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Symposium Survey

The PenSPRA2013 Symposium Planning Committee is hard at work planning our state-wide Symposium held every March. If we follow our normal pattern, the Symposium will be held in the day before the PASBO state-wide conference at Pittsburgh's Convention Center. Although we have enjoyed a long-standing partnership with our PASBO colleagues, the Convention Center is a very expensive venue for our smaller group. Therefore, we are considering options which will keep facility costs down and still provide an informative program in an enjoyable atmosphere. We are asking for your input on this topic via a brief four question survey about the 2013 Symposium. Please take a few moments to complete it.

<https://www.surveymonkey.com/s/ZNQL89Q>

Phi Delta Kappa/Gallup Poll on the Public's Attitudes Towards Public Schools

Each year Phi Delta Kappa and the Gallup organization perform a poll on the public's attitudes towards public schools. This year's poll is the 44th. The national, scientific poll is useful to all of us in school PR because we can rarely (read never!) afford to perform such a poll in our own areas. Here are some of the highlights from this year's poll, and I have included the entire report below.

Not surprisingly, lack of funding was by far the most common single response Americans cited as the biggest challenge facing schools in their communities. It is good news that the public understands the difficulties we face with our budgets

For the third year in a row, three of four Americans say they have trust and confidence in the men and women who teach children in the public schools.

This year, as we have seen for several years, almost half of Americans give the schools in their community either an A or B. almost 50% of Americans assigned a mediocre grade of C to the nation's schools.

Americans are evenly divided on whether states should require that teacher evaluations include how well a teacher's students perform on standardized tests, and this finding is consistent across all demographic groups.

In 1972, fewer than half of Americans thought students should be required to attend school until they reach age 18. Forty years later, that percentage has increased to almost two of three Americans who believe students should remain in school at least until they're 18 years old.

Support for charter schools declined this year for the first time, down to 66% this year.

Last year, we documented the lowest level of support for private school vouchers with only 34% in favor. However, this year's approval rating jumped 10 percentage points to 44%.

Ninety-seven percent believe it's very or somewhat important to improve the nation's urban schools, indicating a strong continuing commitment, and almost two of three Americans said they would be willing to pay more taxes to provide funds to improve the quality of the nation's urban schools.

Most Americans oppose providing free public education and other benefits to children of immigrants who are in the U.S. illegally.

Member request

Cheryl Galdo from Lower Moreland Township School District has a question for us – The district frequently receives requests from outside organizations to post information about meetings, events or fundraisers they are holding that they want to let the school community know about. What guidelines do other school districts have about these type of requests? Do accept all types of fliers or only some?

News From Around the State and Nation

PSSA scores drop statewide; budget critics say it is a direct result of budget cuts while Secretary Tomalis argues it is because of cheating on tests. Here are two articles on the topic:

http://articles.philly.com/2012-09-27/news/34128384_1_pssa-districts-and-three-charter-budget-cuts

http://articles.philly.com/2012-09-23/news/34023090_1_grade-level-math-test-decline-in-math-scores

A survey of PA schools by PASBO and PASA shows the impact of funding cuts:

<http://www.post-gazette.com/stories/news/education/pennsylvania-survey-shows-huge-education-cuts-655780/#ixzz288t9yW8C>

Last week a movie about a parent and teacher who worked together to bring school choice to their district was released. Here's a movie review of "Won't Back Down." Unfortunately it continues some of the negative stereotyping about public schools.

<http://www.npr.org/2012/09/26/161546081/wont-back-down-takes-a-too-easy-way-out>

Another look at the International PISA test and why America isn't scoring as badly as is widely reported

http://www.pennlive.com/editorials/index.ssf/2012/09/us_could_learn_from_finland_on.html

An interesting opinion of both sides of the Chicago teacher's strike.

<http://www.nybooks.com/blogs/nyrblog/2012/sep/12/two-visions-chicagos-schools/>