

Ecomm Sept 4

1. Welcome from Nicole
2. Not Our Only Choices!
3. Keystones
4. New Website
5. Membership Renewals
6. News From Around the State and Nation

Welcome from Nicole

Welcome back to school! I hope you and your families had some time to rest, relax and rejuvenate this past summer.

I love living in Pennsylvania because we can look forward to the wonderful change in seasons. The fall means colder weather, warm cider, the best fresh apples, and trips to the pumpkin patch. As I reflect back over one year, I am amazed by how much my job changed in just one year! I helped start a Foundation for my district, started selling advertising in publications to offset the costs, and starting selling sponsorships to events to generate revenue. In all, my office raised \$166,000 in the first year of these new activities.

From the posts on the PenSPRA Linked In Users Group, it seems like many of you have also been given the "Alternative Revenue Generator" hat to wear. It may seem overwhelming at first, but my best advice is to try one program at a time and start talking to people/businesses in your community who may be interested in helping out. One idea that I am embarking on is to work with a local company to speak with our high school marketing class about branding. You can then ask the marketing executives at the company to turn the table around and ask the class to brainstorm what our school district brand means to them. I am hoping the class can then work on a campaign to "brand" our school district and develop a giving campaign that would entice people to make a gift to our Foundation.

Doing more with less has also prompted me to tap our local colleges for interns in the field of graphic design and communications to help me with my workload. Over the years, I have worked with stellar interns who have helped me with everything from event planning to the graphic design of print publications to the generation of news articles and press releases.

As I look into the future, I am not sure what will become of public education. As a parent, I obviously worry about the children and our society as whole. I know that the only thing we can pretty much count on, however, is that things are going to change. As an ambassador for the district, I will do whatever I can to keep us thriving. To me, it is not a question of what we can do to help public education survive, but what we can and should do to help ensure that it thrives!

It is with this message that I welcome you all back to a new school year. I look forward to hearing from you throughout the year via email and at PenSPRA's regional workshops and Annual Symposium when we can meet face-to-face and develop the support network that so many of us have relied on in PenSPRA. Know that you are never alone in your endeavors and that your PR colleagues around the state are here to help, respond, bounce ideas off of, and listen. As you look over your goals for the year, I invite you to make it a point to ask questions and share on the Linked In site this year, get involved by attending a PenSPRA event that you have not attended before (so many events are FREE!), and share

your success stories with Karen. She in turn will share them with the whole network via her email blast updates that are done bi-weekly throughout the year. Best wishes for a wonderful year!

Yours in service to public education,
Nicole McGalla

Not Our Only Choices!

I noted this excerpt from Jeb Bush's speech at the Republican convention: "Choose. You can either help the politically powerful unions. Or you can help the kids." It's one of those quick sound bites the politicians and the media love to throw around. You have likely heard something similar from other speeches recently. The problem is that it is just plain WRONG. These are not the only two choices we have for our schools, and don't accept it. Fight this thinking! Very few complex issues are so cut and dry and education certainly isn't either. Education reform must clearly be a balance of increased funding, sensible accountability measures for student achievement and teacher performance and a continued push to help the schools that need it most. I know I can count on school PR pros to tone down this rhetoric and clarify what should be done to help our kids!

Keystones

Districts were notified over the summer as to an earlier testing date for the Keystone exams. Although passing grades on the exams aren't required for graduation until the class of 2017, current 11th graders will take the exams this year in place of the PSSA's. Students will be tested in Algebra 1, Biology and Literature. Keystones are likely to result in a good number of questions from students and parents, because two of the subjects tested are often taken well before the junior year. We could have 8th, 9th, 10th and 11th graders taking these tests. I have compiled some online resources about the Keystones here, and will work to put together a concise summary of the changes in a future e-Comm.

This blog has a good summary of the Keystones testing schedule.

<http://chalkandtalk.wordpress.com/2012/05/19/keystone-exam-to-replace-pssa-in-2013/>

This is an FAQ for parents about Keystones

http://static.pdesas.org/Content/Documents/Information_for_Parents_or_Guardians_PA_Keystone_Exams_Aug_2012_final.pdf

This article discusses some of the challenges being faced by districts due to the sudden shift in testing dates:

<http://www.mcall.com/news/local/parkland/mc-state-keystone-exams-20120903,0,205928,full.story>

New Website

We are excited to announce that PenSPRA will debut a new website in about three months! The executive board has recently approved a contract with eSchoolView to design and host our site. The new site will allow for online membership registration with credit card payments, online conference registration, enhanced use of photos and videos, a chat room and more!

While we are in the design phase, please let us know what features or resources you would like to see on the new site. Also, we want the site to reflect the positive atmosphere in our public schools. Please

send photos of your students engaged in learning for use on the site. We should use our site to promote positive happenings in our schools! Send photos or ideas to karenwsmith5@gmail.com.

Membership Renewals

It's membership renewal time. Please click here for a form.

Useful Resources

The US Dept. of Ed offers three different newsletters you may find useful
<http://content.govdelivery.com/bulletins/gd/USED-514daa>

Factoid:

U.S. 15-year olds in schools with fewer than 10 percent of kids eligible for free or cut-rate lunch "score first in the world in reading, outperforming even the famously excellent Finns." U.S. schools where fewer than 25 percent are impoverished (by the same lunch measure) beat all 34 of the relatively affluent countries studied except South Korea and Finland.

News From Around the State and Nation

Sequestration is something we need to keep our eyes on
<http://www.post-gazette.com/stories/opinion/perspectives/we-must-avoid-sequestration-savage-cuts-in-education-funding-would-cripple-our-schools-634125/#ixzz257JMISIK>

This opinion piece is political, but is an interesting point of view of the changes that are occurring nationwide amongst "typical" education supporters.
http://www.washingtonpost.com/blogs/answer-sheet/post/lifelong-democrat-ready-for-fight-in-charlotte-over-school-reform/2012/09/03/5398a26c-f39c-11e1-a612-3cfc842a6d89_blog.html

The Opportunity Scholarship Tax Credit program is off to a slow start
http://articles.philly.com/2012-09-03/news/33564208_1_scholarship-groups-children-s-scholarship-fund-philadelphia-private-school

An increasing trend... school districts where senior citizens out number school age children. How schools are responding.
http://www.edweek.org/ew/articles/2012/08/29/02age_ep.h32.html?tkn=MSSFijGbmGQl8EyQyQBnPW11ZpPOeWONlCdY&cmp=clp-edweek