

PASCD Newsletter



“Educators impacting teaching and learning through leadership”

MARCH 3, 2015

President’s Message



It is my pleasure to share that PASCD is the recipient of the 2015 ASCD Area of

Excellence Award for Programs, Products, and Services. The award recognizes ASCD affiliates who engage their membership to impact teaching and learning. PASCD’s award application highlighted the Emerging Leader program; increased member benefits including the ASCD virtual library, the new Weekly Policy Update, and monthly newsletter; and significant professional development opportunities such as our Annual Conference. The award will be presented at ASCD Annual Conference in Houston, TX later this month.

Speaking of professional development opportunities, our conference committee has been

working diligently to plan and organize the 2015 PASCD Conference. This year’s conference will be held at the Monroeville Convention Center, just outside of Pittsburgh, November 15-17th. The theme, “Leading and Achieving in an Interconnected World” will challenge participants to explore new paradigms in education. Keynote speakers include Heidi Hayes Jacobs, author and international speaker regarding curriculum reform and creator of Curriculum 21; Meenoo Rami, National Board Certified English teacher at Science Leadership Academy in Philadelphia, creator of EduCon, and author of *Thrive: 5 Ways to (re)Invigorate Your Teaching*; and David Griffith, ASCD Director of Public Policy. Our preconference opportunities will include an ‘Unconference’, an unstructured meeting in which the participants drive the agenda. Requests for Proposals to present a small group session at the conference will be available later this month. Watch for a communication announcing the opening of the RfP window and consider sharing your

expertise at the conference through a small group presentation!

PASCD is dedicated to providing educators premier programs, products, and services to impact teaching and learning. Thank you to the many people behind the scenes who make this happen. Our dedicated members volunteer their time to orchestrate our conference, publish our newsletter and journal, facilitate our Emerging Leader Program, and lead our regions. Together, we are PASCD!

Lori

Lori J. Stollar, Ed. D.
PASCD President

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2015 ASCD LILA EVENT

PASCD Legislative Influence Committee

Dean Maynard, Chair



The 2015 ASCD ***Leadership Institute for Legislative Advocacy*** was held in Washington, DC, January 25th through the 27th. Approximately 120 educators attended the annual event representing more than 40 states and the District of Columbia. The overall theme of this year's event was the need for ***College, Career and Citizenship Readiness*** for all students. In addition the emphasis was on the ASCD Legislative Agenda for 2015. The 2015 Agenda includes the following: **Overdue Reauthorization of ESEA, Establishing a Multi-metric Accountability System, Reduction in the Reliance on Standardized Testing, Promotion of Whole Child Education, and Honoring and Supporting the Education Profession.** There was also much discussion regarding the need to clarify and clearly communicate Common Core and the political nature of this at the federal and state levels. The general consensus is that a core curriculum may better belong with the state government and not the federal government. There was also much discussion about providing all students with integrated access to learning. This year's featured speakers on Sunday included

Reginald Felton, President, Felton Associates; Elaine Weiss, National Coordinator, Broader Bolder Approach to Education Campaign; and the keynote address on Sunday was delivered by Chris Matthews, Host of MSNBC's *Hardball*. Mr. Matthews spoke on his thoughts on the 2016 presidential election, emphasizing that it may belong to another democratic candidate and that Hillary Clinton seemed to be the front-runner. As nearly a dozen Republican names are "out there" the race is already underway. He also reinforced the need for a community college experience for everyone, adding that young men want a job where they can be the sole provider for their family and come home "dirty" after a long and hard hands-on and active day at work.



Presenters throughout the event continued to say that it is time for educators to be courageous as we choose to speak out and share our expertise and knowledge with policy makers and elected officials. We need to remember that there really are no longer the opportunities for jobs in our big cities except for crime and crime is what is attracting our young inner city youth. We were also reminded that ALL POLITICS ARE LOCAL and that we need a curriculum that challenges every student, every day. In addition we need to use the strength of our teaching forces and be an advocate everywhere we go to speak about

the positives of being in the classroom and the potential that lies within our position including trips to the grocery store and especially to the offices of our elected officials. We were reminded to get our locally-elected politicians into our districts to see learning, to see teaching, and to better understand the look and feel of our schools today.

Of continued interest is the status of the Reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act. Congressmen John Kline (R-MN- Chair of the House Education Committee since 2010) and Lamar Alexander (R-TN-New Chair of the Senate Education Committee) have taken steps to replacing the dated No Child Left Behind Law of more than a dozen years ago. Each version is available to review. ASCD has created a side by side comparison chart for easy understanding and this is available at the ASCD Edge website, www.educatoradvocates.org. There are many similarities and we as ASCD members should work with our elected officials in order to ensure stable, transparent and uniform policies that are acceptable to all states and districts. We were reminded throughout the LILA Event that we need to get involved in this work as well as in the work of the other items on ASCD's 2015 Legislative Agenda. We were urged to contact our legislators at home and share the materials that are available on the ASCD Edge site with them. The materials are supportive of meaningful reauthorization of ESEA, the importance of a whole child education, and reducing the reliance on standardized testing.

We learned about the 114th Congress that was sworn in earlier this month, and the members that will be determining the direction of our nation's education policies.

The 114th Congress by the numbers:

HOUSE → 43% Democrat/57% Republican

SENATE → 54% Republican/44% Democrat/2% Independent

Even with the Republican “takeover” they still fall short of reaching the two-thirds of member votes to override a presidential veto. This means compromise across the aisle will still be a crucial element of success for the 114h Congress.

***81% male/19% female**
***Average age in the Senate is 51 and average age in the House is 50 years of age.**
***Nearly 50% of the 114th Congress have been in office for four years or less**
***About 25% of the 114th Congress-25% of the Senate and 24% of the House-was serving when NCLB was passed in 2001.**

In our visits to “The Hill” on Tuesday, we reinforced the role of ASCD as a ready and well-prepared resource, one that believes in Whole Child Education, warns of the danger of High Stakes Testing, and reminded them of the importance of family and community engagement in schools as we work together to improve what happens in every classroom. In summary, ASCD calls on the 114th Congress and the Obama administration to adopt the following recommendations to promote the comprehensive achievement of educators, students, schools and families. These recommendations are:

Reauthorize ESEA Now, Multi-metric Accountability, Reduce the Reliance

on Standardized Testing, Promote a Whole Child Education, and Honor and Support the Education

Profession. More information about these recommendations can be found at ASCD’s Edge, www.educatoradvocates.org, and in ASCD weekly e-newsletters and publications such as ASCD’s Capitol Connection and ASCD’s Policy Points. Please “step-up” and take action as you take a close look at the 2015 Legislative Agenda of ASCD and take a copy to the office of your local legislator, they are waiting for you.

Written and submitted by PASCD Legislative Influence Committee Chair, Dean Maynard.

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Regional Update North Central Region

Tonya DeVecchis-Kerr

In an attempt to stay warm, the North Central Region has been generating energy by planning for our third annual “Up Close and Personal with PDE” scheduled for April 10 at the Mountain View Country Club, Boalsburg, PA. The day begins with registration at 9:00 AM and concludes at 2:45 PM. Participants will have the opportunity to hear the latest information about topics important to Pennsylvania educators. The format of the conference will allow conversation and question/answer sessions.

Presenters for the day include:

Mr. Robert Shinskie, Senior Vice President for Educational Systems Designs, PLS 3rd Learning, *Understanding the PA School Performance Profile*

Carl Beard, Esquire, *Legal Updates for Educators*

Mr. Michael Kozup, Director, Safe Schools Office, Pennsylvania Department of Education, *Safe Schools Overview*

We are also hoping to have a representative from the Office of Acting Secretary of Education, Pedro Rivera. Also, we have invited area legislatures to join us for the day.

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.



Christine Fleming-Hirshka

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

I am Christine Fleming-Hirshka. This is my 15th year as a teacher. I have been with the Hatboro-Horsham School District since 2005. I have taught Social Studies at the high school and middle school; currently I serve as the middle school gifted support specialist and enrichment teacher.

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

The best part of my job is that every day is different; there is no routine or sense of monotony. I teach during our RTII/Content Remediation period each morning then at other times during the day depending on the day of the week and the grade level scheduled to meet with me for class. I am the case manager for most of the middle school gifted population and teach every gifted student in the middle school setting (approximately 80 students). I write all GIEPs (approximately 60-65 per year) and hold the annual GIEP review meetings. I sit in on many parent conferences and mediate difficult teacher/parent or teacher/student situations. I attend team level meetings regularly and work with various curriculum coordinators and teachers to assist in the differentiation of the content, process, and product for gifted and advanced learners. This year I have been doing my administrative internship so I have been working with the building administrative and central administrative teams more closely than any other time during my career. Over the past two years we revamped our gifted support program to infuse gifted support into the RTII program and to allow for student choice based on content interest. We have strived to better address the social and emotional needs of the gifted students with a focus on their executive functioning skills. Each year I research, develop, and write new curriculum based on student interest and access to technology. It is an exciting, fast-paced, and hectic job but never dull!

What is your educational philosophy summed up in one sentence?

If you are bored just imagine what your students are thinking/feeling. That sums it up. I am always looking for new tech savvy ways to engage, inspire, and to reach the students. If I am bored or uninspired by the content how can I expect them to be excited about coming into my classroom each class period?

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

Two books have recently made a huge impact on how I view myself as a teacher and a leader. Dave Burgess *Teach Like a Pirate* has inspired me to share his message with my colleagues and try and teach in ways that will inspire a passion in my students for learning. I saw Dave speak at the PASCD conference and it was a transformative experience. I returned to school feeling inspired and determined to teach the way the kids learn best regardless of what the "norm" may be or to be more "like a pirate". I spent my winter break reading this book. It is a "must read" for every teacher regardless of whether you are a seasoned veteran or a novice.

The second book was *The Constructivist Leader* (2002) by Lambert et al. This book was assigned for one of my educational leadership program graduate level classes. It truly helped me define the refine by leadership philosophy and style. The book is one that I kept in my professional library for future reference. It provides a great deal of insight in regards to recognizing that all stakeholder in a school have skills and talents and that all should be valued, engaged, and working together and engaged in ongoing

dialogue to continually improve the climate and the academic services offered to the students.

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

We spend an enormous amount of time prepping for tests and teaching in ways that defy logic. Students learn best when content, process, and product is differentiated to meet their needs. However we measure them in a "one size fits all manner". We should be incorporating more authentic real-world learning experiences in the classroom, however with SLO's, Teacher Specific Data, and SPP's teachers live in fear of failure or being measured by a test that they have little control over. The tests do not measure the social and emotional lessons being taught in the classroom or the life lessons that are imparted by dedicated professionals. I wish we had more time to do the things that truly make a huge impact and change lives. There has to be a balance.

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

There have been many. I have saved quite a few cards and letters that inspire me after a less than inspirational day. However if I had to choose one it would be "You don't teach like the rest of them, that is why I never cut your class." A student who was very troubled and had quite a reputation said this to me in 2003. In a follow up conversation he stated that he never cut my class (and he cut others far too often) because he felt that I did not talk "at" the class but rather allowed for the students to make connections between events that transpired in the past with current world events and situations. He like that I infused art, music, and pop

culture into the classroom experience in an interactive fashion and did not tell them how to think or feel. Respect was given and demanded in return.



Felix J. Yerace

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

For the last ten years I have worked as a Social Studies teacher at South Fayette Township High School in McDonald, PA, outside of Pittsburgh. I am also working on my Ph.D. in Leadership Studies at Gonzaga University, with my dissertation focusing on adolescent leadership development. Outside the classroom, I am the District #3 Director for the Pennsylvania Association of Student Councils, a Vice-President on the Board of Directors of Global Solutions – Pittsburgh, and I teach an online undergraduate course in Project Management through the Jesuit Commons – Higher Education at the Margins project.

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

I teach a variety of classes (which I love!) My schedule consists of AP US & Comparative Government and Politics, American Cultures and Honors American Cultures, Leadership, and Sociology. After the

last bell rings, I almost always have some activity with my student council, usually around some program they want to hold at our school! As a result, I really don't have a typical day, as my students can come up with some pretty creative things to do!

What is your educational philosophy summed up in one sentence?

High school is four of the most important years in a person's life, and we need to do everything we can to make it as meaningful and impactful as possible as our students become the adults they want to become.

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

The best thing I ever did in my career was to go back to graduate school for my principal's certification. Not only because of what I learned from my courses and about how to think globally as an administrator would, but also just because I needed to be reminded what it's like to be a student! Sometimes we forget what it's like to be given (and assessed on!) an academic assignment and remembering what that feels like, I believe, has made me a much better teacher.

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

In the 1970's when Finland decided to improve its educational system, in addition to adding teacher supports and improving training, the nation also attacked childhood poverty to ensure that all children had an equal chance to succeed in school. This would be my change, to work to ensure that all children, regardless of

economic background, were provided the same opportunity to be successful by removing outside barriers to their success in school.

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."



Member Spotlight



The March Member Spotlight is dedicated to the leadership and members of PASCD who have worked diligently to bring quality programs and services to the educators of Pennsylvania. This dedication has resulted in being named the recipient of the 2015 ASCD Area of Excellence Award for Programs, Products, and Services. Congratulations to the members of PASCD who have made a positive impact on Pennsylvania's educational community!