

March 25

Symposium wrap-up

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Snowy Symposium

The winter that never quit lived up to its name as the first day of spring brought a significant snowfall to our annual Symposium. Regardless, we had an interesting day of learning and some fun times for collegial sharing at Bedford last week. We've compiled a summary of the presentations here, and a link to a powerpointsare below.

We began the morning with a presentation on social media from Steve Miller and Jay Cooper of Campus Suite. When starting a social media program for your district, they stressed the importance of planning before you launch the sites. You must decide who is going to be in charge of posting content and responding to comments. Your social media team should include IT, administrators, parents and even a student. You should draft guidelines for what is allowed on your page, and then post the guidelines on your page.

Creating content is the most time consuming part of maintaining a social media program. You can make this step easier by remembering to follow the rule of thirds; Promote school one third; Share ideas one third; Share personal stories one third. Ask your followers to help provide content by supplying an online content request form. Then, once you have taken the steps to make sure you are well supplied with content, use an automated scheduler like Hootsuite to optimize your posts. Publish on Facebook at least two times a day, seven days a week. On Twitter, you should tweet the same story 8 times. Tweet twice on the first day and then once a day for 5 days, and then once on the 7th day.

Instagram has become the most popular social media platform with teens. It can be a really good way to communicate with your students. Instagram is like a photo version of twitter, where all posts are public but you can also follow select people. Photos are also the most popular posts on Facebook, more than four times popular than text only posts. It's easy to see how important the visuals have become with social media.

Our next speaker was Trooper McGarvey from the PA State Police. McGarvey is a Community Services Officer. Every area in PA has a Community Services Officer. You can look yours up here. <http://www.psp.pa.gov>. Your community service officer can provide training, drills, and emergency plans and manuals for your district. Tabletop drills are some of the most effective ways to perform crisis training.

Your crisis plan should spell out what every staff member's role is in the event of a crisis. Your plan should define the following areas: Media staging, parent reunification, command post, and evacuation. Remember that media staging areas sometimes need to be as big as a Walmart parking lot. Satellite trucks are really big! Also remember to include a plan for communicating with social media in your crisis plan.

Some of the advice on what to do during a crisis has changed in recent years. Trooper McGarvey said "Lockdown is to violence what fire drills are to fire. Move away from violence.

Don't be paralyzed. Lockdown does not mean hunker down and die. Evacuate if an accessible path exists.”

The other valuable service the state police can offer your district is a free safety audit by RVAT, or the Risk and Vulnerability Assessment Team. RVAT is a team of troopers that will come to your district free of charge to evaluate your safety procedures. There is approximately a year long waiting list for this service, however.

Finally, Trooper McGarvey reminded us that seemingly "routine" crisis' like a bus accident are much more likely than a dramatic one like an active shooter. Spend enough time training and planning for these types of crisis' too.

Next, we were proud to host Penni Fishbaine, president of the State College Area School Board, who shared with us how State College Area SD was the second district in the state to pass a referendum, which was for an \$85 million new high school. The key to their success seems to have been careful planning, community involvement and time. The board began with a district wide facilities master plan in 2009, 5 years before the referendum. Community meetings started with 6 options, including the new high school, and all meetings were streamed live over the internet and broadcast on cable access channels. These meetings were very important in making the State College community feel like they were a part of the decision. A survey also showed the public wanted the high school on the same location, even though the board did not, but the board followed the survey results.

Penni attributed their success to all the relationships they created and strengthened in their community. Your board must be totally committed to going to referendum, because district employees can't do all the relationship building themselves. They also found door knocking to be a very effective tool in the off-year local elections. They used a list of registered voters, and kept track of who was supportive as they door knocked. They went into election day with some idea of how many yes they had as a result of this monitoring. School districts cannot advocate for a "yes" vote; they can only provide information about the vote. State College had a bipartisan political action committee that advocated for the yes vote; "Friends of State High." Districts need 50% of the vote plus one vote in order to pass the referendum and State College received 74%! Very impressive indeed!

That wraps up our summary of the Symposium speakers. Here is a link to the information from campussuite on social media:

<http://www.campussuite.com/for-schools/social-media-program-for-public-schools-webinar-archive/?hsCtaTracking=909a8054-c8f5-453f-a5ca-80e13ac4d8e5%7C237a70ad-e645-4d90-b756-952b333d035c>

Eastern region workshop

The eastern region will be having a workshop on Thursday, April 16 from 9 am to 12 p.m. at Parkland School District. The first presentation will be "Crisis Communication Can Make or Break a District during an Extended Police Operation by Wendy Frable, Director, Public Relations & Compliance Services, Pocono Mountain School District. Next, Chris Stanley, Community Relations Coordinator for Neshaminy School District will discuss . Chris will be followed by Nicole McGalla of Parkland School District who will share the secrets of her successful gala fundraiser. Finally, we will wrap up with a roundtable discussion. Further details are here.

Scholarship Judges Needed

We are in need of PenSPRA members willing to help us judge in our scholarship competition. Judging is an easy two-step process of reading through applications and selecting your top choices in two rounds. If you are interested in helping, please contact our scholarship chair Shelly Belcher at BelcherS@pt-sd.org.

News from around the state and nation

Wolf plans to make changes to the SPP

<http://www.newsworks.org/index.php/local/item/79942-pa-gov-wolf-says-school-ratings-should-be-less-tied-to-tests/>

Supts must report what funding in Wolf's budget will be used for

http://www.bradfordera.com/news/article_d80f1016-d1cb-11e4-a79a-53ad4e144baa.html

More on the reporting of district funding/spending

<http://www.newsworks.org/index.php/local/item/79750-whether-pennsylvanias-schools-get-a-big-boost-in-funding-depends-on-whom-you-ask>

The public seems to support Wolf's budget plans

http://www.pennlive.com/midstate/index.ssf/2015/03/pennsylvania_survey_finds_earl.html

Republicans planning to tie budget pass to pension reform

http://www.philly.com/philly/news/politics/20150324_Corman__Pa__budget_must_include_pension_reform.html#u1g386liVvk3hEI7q.99