

August 2013 ecomm

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Fixed Test Scores Take Down Florida Education Commissioner Tony Bennett

If you have not tuned into this story previously, this headline may have you wondering why the Florida Education Commissioner matters much here in Pennsylvania. Here's the basic story: While working as Indiana's Superintendent, Florida Education Commissioner Tony Bennett and members of his staff appear to have altered the reporting of test scores so a favored charter school, Christel House, could receive an "A" in the state's ranking system. There is also a political side to the story; Christel House is managed by a major Republican donor and Bennett is a Republican. The AP uncovered e-mails between Bennett and his staff which are hard to dispute, with comments like "They need to understand that anything less than an A for Christel House compromises all of our accountability work," and "...the repeated lies I have told over the past six months." After the release of the e-mails became national news, Bennett resigned his current position as Florida's Education Commissioner.

The AP's research also uncovered other e-mails between politicians around the country and links to staff at charter schools. They appear to point to a clear effort to draft education laws that will benefit corporate donors, *around the country*. It's a complex story with multiple angles, and we've included some news coverage here.

[m.washingtonpost.com/blogs/answer-sheet/wp/2013/01/30/e-mails-link-bush-foundation-corporations-and-education-officials](http://m.washingtonpost.com/blogs/answer-sheet/wp/2013/01/30/e-mails-link-bush-foundation-corporations-and-education-officials)

<http://www.washingtonpost.com/blogs/answer-sheet/wp/2013/08/01/who-does-tony-bennett-think-hes-kidding/>

[http://www.slate.com/articles/news\\_and\\_politics/do\\_the\\_math/2013/08/tony\\_bennett\\_education\\_an\\_astonishing\\_act\\_of\\_statistical\\_chutzpah\\_in\\_the.html](http://www.slate.com/articles/news_and_politics/do_the_math/2013/08/tony_bennett_education_an_astonishing_act_of_statistical_chutzpah_in_the.html)

[educationvotes.nea.org/2013/07/31/former-indiana-superintendent-rigged-grade-for-top-gop-donors-school](http://educationvotes.nea.org/2013/07/31/former-indiana-superintendent-rigged-grade-for-top-gop-donors-school)

A Day in the Life of an American School District

In the past two years there have been two major films that blasted public education and were very supportive of charter schools, "Waiting for Superman" and "Won't Back Down." These films have been tough on the reputations of public schools, and somewhat unfair in their criticisms, failing to point out that only 17 percent of charter schools provide a better education than traditional public schools.

A new film project is set to release that paints a clearer picture of the great work that happens daily in our public schools. It is called "Go Public." The filmmakers are the O'Keeffe's, a husband and wife team, both experienced film producers. Fifty camera crews followed a variety of different students and staff

members on a single day in the Pasadena Unified School District in California. There is no narrator to offer hints about what we're seeing and what we should think about it. The O'Keeffes objective was to present a balanced exploration into the lives of these families and educators.

The project does have a small budget, and they are still working on marketing and distribution. We will keep tabs on it, and share any information or opportunities to view the film in our area when it becomes available. In the meantime, here is a little more information about the film:

<http://gopublicproject.org/>

This is an essay about the film

<http://truth-out.org/opinion/item/17455-go-public-finally-a-film-that-celebrates-public-schools>

NSBA Request

<http://www.psba.org/issues-advocacy/advocacy-services/frn.asp>

The National School Boards Association is seeking school directors interested in filling vacancies for the remainder of the 2013-14 term of the Federal Relations Network. The FRN is NSBA's grassroots advocacy program that provides the opportunity for school board members from every congressional district in the country who are committed to public education to get involved in federal advocacy. For more than 40 years, school board members have been lobbying for public education on Capitol Hill as one unified voice through this program.

Central Region Workshop

The central region will be having a workshop, on Friday September 13, 2013 from 9:30 am to noon at the PASBO office building, 2608 Market Place in Harrisburg. The first session of the workshop is "Public and Media Relations — Back to the Basics," by Steve Manuel, College of Communications, Penn State University. The second session is "Alumni Development & Relations," by Greg Hayes, Williamsport Area School District, and Madeline Bergman, North Penn School District. The two sessions will be followed by a round table discussion on marketing your school district. If you are so inclined, be prepared to share some ways that you have marketed your school district. RSVP to Greg at

Common Core Confusion

Common core standards are supposed to begin with this school year, and PA remains in a hold pattern. Districts have been preparing for the implementation of the common core for two years, but early this summer public protests caused legislators to delay the implementation so a review of the standards could occur. Many teachers are even heading back for opening days this week, and Governor Corbett and the Department of Education have not clarified the state's position on the common core standards. The hold seems to be in place although districts were also instructed to continue to plan to implement the standards. A most confusing situation indeed; expect news on this issue before Labor Day. Here are some current news stories:

<http://tribune-democrat.com/local/x1981929090/Common-Core-issues-overblown-lawmakers-told>  
<http://thetimes-tribune.com/news/schools-preparing-for-new-standards-1.1531496>

This is a long opinion piece, but is written by an experienced special education teacher and shares an important viewpoint on the common core

[http://blogs.edweek.org/teachers/living-in-dialogue/2013/08/arthur\\_getzel\\_small\\_lies\\_big\\_1.html?override=web](http://blogs.edweek.org/teachers/living-in-dialogue/2013/08/arthur_getzel_small_lies_big_1.html?override=web)

## Membership Renewals

We are pleased to announce our membership renewal page is ready to accept credit card payments. You can register and pay online at this link or use the snail mail app and a check, whichever is more convenient for you.

Register by October 31<sup>st</sup> for a chance to win a free mobile app for your district, donated and provided by Parentlink. Thanks Parentlink!

[http://www.penspra.org/protected/PenSPRA\\_MemberSignup.aspx](http://www.penspra.org/protected/PenSPRA_MemberSignup.aspx)

## News From Around the State and Nation

A New Report was Released on the Impact of Time Spent on Testing

<http://www.washingtonpost.com/blogs/answer-sheet/wp/2013/07/25/how-much-time-do-school-districts-spend-on-standardized-testing-this-much/>

Philadelphia is Able to Restore Secretaries, Fall Sports and Music Teachers

[http://articles.philly.com/2013-07-27/news/40817260\\_1\\_two-district-students-philadelphia-school-district-three-low-performing-elementary-schools](http://articles.philly.com/2013-07-27/news/40817260_1_two-district-students-philadelphia-school-district-three-low-performing-elementary-schools)

Test Scores in NY State Drop Because Test Difficulty Dramatically Increases

<http://www.nydailynews.com/punishing-kids-adult-failures-article-1.1420622>

Construction Reimbursements are Delayed

<http://www.mcall.com/news/local/mc-pa-plancon-school-construction-20130727,0,4908485.story>

Advice for Twitter Users

<http://www.edudemic.com/2013/07/10-twitter-mistakes-youre-probably-making/>

District Apps Become More Common

<http://www.post-gazette.com/stories/news/education/pittsburgh-schools-make-student-data-accessible-from-smartphones-696253/>

A Revised Education Bill Passes the House

[http://www.washingtonpost.com/local/education/federal-education-bill-a-departure-from-no-child-left-behind/2013/07/19/b8f18626-f0a6-11e2-9008-61e94a7ea20d\\_story.html](http://www.washingtonpost.com/local/education/federal-education-bill-a-departure-from-no-child-left-behind/2013/07/19/b8f18626-f0a6-11e2-9008-61e94a7ea20d_story.html)

The Affordable Care Act is Changing the Way School Districts Hire Certain Staff Members

[http://www.phillyburbs.com/my\\_town/levittown/bucks-school-districts-outsourcing-substitute-teachers-due-to-obamacare/article\\_2f9dab16-3266-554c-98ba-f3067485da61.html](http://www.phillyburbs.com/my_town/levittown/bucks-school-districts-outsourcing-substitute-teachers-due-to-obamacare/article_2f9dab16-3266-554c-98ba-f3067485da61.html)

Diane Ravitch Will Speak at the Philadelphia Free Library on Sept 17. Tickets Go on Sale Aug 23 at 10 am at This Link

<http://libwww.freelibrary.org/authorevents/index.cfm?ID=40337&type=2>

