



*Dr. Mark DiRocco thanks attendees  
for their support at the Country  
Club of Harrisburg.*

## PASA HONORS THE CAREER OF DR. MARK DIROCCO

After more than 44 years in public education, including over 14 years as Superintendent at Lewisburg Area School District, and 6 years of serving educational leaders as the executive director of the Pennsylvania Association of School Administrators (PASA), Dr. Mark DiRocco will retire on September 30. Dr. Sherri Smith will step in as PASA's next executive director effective October 1.

"It has been an honor to serve as the Executive Director of PASA and serve our superintendents and school leaders across

the state," Dr. DiRocco said. "It has been a wonderful capstone to my career and I thank all the past and current PASA officers, board members, and staff for all their support. I wish Dr. Smith and PASA the best of success in the future."

During Dr. DiRocco's six-year leadership tenure, PASA services and programs have flourished, building on relationships with supporters and boosting membership. He helped PASA become a vital voice on education-related legislation and increased the organization's visibility at the Capitol, testifying on critical education bills.

As the first superintendent to lead PASA, he expanded professional development programs designed to support school administrators.

And when times were far from calm as a global pandemic shuttered in-person education and created chaos in school com-

munities across the Commonwealth, Mark stepped up to provide steady leadership and support to PASA members through weekly virtual sessions and one-on-one consultations. He unified leaders on strategy—and helped to breakdown complex guidance from the Department of Education.

"Mark is the epitome of an educator," PASA Board of Governors President Jay Burkhart said. "His selfless service to our students and staff is something that will never be exceeded but hopefully duplicated for many years to come. Mark will never know how much he is appreciated—only because he is too dedicated to think any appreciation is warranted. Best of wishes to Mark, Kim, and his entire family."

Prior to his work at PASA, Dr. DiRocco spent 21 years at Lewisburg Area including

*See Honoring DiRocco, page 4*

## PASA NAMES DR. MICHELE M. BALLIET NEXT DIRECTOR OF PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

The Pennsylvania Association of School Administrators is excited to announce the hire of Dr. Michele M. Balliet to fill the role of Director of Professional Development. She will succeed Dr. Sherri Smith who will transition to the role of Executive Director on Oct. 1.

Dr. Balliet is a proven leader with nearly 20 years of experience in school administration. She currently serves as the superintendent of Elizabethtown Area School District—a role she held since 2011 when she became the district's seventh superintendent. She was promoted from the Assistant Superintendent position in the district.

"I am thrilled to know that Dr. Michele Balliet will be leading the professional development work at PASA," incoming executive director (effective Oct. 1) Dr. Sherri Smith said. "Not only does Dr. Balliet bring

32 years of experience in public education, eleven of those years as a Superintendent, but she has also held many positions specifically leading curriculum and professional development programs and services. Her knowledge, skills, and passion for education will be a true asset to PASA and our school leaders across the Commonwealth."

Balliet guided her district of 3,900 students and 500 staff members through the COVID-19 pandemic and other crises with care, compassion, and a steady focus on student needs, fostering an environment that inspires a passion for learning and continual growth, personal integrity, the pursuit

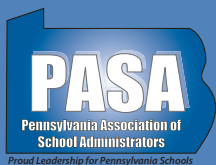


*Dr. Michele Balliet*

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#### **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](mailto:pasa@pasa-net.org). Copy deadline is the 1<sup>st</sup> of each month.

## FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR DR. MARK DIROCCO

### A HEARTFELT FAREWELL

This will be my final column as Executive Director of PASA. It has been an honor to serve in this position for the past six years and support our school leaders across the state. The best part of the job was getting to meet and interact with so many great educational leaders in a variety of settings. I am truly impressed with the courage, fortitude, and dedication of our educators in the position of school leadership.

The past two years have been excruciatingly difficult to say the least. Yet so many of our educators withstood the onslaught of the issues of the pandemic and the chaos that came with it to lead their district through the troubled waters with great distinction. You will always have my admiration for leading so well in such difficult times. Some of the most fulfilling work I did at PASA was providing updates and assistance to you during the height of the pandemic.

As I come to the sunset of my career, I am extremely grateful to all those who helped me along the way. They are too numerous to mention but I thank those who saw something in me many years ago and encouraged me to advance to leadership positions. I've tried to pay that forward over the years and encourage all of you to do the same in appreciation for those who helped you along your path. I have found it a far better feeling knowing that I helped someone succeed rather than focusing on my own success. Gratitude is a powerful force and has helped me maintain a positive perspective as a leader.

I thank all the officers and board members of PASA for giving me the privilege of leading this organization over the past six years. I also thank all the current and past PASA staff members for their hard work, loyalty, and dedication to PASA. I appreciate all they did for me and our members.

I hope you believe that our PASA members were well served during my tenure and the organization is poised to do well in the future. I wish Dr. Sherri Smith the best of success as she assumes the leadership of PASA. Sherri was my go-to person at PDE during the pandemic and helped me craft many of the briefings that we conducted for our members. I am confident that she will be an excellent Executive Director and will take PASA to greater heights during her tenure.

Please accept my best wishes for the future and know that I will be rooting for you and the work you do for children each day. Remember that no other institution in the history of our nation has done more good for more people than public education and you are part of that great history. I encourage you to keep the faith, stay strong, always do what you think is best, take measured risks when needed, and remember to take care of yourself. I look forward to reading about the great things you are doing for your students!

With Gratitude,  
Mark DiRocco



They are too numerous to mention but I thank those who saw something in me many years ago and encouraged me to advance to leadership positions. I've tried to pay that forward over the years and encourage all of you to do the same in appreciation for those who helped you along your path. I have found it a far better feeling knowing that I helped someone succeed rather than focusing on my own success. Gratitude is a powerful force and has helped me maintain a positive perspective as a leader.

### THOUGHT FOR THE DAY

Education is the Movement from darkness to light.

– Allan Bloom

## NATIONAL RECAP:

### **Free breakfast for all PA schoolchildren to start on Oct. 1**

— Pennsylvania parents will soon be able to check making breakfast off their list of things to do in the morning rush to get their children ready for school. Starting Oct. 1 and running through the remainder of the 2022-23 school year, that morning meal will be provided in schools. Read the rest of the story: [“Free breakfast for all PA schoolchildren to start on Oct. 1”](#) (from *Pennlive.com*, 9/9/22)

### **Governor Wolf Announces \$7 Million in Funding to Provide Free Healthy Snacks in PA Schools**

— Governor Tom Wolf announced that 266 elementary schools will receive \$7 million in grant funding to provide students with fresh fruit and vegetable snacks during the school day. The funding was awarded through the U.S. Department of Agriculture’s Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Program (FFVP). Read the rest of the story: [“Governor Wolf Announces \\$7 Million in Funding to Provide Free Healthy Snacks in PA Schools”](#) (from *Governor Wolf*, 8/31/22)

**The Kids Are All Right? Teens Are Optimistic About the Future**— It seems nearly every poll, study, and anecdote show that teenagers’ overall mental health is in a bad state. But here’s a bit of good news: A new [survey of teenagers by ACT](#) has found that despite all of the challenges thrown up by the pandemic in the past few years, teens are overwhelmingly optimistic about their futures. More than 80 percent of students said they feel high levels of optimism that their lives will turn out well, according to survey results released by ACT, the nonprofit that runs the ACT college entrance exam. High schoolers see well-paying jobs, home ownership, and good health in their futures. Read the rest of the story: [“The Kids Are All Right? Teens Are Optimistic About the Future”](#) (from *EducationWeek*, 9/8/22)

## PASA NAMES BALLIET

*continued from page 1*

of educational excellence and social responsibility. She’s also led the district through numerous construction and renovation projects including the launch of Bear Creek Elementary School and renovations to Elizabethtown Area Middle School and the East High Street and Bainbridge elementary schools.

Prior to her role in administration, Balliet served as the assistant to the superintendent for curriculum and instruction for Lower Dauphin School District, a Curriculum Specialist at the Capital Area Intermediate Unit, an educational consultant on curriculum, and a Program Director at PA Partnership for Economic Education.

“I am thrilled to be joining the PASA team as your next Director of Professional Development,” Dr. Michele M. Balliet said. “I look forward to this opportunity to walk alongside educational leaders across the Commonwealth, supporting them and their professional growth as they navigate the complexities of public education.”

### **Pennsylvania Releases New App to Connect Students and Families Experiencing Homelessness with Resources**

— The Pennsylvania Department of Education (PDE) announced the creation of *Finding Your Way in PA*, a Pennsylvania-based mobile and desktop app developed by the Center for Schools and Communities to help connect students and families experiencing homelessness with local services and resources. Read the rest of the story: [“Pennsylvania Releases New App to Connect Students and Families Experiencing Homelessness with Resources”](#) (from *PA Dept. of Ed*, 7/26/22)

## LEGISLATIVE NEWS:

### **Ortitay Appointed to Basic Education Funding Commission**

— Speaker of the House Bryan Cutler (R-Lancaster) recently appointed Rep. Jason Ortity (R-Washington/Allegheny) to be one of two representatives from the House Republican Caucus on the Basic Education Funding Commission. Created by Act 51 of 2014, the 15-member bipartisan commission developed and recommended to the General Assembly in 2015 a new formula for distributing state funding for basic education to Pennsylvania school districts. Every few years the commission is reconstituted to review the formula to make sure it is working properly and make recommendations for changes. Read the rest of the story: [“Ortitay Appointed to Basic Education Funding Commission”](#) (from *Press Release* 8/15/22)

## STATE NEWS:

### **Slashed Funding, Equity, Parent Choice: PA Gov. Candidates Have Hugely Different Education Plans**

— Democratic gubernatorial candidate Josh Shapiro wants to continue to increase public education funding in Pennsylvania, while his opponent, Republican Doug Mastriano, wants to dramatically cut it. Mastriano, a state senator, would take the funds and move them to separate accounts parents can use to send their children to any school they want, including charter and religious schools. Read the rest of the story: [“Slashed Funding, Equity, Parent Choice: Pa. Gov. Candidates Have Hugely Different Education Plans”](#) (from *WHYY (PBS/NPR)*, 8/24/22)

### **Pennsylvania Department of Education: School Bus Drivers Play Critical Role For PA Students**

— Pennsylvania Department of Education Acting Secretary Eric Hagarty and the Pennsylvania School Bus Association (PSBA) visited Duncan to tour the Rohrer Bus facility in and highlight the critical role that school bus drivers play across the commonwealth. “As we work to ensure that students in all areas—rural, urban, and suburban alike—have access to a high-quality education, we must also provide access to safe, reliable transportation to and from school,” said Acting Secretary Hagarty. “School bus drivers are critical in that mission, and PDE is committed to supporting this industry as it works to recruit individuals to the workforce.” Read the rest of the story: [“Pennsylvania Department of Education: School Bus Drivers Play Critical Role For PA Students”](#) (from *PA Dept. of Edu.*, 9/6/22)





# FALL FOR OPTIMISM

BY JOHN SANVILLE,  
2021-22 INCOMING PASA BOARD PRESIDENT



Greetings to everyone across Pennsylvania. I am writing to you from Chester County in the south-east corner of the Commonwealth. However, wherever you are reading this the school year is underway. The work that began as early as last winter and that continued during the spring and summer has paid off. This is truly the time to exhale and refocus on making the educational experience a little better next year.

*Education is all a matter of building bridges.* ~ Ralph Ellison. I love this quote because it sums up what I believe to be true - that when we make connections between students and teachers, parents and educators, and communities and schools - students and staff are best able to thrive and grow. When we intend to build bridges, our optimism becomes vital to success. Each element of the bridge needs to be aligned with our stated district missions. Completion of the task is multi-layered and needs the input, experience, and energy of many. In research studies the evidence is overwhelming - people work harder for and prefer to follow optimistic leaders.

So ... where do we get the optimism that will make building bridges easier? Start with yourself. It is well-known that when we project happiness on others - it catches on. Everyone around you derives meaning by the way you carry yourself - so say good morning and smile as you walk in. Remind yourself that how you respond to circumstances and people matters not only in the moment but after it by those who see it and or are impacted by it. Set yourself up for success by approaching each situation by anticipating a positive outcome. Even when that seems impossible - there is always a better option - and if you believe that you will always find it.

We are living in a world where change is constant and challenges to schools are many. Increasingly it is our ability to be nimble while leading that makes the difference. Like you, I have walked into meetings where there were more questions than answers, where frustration hung in the air, and where it seemed like there were two camps instead of one community. And like you, sometimes it got the better of me until I was able to readjust my thinking and get my bearings. This is where underlying optimism makes the difference.

There are dozens of opportunities every day including when you come in and leave work, during meetings, during conversations in the hall, when asking or answering questions, on the phone, online, and a million other places. Schools are filled with people and all kinds of adventures and activities and each is a chance to share your positive outlook. So as we prepare for the shorter days, cooler nights, and the brilliant colors of fall, I ask that we all dig a little deeper to find that part of ourselves that is confident and strong.

You are where you are because of hard work, dedication, and commitment to creating and maintaining positive educational environments. So, roll up your sleeves and be the source of optimism for your office, your school, and your community. Let it become a habit and soon others will adopt it too. Before you know it there are more smiles and more accomplishments. There is no downside!

So now I offer wise words from Helen Keller.... Optimism is the faith that leads to achievement. Nothing can be done without hope and confidence. Here is to making 2022-23 the year Pennsylvania schools adopted optimism - a zero cost plan - and benefited from the changes it brought.

## HONORING DIROCCO

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14 as superintendent. Under his leadership, the Lewisburg's student achievement levels were consistently in the top 5 percent in the Commonwealth and ranked in the top 50 Pennsylvania schools for student SAT scores for 11 years.

Prior to becoming superintendent, Dr. DiRocco served as both the middle and high school principal at Lewisburg Area School District for five years.

His leadership at the district earned him recognition as the Pennsylvania Superintendent of the Year in 2016.

"It's hard to find the words to express the gratitude for a person who has given so selflessly and dedicated one's entire career to leading and supporting public education," Smith said. "You have been an inspiration to all of us and an excellent example for all educational leaders to aspire to. Thank you for your service, your compassion and your dedication to education and students of the Commonwealth."

From all the staff at PASA, we're honored to have your leadership and guidance over the last six year. Thank you, Mark. We wish you the very best in the relaxing years of retirement!



*Dr. Mark DiRocco and Dr. Sherri Smith embrace at Mark's retirement celebration at the Country Club of Harrisburg.*

**To view Mark's  
retirement video,  
[CLICK HERE.](#)**





## WHAT TO KNOW BEFORE USING BUS BROKERS

The Pennsylvania Bus Association (PBA) wants to alert you to a troubling trend we are seeing across the United States regarding a new type of “bus company” marketed to school districts. The problem is that these are not bus companies at all, but artfully created websites that imitate a bus company, using various names and websites. They do not own any buses or motorcoaches, or maintenance facilities, nor do they employ any drivers, mechanics, or typical support staff.

Simply a phenomenon of the internet, these “companies” are known as brokers and, once they capture someone’s business, they simply try to find a real, but unsuspecting bus company that will accept the trip. Savvy bus and motorcoach companies refuse business from brokers. Their pattern of not paying bus companies or disclosing the details of a trip is, unfortunately, all too familiar.

Recently, we have seen school officials trying to find buses at the last minute because the contracted carrier (the broker) failed to deliver a bus. Brokers rarely disclose they are a broker, so the school official believes they have contracted with a real bus company.

In contrast, PBA’s members consist of men and women business owners that make their home in Pennsylvania. We have invested in expensive buses, maintenance, and office facilities, and employ thousands of Pennsylvanians. Whether taking students on their first trip to Washington, D.C., a local museum, or a school sporting event, PBA’s member companies and their employees take immense pride in providing this transportation to our neighbors and communities.

A list of member bus and motorcoach companies domiciled in and, more important, invested in Pennsylvania with tangible assets and employees is on our website at [www.pabus.org](http://www.pabus.org). We hope this information will go a long way toward avoiding canceled trips and disappointing any more students. We also hope, too, that this message gets to the school personnel who make transportation decisions at the school level.

Founded in 1923, the Pennsylvania Bus Association has functioned without interruption and with an unrelenting commitment to the safety of the traveling public and the economic well-being of its member companies. PBA boasts a well-rounded program of activities for both bus operator and supplier members and carriers with a current membership of over 750 entities. Governmental affairs, travel and tourism marketing, education, safety, and communication constitute the major areas of involvement for this, one of the oldest public passenger transportation associations in the United States.

If you have any questions or need help finding bus service, please feel free to contact the Executive Director of the Pennsylvania Bus Association Pattie Cowley at [director@pabus.org](mailto:director@pabus.org).

*Tammy Wolf-Baker, chair of the Pennsylvania Bus Association (PBA)*

**Thank you to our Diamond Sponsors:**



### For Educational Leaders, By Educational Leaders **PASA MENTOR COACHING PROGRAM**

Our superintendents and assistant superintendents continue to be challenged in ways we never imagined possible. The pandemic related complexities above and beyond the “normal” requirements for leading a school district are overwhelming, especially to those who are just beginning their roles as superintendents or assistant superintendents. The support of an experienced current or former Pennsylvania-based superintendent can be especially beneficial to the new career superintendent or assistant superintendent’s peace of mind, decision-making, and goal achievement.

PASA has developed and is piloting a mentor coaching program to assist with the unexpected and normal challenges of the job. Our program is based upon various international and national mentoring and coaching models. It provides a highly personalized approach, customized to the mentee’s needs and/or goals, in which an experienced, skilled mentor coach serves as the mentee’s thought partner.

Most successful executives, athletes, musicians, etc. utilize an experienced and skilled mentor and/or coach for ongoing guidance and training. You, too, deserve this opportunity.

For more information about PASA’s program, visit our website at <https://www.pasa-net.org/mentor> or contact Dr. Sherri Smith at [ssmith@pasa-net.org](mailto:ssmith@pasa-net.org).

# COMMUNICATIONS TIP OF THE MONTH

BY MARIA SOBOL, WELL CLINIC

For more information on self-help resources, visit [the Well Clinic](#).

How we communicate in the world has a major impact on virtually every aspect of our lives and most of us don't even really think about it—we just do it automatically.... Below are some specific ways you can begin to improve your communication and relationship-building skills.

## Be Present:

This one sounds so simple and it is. But simple does not always mean easy. Being present just means to purposely be aware of what is happening in the moment. So often we are in our heads thinking about something that happened earlier in the day, or planning what we might do later, or telling ourselves a story about what a particular interaction means about ourselves or someone else.

Being present and aware means noticing what is happening in the moment without attaching any sort of meaning to it. The next time you have a conversation with someone, experiment with just noticing your thoughts, physical sensations, and emotional responses without getting caught up in and carried away with them.

## Really Listen:

So often when we are in conversation with someone, our minds move easily to other places. We often recall a similar experience that we have had, we may feel pressure to come up with a good piece of advice, we may be making a judgment about what the other person is telling us, or our minds may just wander to what we are going to have for dinner.

Notice if this happens and then return to the person who is talking and just try to listen. We can often feel very pulled to respond with advice or to share our own experiences. Practice just listening with a kindness and warmth, solid eye contact, and an open and attentive body posture.

## Seek to Understand:

So often our actions and responses to others are driven by some kind of agenda: to be right, to make the other person wrong, to get our point across, or to show off or prove our own knowledge or accomplishments. When our interactions are primarily driven by our own agendas, our ability to really understand and connect with another person's experience is significantly limited.

In your next conversation with someone, try to notice when you feel compelled to offer advice or your own experience. Ask yourself why you want to offer these ideas—see if you can identify an agenda that stems from a need that you have for yourself.

Try asking clarifying questions to gain a deeper understanding of what the person is telling you rather than offering your own experience or advice. This can show the person that you are really focused on and interested in them, which facilitates a stronger connection. A sincere quality connection with another person allows space for and gives rise to more productive discussions and more skillful navigation of interaction. Improved connection also deepens the relationship, which leads to more fulfilling and meaningful life experiences.

## Use Active/Reflective Listening

One of the [best ways](#) we can be present, attentive, and show another person that we are listening and wanting to understand is to use active/reflective listening. Reflective listening is a communication strategy in which the listener seeks to understand what the other is thinking and feeling and to convey this understanding back to the person.

**You can practice this type of listening by using the following guidelines:**

- ♦ Focus on the conversation and try to embrace the other person's perspective without agreeing or disagreeing.
- ♦ Use non-verbal communication to mirror the person's mood and feelings—for example, use a similar tone of voice and facial expression.
- ♦ Summarize what the other is saying and repeat back the ideas by using the other person's own words.
- ♦ Stick with the other's specific ideas without digressing to other topics.
- ♦ Listen for the feelings behind the other person's words and reflect those feelings back to the person.

## Practice Silence

As we go through our fast-paced, multi-tasking lifestyles we tend to move quickly to responses that attempt to fix and problem-solve. However, one of the most effective communication tools we can use is silence. Next time you feel compelled to offer a suggestion or idea, try pausing with a couple of breaths and allow a few seconds to pass before saying something.

It can be helpful to take a moment to let someone's thoughts, ideas, and feelings sink in so that we can reflect on them ourselves and respond in a kind, warm, and present way. In a similar way, waiting several hours or a day to respond to someone in a text or an email can help settle some of the feelings that come up in you and give you time to think about and reflect what will be useful and helpful to facilitate connection with the other person.

Try practicing some of these ideas in your next conversation and see how it goes. You might be pleasantly surprised at how much the discussion can open up and result in you feeling more connected to the other person (and to yourself). You might even get some positive feedback from others about what a good friend, co-worker, or spouse you are.



## EMPLOYING ACTIVE LISTENING



# WHY LEADERSHIP MATTERS IN ESTABLISHING A CULTURE OF SOCIAL, EMOTIONAL, AND ACADEMIC LEARNING (SEAL)

BY DENNIS BEST, ASSISTANT TO THE SUPERINTENDENT FOR SCHOOLS & STUDENT SERVICES AND  
MICHELLE GILL, SOCIAL, EMOTIONAL, AND ACADEMIC LEARNING (SEAL) COORDINATOR,  
CENTENNIAL SCHOOL DISTRICT



*Dennis Best*

Despite our best efforts, there are some things we all know but fail to act on proactively. Educational leaders have long been aware of the need to consistently address students' social, emotional, and academic learning (SEAL) needs.

However, due to educational leaders' many hats, this recognized need was more frequently addressed in pockets than across school organizations. The impact of the pandemic only accelerated our collec-

tive desire to strengthen SEAL support. A recent report published by the United States Government Accountability Office (2022) highlights this impact as seen during the 2020-21 school year:

Nearly two-thirds of teachers (61 percent) had more students who showed signs of emotional distress than in a typical year. In addition, among those teachers who had students who made less academic progress compared to a typical year, the vast majority said social or emotional issues were a contributing factor to the lack of progress. These issues were especially common in high school.

Anticipating those increased needs, the Centennial School District's (CSD) leadership team sought to evaluate and potentially refine the systems and practices used to support students' social and emotional wellness throughout the district. Therefore, in the spring of 2021, the CSD Board of School Directors approved a new position to lead this work – a Social, Emotional, and Academic Learning (SEAL) Coordinator. In contrast to the more widely used acronym SEL, SEAL reflects CSD's organizational stance that social and emotional learning is as important as, and supports, academic learning. (Durlak., et al. 2011)

## SEAL COORDINATION - WHO OWNS THE WORK?

Dedicating SEAL coordination to a new position, instead of adding it to a previously existing position, reflects the district's commitment to sustaining this work.

Adding school- or district-level coordination to a current position would have served as irony, considering the impact it could have on the social and emotional well-being of the designated employee, as well as potentially setting the initiative up for failure.

Further, housing the position within CSD's Schools and Student Services department created the potential for systemic impact through district-level coordination of evidence-based K-12 SEAL practices.

This action represented an intentional organizational shift for CSD.

Previously, well-intended approaches to social-emotional learning existed in some classrooms and pockets of schools. While that addressed the needs of some students, this approach no longer aligned with our understanding of SEAL as a universal, tier 1 approach, nor did it reflect CSD's commitment to equity in educational opportunities for all students.

Adding and staffing the SEAL Coordinator position was CSD's initial step toward better addressing its students' social, emotional, and academic needs. The next, and equally critical step, was soliciting the buy-in of the district's building level administrators to support the SEAL Coordinator in carrying out this work – building shared ownership of SEAL implementation. Again, without the support of the building-level administrators, the intended student outcomes would not be attainable.

Principal "buy-in" and collaboration with the SEAL coordinator are critical to this process as they set an organizational culture in their school that impacts the school's climate.

## ORGANIZATIONAL CULTURE

Principals are responsible for constructing the organizational norms by which school constituents are expected to interact. This includes preferred modes of communication, shared priorities, and behavioral etiquette. To become pervasive, principals must model these norms and encourage school community members to abide by these expectations consistently. Established organizational cultures ultimately become the fabric of a school (Louis, Leithwood, Wahlstrom, & Anderson, 2010).

Simply put, when principals "own" SEAL, eliciting staff "buy-in" and subsequently permeating the practice throughout the school's culture is a likely outcome.

## SCHOOL CLIMATE

Principals that establish an organizational culture of respectful behavior by modeling respectful interactions with the constituents of their schools enhance the school climate.

In such instances, the principal values teachers and students, and the resulting climate of respect encapsulates the interactions between teachers and students (Koth, Bradshaw, & Leaf, 2008).

School cultures and climates characterized by trust, respect, engagement, high expectations, and supportive practices create the necessary conditions for students to continuously develop and practice practical social and emotional skills (Louis, Leithwood, Wahlstrom, & Anderson, 2010).

*See SEAL, page 8*



*Michelle Gill*



## WHAT DOES SEAL IMPLEMENTATION LOOK LIKE IN SCHOOLS FOR LEADERS?

Establishing a SEAL Coordinator position has provided relief and support for CSD's principals in better-addressing students' social, emotional, and academic needs.

The SEAL Coordinator can:

- ♦ Dedicate the time necessary to gather stakeholder input and lead the development of a district-wide comprehensive SEAL plan.
  - ♦ Collaborate with principals to transparently share the plan's why, how, and what.
  - ♦ Articulate a systematic process for implementation, data collection, and progress monitoring.
- Maintain alignment between SEAL goals and implementation steps, [Pennsylvania's Career Ready Skills](#), and existing district priorities.
- ♦ Design and facilitate professional learning to provide clarity and develop SEAL practices for leadership, staff, and community members.

In this arrangement, the requirements of principals are limited to sharing their leadership in demonstrating the importance of the initiative, subsequently eliciting the "buy-in" of staff and recursive collaboration with the SEAL Coordinator.

Systemic SEAL implementation is easily doable at the building level for principals when structured in this meaningful and collaborative way. Especially when juxtaposed with the unfortunate recipe for unsuccessful implementation of initiatives demonstrated too often in school districts - adding to the already overflowing plates of principals by asking them to lead work that may not be in their wheelhouse independently.

### Practical/concrete examples practitioners can use tomorrow to infuse these practices into their organization's culture.

In districts with or without a SEAL coordinator, leaders can leverage high-impact, low-maintenance practices to intentionally shape organizational culture and school climate - creating the conditions for social, emotional, and academic learning to flourish.

- ♦ **Cultivate one's Social-Emotional Competency:**
  - ❖ Use a personal SEL reflection, like the one [provided by CASEL](#), to build familiarity with your SEL competencies. Self-awareness, self-management strategies, and effective relationship skills provide protective factors that can increase leaders' resilience and allow leaders to model effective SEL skills in interactions with staff, students, and family members throughout the school day (Mahfouz et al., 2019).
  - ❖ Self-management strategies like taking a deep breath or pausing to allow a moment to process during interactions, model effective self-regulation, and enhance your ability to respond rather than react. Modeling this in everyday interactions also communicates that others can do the same, potentially impacting many in the school community.
  - ❖ Giving others the gift of your full presence through active listening models a key social and emotional skill, and sends the message that you value the person or people in front of you. In addition, the positive ripple effect of this practice on an organization's culture is far-reaching as staff mirror the practice with one another and among students.

- ♦ **Prioritize belonging and relational trust:**
  - ❖ Begin conversations and staff meetings with a brief inclusive opening such as, "what is a success you've experienced recently?" If you are with a small group, invite all members to share. For a large group, create groups of 4-6 people to share amongst themselves.
  - ❖ Create a calendar reminder system that prompts you to have a brief check-in with each staff member throughout the year, with specific students undergoing challenges, or with new students. Use this quick conversation, email, or phone call for good news, avoiding task-related school topics.
  - ❖ Notice and acknowledge what is going well. This does not need to be tied to a big incentives program or public ceremony. It can be as simple as including it as part of a conversation or email, or on a sticky note left on a desk that lets the person know that what they did is valued: "You put a lot of effort into that project!" or "Your team's collaboration is fun to see in action and shows in your work with students."

We anticipate that the increased prioritization of students' social, emotional, and academic learning needs over the last two years will become a sustained component of K-12 education. However, there can be a wide space between mere prioritization and students' improved social, emotional, and academic outcomes. School leaders have the potential to create a clear path through that space with their support for implementation steps and the robust and positive climate and culture they set.

Located in Bucks County, Pennsylvania, the Centennial School District comprises Warminster Township, Upper Southampton Township, and Ivyland Borough, serving approximately 5,300 students in grades K-12.

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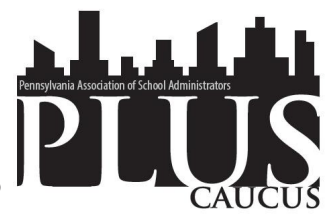
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# STAYING THE COURSE BY STAYING BALANCED

BY STEPHEN RODRIGUEZ, PLUS PRESIDENT



and more like the pre-pandemic experience school used to feel.

Yet, NO ONE wants to have a school year like last year or the year before! School life was hard on students, parents, teachers, and principals. But it was particularly stressful on superintendents. The average superintendency has consistently remained at about 3 years, and in 2021, the Commonwealth of PA saw 20 percent turnover, many positions of which are going unfilled for extended periods.

As I begin my seventh year in this role, I can hardly claim expert status, but if you listen to the advice of those I would label "Successful Superintendents" a clear theme can be detected. "It's not a sprint, it's a marathon" is a quote I've heard repeatedly, but I admit that such sage advice doesn't help when the deadlines, the projects, and the problems are mounting up and it's all I can do to stay afloat. The custodian of our administration building doesn't even need to verbalize the process for locking up the building while I'm still in it, he just knows to warn me so I don't set off the alarm and get surrounded by the police!

Even when we get out of the office at a decent hour, most of us know, we don't really stop working, we just change locations.

Sometimes, there is no choice but to push through and be the leader your district needs. But you will not last if that is your default position.

Keeping balance in life, consistently, will keep us healthier and better performing for the students, staff, and communities we serve. Stop feeling guilty about sleep, exercise, vacations, and hobbies. All of those are part of the secret sauce to surviving and succeeding as a leader.

Admittedly, this is not a popular model among school boards or community leaders. We are at the top of the "food chain" usually with a salary to match, so no one feels sorry for the boss. They just want results, and we as moral leaders feel compelled to comply and deliver.

The problem with such practices is that it either wears us out to the point of burnout and job seeking (contributing to the churn of school leaders), or to the point of poor performance because we are exhausted and stressed beyond what is healthy.

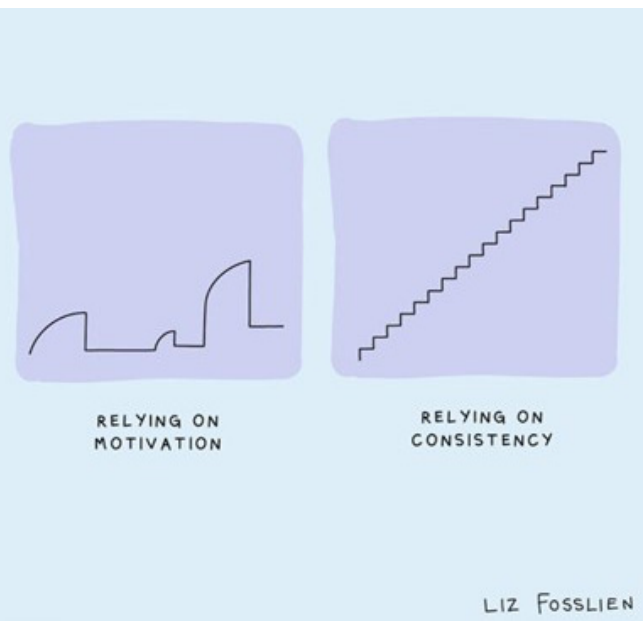
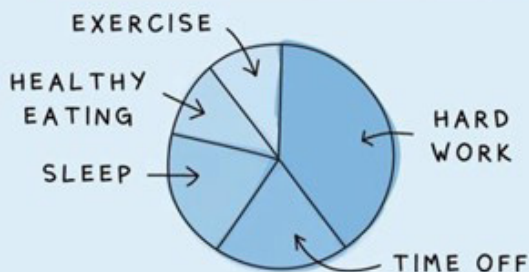
"Stay the Course" is a very old expression, borne from the nautical reference because changing course to avoid a storm or other trouble is a big temptation. It's one of my favorites because it forces me to match what I know to be good practice with what I do. The graphics clearly illustrate why we need encouragement to stay on the course! Keeping balance might be easy for those who have low-stress, low-visibility jobs. We don't have those jobs, and it is not easy for us. Balanced living, a balanced approach to leadership, and the discipline to stick to it does not come naturally. So my encouragement to you this year is simple, but not easy: Stay the Course! And Stay Balanced!



## WHAT I THOUGHT WOULD MAKE ME PRODUCTIVE



## WHAT ACTUALLY DOES



# FOCUS ON FRAMING TO ACHIEVE YOUR DESIRED OUTCOME

BY ADAM KULIKOWSKI



Raise your hand if you ever heard a loved one, friend or colleague say to you something along the lines of, 'it isn't what you said, it is how you said it,' in an argument or conversation.

We subconsciously frame our communications every day. We do this in the way we talk to others, what information we share and when and how we share that information.

When we must share bad news, we're thoughtful in how we share that information with others. Why? We know that the way we present what we have to say will affect how others react—it will affect the emotion they feel and the thoughts they formulate.

This is message framing. It's a critical tool in your proverbial bucket as a school leader.

In strategic communications, we use framing to help drive home our point of view, elicit emotion from those listening to us and refute counterpoints with which we may not agree.

Opening the new school year with positive energy and upbeat communications to staff and your school community likely helped others to feel more positive about the coming months.

That wasn't by coincidence.

"Think of message frames as shortcuts to mental models, with an added emotional component. Because people are more open to information if it's framed in a way that resonates with how they see the world, research about your audience, their values, and identities," advises Marketing Partners.

When we talk about difficult issues facing our school community or public education in general, I urge you to think about how you frame those messages with media, parents and caregivers, and the community.

A growing body of research in psychology, communication, conflict resolution, and decision-making indicates that because frames filter people's perception of an issue or problem, changing the frame changes the response. (Marketing Partners)

For example, when we talk about teacher shortages—a very real and serious problem that must be addressed to ensure our school communities continue to provide a quality educational experience to our students—what is the takeaway we want to elicit?

I would argue that we want our school communities to understand the challenge we are facing, know

that their children continue to receive a quality education thanks to short-term measures taken; and that we have a plan to develop a long-term solution to the issue.

Here are four elements to consider when you craft your communication:

1. **Values at Stake** - Why should your audience care? What is the shared value?
2. **Problem** - Document and describe
3. **Solution** - One clear solution; avoid compassion fatigue
4. **Action** - What one step can your audience concretely take?

For this example, the frame we use could look something like this:

"We all want our children to thrive as they learn and grow. Quality instructors are a vital part of that success. We need to better understand why some teachers have chosen to leave the education field and work to ensure young professionals considering career options see the rewards of being public education instructors. By better understanding why some have chosen to leave, we can position our district to create long-term solutions

to these issues and provide instructors with the elements they need to be successful and feel appreciated for their contributions to the success of children across the Commonwealth for years to come."

To learn more about framing, visit [www.marketing-partners.com](http://www.marketing-partners.com).

## MEMBER NEWS

### REGION 15:

Shippensburg Area School board August 22 approved the hire of **William August** as its next superintendent. August is currently the assistant superintendent at Big Spring School District.

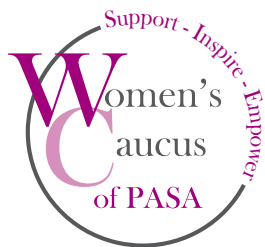
**James Estep** plans to retire as superintendent of South Middleton School District on January 2. Estep served in public education for more than 35 years, previously serving 11 years as superintendent of Mifflin County School District.

### REGION 18:

Crestwood School District named **Natasha Milazzo** acting superintendent, replacing **Vito Quaglia**. Board president Barry Boone said the board will not search for a new superintendent and plans to name Milazzo to the position.

Please report member news to PASA at [pasa@pasa-net.org](mailto: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](http://www.pasa-net.org) (Click on the "Leadership Development" button and look for "Career Center.")



# I HAVE LIMITED TIME TO FOCUS ON NEW TEACHERS! WHERE SHOULD I SPEND MY TIME?

BY SHERRI CONNELL, Ed.D, WOMEN'S CAUCUS SECRETARY



According to the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES), the annual turnover rate for teachers is about 16 percent a year; 8 percent leave the profession and another 8 percent move to other schools. This turnover has dire consequences for a school, including decreased school achievement, financial burdens, and operational disruptions.

One of the most frequent reasons teachers give as to why they leave a school or the profession is lack of administrative support. This issue, which has been exacerbated by school closures and online teaching due to COVID, is especially significant when we look at new teachers.

Administrators face their own challenges. While most say that being an instructional leader is important, many find themselves spending more time than they would like as school managers. With limited time and many teachers to supervise, supporting new teachers can feel overwhelming. Consider these three ways to focus on supporting new teachers so they become successful, committed, and less likely to want to leave their school or the profession.

**Empower Them** – teachers need to have a voice and need to collaborate if they are to grow.

Below are some suggestions for empowering your teachers.

## GIVE THEM A MENTOR

While mentors are required as part of many teacher induction programs, choosing the right mentor should be a priority for an administrator. A mentor does not need to share a grade level or subject area with a new teacher, they just need to be excellent teachers. A good mentor should have great communication skills, be committed to continuous improvement, and should have a solid understanding of good instruction.

**TIP: Mentors should check in daily and meet/reflect weekly. Have mentor training that new mentors must attend prior to getting a mentee.**

- ♦ **Monthly Meetings** – We hold a monthly meeting for new teachers with a focus.

While most districts give new teachers some professional development and focus areas, monthly meetings with specific topics support implementation and encourage teachers to collaborate. For example, March's topic might be learning strategies for reading subject-specific text.



Another month might be about how teachers should use Lesson Essential Questions throughout the lesson. Use your resources – have different presenters.

**TIP: Use data from walk-throughs and observations to determine topics!**

- ♦ **Encourage peer collaboration**

Peer collaboration doesn't just happen, it takes support! Have new teachers observe three other teachers during their first year and have them invite their mentor into their classrooms. After each visit, have the new teacher write a reflection about the observation and share it with the mentor and the administrator.

Some great conversations can come from these reflections.

**TIP: Require the WRITING of the reflection.**

- ♦ **Feedback is necessary for a Growth Mindset**

We want teachers to grow and improve but we often don't provide enough feedback for them to do so. After a teacher reflects, we need to provide feedback on their reflections and data/observations on what we are seeing. Feedback should be specific, focused, and appropriate and should follow the What, So What, Now What model.

**TIP: Give Specific, appropriate, and focused feedback and Recommendations – immediately set up a time for follow-up.**

**Coach Them** – Anyone who is learning to do something new needs to know what they are doing well, what they need to improve upon, and how to go about improving.

Coaching does that. Below are three suggestions for ways to help your teachers reflect and grow.

- ♦ **Walk-throughs**

If you have five new teachers in your building, spending five minutes in each of their classrooms at least four times a week will take less than two hours per week but will pay huge dividends. These walk-throughs can also be divided up among other buildings or district administrators.

These visits are not "gotchas" but should be about collecting data and providing feedback to support the implementation of any program or strategies on which your district is focusing.

**TIP: Use that data to target your PD, your monthly meeting topics, and your future full observations**

- ♦ **Observations**

See Limited Time, page 10



## LIMITED TIME

continued from page 11

Many districts use Charlotte Danielson's Framework for observations. Observations should be about data collection and lesson plan review. Do not make judgments at this point - collect data. Then give the data to the teachers and have them reflect (IN WRITING). Only after they reflect should you meet, discuss, and give feedback.

**TIP: Have the teacher determine what data will be collected prior to the observation. This should be based on their areas of need. OR Think about doing observations during teacher planning times – how are they planning? What an awesome time to understand their thinking process.**

- ♦ **Lesson plans**

How and when teachers plan is one of the biggest indicators of teacher success. Have the teacher plan for the content, not for the day. Have teachers plan two weeks out (yes, timing changes and that is okay). Have all teachers use the same planning framework. Instructional conversations and observations can be centered around these plans.

**TIP: Review new teacher plans and formulate a question or two for them to reflect upon (in writing).**

Example: You review the lesson and determine the teacher is not using a graphic organizer. Post the following question - I see in your lesson plan that your assignment is an error analysis of the lab experiment they completed. How are you going to help students organize their thoughts and evidence so they are able to meet your expectations in your rubric?

**Hold them Accountable** – Change/Improvement is hard and uncomfortable at the time. If it were easy, we would all be in shape. If we want teachers to commit to developing and reaching goals about their practices, educational leaders should do the following to increase accountability.

- ♦ **Data**

Data is everywhere! New teachers find themselves overwhelmed with data. Help them focus on data that is going to help them grow students. WHAT does the data say? SO WHAT does the data mean?

**TIP: Prior to a meeting, have teachers review their data and document the strengths and needs. Have them do a written reflection about what the data means. Many districts have "data worksheets" for this.**

- ♦ **Goal Setting**

This is the NOW WHAT. After the teacher sees and understands the data, how will that data be used to improve instruction and grow ALL students? I find that teaching SMART goal setting early on is crucial.

**TIP: Some very reflective teachers want to write too many goals. Focusing on one or two well written, well-measured goals is better than 10.**

- ♦ **Professional Development**

Professional Development (PD) is not just for Inservice Days. Professional development is an ongoing learning process. It is challenging and at times uncomfortable. Think about sending out one-page readings or a question for reflection.

What about doing a book study?

Make ALL faculty meetings about instruction so that new teachers see your veteran teachers discussing instruction and learning.

**TIP: Become the instructional leader that EXPECTS discussions about teaching and learning. When a teacher comes to your office to ask a question or talk about an issue before you have that discussion, ask about their instruction that day. "Briefly, what were your two or three learning activities last period?" "What did your students write about today (not taking notes – writing to understand, inform, or argue)?" "How did ALL of your students answer the lesson essential question during your summarizing activity today?"**

Teaching is not an easy profession, especially during those first one to three years. Giving your new teachers support, not in just words, but in actions, will increase the likelihood that they will stay on to eventually become one of your mentors!



*All programs and meetings are virtual.*

See the PASA web site at [www.pasa-net.org](http://www.pasa-net.org).

### **SEPTEMBER**

21-22 New Superintendents' Academy Part 1

### **OCTOBER**

4, 5, 11 Basics of School Budgeting and Finance: Understanding the Basic Education Formula

14 Summit for Assistant Superintendents and Supervisors

20 Managing the Risks: Record Retention, Right to Know and Litigation Holds

31-2 PASA/PSBA Fall Conference (Poconos)

### **NOVEMBER**

15 Managing the Risks: Fiscal Responsibilities—Managing Revenues and Expenditures

16 Women's Caucus Annual Fall Dinner

17-18 New Superintendents' Academy, Part 2: Systems Leadership

28, 29 Basics of School Budgeting and Finance: Federal Programs and Special Education Funding

### **DECEMBER**

6 Basics of School Budgeting and Finance: Federal Programs and Special Education Funding

13 Managing the Risks: The PA Public Official and Employees Ethics Act—Compliance and Potential Unintended Violations



## 5 KEY ELEMENTS TO CONSIDER AS YOU UPDATE & ENHANCE YOUR SCHOOL SAFETY PLANS

*As schools begin a new year, administrators and communities must come together to focus on solving the complex and multifaceted issue of school safety.*

BY JP GUILBAULT

### **EmpowerED Superintendent edLeader Panel Series**

The EmpowerED Superintendent edLeader Panel Series, which is co-hosted by AASA, CoSN, and edWeb.net and sponsored by ClassLink, aired its most recent live broadcast, *Cybersecurity in Today's Learning Environments: What School Leaders Must Know and Do* on Monday, September 12, 2022, at 5:00 pm Eastern Time. Superintendents Dr. Doug Brubaker, Texarkana ISD, TX, and Glenn Robbins, Brigantine Public Schools, NJ, joined Lorrie Owens, Chief Technology Officer, Integrated Technology Services, San Mateo County Office of Education, CA, and host/moderator Ann McMullan in sharing the strategies they use to analyze a network's cybersecurity status and build and sustain school networks that are created to maximize security. They covered the processes they have established to respond to a network attack if such an event does occur. If you missed the live broadcast, you can access the free recording and podcast version at:

<https://home.edweb.net/webinar/supers20220912/>

You are also welcome to register for future EmpowerED Superintendent edLeader Panel broadcasts and access previous broadcasts in this series at <https://home.edweb.net/supers/>.

### **CoSN Superintendent Advisory Panel Discussion on Successes and Challenges in Leading School Districts Today**

During the May 2022 virtual meeting of the CoSN Superintendent Advisory Panel, the Superintendents and other panel members broke into small groups to share their ideas about what has been successful and what challenges they see as they start the 2022-2023 school year. Their group discussions revolved around the following questions:

1. What have you learned and how are you thinking about leveraging technology as you open school in the fall of 2022?
2. What strategies are you utilizing this summer to lead with innovation? How will you overcome the sense of inertia and desire to "return to normal"?

You are invited to read a summary of the responses and use any or all of the thoughts listed to start similar discussions in your school or district. Access the summary report at:

<https://www.cosn.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/07/Emp-SupMaySummary.pdf>

**CoSN Membership:** If you, your school, or district would like more information about joining CoSN or getting more involved with CoSN, please contact Me'Shell Sheffield, CoSN Director of Membership and State Chapters, at [MSheffield@cosn.org](mailto:MSheffield@cosn.org).

Keeping staff and students safe is the first step in creating a positive learning environment, but whole-child wellness and success require more than physical safety. Now, during Suicide Awareness and Prevention Month, and always, we must remember that students can't reach their full potential unless they feel safe and supported – physically, socially and emotionally



The last two years have seen a tragic decline in student mental health, leading to an increase in aggression, self-harm, and violence. Add to this issue an ever-changing landscape of threats and the growing complexity of government regulations, and the thought of developing a comprehensive school safety plan can seem overwhelming. There's no doubt that school safety is multifaceted and complex, but with a robust framework that focuses on the physical as well as emotional well-being of the whole child, K-12 schools can promote the long-term development and success of students.

### **Achieving — and Maintaining — Whole-Child Safety**

Here are 5 key elements to consider as you update your school safety plans and enhance your schools' holistic culture of safety this fall:

1. **School Culture & Climate** – A strong foundation in social-emotional and mental wellness contributes to the quality and character of a school's climate. A positive learning environment fosters favorable student development, as well as the core values and expectations that promote feelings of social, emotional and physical safety.
2. **Physical & Cyber Safety** – To ensure the physical safety and security of K-12 schools, a variety of factors must be evaluated regularly – from physical and digital safety measures to assessment of risks associated with natural disasters. In addition to these measures, cyber safety safeguards must be put in place to protect students from online threats. Leveraging appropriate and ethical technology to keep harmful content out of the hands of students and alert school staff about concerning behavior related to bullying/cyberbullying, harm to self, substance abuse and acts of violence is critical.
3. **Threat Detection, Assessment & Intervention** – From anonymous tip reporting to online social listening, technology that captures leakage and spots early signs of risk are needed. In addition, the formation and training of multidisciplinary threat assessment teams and their use of evidence-based technology can help schools detect, assess and apply customized intervention plans that meet the individualized needs of students in crisis.
4. **Emergency Preparedness & Response** – Emergency preparedness and response are vital to day-to-day operations, supporting school safety from prevention through reunification and recovery. These are the emergency operation plans, policies and

Your AASA lobbyists live and breathe Washington headlines all day and night. Whether in our work with various coalitions—we are on the board or chair six different national coalitions—or in our individual capacities, we are constantly reading and sharing news on social media, on the AASA Advocacy app or via email.

While we are fortunate to be interviewed frequently by national news outlets and are able to share AASA's views on policy and funding matters frequently, sometimes we actually like to be the news. And that's what we spent the August recess trying to accomplish.

This month, AASA is releasing two new surveys touching on the most important policy and funding issues in the K-12 federal policy space: ARP funding and educator shortages. The ability to influence policy is much greater when you can point to how real people—i.e. real superintendents—who are impacted by the policy and funding decisions or indecisions in Washington D.C.

Because we have an incredible membership that is responsive to our requests for feedback and takes time to answer our emails requesting “2 minutes of their time,” we are able to generate interesting new datapoints, shift policy debates and make our own headlines and in turn, grab policymakers' attention.

On September 1, we released the third in our series on how districts are spending ARP funding. There are a lot of takes in the media and in Washington about how districts are spending (and not spending) this unprecedented funding on both sides of the aisle, and we felt it was important to chart a clear narrative right away about what district leaders' spending priorities are and what, if any, obstacles they are experiencing in spending this funding.

This [month's report](#) was taken from data we collected in July from a representative sample of more than 500 AASA members across the U.S. The results show that districts' ARP spending priorities have remained consistent from the 2021-2022 school year to the 2022-2023 school year.

Improving instructional practices, expanding learning opportunities and learning time, hiring staff and addressing the social-emotional needs of students remain a top priority of public school system leaders, regardless of state, size of district or locale. District leaders continue to report they are using ARP funding for long-term system changes that will prioritize a shift in expanding whole child supports, including social, emotional, mental, and the physical health and development of their students.

The report also details how spending on districts' third long-term priority—renovating school facilities and improving ventilation—continues to be hampered by the lack of federal guidance on whether districts will be able to extend the timeline for these projects, which have been stymied by supply-chain issues, worker shortages and inflation. Almost half of district leaders indicate the 2024 deadline presents an obstacle to completing these critical projects.

Superintendents also predicted what areas they would be forced to cut in September 2024 when the deadline for spending ARP funding occurs. Fifty-seven percent reported they will decrease, or end summer learning and enrichment offerings currently being provided to students. Fifty-three percent reported they will have to end contracts with specialist staff, such as counselors, social workers and reading specialists, to support student needs by September 2024. Forty-four percent reported they will have to stop compensating staff for working additional hours for extended school year/day programming they offer.

Approximately half (49%) of respondents reported that a later deadline to spend ARP funding would allow them to retain recently hired staff and extend recently added programs and supports for students that are making a big difference both in learning recovery efforts and in addressing the social-emotional needs of students.

On September 8, AASA will release its second survey which attempts to gauge the pervasiveness of the staffing shortage in schools. More than 900 AASA members participated in the survey from 47 states.

The data show that three-quarters of districts are facing a vacancy rate of 0-5% of needed instructional positions at the start of the school year while almost half report a vacancy rate of 0-5% of non-instructional staff. When asked what factors are contributing to staffing vacancies, the top 5 responses from superintendents are: Not enough applicants, losing staff to other districts, staff desire for better pay (57%), departure from field entirely or via retirement, and increased politicization and burnout. When asked to compare vacancy rates at the start of this school year to the start of last school year, approximately 10% of district leaders report lower vacancy rates this year while 22% report comparable vacancy rates.

These two new surveys enable the AASA Advocacy Team to better lobby for more flexible spending deadlines for ARP and to urge Congress to allow districts more time to retain the staff districts have hired with ARP funds for as long as possible. The new educator shortage data is a critical reminder of the serious impact the pandemic has had on the teacher pipeline and the need of a significant, sustainable solution teacher and staffing shortages.

Thank you for your time to respond to our surveys and to engage in AASA advocacy. We pride ourselves on truly representing the voice and priorities of the nation's public school superintendents, and these two surveys are just the most recent and clear examples of superintendent voices impacting education.

## FIVE KEY ELEMENTS

*continued from page 13*

procedures that allow districts to stay compliant, ensuring the training and all-hazards readiness of staff and students for drills and other exercises.

5. **Incident Management & Recovery** – Safety is not linear. Having and implementing a Continuity of Operations Plan helps a school begin the long recovery process if needed. Within the days, weeks and months following a critical incident, conversations are certain to circle back to the pillars of support mentioned above, all focused on how to keep those affected feeling physically, socially and emotionally safe while preventing acts of violence from reoccurring.

### **Navigate360's Whole-Child Solutions Can Help You Create a Culture of Safety**

Maintaining school safety is an ever-changing initiative that requires diligent effort from solution providers as well as every part of the school community. The good news is that achieving this goal can start with school leaders as you develop and implement dynamic school safety and security programs. At Navigate360, our mission is to provide a holistic suite of solutions that support whole-child safety. Learn more about how we can help your school community stay safe and thrive [here](#).



The latest National Assessment of Educational Progress showed a significant decline in math and reading scores among 9-year-olds across the U.S. AASA Executive Director Daniel A. Domenech released the following statement:

*This report is disappointing, yet the factors contributing to the findings are not surprising given what the education landscape has looked like over the past two-and-a-half years. The exodus of education leaders from the profession during the pandemic is unprecedented. The alarming educator shortage, which has plagued our communities even before the outbreak, continues to be felt in our communities. The lack of mental health personnel in schools reduces the ability for students to access social and emotional supports. What's more, the continued threat of gun violence in our school environments adds to the stress of what our schools are supposed to be—a safe place to learn.*

*"We are encouraged that districts we've surveyed will continue to prioritize investments in expanding summer learning and enrichment offerings, adding specialist staff such as mental health personnel and reading specialists and investing in high-quality instructional materials and curriculum.*

*"We urge Congress to move swiftly to extend the obligation deadline for American Rescue Plan funding to ensure students benefit from the additional staff and additional access to instructional programming they so desperately need. The road map for success for ARP is long, and implementation work will continue to require candid communication between Congress, the administration and school system leaders."*

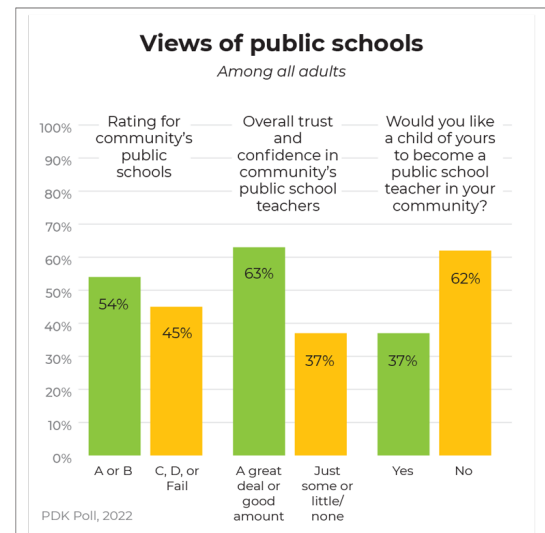
#### Quotes in the Sept. issue of AASA's School Administrator:

"I've never been prouder to be a public school leader. Public education is the hope of our country. When the history of the pandemic is written, public school educators are going to be remembered as those who are making a difference in the lives of kids. –Paul Imhoff, 2021–22 President, AASA, The School Superintendents Association

"One wise management guru says, Culture eats strategy for breakfast. Culture wars are proving that point. We can't strategize our way out of this mess. Needed is the rebuilding of a strong and resilient culture... where people are acknowledged, heard and to the extent possible, heeded." - From ["Growing a Culture of Care"](#)

One of the lasting legacies of the COVID-19 pandemic will be its exposure of pre-existing societal inequities to a wider audience. While inequities have existed in society and schools since they were created, the pandemic has caused many of us to see them with greater clarity. - From ["The Launch of Our Equity Website"](#)

Without understanding the goals and needs being met in the current state, leaders are likely to miss potentially powerful forces that will work hard against change efforts... When leaders go about the important process of defining and understanding a problem or opportunity, it's likely they also discover reasons that help to explain why things are the way they are. - From [Getting Unstuck on the Path of Organizational Change](#)



PDK Poll of the Public's Attitude Toward Public Schools shows a 63 percent level of overall trust and confidence in their community's public school teachers. Fifty-four percent of those polled would rate their community's public schools as 'A' or 'B'. Local ratings are at a nearly five-decade high and a majority have trust and confidence in teachers, yet there's a wide recognition that the challenges they face make their jobs broadly undesirable, according to the PDK Poll.

[Read the full report.](#)

#### In the September issue of School Administrator magazine:

AASA packed the September issues with a number of engaging articles including, "Getting Unstuck on the Path of Organizational Change," "Values that Drive Leadership Work," "Bring Back the Renaissance Leader," and "A Welcome Opportunity for Redesigned Schooling"

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