



PASCD Newsletter



“Educators impacting teaching and learning through leadership”

FEBRUARY 9, 2015

President’s Message



In a recently released research bulletin published by the Southern Education Foundation

51% of America’s school children were identified as low income (National Center for Education Statistics, 2013). That number is staggering! Many of us reading this newsletter are experiencing increasing rates of poverty in our regions. Pennsylvania reports 40% of public school children are low income. The implications of this trend are far-reaching—if public education fails these students, entire regions of our country will fail due to “inadequate human capital...to build and sustain good jobs, enjoyable quality of life, and a well-informed democracy,” (Southern Education Foundation, 2013). The report titled, ‘*The New Majority*’ goes on to state “the trends of the last decade will be

prologue for a nation not at risk, but a nation in decline...” Unbelievable! America—the land of opportunity—in decline because we failed to adequately educate the totality of our citizenry.

In the district in which I work, the percentage of children designated as low socio-economic status has almost doubled in ten years. Our demographics are changing. As educators, we must understand our new demographic. I have been reading the book, Engaging Students with Poverty in Mind by Eric Jensen. In his book, Jensen identifies what many educators already know—factors of lower socio-economic status impact student engagement. However, he also reinforces the research stating the *teachers matter more than any other factor in a student’s school years*. As educators, **we** can make the difference. Jensen’s book goes on to explore how to engage students in poverty through nurturing a positive climate, building cognitive capacity, encouraging greater effort, building understanding, and activating

energy. It won’t be easy. It will take the united efforts of all. However, until legislators in our state and national capital can agree on new ways to fund the educational needs of our children, it is up to us to work best we can to level the playing field and educate **all** children.

Lori

Lori J. Stollar, Ed. D.
PASCD President

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Advantages of Online Professional Development

Dr. Jeff Taylor,
Technology Committee Chair

The need for professional development that can fit into an educator's busy schedule, that draws on powerful resources often not available locally, and that can create an evolutionary path toward providing real-time, ongoing, work-embedded support has stimulated the creation of online professional development programs.

Online professional development environments can connect learners at different locations to work on a collaborative task or to discuss a complex issue. They create opportunities for learners to interact actively and remove the time and space constraints so that learners enjoy greater flexibility and opportunities to process information pertaining to the discussed issues and problems.

Online learning can be used to bridge distance and time. Educators can participate in professional development activities via the Internet rather than travel to a specific site, and interactions can be asynchronous so that participants do not need to be available at the same time. In addition to logistical advantages, online professional development can: provide expertise and resources to locations where they would not normally be available, provide new means to interact with experts and colleagues, enable educators to experience for themselves new forms of teaching and learning, and make participation in coaching, mentoring, and professional learning communities more accessible.

Online professional development provides educators with the ability to: participate during times that are convenient, receive job-embedded support that addresses immediate classroom needs, customize programs to better suit their own individual learning styles, interact with material through a variety of visual or other multimedia formats, and gain valuable computer and online technology skills.

In summary, the following advantages of online professional development can be realized:

- Time – flexible and convenient
- Access to experts and resources that are not readily available locally
- Ongoing collaboration – addresses the practical needs of the teacher
- Interactivity with multimedia-rich content – addresses individual learning styles.



The New Digital Divide

Laurie Heinricher
Curriculum Committee

The term “digital divide” has been part of our lexicon for many years. In its infancy, the term was used to describe the amount of technology available to students. The availability was often based on the socio-economic health of the community of the school district. The good news is that the original digital divide has

become less and less. Given grant monies available to create a better balance between the have's and have-not's (Graham, 2014), fewer and fewer students find themselves in districts replete of technology. The bad news is that a new, second-level digital divide (Reinhart, Thomas, Torskie, 2011) has emerged that is affecting the application of the technological tools.

Just like Kevin Costner in *Field of Dreams*, many, many districts and teacher-preparation programs have adopted the “build it and they will come” approach to technology integration. Districts have spent money, providing technology; laptops, interactive white boards, iPads, and desktop computers. Some teachers have latched onto the resources and have provided rich opportunities for their students. Such implementations have allowed students to harness the power of connectivity to investigate, apply and communicate information to their classmates that was never possible without the hardware and infrastructure. Computational thinking has become a goal for districts and has raised the bar for students in such technologically rich classrooms. But, do all students have the same experiences leveraging technology to deepen and expand their learning experiences? Many researchers would suggest that this is not the case.

This is the new digital divide. Classroom containing similar technological tools with exact levels of connectivity are not using the resources the same way. New teachers, who can be labeled “digital natives” (Bennett, Maton & Kervin, 2008) are not leaving their teacher preparation programs with the experiences needed to purposefully apply the tools. In-service teachers

do not have the same interest and approaches to integrating the tools in their classrooms. How can we better prepare all teachers to make the best possible use of the tools being provided by their districts? University and school district partnerships can play a role in improving technology integration for both pre-service and in-service teachers. Hampton Township School District partners with Duquesne University in an internship program. Dr. David Carbonara brings students from the Instructional Technology program to act as interns. They spend 8-10 hours observing K-12 classrooms. This time is spent observing teachers, interacting with students and slowly integrating themselves into the classrooms and into the instruction. These are pre-service teachers so they are working cooperatively with teachers. Some of the innovative ideas come from the Duquesne students. They observe classroom routines and best practices and then make suggestions to the teachers about how to use technology to accomplish the same tasks in more efficient and technology-rich ways.

The initial experience was tentative on the parts of both the college students and the classroom teachers. Interestingly enough the creation of a Jeopardy review game on an interactive white board was the first icebreaker in making the intern-teacher relationship work. Now interns can be found helping teachers utilize Nearpod to streamline formative assessment and working with integrating Google docs into elementary classrooms. After 5 years of working with Duquesne University in this semester intern program, Hampton teachers are anxious to meet their interns. The second day of school, teachers

wanted to know when the interns would come.

This is one example of a partnership that has had positive effects on all involved. The pre-service teachers are having a hands-on experience in integrating technology in K-12 classrooms. Current teachers are able to take advantage of the fresh, creative ideas offered by the college-age interns and the interns are able to see the implementation in action. This design model allows all involved to grow as technology integrators and as educational colleagues.

References

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- Reinhart, J., Thomas, E., & Toriskie, J. (2011). K-12 Teachers: Technology use and the second level digital divide. *Journal of Instructional Psychology*, 38(3).

Emerging Leader Corner

Over the next several months we will be introducing our Emerging Leaders through a series of questions they have been asked to answer.



Kristen Craig

Provide a brief intro of yourself (no more than 3 sentences) including your location in PA.

I am a working mother of a 5 year old daughter and have a son on the way! As a reading specialist in a K-8 inner city public school in Philadelphia, I enjoy supporting students who both struggle and excel in reading. During my free time, I enjoy spending time with family, cooking, exercising, reading, and growing as a professional.

Tell us about your role in education? What does your typical day look like?

Currently, I am working on building and implementing the Reading Intervention program, as the school I work at is newly K-6, historically 6-12. Supporting both a push-in and pull-out model to Tier 2 and Tier 3 RTII, I spend my days assessing students' needs, building individual plans for those needs, tracking the growth of students, forming and facilitating flexible groupings based on student needs, and supporting teachers with DRA testing, literacy lessons, and differentiation. In addition, I am the high school English curriculum coordinator, which requires the oversight of unit plans, standardized test preparation, unity in curriculum among grade levels, and communication between administration and teachers.

What is your educational philosophy summed up in one sentence?

The role of education is to support the whole child in flourishing academically, socially, and emotionally in order to prepare students to become productive and successful citizens.

What professional development (books, webinars, courses, articles) have made a difference in your career?

There are a variety of professional development experiences that have made a difference in my career. First, I attended the PEAK Learning Systems training for a week in Vail, Colorado in 2010, which shaped my philosophy on teaching the whole child plus offered a plethora of best practice strategies that have been very useful in the classroom. Also, some of the most beneficial professional development experiences have been inside schools led by administrators and other teachers. I really feel that the book The Cafe by Gail Boushey and Joan Moser has been instrumental in the development of the reading intervention program I have been designing in my current position.

If you could make one major change in education, what would it be?

One major change in education that I would make is less of a focus on standardized test scores and more of a focus on authentic, inspirational teaching. It is very discouraging to teachers that student performance on standardized tests determines their professional value as an educator in the state of PA, especially when a stagnant test is given to all students no matter the learning gaps, special education needs, and language needs of students. If education calls for differentiation, then why aren't the

"most important" tests also differentiated and more inclusive for students so that real teacher effectiveness can be more fairly gauged?

What is the most impactful statement a student has ever said to you?

The most meaningful statement ever said to me by a high school student was, "Miss, we respect you because you actually care about us both inside and outside of school. You don't just care about the grades we earn; you care about our home lives, whether we eat, and our emotions. That is why we respect you."



Jim Gallagher

Provide a brief intro of yourself (no more than 3 sentences) including your location in PA.

Although I am originally from Ohio, I moved to Erie, Pennsylvania, in 1998 to get married and finish my undergraduate degree at Gannon University. Erie is such a great community I decided to stay here and raise my family. I truly consider myself fortunate to be an educator in Pennsylvania.

Tell us about your role in education? What does your typical day look like?

I currently serve as the Director of Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment for the Northwest Tri-County Intermediate Unit. Much of my time is spent working with

administrators from the various LEAs in our service area. Typically we focus on professional development, school improvement planning, and implementing the new initiatives coming from the Pennsylvania Department of Education.

What is your educational philosophy summed up in one sentence?

Everything I do as a professional educator should be directed toward increasing student achievement and improving instructional practice.

What professional development (books, webinars, courses, articles) have made a difference in your career?

My career in education was significantly altered when my school district received the Classrooms for the Future Grant in 2007. The professional development and leadership opportunities I received while serving as a technology coach for the Iroquois School District continue to shape my work today. Although I will always be a classroom teacher at heart, stepping into other educational spheres has provided me with a more global perspective on factors influencing education. I am passionate about systemic changes and believe we can best improve student success when we address educational systems as a whole.

If you could make one major change in education, what would it be?

I would like to fix the basic education funding formula to ensure that all students in PA have the resources necessary for a successful educational experience.

What is the most impactful statement a student has ever said to you?

“I never had to think in a Social Studies class before. You don’t give us the answers, you make us think for ourselves.”

Pennsylvania’s Race to the Top Early Learning Challenge grant offers schools and communities new funding and supports for effective Pre-K – 3rd grade alignment

Submitted by Debbie Reuvenny and Kelly Swanson

Research shows that children’s experiences before they reach kindergarten have a significant impact on future performance in school. The achievement gap between children in high- and low-income households becomes evident as early as nine months of age and widens by two years of age. Schools that make a concerted effort to support young children and their families before they enter kindergarten may enjoy lower special education rates and grade retention, and higher graduation rates.

In 2013, Pennsylvania won a \$51.7 million Race to the Top-Early Learning Challenge grant that helps expand upon its efforts to reduce the achievement gap and improve at-risk student math and reading proficiency by the end of third grade. Pennsylvania’s Office of Child Development and Early Learning is using the “Framework for Planning, Implementing, and Evaluating Pre-K-3rd Grade Approaches,” created by Kristie Kauerz, Ed.D. of the University of Washington to inform this work.

During the four-year grant period there will be numerous opportunities for schools and educators to take advantage of collaboration, professional development and other resources to improve student achievement. For example:

Pennsylvania will award 50 Early Childhood Education Community Innovation Zone grants to at-risk elementary schools and neighborhoods to strengthen P-3 alignment through strategies such as standards alignment, cross-sector collaboration and family engagement. Teams representing schools, early learning programs and community organizations may apply for up to \$75,000 a year for three years. Twelve grants were issued in 2014; 38 additional grants will be awarded in 2015. The application will be released in early 2015.

Pennsylvania’s “Prekindergarten to Grade 3 (P-3) Governor’s Institute: P-3 Collaboration-Working Together for Student Success” helps school districts, early learning programs and community organizations make the vital connections necessary for student success from birth through grade 3. Act 48 credits are available; the Office of Child Development and Early Learning is also applying to offer Act 45 credits. The four Institutes in 2015 are: June 14-17, King of Prussia; June 21-24, Monroeville; July 12-15, Erie; and July 26-29, Scranton.

Pennsylvania has made the Kindergarten Entry Inventory available at no cost to all Pennsylvania schools. Pennsylvania’s Kindergarten Entry Inventory is a reliable reporting tool that provides a comprehensive snapshot of a child’s cognitive and non-cognitive skill levels at kindergarten entry. The results can inform instruction, professional development and planning. More than 250 schools in

26 school districts registered to use the Inventory in 2014. Schools can register and participate in training in spring 2015.

Pennsylvania will refine its Learning Standards for Early Childhood to align with its academic standards for Kindergarten-12th grade with attention to cultural, developmental and linguistic appropriateness. The 2014 Infant, Toddler and Pre-Kindergarten Learning Standards are now posted online. The Kindergarten, First and Second Grade Standards for Early Childhood will be revised in 2015 with opportunities for review and comment.

Notifications for applications, registration for the Institutes, and feedback will be announced in the Build Early Childhood Education E-News. For more information and to subscribe to the Build ECE News, visit http://www.portal.state.pa.us/portal/server.pt/community/departamental_offices/7235/p/1852080 or contact Debbie Reuvenny, RTT-ELC Director, at dreuvenny@pa.gov.

PASCD Member Spotlight

Dr. Bryan E. O’Black



Being a member of PASCD has truly provided me with invaluable opportunities to network, develop and stay abreast of the most up to

date strategies impacting our classrooms. As a Curriculum Director of a large suburban school district in Pittsburgh, PA I find that PASCD offers high quality professional opportunities. These include publications, academies and the Annual Conference. PASCD is always abreast of what is occurring at the state and federal level. Simply put PASCD is my go to professional organization.