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Personnel issues and the sunshine act

This editorial contains a useful reference to the Sunshine Act and how to manage discussions about personnel issues in executive sessions. Key points include: Boards may discuss individual employees in executive sessions, but not if the individual employee asks for the matter to be discussed at an open meeting. This means the board must give that employee notice, so he or she can request an open discussion. The board cannot decide in executive session to simply do away with a whole swath of personnel. Here's the scoop:

http://lancasteronline.com/opinion/editorials/conestoga-valley-school-district-board-needs-to-understand-reality-of/article_9d41095e-000f-11e5-b5af-fb6f62e17deb.html

Reference for PSERS history

It's budget time, and that may mean you are having questions from community members about why that pesky retirement system takes such a big chunk out of the budget each year. Here is a good reference to the history of PA's current pension situation.

<http://www.newsworks.org/index.php/local/item/82051-state-pension-crisis-how-did-we-get-here>

Graduation rates

The national graduation rate is at an all-time high of 81%, and it is likely the rate in your district is much higher than that. Share this news at graduation time! The media loves to print stories about failing schools and low graduation rates, when our actual national rate is in reality much higher. We need to tell the story each and every year; it is critically important that the public learn the real numbers. Perhaps this could even be a web feature over the summer on your web site.

National graduation rate: 81%

Pennsylvania's graduation rate: 87.5%

Your district's rate: _____

<http://www.mcall.com/news/local/data/mc-map-pennsylvania-school-graduation-rates-htmlstory.html>

Survey changes

The Pew organization has done an interesting study on how responses in web surveys differ from traditional telephone surveys. Respondents seem to be more likely to answer in a positive way about their own lives on a phone survey, and are more critical of public figures with the web survey. Check it out here:

<http://www.pewresearch.org/2015/05/13/from-telephone-to-the-web-the-challenge-of-mode-of-interview-effects-in-public-opinion-polls/>

Summer photo idea

Need a quick way to populate your website homepage with photos over the summer when the students are away? Of course you can use photos from the last school year, or you can make a quick trip to your district art show. Take pictures of 30-40 art pieces, and you have an instant colorful display for the summer website.

Member request

A request from member Bonnie Berzonski –

“My superintendent has asked me to begin looking into surveys that can be given to our various audiences/stakeholders to gauge how we are doing as a district. He has asked me to research a survey on how the superintendent is doing and then one on how the district office is doing. The district office survey might include curriculum/instruction, finance, communications, and technology. The surveys might be given both internally (to staff members) and/or externally (parents/community members). Have any of our members ever done something like this? Could I have a sample of the survey and some information on how it was given and administered?”

Please send your responses to Bonnie at bonnie_berzonski@fcasd.edu

News from around the state and nation

Transgender rights are becoming an issue for school districts

<http://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2015/may/7/school-transgender-rights-bill-passes-fairfax-coun/>

Legislator is pushing for changes to the child welfare law that requires additional clearances for volunteers

http://www.pennlive.com/midstate/index.ssf/2015/05/lawmaker_pushing_to_waive_back.html

Gov Wolf and business leaders clash over the natural gas tax

http://www.philly.com/philly/news/politics/20150518_ap_52ca470b23334f379f86c90b6e3b0a88.html#E08qHidQUFMFMu4g.99