

Symposium

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It's almost time!

It's almost time! PenSPRA's annual Symposium is just three weeks away. You need the support of your school PR colleagues to get you through the daily challenges we all face. Take some time to concentrate on you and join us on March 20th. We will be learning about how the State College Area School District passed one of the first successful referendum campaigns in Pennsylvania. A representative from the state police will share guidance on how to best communicate in a crisis, whether it is a blizzard or an armed intruder. Finally we will focus on more tips and tricks in social media.

This year we have built a time into the Symposium to really relax and enjoy your school PR colleagues. Before the Symposium on Thursday evening we have planned a networking event and social hour. Everyone is welcome. We will have yummy appetizers and a cocktail bar from 6 to 9 pm. Then we will head out to the fire pit and toast up some s'mores. No ghost stories, but all of you probably have a school PR horror story or a few jokes to share.

Looking forward to seeing you all on March 19th/20th. (Please email Karen to register for the social hour.) [Registration link here](#)

Calendar reminder

We always like to give you a reminder at this point in the year about the school calendar because so many of you work on a calendar over the summer months. If you are planning a theme of any type for your calendar, that often requires a certain set of pictures. If you already have a theme in mind, make sure to schedule time to get the pictures you need. Or if you don't have a theme, now's a good time to sketch it out and follow up before your subjects have headed home for summer vacation. You also don't want to take all the pictures in June, when everyone is in shorts! Shorts in next year's January calendar picture can look a bit out of place. Happy planning!

The PASA/PASBO survey of school budgets

PASA and PASBO perform a yearly survey of school district budgets. 64 percent of the state's districts responded to this year's survey. Here are some of the key findings from this year:

91 percent of districts have raised taxes at least once in the last five years, with 60 percent reporting they have raised taxes every fiscal year.

93 percent reduced staff size since 2010-11.

40 percent cut academic programs in 2014-15.

78 percent reported an increase in special education costs for this year, with a median increase of 7 percent over last year.

81 percent will be contributing more to health care this year than last year.

99 percent expect the same or worsening fiscal conditions for 2015-16.

Outsourcing is becoming more common. Last year alone more than 20% of districts began outsourcing

You can review the full report here

Hashtag commoncore

If you are into communications research, you might find this twitter project really interesting. A group of education policy experts tracked references to hashtag common core over a period of 6 months, and created a fascinating website to share their findings.

<http://hashtagcommoncore.com/>

Budget briefing

PSBA members can tune in to a budget briefing next Wednesday March 4th. Details are here

<https://www.pspa.org/event/annual-pennsylvania-education-budget-briefing/>

Job Opportunity

Parkland School District is looking for a part-time Executive Director for their Education Foundation. Details are here

News from around the state and nation

Gov Wolf seems poised to make some fairly significant tax changes

http://www.pennlive.com/midstate/index.ssf/2015/02/gov_tom_wolf_may_include_a_pla.html

One of Governor Wolf's changes could be to the corporate tax rate

http://www.philly.com/philly/news/nation_world/20150226_Wolf__Cut_Pa__corporate_tax_rate__close_loopholes.html#fMorlBzvJADfv14r.99

A charter school reform bill is moving along in the legislature

<https://www.psba.org/2015/02/house-bill-530-charter-school-reform-bill/>

The reauthorization of NCLB has begun in DC

http://www.nytimes.com/2015/02/24/us/more-conflict-over-cutting-federal-role-in-education.html?_r=4

Although this is an opinion piece, it contains a very detailed and layman's terms description of the PSERS pension crisis

http://www.yorkdispatch.com/opinion/ci_27588251/op-ed-legislators-not-school-boards-created-pension

The Fair Funding Commission that has been working all year has released a recommendation

http://fairfundingpa.org/publication_files/cfef-proposal-executive-summary.pdf

The AP US History class has been in the news recently

http://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/an-unflattering-history-lesson/2015/02/19/3be9cb0c-b878-11e4-a200-c008a01a6692_story.html?hpid=z3

Tip of the week

Some of these tips might be helpful to you, or to another staff member

http://www.nspra.org/files/newsletter/nspra_this_week/TipSheet_2015-02-17.pdf