

In This Issue:

1. EITC Voucher Program
2. PenSPRA Website Remodel
3. Stand Up for Public Education Poster/Essay Contest
4. EPLC Arts and Education Symposium; Oct. 11
5. PAESSP Article
6. News From Around the State and Nation

EITC Voucher Program

Nicole McGalla, PenSPRA President, wrote the following article about the changes to the EITC program from recent legislation. Her district, Parkland, has decided not to participate in the EITC program. Please feel free to use the article, with a credit to PenSPRA, if you would like to inform your community about EITC and how it may impact your district.

The Pennsylvania Department of Education published a list of low-achieving schools in late July in which students, who live within the schools' boundaries, may be eligible to apply for a voucher to attend another public, private or nonpublic school in 2012-13 through a newly created "Opportunity Scholarship Tax Credit Program" run through the Education Improvement Tax Credit (EITC) program. The list of schools contains the lowest-achieving 15 percent of elementary schools and lowest-achieving 15 percent of secondary schools, based on combined math and reading Pennsylvania System of School Assessment scores from the 2010-11 school year. Career and technology centers, as well as brick-and-mortar and cyber charter schools, are not on the list.

The list of low-achieving schools contains 414 school buildings in 74 school districts across Pennsylvania. Students who live within the attendance boundaries of one of these schools are eligible if their household's annual income is no greater than \$60,000, plus \$12,000 for each dependent member of the household. Income guidelines increase in June of 2013. For the 2012-13 school year, the maximum scholarship award available to regular education students is \$8,500 and the maximum for a special education student is \$15,000.

As with the regular EITC program, Pennsylvania businesses that donate to opportunity scholarship organizations are eligible for a tax credit through the program. The Pennsylvania Department of Community and Economic Development (DCED), not the Department of Education, administers the tax credit program and must approve participating organizations.

The Impact of the EITC Scholarship Program on Public Schools

- The program siphons dollars from the general fund, via tax credits, that could otherwise be used for state-related obligations.
- Concerns are mounting about what happens to the children left behind in the "failing" schools who are not afforded a voucher? The program removes resources from schools that are tackling the challenges that exist in poverty-plagued communities.
- Money will go to pay tuition at private and nonpublic schools instead of going into the state's general fund.

- Scholarships can go to students who are already attending private schools, as long as they meet the aforementioned income requirements.

Website Remodel

We are excited to announce that PenSPRA will debut a new website in about four 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 karensmith5@gmail.com.

Stand Up for Public Education Poster and Essay Contest

PSBA is sponsoring a poster and essay contest for students of all ages. Students must draw or write about what public education means to them. The winners receive a cash prize and are featured at PSBA's October conference.

<http://standupforpubliceducation.org/essayposter-contest/>

EPLC's 2012 Arts and Education Symposium: Save the Date, Thursday, October 11

You may want to consider attending the October 11 Arts and Education Symposium in Harrisburg hosted by EPLC. Outstanding speakers and panelists from Pennsylvania and beyond will once again come together to address key topics in the arts and arts education and related public policy advocacy initiatives. As budgets get tighter and the arts increasingly come under attack, it can be helpful to have a better understanding of the importance of arts instruction in an overall quality education, so you can share your knowledge with your community. For more information, visit <http://www.eplc.org/2012/04/save-the-dates-october-11-eplc-arts-and-education-symposium-and-november-16-eplc-education-finance-symposium/>

Article in PAESSP September issue

The September issue of *Pennsylvania Administrator*, which is published by the Pennsylvania Association of Elementary and Secondary Principals (PAESSP), will feature an article titled "Change is an Opportunity." I wrote and submitted the article and was pleased to learn it was accepted. I hope it will draw attention to the resources PenSPRA can provide to all school administrators, and perhaps even capture some new members! I haven't included the article in our newsletter here, because it is written for school administrators rather than for school PR professionals. After it is published I will provide our membership with a link or PDF so that you can share it with your administrative staff.

House of reps reviewed legislation on pensions and pension reform

<http://thetimes-tribune.com/news/house-hearing-considers-public-pension-changes-1.1358879?localLinksEnabled=false>

...and another article on same topic

<http://www.witf.org/statehousesoundbites/house-lawmakers-review-pension-reform-proposals>

I found this comment interesting about the role of poverty in America's international test scores. Although of course every child deserves a good education, and the only way to lift a child out of poverty is to receive a good education, not every country attempts to provide it as we do. Yet international test scores can't factor the impact of poverty out of the results.

<http://www.post-gazette.com/stories/opinion/letters/povertys-role-in-bad-us-test-scores-648669/#ixzz23QXmUw8x>

More information about charter school funding

<http://www.post-gazette.com/stories/news/education/pennsylvania-charter-public-schools-not-always-bound-to-same-rules-648697/#ixzz23KXL8eXX>

More information on the changes to state funding to school construction projects

<http://triblive.com/news/2398639-74/districts-state-moratorium-construction-plan-on-projects-education-less-needs-support>

Chicago schools negotiate for longer school days. Is this a trend?

http://articles.chicagotribune.com/2012-08-14/news/ct-met-cps-first-day0814-20120814_1_third-of-cps-schools-school-day-selective-enrollment-school