

In This Issue:

1. An Educator's View of The Budget
2. Great Conversations on LinkedIn – Are You Connected?
3. You Can't Afford Not to Be There!
4. News From Around the State and Nation

An Educator's View of the Budget

Governor Corbett releases his 2012-2013 budget tomorrow, and if you weren't already discussing financial issues in your district, you surely will be after the release of the budget, when speculation turns to certainty. I thought today might be a good day to remind ourselves of the big picture, before the nitty gritty details begin to nibble away at the edges.

One of my favorite quotes is by Benjamin Franklin, "An investment in knowledge pays the best interest." It is an important reminder that education must be viewed as a long-term investment. Since we are often advised by well-meaning critics to "run the school like a business," let's examine it that way. The long-term costs to society to support someone who cannot support his/herself far outweigh the cost of a good education. Every high school dropout cost the nation \$260,000 over his/her lifetime in lost wages/tax revenue. The total cost for one generation of dropouts is 3 trillion dollars. What are the costs in social services like welfare, health care and unemployment? Tremendous.

We can also look at the return on investment. For every dollar spent on education, there is a return on investment of \$1.45 to \$3.55, or an average of \$127,000 over one student's lifetime. If half of the students who aren't graduating today did graduate, the nation would see a return on investment of \$90 billion a year! (For each year the non-graduating did graduate)

If you stump your critics with these hard -to-argue facts, my guess is they will change their tune and begin to complain about school costs. As you well know, much of your budget is fixed and outsiders can have a difficult time understanding this. They will offer quick solutions that we simply aren't allowed to do. Yet when you speak of the regulations and unfunded mandates that burden schools, outsiders scoff as if these rules don't really exist. **Show** them. I have gathered some of the regulations from the state school code legislated since the year 2000. This is about 20 % of the list. Some of these regulations are:

- The right-to-know law (requires an Officer that is often a full-time position)
- School bus idling notifications
- The Keystone Exams
- Tax study commissions
- Budget timelines on specific dates
- Required standard budget forms
- Transportation for private and charter school students within ten miles of district boundary
- Body Mass Index recording of all students
- Wellness policies

- Green construction certifications
- Physical exams for home-schooled students involved in extra curriculums
- Certified workplace safety committee
- Accountability block grant funds required to only fund all-day kindergarten
- Adoption of preliminary budget weeks before receiving notification of state funding
- Required notification to residents of homestead exemptions
- Requires notification of concurrent enrollment program to the nonpublic school the district provides transportation for
- Required written policies for students with asthma inhalers
- Requires financially distressed districts to establish an independent educational assessment to report progress
- Requires 72 hour notice of pest control application
- Required to provide special education services to cyber school students
- Required CPR training to the general public as well as employees
- Required to notify of no smoking policies

Your critic's eyes are likely to glaze over half-way through the list. Remind them these regulations are well meaning and may well be very necessary, but we cannot ignore the fact that they increase school costs, both with staff time and supplies. Offer a solution - legislators must work with school officials to allow districts the flexibility to make changes as needed, changes that reduce costs, and not simply legislate more programs that further burden schools.

Budget season starts in earnest tomorrow, and I hope this information is useful. Keep it in balance though, and continue to share positive news of student and staff accomplishments from your district.

Great Conversations on LinkedIn – Are You Connected?

Are you a member of the PenSPRA group on LinkedIn? If not, take a minute and request to join today. With LinkedIn we can share our connections and discuss topics through a secure, group only discussion board. Here are some of the great questions we have had recently:

“I'm wondering how other districts handle their television operations if you carry your own channel. How many staff members, do you sell advertising, how is the department funded?”

“How do other districts send out email blasts to the external public? Do you use Constant Contact or some other method?”

“My administration would like me to start investigating potential advertising revenue ideas. Anyone have materials, polices, experiences that they would like to share?”

Curious about the answers? Sign up today!

You can't afford NOT to be there!

Have you reserved your spot at the 2012 PenSPRA Annual Symposium? We have a great line-up of speakers prepared for you, and this year we are conveniently located in the middle of the state at the Hershey Lodge in Hershey.

I know, I know – you have piles of work to do and you think you just can't afford to be away for the day, right? You are working along day after day in your solo PR office. You are often the lone voice, pointing out the perception of others to your administration and board.

The truth is we can all accomplish more for education when we work together. It is more efficient and cost-effective to spend a day gathering information from your colleagues than to plow along alone. You are likely to get ideas that will save money and help sharpen your message to your community.

Recharge your batteries with colleagues who face the same challenges as you every day! Make new friends and learn the newest techniques on fund-raising, crisis communication and budget messaging. It just won't be the same without you! We hope to see you on March 6th.

<http://www.penspra.org/5105173120422/blank/browse.asp?a=383&BMDRN=2000&BCOB=0&c=51318&5105173120422Nav=|&NodeID=45>

Thanks to member Adam Aurand from Conestoga Valey School District. He conducted a media training seminar with PSBA members

News From Around the State and Nation

The cost to society from high school dropouts.

<http://www.nytimes.com/2012/01/26/opinion/the-true-cost-of-high-school-dropouts.html>

What can we expect from Corbett's budget?

<http://www.post-gazette.com/pg/12036/1208059-454.stm#ixzz1VunS1tR>

Philadelphia schools will close buildings earlier at night and on the weekends to save money, affecting many non-school related community activities.

http://articles.philly.com/2012-02-05/news/31027217_1_police-cuts-school-buildings-deep-program-cuts

Good summary on budgets and proposed legislation to help severely struggling schools

<http://www.delcotimes.com/articles/2012/02/05/news/doc4f2e132f4019f267200510.txt?viewmode=fullstory>