an analysis of more than 70 studies by Brown and Stanford University researchers.

Read the rest of the story: [“What a Difference a Day Makes: How Schools Can Harness More Learning Time”](#) (from EducationWeek, 12/12/23)

Innovative Teaching and Learning

Creating a Culture of Innovation in Our Schools



By Dr. David Christopher
Superintendent, West Chester Area



In the book, *When You Wonder, You're Learning*, by Gregg Behr and Ryan Rydzewski the authors detail the science and intentionality behind the success of Mister Rogers Neighborhood.

Mr. Rogers' intricate and well-executed lessons on curiosity, creativity, communication, and belonging made "The Neighborhood", a multi-decade iconic part of childhood Americana.

Those lessons and a focus on them are not only good for our students but are great ways for us to envision creating a culture of innovation in our schools.

As we continue to see technological change happening at an accelerating pace, our schools must be places of innovation that help our students navigate the world.

Our goals must be aligned with the goals Mr. Rogers undertook to ensure that our students have the tools they need to be successful in a rapidly changing global society.

There are strong parallels between the learning science employed by Mr. Rogers and research on innovative cultures in successful organizations.

In the Harvard Business Review article, "The Hard Truth About Innovative Cultures" by Gary Pisano, the author delves into the paradoxes and challenges of creating and sustaining innovative cultures within organizations.



In the article Pisano identifies several key elements for developing a culture of innovation in an organization that closely parallels the lessons expressed in *When You Wonder, You're Learning*, but with a little more accountability for us adults.

First, there must be a high tolerance for failure, but no tolerance for incompetence. In an educational context, this implies fostering an environment where students and staff are encouraged to take measured risks, explore unconventional ideas, and learn from their mistakes; in a word, to be curious.

If we hope to create spaces like this for our students, we must also create them for our staff. Administrators must create a space where failure is not stigmatized but viewed as



a valuable opportunity for growth.

However, this tolerance for failure should not excuse incompetence. Lack of preparation can never be an excuse for failure, but attempting something new and innovative must be. Just like in, “The Neighborhood,” we should seek opportunities to allow our staff to wonder and learn.

In addition, schools must develop a culture that provides the necessary freedom for staff to employ a willingness to experiment.

In the K-12 setting, this translates to promoting project-based learning, hands-on activities, and interdisciplinary approaches. Students should be encouraged to explore their interests through experiments and projects, fostering a culture of curiosity.

Within this context, educators must provide structured guidance, ensuring that activities align with learning objectives and promote meaningful insights. Like Mr. Rogers, they must use good pedagogy to provide students with activities that give them agency to explore.

In another clear parallel with the lessons employed by Mr. Rogers, psychological safety is another crucial aspect discussed in the article.

In education, creating a psychologically safe environment involves cultivating a classroom culture where students feel comfortable expressing their thoughts, asking questions, and challenging ideas.

As administrators, we must also develop a culture where

our staff feels comfortable expressing their thoughts and ideas and we must provide our staff with a safe space if we expect them to do the same for our students.

Finally, the article’s emphasis on collaboration with individual accountability is particularly relevant to education. Group projects, collaborative learning experiences, and peer-to-peer interactions can be incorporated into the curriculum to promote teamwork and shared responsibility.

Simultaneously, students should be held individually accountable for their contributions, fostering a sense of ownership and personal growth.

While individual accountability may not be one of the core lessons in *When You Wonder, You’re Learning*, it was a core tenet of Mr. Rogers, who held himself personally accountable for the creation of a show that provided our nation’s children with a daily learning opportunity of incredibly high quality for decades.

If we hope to create innovative cultures in our schools, we must hold ourselves to similar high standards so that our own “Neighborhoods” flourish, even with the rapid changes we have and will continue to see.

Gregg Behr, one of the authors of *If You Wonder, You’re Learning* will be one of the keynote speakers at the PASA Leadership Forum on March 13 - March 15, 2024, at the Hershey Lodge.

A copy of the book will be provided to all conference attendees. We hope to see you there.



Critical Funding for Rural Schools



By Tara Thomas

Policy Analyst, AASA,
The School Superintendents Association



Rural schools represent 28% of all schools in the U.S., serving more than 9 million students. This month, we are focusing on two federal programs that are critical for rural schools across the country: Rural Education Achievement Program (REAP) and the Secure Rural Schools (SRS).

Let's start with REAP (also known as Title IV of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act). REAP is the only federal program specifically for rural school districts, acknowledging their unique circumstances while providing broad flexibility in how they can use funds from the program. This year, AASA ventured to gain a better understanding of how districts use REAP funds – surveying more than 350 superintendents from 33 states who participated in the program. Last month, we published that information in a new report: [“View From the District: The Rural Education Achievement Program.”](#)



You can read the full report [here](#) or listen to the PEP Talk episode where we discuss the key findings here. We found the most common uses of funds included technology, software and devices (56%); professional development for teachers and staff (27%); and, tied for third was investing in greater staff compensation and expanded curricular offerings (STEM courses, arts education, etc.) (20%).

In the report, we provide in-depth examples of just how critical REAP funds are to districts and the numerous programs and supports they make possible for students. From providing counselors and mental health professionals and addressing staff shortages to replacing a primary server and investing in school safety technology, the stories from respondents underscore the importance of the program – and its flexibility. The variation of responses we received reflect the variations of school districts across the country. Every district is different, therefore, every district's needs and necessary

investments will also be different.

One message is clear: REAP funds are vital for rural schools across the country. As we watch for Congress to fully fund Fiscal Year (FY) 2024, we continue to advocate for increased investments in this program. REAP currently receives bipartisan support – the House proposal that guts education funding back to 2006 funding levels even provided level funding for REAP (\$215 million). We encourage Congress to continue to support this unique federal education program that enables small and high-poverty districts throughout rural America to better support their students, educators and communities.

Now, let's pivot to a program that is just as critical to many rural schools, but is in a far more precarious position at this time: Secure Rural Schools (also known as the Secure Rural Schools and Community Self-Determination Act).

This program provides funding to counties who have national forests within their jurisdiction. Originally, these entities received a portion of revenues generated on these lands—timber sales, recreation, land use rentals, etc. However, starting in the 1990s, federal timber sales began to decline substantially, which led to substantially reduced payments to the counties. Enter: Secure Rural Schools and Community Self-Determination Act of 2000. Congress stepped in to provide these communities with a different source of funding.

Title I of SRS provides money that must be spent on schools or roads—meaning many rural schools rely on the funding from this program since there is a reduced ability to get funding from property taxes. SRS was last reauthorized in 2021 through the *Bipartisan Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act*, providing payments for FY21-23. If the program is not reauthorized, payments revert to the revenue-sharing model and those communities (and the rural schools within them) stand to lose hundreds of thousands of dollars. For example, the last time Congress failed to reauthorize SRS in FY2016, the funding for one rural district in California dropped from \$569,692 to \$35,601.

The *Secure Rural Schools Reauthorization Act of 2023* ([S. 2581](#)) would reauthorize the program for another 3 years, FY24-26. AASA is a strong proponent of the bill. Last month, we joined AESA, NREA and NREAC in a [joint letter](#) to the Senate Committee on Energy and Natural Resources, urging them to support the bill. The bill is now scheduled for mark up in committee on December 14 – a key step to moving the proposal forward.

Once Congress has addressed the immediate concern of reauthorizing SRS in the short-term, they must figure out a long-term solution for these communities and schools so they no longer must function in 3-year cycles, worrying about whether or not they will get the funding they need. There is no alternative funding for these communities.

In the December Issue of School Administrator Magazine:

This month's issue examines the role superintendents can play in legislative advocacy on the state and federal levels. Articles in the December issue include: [We're Here for the Kids: Superintendents in Their Role as Advocates](#); [Retooling Your Legislative Advocacy](#); [Parents' Rights and the Politics of Inclusion](#); [Superintendents as De Facto Politicians](#) and more.



Quotes:

“Empathetic listening is more than just hearing words; it’s about deeply understanding the thoughts, feelings, and perspectives of others. In the context of school district leadership, this skill is indispensable.”

–**William Adams, Assistant Superintendent, Willmar, Minn** in “**The Heart of Leadership: Empathetic Listening in Educational Leadership**”

“The reality of being an educators--and even more so for school system leaders--is that being an educator is being an advocate. That decision to modify school start times? That’s a major change someone had to support and promote. A switch to more explicit phonics instruction? That’s another move that someone had to push to completion. A decision to lower student-teacher ratios in classrooms to increase student engagement? A superintendent’s job is full of such decisions to better support school-age children. Pushing forward the work of the school district and promoting one approach over another--all of that amounts to advocacy.”

–**Noelle Ellerson Ng, Associate Executive Director of Advocacy and Governance at AASA** in “**We’re Here for the Kids: Superintendents in Their Role as Advocates**”

“To work effectively with local stateholders, superintendents should be inclined to assimilate the skill set of successful politicians. A successful politician knows the laws, policies, and local traditions, but also plays the political game of creating trusting and beneficial relationships. Some education leaders naturally have that skill, but others must learn and practice it to succeed.”

–**Jordan G. Lauer, History Department Chair and Instructional Coach at Hampshire Unit School in Columbia, Tenn.** in “**Superintendents as De Facto Politicians**”



By Ann McMullan
Project Director, CoSN



EmpowerED Superintendent Initiative Resources for School Leaders

We are pleased to share the resources created specifically for superintendents and school district leaders to support their work in leading educational technology initiatives across their school districts and build on their current knowledge, skills and confidence. **The resources listed below – developed in collaboration between CoSN and AASA – are readily available on the CoSN EmpowerED Superintendents website at <https://www.cosn.org/superintendents/>.**

The EmpowerED Superintendent edLeader Panel Broadcast Series

CoSN, AASA, and [edWeb.net](https://www.edweb.net) co-host an online [edLeader Panel broadcast series](#), sponsored by [ClassLink](#), to help superintendents connect and collaborate. Registration is free and participants can join the live event or view recordings and podcast versions starting a day or two after the live broadcast.

The upcoming January 8, 2024 (5:00 pm Eastern Time) edLeader Panel broadcast on the topic of “Proactive Leadership Regarding Cybersecurity in School Systems” features Pennsylvania’s own, Dr. Peter Aiken, Superintendent Central York School District, in a panel conversation with Dr. Gustavo Balderas, Superintendent of Schools, Beaverton, Oregon, and Dr. Mark Benigni, Superintendent Meriden Public Schools, Connecticut. Learn more about the upcoming broadcast and access the free registration link at: <https://home.edweb.net/webinar/supers20240108/>

The EmpowerED Superintendent Toolkit

The Toolkit opens with an Executive Summary that provides an overview of the strategies that are contained within the toolkit. What follows are two Professional Learning Modules. Module #1 presents an overview of the five imperatives for technology leadership. Module #2 defines four specific action steps for strengthening your technology leadership team. In addition to the two Professional Learning Modules, the toolkit includes access to an expanded set of tools to strengthen technology leadership, including CoSN’s research-based Framework of Essential Skills of the K–12 CTO and Certified Education Technology Leader (CETL). Key points and practical tools for hiring, developing and evaluating CTOs and educational technology professionals are integrated within this toolkit.

Critical Focus Areas: Issue One-Pagers

The Superintendent one-pagers were developed to give school leaders a quick resource to help with communication with a variety of stakeholders on important edtech topics. The “One-Pagers” are written in “non-techy talk” so that the areas being described make sense to people who do not work in the technology arena on a daily basis. Some of the twelve topics listed in the One-Pager offerings include: Artificial Intelligence & Generative AI; The Importance of Cybersecurity; Student Data Privacy; Closing the Homework Gap; Effective Technology Professional Development.

Creating Effective Responsible Use Policies for Schools

Creating the conditions for the safe and effective technology use in schools requires both technical policies and establishing appropriate behavior expectations for students. This report, produced in collaboration with the Digital Citizenship Coalition, ISTE, ATLIS and CoSN, articulates the legal requirements for schools regarding responsible use policies and includes examples of appropriate and inappropriate wording to be used developing Responsible Use Policy (also known as Acceptable Use Policies or Technology Use Agreements) documents.

Self-Assessments

Three different self-assessments are provided for school leaders: 1) Self-Assessment for Superintendents, 2) Self-Assessment for Chief Technology Officers and Technology Staff, 3) District Leadership Team Self-Assessment.

Financing Technology Innovations - Strategies and Tools

Multiple tools and workbooks for determining the “Total Cost of Ownership” and the “Value of Investment” are available for download.

CoSN 2024 Annual Conference, “Leading for Innovation: At Warp Speed”

Registration is now open for the CoSN 2024 Annual Conference, scheduled for April 8-10, 2024, in Miami, Florida. For conference and hotel information and registration links, see <https://www.cosn.org/cosn2024/>.

CoSN Membership

If you, your school, or district would like more information about joining CoSN or getting more involved with CoSN, please contact membership@cosn.org.

PASA Calendar



December:

December 25-January 1:

PASA office closed in observance of Christmas holiday

January:

January 9:

Managing the Risks: Navigating Challenging Board Meetings

January 11-12:

New Superintendents' Academy Series (Part 3): Professional & Community Leadership

January 15:

PASA office closed in observance of Martin Luther King Jr. Day

January 30:

Managing the Risks: Record Retention, Right to Know, Board Conflict of Interest, and Litigation Holds

February:

February 2:

Aspiring to Leadership Workshop (Virtual)

February 15-17:

AASA National Conference on Education

February 16:

PASA State Reception at Rustic Root

February 28:

Managing the Risks: The Pennsylvania Public Official and Employees Ethics Act--Compliance and Potential Unintended Violations

March:

March 13:

PA League of Urban Schools (PLUS) Conference (Hershey Lodge)

March 13-15:

2023 PASA Leadership Forum: Unleashing Potential: Navigating the Continuum of Creativity and Innovation in Schools

May:

May 19-21:

Women's Caucus Annual Spring Conference (Hershey Hotel)

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