



Pennsylvania Education Letter

Education Policy News, Analysis, and Commentary

By Ronald Cowell, President
The Education Policy and Leadership Center

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Welcome to our new EPLC e-publication, *Pennsylvania Education Letter*, which will be sent to subscribers only in electronic format. The *Letter* will highlight significant education policy issues, events and personalities with a focus on Pennsylvania, but will include some coverage of national activities as well. The *Letter* will be published at least once a month and replaces the *Education Notebook* previously published by The Education Policy and Leadership Center. We want the *Pennsylvania Education Letter* to be without cost to our readers, but we will welcome donations and advertising support.

In this issue:

- 2017-2018 Legislative Session Begins
- House and Senate Education Committee Chairs
- State Budget Watch
- State Board of Education
- Pennsylvania Election – School Boards
- *Focus on Education* on PCN
- News from the Field
- Pennsylvania Calendar
- National Calendar
- Professional Opportunities
- Coming Soon in the *Letter*
- Donate to EPLC

2017-2018 PA Legislative Session Begins

The Pennsylvania General Assembly’s 2017-2018 legislative session began on Tuesday, January 3 with new members of the Legislature’s two chambers sworn into office.

In the Senate, 25 members were sworn in to begin new terms. There are now 34 Republicans and 16 Democrats in the Senate.

In the House, members in 200 of the 203 seats took the oath of office. Two Representatives-elect were absent (John Maher, R-Allegheny, and Tina Davis, D-Bucks)

while one - Leslie Acosta, D-Philadelphia – submitted her resignation letter following her felony conviction. There are now 121 Republicans and 81 Democrats in the House of Representatives with one vacancy.

The House has 22 new members without prior service and the Senate has 6 new members.

After the swearing-in ceremony and the preliminary organizing of the two chambers, the House and Senate both adjourned until Monday, January 23.

Here is the schedule of House and Senate session days for the next several months:

PA House of Representatives

January 23, 24, 25
February 6, 7, 8
March 13, 14, 15, 20, 21, 22
April 3, 4, 5, 18, 19, 24, 25, 26
May 8, 9, 10, 22, 23, 24
June 5, 6, 7, 12, 13, 14, 19, 20, 21, 22, 26, 27, 28, 29, 30

PA Senate

January 23, 24, 25, 30, 31
February 1, 6, 7, 8
March 20, 21, 22, 27, 28,29
April 17, 18, 19, 24, 25, 26
May 8, 9, 10, 22, 23, 24
June 5, 6, 7, 12, 13, 14, 19, 20, 21, 22, 26, 27, 28, 29, 30

In addition to a state budget process that undoubtedly will be very challenging, many lawmakers are promising to deal with complex and elusive issues like pension reform, charter school reform, and property tax reforms. In many ways, this is a legislative agenda that looks much like years past.

House and Senate Education Chairs

While member committee assignments have not yet been finalized, the chairs for the House and Senate Education Committees have been appointed by the respective caucus leaders.

Former Republican House Education Committee chair Representative Stan Saylor was elected by his caucus as the chair of the House Appropriations Committee, and former Republican Senate Education Committee chair Lloyd Smucker was elected to the U.S. Congress. These moves assured new Republican leadership for both Education Committees. The Democratic chairs remain as in the past session.

The Education Committee chairs for the 2017-2018 Session are:

[Senator John Eichelberger](#) – Republican Chair, Senate Education Committee
[Senator Andrew Dinniman](#) –Democratic Chair, Senate Education Committee
[Representative David Hickernell](#) – Republican Chair, House Education Committee
[Representative James Roebuck](#) – Democratic Chair, House Education Committee

State Budget Watch

Governor Tom Wolf is scheduled to deliver his proposed 2017-2018 budget to a joint session of the General Assembly on Tuesday, February 7.

It is very clear that Governor Wolf and legislators start the new session facing the prospect of current 2016-2017 revenues being more than a half billion dollars short of estimates and facing a structural deficit of more than \$1.5 billion as they work on a budget for 2017-2018.

The PA Department of Revenue announced that December 2016 revenue collections were 3.9% or \$105.2 million below estimate. For the first half of the fiscal year, the General Fund is down 2.7% or \$367 million below estimate.

In December, state Budget Secretary Randy Albright indicated the Wolf administration has revised downward its revenue estimate for FY2016-17, and that the change results in a \$603.76 million budget deficit on the state's financial statement for the current fiscal year.

The Governor has said he will not propose any increase in the state's broad-based taxes. Legislators would not seem to welcome any such proposal anyway, and many are already announcing their intentions to "cut state spending."

Meanwhile, K-12 pension payments aside, school districts and public higher education institutions still are receiving less financial support from the state budget than they did in 2010. The share of K-12 costs and share of higher education costs supported by state funding continue to shrink. Lawmakers will be challenged to address these and other significant budget issues in the coming months.

SAVE THE DATES: EPLC again will host a series of regional Education Policy Forums to discuss the Governor's proposed education budget for 2017-2018. *More details and additional sites will be announced soon.*

Thursday morning, February 23 – Pittsburgh

Tuesday morning, February 28 – Harrisburg

Thursday morning, March 2 – Philadelphia

State Board of Education

The Pennsylvania State Board of Education meets in Harrisburg on January 11 and 12. For meeting agenda, see [State Board of Education Meetings](#).

Future 2017 meetings, all to be held in Harrisburg, are scheduled for:

March 8-9

May 10-11

July 12-13

September 13-14

November 8-9

PA Election Watch – School Boards

This year, Pennsylvania voters will elect more than 2000 school board members in 499 school districts. While these positions are unpaid, school board members collectively make

decisions about spending more than \$28 billion in local, state, and federal tax dollars every year. The board in each district is responsible for governance and important policy issues.

Petitions for school board positions may be circulated beginning Tuesday, February 14 and must be filed no later than Tuesday, March 7. The Primary Election is Tuesday, May 16.

As in every year when school board elections occur, EPLC will be conducting a series of regional workshops for school board candidates and other voters. These all-day sessions are on Saturdays during February and March. Details will be announced soon at www.eplc.org and in a future edition of the *Letter*.

Focus on Education on PCN

EPLC's television program – ***Focus on Education*** – is beginning its fifth year of broadcast on Pennsylvania Cable Network (PCN). Except for January and August, the show is broadcast monthly on PCN on the 2nd Sunday at 3:00 p.m. PCN usually airs the show at additional times during the month. All shows are archived and available "on demand" on EPLC's website at www.eplc.org.

February's show will be broadcast initially on Sunday, February 12 at 3:00 p.m. The topic will be the Governor's proposed 2017-2018 state budget.

Recent 2016 shows and guests include:

- December 2016 – Part 1- State Board of Education (Karen Molchanow, Larry Wittig); Part 2 – Work of School Boards (Kathy Swope, Mark B. Miller, Barbara Bolas)
- November 2016 – Part 1 – Afterschool and Out-of-School Programs (Laura Saccente, Wendy Etheridge Smith, John Price III, Conrad A. Falvello); Part 2 – ESSA Update from PDE (Beth Olanoff).
- October 2016 – Part 1: Pennsylvania Association of Rural and Small Schools (Edward Albert); Part 2: Arts and Culture Programs in Schools and Communities (Clyde M. McGear)

News from the Field

Welcome to **Mark DiRocco as new Executive Director of the Pennsylvania Association of School Administrators (PASA)**. Mark has been the superintendent in the Lewisburg Area School District and takes the reins at PASA from **Jim Buckheit**. Best wishes to Jim Buckheit who has served for seven years as the Executive Director of PASA, and previously for about six years as the Executive Director of the State Board of Education. Prior to that, he served for more than twenty years in various positions as a Commonwealth official, directing numerous programs and services designed to assist students and at-risk youth.

Dr. Valerie Kinloch has been named the new Renée and Richard Goldman Dean of the School of Education at the University of Pittsburgh, beginning July 1, 2017. Dr. Kinloch succeeds former Dean **Alan Lesgold**, who served as dean for 16 years. Dr. Kinloch currently is Associate Dean and Professor at The Ohio State University College of Education and Human Ecology. Previously, she also served on the faculty at the Teachers College, Columbia University. Dr. Kinloch holds a PhD in English and Composition Studies from Wayne State University in Detroit, Michigan. She received the 2012 Outstanding Book of

the Year Award from the American Educational Research Association for her book, *Harlem on Our Minds: Place, Race, and the Literacies of Urban Youth*.

Pennsylvania Calendar 2017

January 11-12 – PA State Board of Education Meeting – Harrisburg
February 7 – Governor’s Budget Message to Joint Session of General Assembly
February 16-17 - PA Association of Career and Technical Administrators (PACTA) 27th Annual Education & Workforce Development Symposium - Hershey
February 17-18 – Keystone Progress Summit - Harrisburg
February 23-25 – Black Conference on Higher Education Annual Conference – Monroeville
February 23 – EPLC Regional Education Policy/Budget Forum – Pittsburgh
February 28 – EPLC Regional Education Policy/Budget Forum – Harrisburg
March 2 – EPLC Regional Education Policy/Budget Forum – Philadelphia
March 21-24 – PA Association of School Business Officials (PASBO) Annual Meeting – Pittsburgh
March 29-30 – PA Association of School Administrators 2017 Education Congress – Camp Hill
April 23-26 – PA Education Policy Fellowship Program Washington Seminar – Washington DC
April 25 – Arts & Culture/Arts Education Advocacy Day - Harrisburg
April 26-28 – PA Association of Small and Rural Schools (PARSS) Annual Conference -
May 16 – Primary Election Day
Late May – Applications for 2017-2018 PA Education Policy Fellowship Program available
June 10-12 – Title I State Parent Advisory Council Annual Conference – Seven Springs
July 23-25 – PA Education Leadership Summit co-sponsored by PASA, PA Principals, PASCD – Altoona
July 23-28 – PSEA Summer Leadership Conference - Gettysburg
September 14-15 – Opening Retreat of 2017-18 PA Education Policy Fellowship Program - Harrisburg
October Date TBA – 7th Annual PA Arts and Education Symposium - Harrisburg
November 7 – General Election Day

National Calendar 2017

March 2-4 – American Assoc. of School Administrators (AASA) Annual Meeting – New Orleans
March 2-4 – National Association for Arts Education Annual Conference – New York
March 16-18 – Association of Education Finance and Policy Annual Conference – Washington DC
March 20-21 – Americans for the Arts (AFTA) Arts Advocacy Day – Washington DC
March 25-27 – Assoc. of Supervisors and Curriculum Development Annual Meeting – Anaheim
March 25-27 – National School Boards Association (NSBA) Annual Meeting – Denver
April 27-May 1 – American Education Research Assoc. (AERA) Annual Meeting – San Antonio
June 16-18 – Americans for the Arts (AFTA) Annual Meeting – San Francisco
June 22-25 – National PTA Annual Conference – Las Vegas
June 25-28 – ISTE Annual Conference – San Antonio
June 28-30 – Education Commission of the States (ECS) Annual Forum – San Diego
August 7-10 – National Conference of State Legislatures (NCSL) Annual Conference - Boston

Professional Opportunities

The Center for Safe Schools will host the first session in the Third Thursday Bullying Prevention Online Learning Series. On Thursday, January 19, 2017 from 3:00 p.m. to 4:15 p.m., “Teach Me to Think: Fostering Children’s Social Emotional Learning, a live online learning session for educators will be held. This session will discuss social emotional learning, the way in which a child experiences, expresses, and manages emotions. The presentation will familiarize participants with a social emotional learning program called, I Can Problem Solve (ICPS) and the parent

program, Raising a Thinking Child (RaTC) developed by Dr. Myrna Shure. The ICPS program teaches young children how to think, not what to think, so they are more able to make responsible decisions.

The Center for Schools and Communities, as a division of the Central Susquehanna Intermediate Unit, is offering Act 48 professional development credit for those with Pennsylvania teaching or administrative certificates. Participants must attend the online session from beginning to end to receive credit. Only specified professional development sessions are available for credit. The Record of Attendance will be emailed to participants upon completion of the session. If you are interested in receiving Act 48 credit, please check the appropriate box on the registration form.

Register at: <http://www.safeschools.info/bullying-prevention/professional-development>. After registering, you will receive a confirmation email containing information about joining the webinar.

Future Third Thursday On-Line Learning Series dates are:
February 16, 2017: Mean on Purpose? Bullying Prevention in Early Childhood; and
May 18, 2017: Implications of the recently released National Academies Report *Preventing Bullying Through Science, Policy, and Practice*: How to use the report to further your bullying prevention efforts.

Coming Soon in the Letter

- In coming editions of the Letter, we'll take a close look at:
- Membership of the House and Senate Education Committees
 - Governor Wolf's proposed 2017-2018 education budget
 - Education Issues - House and Senate Appropriations Committees
 - Property tax reform issues

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