Register now to attend PASA’s Advocacy Day:
Tuesday, April 30 from 7:30 a.m. to 3 p.m.
State Capitol Building, Harrisburg

PASA, along with the PA Principals Association and PA Intermediate Units, are planning a full day of activities in Harrisburg on April 30, 2024. It is our day to share our stories and advocate for needed funding and policy changes for our schools! This is a critical year for our advocacy as we push for the first installment of BEF equity funds to address equitable instructional opportunities for our students across the Commonwealth.

We will start our day at the Capital for breakfast and an opportunity to distribute documents and prepare for the day. We will then break into smaller groups, meet with our legislators, and share our common talking points and stories. In the afternoon, we are planning two other meetings with PDE staff members and members of the Governor’s Office.

It is a busy time of the year, however for those of you who are available, it is a critical day for us to advocate for our students and schools.

Please sign up today on the invitation below and join us for our 2024 Advocacy Day at the Capital!

Click here to register.

Save the Date:

Lunch and Learn: Artificial Intelligence
Free to PASA members; $40 per session or $140 for all sessions for non-members

Stay abreast of the rapid advancements in technology that are reshaping the educational landscape! Attend PASA’s Innovative Teaching and Learning Committee "Lunch and Learn" series on Artificial Intelligence (AI). These sessions provide a unique opportunity for leaders to understand how AI can be integrated into curriculum development, personalized learning, and administrative efficiency, ensuring that their institutions remain at the forefront of educational innovation and avoid legal issues. By engaging with experts and peers over lunch, leaders can learn about practical applications of AI, address ethical considerations, and explore strategies for implementing AI tools in a way that enhances learning outcomes and prepares students for a future where AI plays a central role in various industries. Moreover, these informal gatherings facilitate networking, collaboration, and the sharing of best practices among educational professionals, fostering a community that is well-equipped to navigate the challenges and opportunities presented by AI in education.

All sessions run from 11:30 a.m. to 1 p.m.

April 22:
Opportunities, Risks, and Legal Concerns with Generative AI in K-12 Education

May 14:
AI District Panel Discussion: Using AI to Impact Student Learning
New Superintendent Induction Program: Mentors for New Leaders
PASA’s New Superintendent Induction Program provides needed support and guidance for beginning Superintendents by providing an experienced superintendent mentor to help 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.

For more information and to apply, visit PASA’s website.

In Health, Safety, Equity & Learning News...

Superintendent Coalition Aims To Strengthen Whole Child Supports — A national coalition of superintendents from 19 school districts launched a new fellowship to provide resources for school systems to address whole child supports, the group announced Tuesday. The Place-Based Education Leaders Design Fellowship recently held its first convening to learn more about strengthening neighborhood-based “cradle-to-career” services in under-resourced communities. Specifically, the group is focusing on lifting the barriers of intergenerational poverty and gaps in wraparound services. Read the rest of the story: “Superintendent Coalition Aims To Strengthen Whole Child Supports” (from K-12 Dive, 4/2/24)

Social Media Is Hurting Social-Emotional Skills. How 4 School Districts Are Fighting Back— Social media, generative artificial intelligence, and other advances in digital technology are already dramatically influencing how kids develop social-emotional skills. A majority of educators believe social media negatively impacts those skills, such as how students communicate, how they treat others, how isolated they feel, or how they perceive themselves, according to a nationally representative EdWeek Research Center survey of 595 teachers, school leaders, and district leaders conducted in December and January. Read the rest of the story: “Social Media Is Hurting Social-Emotional Skills. How 4 School Districts Are Fighting Back” (from Education Week, 3/25/24)

Only About Half of K-2 Students On Track For Reading — Assessment data shows some progress since 2021 in the percentage of K-2 students on track for reading, but that rate of progress has slowed more recently, according to an analysis by Amplify. The percentage of K-2 students ready for core instruction in early literacy skills is still tracking below pre-pandemic levels. For example, while 58% of 1st graders were on track in 2019-20, that figure dipped to 52% in 2022-23 and then inched up to 54% in 2023-24, according to data from recent the Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills, or DIBELS, assessments. Read the rest of the story: “Only About Half of K-2 Students On Track For Reading” (from K-12 Dive, 4/3/24)

In State News...

PA’s Student Teachers Ready For New Stipend Program To Launch— Grace Bettwy plans to keep her laptop close at hand on April 10. She’s hoping she will be one of the lucky education majors to win what amounts to a jackpot for student teachers hoping to launch their careers in Pennsylvania this fall. Applications for a new student teacher stipend program will be available to download by April 11, according to the Pennsylvania Higher Education Assistance Agency, which is tasked with administering the program. Stipends will be awarded on a first-come, first-served basis. Read the rest of the story: “PA’s Student Teachers Ready For New Stipend Program To Launch” (from Pennlive, 4/3/24)
Conservative Pine-Richland School Board Director Launches New Statewide Coalition — A new organization for Pennsylvania school board members launched in March. The Pennsylvania School Directors Coalition has billed itself as a resource for all school board members, “regardless of political viewpoint or ideology.” But its website doesn’t detail its leaders’ history with the state’s conservative education movements. Pennsylvania already has a long-established, non-partisan organization for school board members: The Pennsylvania School Boards Association (PSBA) has been around since 1895, and provides support and services to the Commonwealth’s school boards. Read the rest of the story: “Conservative Pine-Richland School Board Director Launches New Statewide Coalition” (from NPR, 4/2/24)

Eclipse Education: Western PA Schools Make Plans For Day Of Astronomical Event — When the moon passes in front of the sun in the afternoon of April 8, students with the astronomy club at Penn-Trafford High School will be waiting on the football field to see it. Most Penn-Trafford students are being dismissed two hours and 15 minutes early on the day of the eclipse so they can safely view the event at home. But members of the astronomy club plan to host an eclipse viewing party on the football field from 2 to 4:30 p.m., teacher Ryan Tucek said, and the public is invited. Read the rest of the story: “Eclipse Education: Western PA Schools Make Plans For Day Of Astronomical Event” (from The Tribune-Review, 3/21/24)

Why Pennsylvania’s Efforts To Regulate Kids’ Social Media Accounts Have Failed So Far — Despite bipartisan interest in setting ground rules for social media companies, Pennsylvania lawmakers are struggling to reach a consensus amid privacy and other concerns that don’t neatly break down along party lines. In recent months, the legislature has debated bills that would mandate disclosure of artificial intelligence-generated images, ban TikTok from state-owned phones, and require monitoring of minors’ social media. The debate around the latter most clearly demonstrates the balancing act legislators are trying to achieve. Read the rest of the story: “Why Pennsylvania’s Efforts To Regulate Kids’ Social Media Accounts Have Failed So Far” (from Chalkbeat Philadelphia, 4/3/24)

In National and International News…

Book Ban Attempts Soared 65% in 2023 — Book ban attempts continued to soar in 2023, with a 65% increase in the number of titles disputed compared to the year prior, according to an American Library Association report released last month. The efforts to censor 4,240 unique titles in schools and libraries marks the highest level ever documented by the organization. Groups pushing for book bans focused their attention on public libraries, where the number of titles targeted rose by 92%, in addition to school libraries, which saw an 11% increase. Read the rest of the story: “Book Ban Attempts Soared 65% in 2023” (from K-12 Dive, 4/3/24)

About Half Of Americans Say Public K-12 Education Is Going In The Wrong Direction — About half of U.S. adults (51%) say the country’s public K-12 education system is generally going in the wrong direction. A far smaller share (16%) say it’s going in the right direction, and about a third (32%) are not sure, according to a Pew Research Center survey conducted in November 2023. A majority of those who say it’s headed in the wrong direction say a major reason is that schools are not spending enough time on core academic subjects. These findings come amid debates about what is taught in schools, as well as concerns about school budget cuts and students falling behind academically. Read the rest of the story, “About Half Of Americans Say Public K-12 Education Is Going In The Wrong Direction” (from Pew Research Center, 4/4/24)

Incorporate Literacy Tools In K-12 STEM Subject — K–12 students across the U.S. are struggling with literacy skills. “We have secondary students who have third-grade reading levels,” says Sharo Dickerson, director of digital and learning resources at El Paso Independent School District in Texas. Reading levels for 13-year-old students have been declining since 2012, with the sharpest drop between 2020 and 2023, according to the National Assessment of Educational Progress’s long-term trend assessment.
Interestingly, mathematics scores closely follow the same drops, the assessment report shows. Read the rest of the story: “Incorporated Literacy Tools In K-12 STEM Subject” (from EdTEch, 4/4/24)

Pittsburgh Public School Officials Present 12 Recommendations For Creation Of Facilities Utilization Plan — Pittsburgh Public School officials on Wednesday presented a proposed framework for a facilities utilization plan, an idea that has already faced community pushback because it could lead to the closure and consolidation of some school buildings. The plan — which was presented by several district administrators during an education committee meeting and did not include a list of schools that could be closed or consolidated — laid out 12 possible recommendations that are meant to act as guideposts as the district moves forward with creating the plan with the help of an outside consultant. A finalized version could be presented to the board as early as August, with a possible vote on changes to the district’s footprint, which currently has 54 buildings, taking place in December. Read the rest of the story: “Pittsburgh Public School Officials Present 12 Recommendations For Creation Of Facilities Utilization Plan” (from Pittsburgh Post-Gazette, 4/4/24)

Key Legislative Updates:

**HB 1434:** PN 1613: Dual Credit Innovation and Equity Grant Program (Isaacson) Referred to the Senate Education Committee (4-5-24)
Award grants to public IHEs that offer dual credit opportunities to high school students enrolled in a school entity.

- Funds may be used for tuition free dual credit (DC) courses, gain accreditation for DC courses, low/no cost course materials, PD for HS teachers to teach DC courses, provide a system of student supports to be success in DC courses.
- Priority given to IHEs that emphasize coursework aligned with high-priority career paths, service to students from low-income backgrounds, CTE programs, historically underserved student groups; students in rural areas.
- Annual data collection by PDE on specifics of program.

**HB 1665:** PN 2762: Comprehensive school counseling services. (Steele) Referred to the Senate Education Committee (4-5-24)
Our legislation would create the School Counseling Services Act - requires that schools develop a robust and comprehensive school counseling plan. The plan would ensure that academic, career planning, and social and emotional learning concerns are addressed, would include a multilevel school data review to determine student needs, and would align with guidance from the PDE.

- This bill would spell out the way in which counselors spend their time, requiring that they spend at least 80% of their working time engaged in direct and indirect services to students on days that students were in school. These services could involve academic advising, career planning, social and emotional skill building, intervening with students at risk of dropping out, orienting new and transferring students, and contributing to decision-making teams and programs that directly impact students and families. Administrative responsibilities could take up no more than 20% of their time.

Note: This bill was amended on March 20 by Rep. Schweyer to remove language defining a public school. An amended proposed by Rep. Scialabba did not pass.

PASA is opposed to this bill both for the plan, as well as the Counselor dictation of time.

**HB 1875, PN 2418:** AP Exam Cost Reduction (Intro. By Malagari) Referred to the Senate Education Committee (4-5-24)
An Act amending the act of March 10, 1949 (P.L.30, No.14- providing professional development and for access to advanced courses for all students; establishing the Access to Advanced Courses for All Students Grant Program;

- This bill will cover an 80% exam fee reduction to all AP and International Baccalaureate (IB) students. School districts will be responsible to cover the remaining 20% for students with
financial need, and may also choose to do so for all students. School districts may use federal funds to cover its portion of the exam fee.

- A) ACCESS.--BEGINNING WITH THE 2025-2026 SCHOOL YEAR, EACH SCHOOL ENTITY RECEIVING A GRANT UNDER SECTION 1704-E(B) SHALL PROVIDE SECONDARY STUDENTS WITH EXPANDED OPPORTUNITIES TO ENROLL IN ADVANCED COURSES AS WELL AS EXAM FEE ASSISTANCE, AS APPROPRIATE.

- (B) DUTIES.-- (1) NO LATER THAN SEPTEMBER 1, 2024, AND EVERY FIVE YEARS THEREAFTER, EACH SCHOOL ENTITY SHALL REPORT TO THE DEPARTMENT, IN A MANNER DETERMINED BY THE DEPARTMENT, ALL ADVANCED COURSE OFFERINGS THAT ARE AVAILABLE TO THE SCHOOL ENTITY'S SECONDARY STUDENTS FOR THE CURRENT SCHOOL YEAR AS WELL AS THE NUMBER OF STUDENTS PARTICIPATING IN ADVANCED COURSES, COMPLETING ADVANCED COURSES AND TAKING AN END-OF-COURSE EXAM.

- 1) A SCHOOL ENTITY THAT DOES NOT MEET A MINIMUM ADVANCED COURSE BENCHMARK ESTABLISHED BY THE DEPARTMENT UNDER SECTION 1703-E(B)(2)(I) SHALL BE ELIGIBLE FOR ANNUAL GRANTS FOR A MAXIMUM OF FIVE CONSECUTIVE YEARS TO TRAIN EDUCATORS TO TEACH ADVANCED COURSES TO ENABLE THE SCHOOL ENTITY TO MEET THE BENCHMARK AND FURTHER EXPAND ACCESS TO ADVANCED COURSES BEYOND THE BENCHMARK OVER THE FIVE-YEAR GRANT PERIOD.

Read the full bill here.

PASA opposes due to the cumbersomeness of this bill in implementation.

Other Legislative Action Taken Last Week:

**SB 1136:** Referred to the Senate Education Committee (4-5-24): This bill would allow school districts to utilize a Public Health Dental Hygiene Practitioner (PHDHP) to fulfill the requirements of Section 1403 of the Public School Code relating to dental screenings and dental hygiene.

**HB 2172:** Referred to the House Education Committee (4-3-24): This legislation would assist merging school districts by providing funds to offset the increased cost per pupil, as well as any additional administrative needs, for up to five years following a merger. These funds would be assessed through a state study to estimate the costs of merging school districts.

**HB 2176:** Referred to the House Education Committee (4-3-24): This legislation would require cash to be an acceptable form of payment for admission to school-sponsored activities.

**HB 2183:** Referred to the House Education Committee (4-3-24): This legislation would create the Student and Teacher Support Act to allow public school entities to employ, or approve as a volunteer, a certified school chaplain.

Upcoming Legislative Schedule – (Subject to change)

**House of Representatives:**
Next Session: April 9

**Senate:**
Next session: April 9

**Senate Scheduled Session Days:**
April: 8, 9, 10, 29, 30
May: 1, 6, 7, 8
June: 3, 4, 5, 10, 11, 12, 24, 25, 26, 27, 28, 29, 30
House Scheduled Session Days:
April:  8, 9, 10, 15, 16, 17, 29, 30
May:  1, 6, 7, 8, 20, 21, 22
June:  3, 4, 5, 10, 11, 12, 17, 18, 24, 25, 26, 27, 28

Note: Tuesday, April 23 is Primary Election Day in Pennsylvania

On the PASA Calendar...
April 15:  Connecting the Dots: School District Funding, Spending, and Budgeting
          (Westmoreland I.U.)
April 17:  Connecting the Dots: School District Funding, Spending, and Budgeting (Central
          I.U.)
April 22:  Artificial Intelligence: Opportunities, Risks, and Legal Concerns with Generative AI
          in K-12 Education (Virtual)
April 30:  PASA Advocacy Day
May 14:   Artificial Intelligence: District Panel: Using AI to impact student learning
May 19-21: Women’s Caucus Annual Spring Conference at the Hershey Hotel

Click here to view the full calendar of events.