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Charter schools AYP ruling struck down by the Federal Dept of Education

School districts in PA are measured on AYP results at the district level and at the school level. The district level allows for reporting of grade spans, such as grades three to five or grades seven to nine. Reporting over spans in this way generally raises scores.

Last summer, PA Secretary of Education Ron Tomalis altered the way charter schools could report their AYP results. Tomalis' ruling allowed charter schools to report AYP results at the district level, rather than at the school level. Traditional public school districts and PSBA objected, stating that an individual charter school is not the same as a school district, which is made up of a number of individual schools. The new ruling resulted in reports that 59% of charter schools reached AYP, rather than the 37% that actually did.

On Nov. 21st, the Federal Department of Education overruled Tomalis' change, on the basis that a charter school is an individual school building and is not a school district. The federal government ordered PA to re-calculate and re-publicize the results of the charter schools in January 2013, using the school level methodology.

This change ensures that a parent or community member comparing the results of one public school to one charter school will be comparing results grade to grade, and not one grade to one grade "span."

It's Our New Website!

As you can see if you are reading this e-Comm, our new website is up and running! We hope you like the new modern look and enhanced features. Our sincere thanks to eSchoolView for all their assistance during the development process. We've tried to check and double check, but if you find something on the website not working, please let me know. It's always a work in progress.

Two features are still under construction, but we expect them to be operational within a week or so. The first is the online membership registration, and the second is access to the restricted page for members only. The members only page will contain a new media list and an updated membership directory when it is ready.

Sequestration – Another Word for Budget Cuts

Sequestration may sound like a nasty stomach virus or the time juries spend in hotels eating room service, but unfortunately it is just another word for school budget cuts. Sequestration refers to across-the-board budget cuts of all federal programs that may occur on January 2, 2013 because Congress failed to cut 1.2 trillion from the federal budget during last year's debt ceiling deal. The cuts are expected to be around 8.2%. Here are some more facts about sequestration from www.nsba.org:

- For every \$1 million of federal aid districts receive, they would lose \$82,000; and, while districts can vary widely, on average, for every 5,000 students enrolled, districts would lose about \$300,000.
- The impact of an 8.2 percent cut to programs such as Title I grants for disadvantaged students would mean a cut of more than \$1 billion, affecting nearly two million students.
- Special education grants would be reduced by more than \$900 million, impacting nearly 500,000 children with disabilities.
- English Language Acquisition grants would be cut by approximately \$60 million, affecting an estimated 377,000 students.
- These budget cuts to education programs would take place during 2013-14 school year, with the exception of Impact Aid, with which cuts would become effective during this school year.
- Sequestration's budget cuts to these and other education programs would mean increased class sizes and less access to programs for children with special needs, as well as summer school, college counselors, early childhood education and after-school programming.
- Certain school bond programs would also be affected by a 7.6% reduction in federal subsidy payments.
- In addition to school systems losing federal education funds, there are two indirect impacts. First, federal cuts for programs to state and local governments in other areas may result in those units cutting their aid to schools as they scramble to make up the difference. Second, in communities with a large federal presence, such as military bases or government contracts, the across-the-board budget cuts could be devastating to their economies in terms of lost sales and property tax revenues that are often used, in part, to finance education.

We all need to stay updated on this topic over the next month. Congress may take legislative action that could stop sequestration. Some school boards are passing resolutions urging Congress to do just that. Here are a couple of additional news articles on sequestration if you would like to learn more:

<http://www.washingtonpost.com/blogs/answer-sheet/wp/2012/11/16/what-the-fiscal-cliff-means-for-public-schools/>

<http://www.nsba.org/Advocacy-Resources/Resnick-ASBJ-Article-Against-Sequestration-11-2012.pdf>

Eastern Region Workshop Tomorrow! (Tues. Nov. 27)

The eastern region is meeting on Tuesday Nov 27th. Here is the agenda if you didn't catch it in the previous e-Comm Alert.

Membership Directory Deadline

If your membership is still not up to date for this year, you risk being removed from the e-mail notifications and being excluded from the soon-to-be-published membership directory. Please send those in ASAP and I am happy to check if you are not sure if you renewed!

News From Around the State and Nation

Summary of Federal Ruling on Charter School AYP reporting

http://www.mcall.com/news/nationworld/pennsylvania/mc-pa-charter-school-ayp-20121121_0,892172.story

A second story on the charter school AYP ruling

<http://www.poconorecord.com/apps/pbcs.dll/article?AID=/20121123/NEWS90/211230325/-1/NEWS>

Alarming Look at How Political Action Groups are Working to Expand School Choice. Long article but an Important read.

<http://www.pghcitypaper.com/pittsburgh/want-to-privatize-schools-you-might-want-to-buy-up-an-election-cycle-or-two-first/Content?oid=1590243>

What a Second Term with Obama May Look Like for Education

www.philly.com/philly/education/20121119_ap_obamaseducationagendadominatedbylooseends.html

A Review of Pension Costs

<http://www.delcotimes.com/articles/2012/11/18/news/doc50a918b5ce22c703318742.txt?viewmode=fullstory>

Interview with US Dept of Ed Secretary Arne Duncan

http://blogs.edweek.org/edweek/campaign-k-12/2012/11/Duncan_CCSSO_speech.html?utm_source=feedburner&utm_medium=feed&utm_campaign=Feed%3A+CampaignK-12+%28Education+Week+Blog%3A+Politics+K-12%29

PSERS Returns at 11.45% for year

http://www.pionline.com/article/20121115/DAILYREG/121119934&utm_source=friend_refer&utm_medium=email&cslet=UnhOY2ILYjhMdk9aK2IFeHY3clJMNFVjdWUvaHNHVFBYnJCaWc9PQ