

March 14 e comm

Contest winners coming soon!
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Publication contest winners to be announced soon

Just a quick note to let you know that winners in PenSPRA's publication contest will be announced late next week, around March 21st. PenSPRA members will receive an e-mail notification that the winners list has been posted on our website.

A teaser – one category had many stand out stars! Guess which one? Interestingly enough, one of the newest categories - Social media! We are so pleased that our members are doing outstanding work in this new medium.

And now you have to wait just a little longer to get the full list of winners.

SchoolMessenger webinar

Register now for an information-rich webinar that will give you a head start on building and launching a successful district app, with a one hour professional development session exclusively for PenSPRA members. You'll learn the latest trends in mobile app development for K12 and beyond. Includes insights learned from hundreds of app launches including: the 3 distinct approaches to app development and which may be right in your district; the most popular content types and how to source them; and the latest research to help justify your app investment. You'll get actionable tips including creative ideas for funding your app.

Join us Tuesday, April 22, 2014 at 11:30 a.m for this information-rich webinar to get a head start on building and launching a successful district app.

<https://www1.gotomeeting.com/register/420461529>

Foundation conference looking for volunteers; earn free sessions

The National School Foundation Association is holding its national conference in Philadelphia from Wednesday May 7 to Friday, May 9. They are looking for volunteers to help staff the event. If you volunteer for the conference you can attend conference sessions for free. It's a great opportunity for PR professionals with Foundations in their school districts, who serve on Foundation boards, or who are thinking of starting one. Volunteers are needed for registration, logistics and more. If interested, please contact Christine Liberaski at liberacd@npenn.org.

To see a listing of workshops at the conference, click here <http://www.schoolfoundations.org/index.cfm?nodeID=71537&audienceID=1>

Sunshine Week and proposed sunshine bill

This may be late notice to plan anything for this year, but on an annual basis the third week of March is “Sunshine Week.” This year it is next week, March 17-21. This week brings awareness to the freedom of information act and the sunshine law. It could be a good opportunity to remind your community of the work you do to communicate in an open and transparent manner. This website includes some additional information about the week and ideas for events in your community.

<http://sunshineweek.rcfp.org/>

And on that same topic, there is a proposed bill on the sunshine law that could result in a few changes for school boards. The proposal, House bill 1671, would require any executive session on personnel to be about a specific prospective, current or former employee. Everything else would have to be done in public. The bill would also require boards to record all executive sessions, and save those recordings for a year. Here’s an article on the bill:

http://www.pennlive.com/midstate/index.ssf/2014/03/pennsylvania_sunshine_act_exec.html

New film on standardized testing

There is another film on education making the rounds that is important to be aware of. This one is called “Standardized,” and as you might guess is about standardized testing. You can learn more about the film or rent or purchase it at this link. It is being shared by parent groups around the country and was recently screened in Pittsburgh.

<http://www.standardizedthefilm.com/>

You might find this information from the EPLC useful if you are having any questions about “opting out” of standardized testing in your district

http://www.elc-pa.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/03/ELC_FactSheet_TestingOptOut_March2014.pdf

News from around the state and nation

The college board announced changes to the SAT’s recently

http://www.nytimes.com/2014/03/06/education/major-changes-in-sat-announced-by-college-board.html?ref=education&_r=4

And is the common core responsible for the changes to the SAT?

<http://www.theatlantic.com/education/archive/2014/03/the-common-core-is-driving-the-changes-to-the-sat/284320/>

Interesting ruling in Kansas on school funding

http://www.nytimes.com/2014/03/08/us/kansas-school-spending-ruling.html?_r=0

Proposed plan to fund the pension system lowers long-term debt, does not change the state's obligation to current employees or retirees, maintains the current defined benefit pension structure and provides short-term savings critical to this year's budget

<http://www.post-gazette.com/news/politics-state/2014/03/12/Pa-Democrats-propose-bond-to-fund-pensions/stories/201403120094#ixzz2vj0XCwqJ>

Not surprisingly, a new survey finds 90% of school leaders value predictability in school funding
<http://www.post-gazette.com/news/education/2014/03/06/Survey-shows-90-percent-of-education-leaders-find-predictability-of-state-funding-very-important/stories/201403060290#ixzz2vH0n7pCC>

Recent interview with education historian Diane Ravitch

http://www.salon.com/2014/03/12/public_schools_under_siege_diane_ravitch_warns_salon_some_cities_soon_will_have_none/