

July 2017

Voice

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Digital media pilot huge success **page 25**

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The
HUB page 6
of the school

A photograph showing several students in a library or study area. They are sitting at tables, working on laptops. In the background, large windows look out onto a bright day. The word "HUB" is overlaid in large white letters across the bottom left of the image.

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We are members who promote, protect, and advocate for our schools, students, and professions.

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College-level research assignments for AP classes, resources for terms papers, and learning credible internet sources for high school students, introducing middle school students to research, and helping elementary students hone reading skills. Libraries and librarians, it would seem, are indispensable. But while they are a top priority in some school districts, that is far from the rule.



CENTER SECTION

STAND UP FOR SCHOOLS AND GOV. WOLF

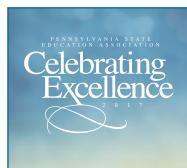


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Changing the conversation

After four years of bad bills, endless legislative debates, and unprecedented advocacy by PSEA members, a new pension law is on the books in Pennsylvania.

It isn't perfect, but it does protect your retirement benefits and the solvency of the retirement funds, while excluding many of the harmful provisions that were in previous bills. You can read more about it in this issue of *Voice*.

What I want to focus on is just how much you changed the conversation about pensions in Harrisburg.

It wasn't that long ago that the Corbett administration was trying to make unconstitutional cuts to your retirement benefits. Many in the Legislature supported those attempts. That's when PSEA – you – sprang into action.

You held thousands of meetings with state lawmakers and sent them more than 1 million emails, letters, and phone calls. That's right – 1 million. They heard you. They had no choice. You wouldn't let up.

When it came time to put the votes together for a new pension law, lawmakers had no doubt where we stood.

We also had Gov. Tom Wolf as our advocate in this debate, standing up for us at the bargaining table and fighting against the worst elements of several bad pension bills.

So, it's no accident we now have a pension law that comes closer than any other recently considered to meeting PSEA's pension principles.

It's been a long four years, and it's tempting to think that now we can finally sit back and relax.

We cannot.

We need you now more than ever to engage with your lawmakers and change

the conversation on other policies that impact what we do in our schools and our classrooms – just as more than 100 of your colleagues did during PSEA's Lobby Days in mid-June. We need to speak out against attacks on our ability to deduct union dues from our paychecks,



...it's no accident we now have a pension law that comes closer than any other recently considered to meeting PSEA's pension principles.

a move expressly designed to silence our voices.

We need to fight efforts in Washington to cut billions in federal funds for public schools and divert dollars to new unaccountable tuition voucher programs.

We also need you to help us advance policies that work, such as investing more in our schools and requiring districts to use transparency in subcontracting decisions.

And on Election Day, we need you to go out and vote for champions of

public education up and down the ballot.

PSEA will remain vigilant and keep you in the loop every step of the way. But only you can change the conversation.

By picking up the phone.

Sending an email.

Meeting with your lawmakers.

And voting.

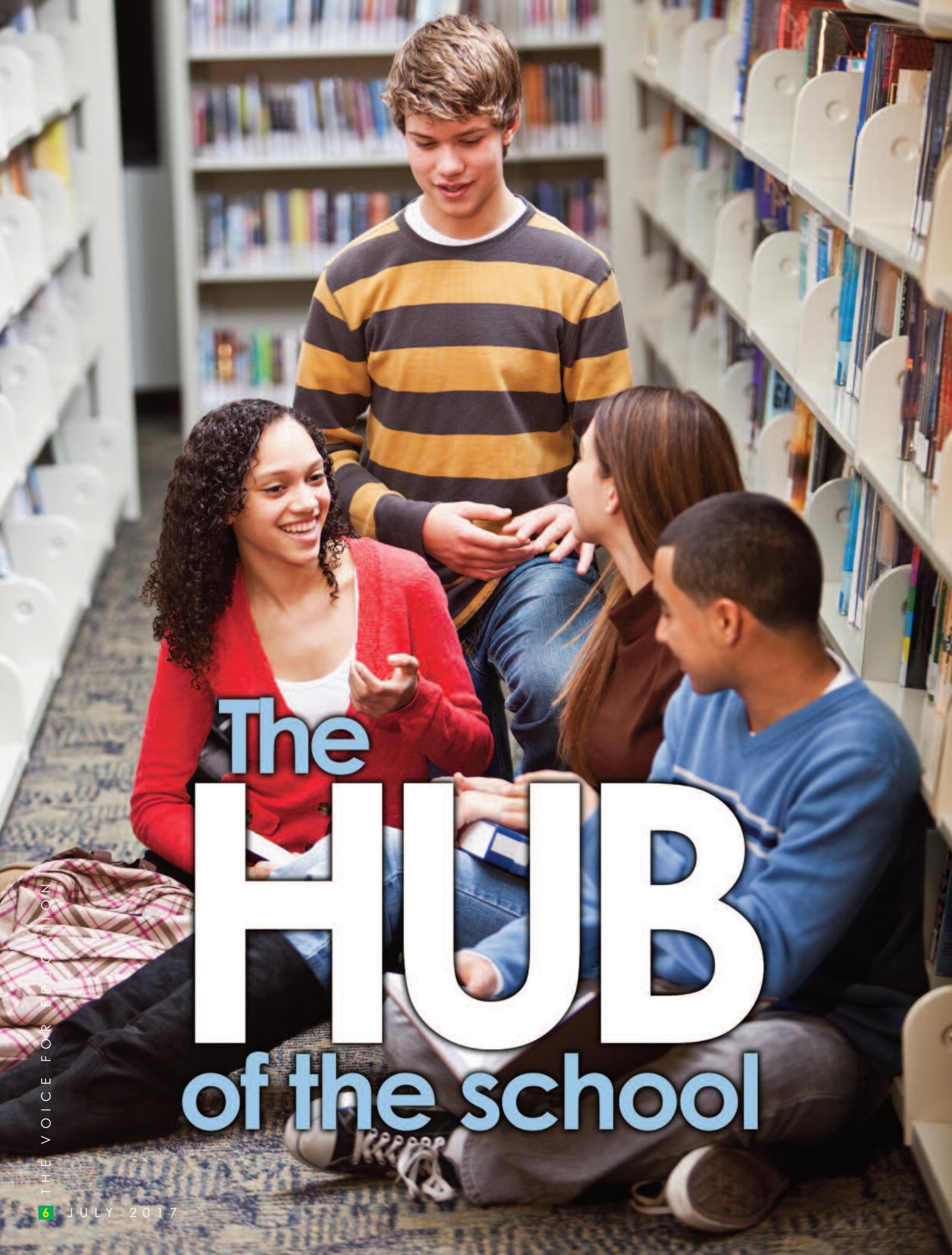
We may get to rest someday, but not when there's still so much work to do. ▶

Email Jerry Oleksiak:
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The HUB of the school



College-level research assignments for AP classes, resources for term papers, learning credible sources on the internet, access to laptops and iPads for students who don't have their own.

That is a short list of the key roles libraries play for high school students.

Middle school students are starting to get research assignments for the first time in some of their subject areas and learning what libraries can do in the 21st century; elementary students are honing reading skills and getting help with reading choices.

The libraries of their grandparents – card catalogs, librarians mainly signing out books, directing students to shelves of encyclopedias – are long gone in the digital and information ages of the early 21st century. “Shhh” is another relic. Collaboration and socialization are fine.

In some school districts, libraries are not only a center of technical tools, data, group learning, or maybe just “hanging out,” they are referred to emphatically as the “hub of the school” by more enlightened administrators.

“Students aren’t just there consuming things anymore,” said Robin Burns, head librarian at Salisbury Twp. High School, Lehigh County. “They are producing podcasts and movies. They are working on research projects. They are collaborating with each other, and they are producing content, whether digital or on paper.”

Libraries and librarians, it would seem, are indispensable. They are a top priority in some districts, but unfortunately that is far from the rule.

There are currently 28 school districts in Pennsylvania, educating 54,329 students, without a single librarian. Another 100 school districts have only one librarian for the entire district. That’s more than one-fourth of the state’s 500 school districts.

There has been a steady decline in librarians and library

aides since the 2012-13 school year – not coincidentally a year after the state cut nearly \$1 billion in funding to public schools. Among the first cuts in some districts – foolishly many educators say – were librarians, aides, and resources.

That has resulted in some librarians’ being spread thin trying to cover multiple buildings, or picking up the work of library aides who are gone.

“If you are going to cut aides, I’m going to be doing that work instead of working with students,” said Ann Schmidt, librarian at Conrad Weiser High School, Berks County.

“Why would you want me checking out books when I could be in classrooms collaborating and curating resources with students and teachers?”

A ray of hope is that state lawmakers of both parties are noticing, thanks in large part to a strong push by the Pennsylvania School Librarians Association. The

House Education Committee held a hearing on public school libraries last year, leading to a bipartisan bill recently introduced (House Bill 740) that calls for a certified librarian in every school.

And librarians and teachers are not alone in their quest. Many administrators, some of whom are active in the association, are among librarians’ biggest champions.

Cathy Fuhrman, K-12 department supervisor in the Hempfield School District, Lancaster County, makes library funding and staffing a top priority in her annual budget presentation.

“The pitch I make is that libraries and librarians are the biggest bargain when it comes to a district’s budget,” she said. “You’ve got a librarian, who is also going to be a teacher, who is also going to be an information specialist, and who is going to help teachers with resources.”

The following stories show the importance and the disparity of public school libraries in the state.

In some school districts, libraries are not only a center of technical tools, data, group learning, or maybe just “hanging out,” they are referred to emphatically as the “hub of the school” by more enlightened administrators.

Chocolate, roller coasters, and...libraries

Not all visitors to Hershey come to see how some of the world's best chocolate is made, or to seek thrills on the many roller coasters in its world-famous amusement park.

Some are representatives of school districts around Pennsylvania who visit Hershey High School to learn about one the state's top library systems.

Yes, the Derry Twp. School District, Dauphin County, is fortunate to have a strong economic base from The Hershey Company, the H.B. Reese Candy Co., the Penn State Hershey Medical Center, and the Hershey Entertainment and Resorts Company.

But its showcase library program – there are full-time librarians and professional aides giving students hands-on attention daily at Hershey High School and four other buildings – comes from far more than resources.

It starts with a strong commitment from the administration toward the library program, a commitment based on a strong belief that libraries are a key part of the educational program.

"From our perspective, the library really should be the hub that the school operates from," said Derry Twp. Superintendent Joseph McFarland. "For the innovation, for the collaboration, for the sharing."

Allison Mackley, right, Hershey High School librarian, and a typically busy day at the library.

Librarians heart of it all

As important as commitment and resources are, quality librarians are the ones who make it all work – both in the library with students and assisting teachers with curriculum.

Meet Allison Mackley, Hershey High School librarian and instructional technology coach, who was among 12 finalists for Pennsylvania's 2017 Teacher of the Year.

She teaches classes in the library on research and technology, co-teaches an AP language arts class, and teaches an online class called "Passion Driven Research" that allows students to undertake projects they are interested in but might not get to do in school. Examples include how video games impact brain development and social media's impact on elections.

Mackley also works with students on how best to use the technology; how to find credible sources on the internet; copyright restrictions; research notetaking and citations; graphic design; and how to present research work.

For students who don't have their own laptops and iPads for these lessons and for their own research, the library loans them out. There are also pre- and after-school library hours.

Mackley feels fortunate to have the resources and commitment she does in Derry Twp., but as vice president of the Pennsylvania State Librarians Association she knows the severe



In an age of “fake news,” school librarians help students and educators make sense of it all

Information literacy

School librarians teach students to recognize credible sources

Research skills

School librarians teach students to be independent and competent researchers

Educating educators

School librarians are a resource for teachers and education specialists

budgetary and staffing limitations under which some of her counterparts are working.

“Coming from a district that supports students with full-time, certified librarians in each library, I am able to see the disparity of services offered to students in other school districts,” Mackley said. “Without fully staffed libraries, the personalized formal and informal learning opportunities a librarian can provide are lost. Librarians inspire curiosity and help students explore personal interests.”

Culture, environment key components

In addition to resources and staffing, another large piece of the pie is the design of the library.

Mackley went to work on this when she took over as high school librarian 10 years ago after 14 years of teaching English.

There is a lot of glass – from the bright, open glass panels and ceiling in the atrium with plants and small trees at the library entrance, to the individual classrooms and other designated rooms within the library itself. High-topped café-style tables and stools are arranged around more traditional furnishings, and student artwork adorns the walls.

Mackley started a Learning Commons Council two years ago – an official school club with officers – that provides advice on what students want in their library.

“I want students to help make the decisions about what is going on in the library,” Mackley said. “They are the ones who use it and can give the best feedback on what is going to work for them. They are the ones who make decisions about the culture of the library and the environment.”

Part of the culture, which has become the norm for school libraries, is that there is noise and chatter everywhere, except for the classrooms, and a room set aside as a quiet zone or “think tank.” Many research projects involve collaboration, and the students simply need to be able to talk among themselves. Snacks and drinks are allowed.

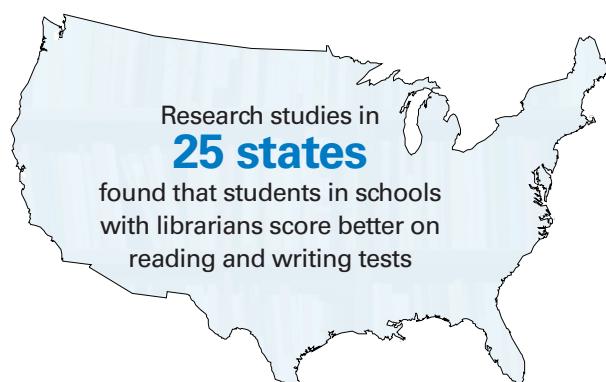
“I try not to have a lot of do’s and don’ts,” Mackley said. “Sometimes it gets noisy but the students know my limits. And I list my three expectations on the wall: ‘Be Productive, Be Responsible, Be Respectful.’”

Despite Hershey High School’s reputation and impressive resources and surroundings, Mackley still sees the library as a work in progress.

She is working toward turning a faculty reading room into a studio where students can do things like work on audio/visual presentations and music recitals.

“Kids are all over the hallways trying to find places to film,” Mackley said. “This will give them a space.” 

Students in schools with full-time librarians do better on standardized tests and other assessments



8 percent
more PA students score
“advanced” in PSSA
reading tests where
they have a
certified librarian in
their school



21st century makeover at Fox Chapel

Walk into the main entrance of Fox Chapel Area High School, and the first thing you encounter is a café-style commons area that adjoins the library and the school's technology center.

The library's glass walls and ceiling provide plenty of natural light, and just outside are neatly landscaped courtyards with tables where students can go to study, eat lunch, or relax during nice weather. Much of the furniture is on wheels so students and teachers can move it around to accommodate their needs.

The idea is to make the library the "hub of the school" – a phrase used by both Laura Ward, the school librarian, and Principal Mike Hower.

"It's sort of a Starbucks idea," Ward said. "We want the students to be comfortable here. They certainly come for academic purposes, but it's also a place where they can just socialize and hang out with friends."

Ward just completed her fourth year as librarian, and the renovations from more traditional library furnishings and the culture took place after her first year.

Like Hershey High School in the Derry Twp. School District, Fox Chapel has a strong economic base that allows for ample resources, and there is a strong commitment from the administration to make the library system a top priority. All six district buildings have full-time librarians and aides.

Ward and Hower were on the same page when the library was renovated.

"What we did with the commons area, tech center, help desk, and the library in one place was to make this the hub of the school," Hower said. "We made a concerted effort to put it all in one place to encourage students to use it in a variety of ways."

Era of 'general hush' is over

Before the renovation, Ward described the library as "'70s or '80s era.'

There were traditional furnishings and the traditional stern atmosphere. The number of students allowed in the library from study halls was limited.

"We used to have turnstiles in front of the library and security gates. A general hush would come over you," Hower said.

"That frustrated me. This is a place where students should want to come to read, or to study, or to socialize."

Mission accomplished.

On a recent day, students chatted in the commons area. In the library, students worked individually and collectively in the main library area, while in one of the library's separate rooms a ninth-grade history class was holding mini-debates.

Ward is generally overseeing and making herself available to students who need guidance, but on other days she could be teaching classes in the library or assisting other teachers and their students with class projects.

There are no limitations on the number of students. The "general hush" to which Hower referred is gone. In fact, when Ward herself wanted a student

across the library to meet a visitor, she just yelled out his name.

Many students have their own laptops or iPads, but the library loans out technology, including cellphones and Wi-Fi devices that can be used throughout the school.

A community asset

The school day starts at Fox Chapel at 7:30, but the library opens at 7 a.m. and at 6:55 students are lined up at the door.

It's also open at least another 80 minutes after the school day, and Ward says there could be anywhere from 50 to 100 kids during those times.

And when students aren't using the library, it is made available to community groups, including charity telethons.

Guest lecturers have included such prominent authors as Marja Mills, A.S. King, Heather Terrell, Philip Beard, and Gregory Maguire.

"We often partner with the public libraries for events," Ward said. "They invite students to their events, and their patrons get invited to some of ours. The students get top priority, but we like to think of the library as a community asset as well." □



Laura Ward

The idea is to make the library the 'hub of the school'... the commons area, tech center, help desk, and the library in one place.

Bill calls for librarian in every school

Prisons are required to have a certified librarian in Pennsylvania; public schools are not.

That is an eye-popping talking point the Pennsylvania School Librarians Association notes in pushing for support for House Bill 740, a bipartisan bill that will require every public school in the state to have a certified school librarian.

Association President Allison Burrell, the only librarian for the Southern Columbia Area School District, Northumberland County, said staffing and resources for public school libraries have been steadily dwindling in recent years.

She cites stunning statistics showing that 28 of the state's 500 districts have no librarian at all, and that another 100 have just one librarian for the entire district. Statewide, staffing of certified school librarians and library aides has been declining in recent years.

"How can we neglect the needs of so many students?" asks Burrell. "Even in communities where public libraries are available, the school library remains the best and most likely source for students' day-to-day information gathering and independent reading needs."

The demand is so great in the digital and information age,

and classroom assignments are so tied to library resources, that most adequately staffed libraries have pre-school and after-school hours to accommodate students.

"Our library opens at 7 a.m., about 40 minutes prior to the start of school, and we usually have more than 100 kids waiting at the door," said Allison Mackley, librarian and instructional technology coach at Hershey High School, Dauphin County.

Similarly, she and other librarians report similar use during after-school hours.

HB 740 is getting strong bipartisan support.

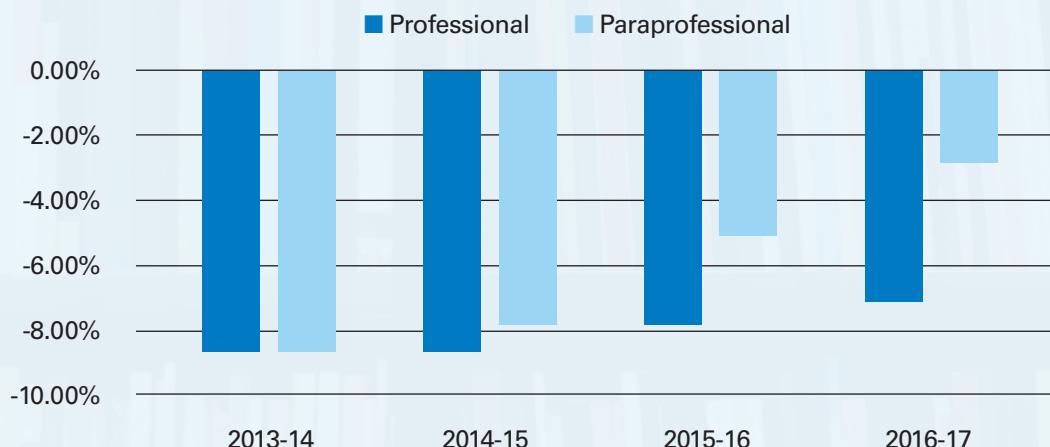
Its prime sponsors are Reps. Mark Longietti, D-Mercer, and Thomas Murt, R-Montgomery/Philadelphia, and there is a long list of co-sponsors from both parties.

"Research shows that students with a certified librarian do better on standardized tests," Burrell said.

"But librarians are not just there for students. Libraries and librarians are great assets to teachers and school staff throughout a district. When these resources to support teaching are spread thin, students' learning suffers." □

Losing ground every year

Statewide, school districts have cut library staff every year for the past four years.



Needs greatest in urban districts; resources lowest

Regardless of a school district's demographics, libraries are a key component to student learning and achievement.

But the need is perhaps most pronounced in urban districts, where many students don't have access to resources and technology at home. Unfortunately, these districts with large student populations also tend to be the lowest staffed and lowest funded, and their resources are antiquated.

In the Philadelphia School District, a recent philly.com story called school librarians there a "species nearly extinct." One of the nation's largest school systems with 134,000 students and 220 schools, the district has only eight full-time certified librarians.

The Erie School District has only two librarians for 18 schools with 11,500 students – 80 percent of whom are economically disadvantaged and 58 percent of whom are non-white.

The situation in urban districts is unfathomable to Shawn Kerbein, librarian for three elementary schools in the Allentown School District. She knows how difficult it is, and how shortchanged students are in Allentown with 11 librarians covering 22 buildings for nearly 18,000 students.

Those librarians, she said, "aren't doing library stuff. There is no time for hands-on work with students."

Kerbein once was the librarian at just one school, a situa-



Shawn Kerbein

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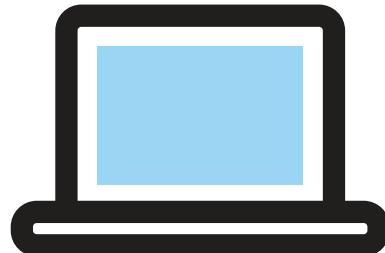
Students from low-income families do better in schools with librarians



In middle-income neighborhoods, there are **13 books per child**



In low-income neighborhoods, there is
1 book for every 300 children



Libraries also provide low-income students **access to technology**

tion that allowed her to do so much with students and teachers.

Now, over the course of the district's eight-day cycle, Kerbein deals with more than 1,200 kids. At one elementary school alone, she has 29 classes that take her five days to get to.

Teachers, she notes, also need assistance from librarians in knowing what is available for students, and having someone who can teach students how to use the resources properly.

"You need someone there to say, 'this is how it's done.' You can't Google everything," Kerbein said. "Teachers are not taught how to teach research and how to use the library. They are taught how to teach kids reading, they are taught how to teach kids math ... Teachers and librarians each have specialized skills."

Kerbein, who is a member of the Allentown EA executive

board, said the library system in Allentown has been the first to feel the budget knife in recent years. Sometimes, she said, even money that is allocated for libraries is taken away and used for other purposes.

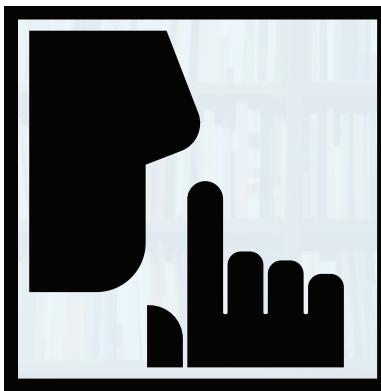
"The average age of my nonfiction section is 1975," Kerbein said. "We have old books that are falling apart, that are being held together with a wish and a prayer."

She points to research showing that one certified librarian in a school can raise those students' standardized test scores by as much as 15 points.

"Politicians are hollering about test scores – 'our kids can't do math, our kids can't read,'" Kerbein said. "So why do you cut libraries and librarians?" □

54,329 students in 28 school districts

attend schools with no certified school librarians



100 school districts

have just one certified librarian for the entire district

Mifflin County time warp

Arica Monsell is a 21st century librarian trapped in 20th century thinking.

Leadership certainly doesn't view libraries as the "hub" of the Mifflin County School District, which Monsell describes as a "rural poor" district of about 5,000 students located in the central mountains about 30 miles from State College.

Monsell is fortunate that she has only one building, the high school, but she has only 96 computers for 1,300 students in grades 10 to 12. Despite a large percentage of students with no technology at home, she has no laptops or iPads to loan.

She has no aide to cover for her so she can't teach classes in the library – this was the first year in her six years at the high school that she has gotten coverage for lunch. The library has no separate rooms for teachers to bring their classes; so when she goes to a teacher's class to speak to students about their projects, the teacher must go to the library to cover for her. And unless she obtains grant money, data bases in the library have to be free programs.

"(The databases) don't hit the depth of knowledge that we want our kids to have," Monsell said. "They don't hit the higher level of critical thinking because it doesn't allow students to dive deep into research. With free stuff, you get what you pay for. So, if we are getting nothing, we give nothing back."

Mifflin County High School students fill the library after school.

'Google is not a database'

Monsell didn't say it, but it's clear there is no district commitment to libraries.

When she came to the high school six years ago after 10 years as a middle school librarian, the library had no copy machine, and there were no staplers or staples.

She has made some "baby steps," but said the void with resources is still wide.

"I tell them (administrators) that Google is not a database," she said. "Students need credible research databases. They need more digital resources. I need more time with the kids to teach them research strategies."

"Some teachers get exasperated because students aren't handing in quality work. Well, no one is teaching them how to do research, and they don't have the proper databases. What do you expect?"

Long after-school hours

There is one shining star to Mifflin County High School's library, and it's a testament to Monsell's dedication to students.

She saw the need for after- and pre-school hours soon after



Arica Monsell

she came to the high school.

Even that wasn't an easy sell. When approval did come, it was made clear there was no money to compensate her.

"I just said, 'can the kids come to the library after school?' That's all I'm asking," Monsell said, noting that she did start receiving reimbursement last year.

The after-school program was a huge success, and she was able to get permission for pre-school hours, too.

The library opens in the morning 45 minutes before school, and it's often overflowing. After school the library is "officially" supposed to be open an extra hour. In reality, particularly during peak research times, it often runs to 8 p.m., and Monsell has been there at times as late as 11.

A one-person show

Allison Burrell's world as a librarian has changed drastically in the past seven years. Unfortunately, not for the better.

In 2009, she was the only high school librarian in the Southern Columbia School District. Today, she is the only librarian for the entire district.

"I had classes in every week," Burrell said of her previous role. "Language arts classes would come in, and we'd talk about individual reading options available to them. Other classes would come in to work on technology skills and research. Kids were in the library constantly."

But 2011 brought nearly \$1 billion in state funding cuts to public schools, and difficult economic times further strained the tax base of this small, rural district situated amid the rugged mountains of Columbia and Northumberland counties.

Sounding a refrain similar among librarians in many other school districts, Burrell said library positions and resources were among the first cuts.

Her directions are to spend four of her five days in the elementary school, leaving just one in the high school building, which also houses middle school and junior high school students from grades seven to 12. Originally, the plan was to go without a librarian in the high school building, but Burrell came up with a plan to at least give her a day there.

Providing a lot of attention to elementary students makes sense, she said, in that they tend to forget things and need a lot of reinforcement.

But that only speaks to why both elementary and secondary students should have their own librarians.

Burrell said she does what she can with the upper grades, but with one day "all it amounts to is showing them the re-

Not serving the future

The extra hours are great for students, but they still don't make up for the library's lack of resources.

"We should have iPads and laptops. I shouldn't even have to ask for them," Monsell said. "We should have facilities for kids to practice PowerPoints, for example, because they are going to need that at the next level. In fact, at the next level they are expected to know that and know how to interact with technology."

"Libraries are no longer just about books. There is so much involved with being a librarian in the 21st century." 



Allison Burrell

sources." Without more time and hands-on instruction, the information sources and data bases "largely go untouched," she said.

Ironically, the upper grades probably need the most hands-on attention and direction given that their assignments are more complicated, and proper research and technological skills are needed for their post-graduation plans.

"There is no doubt in my mind that the upper grades are losing," Burrell said. "They are not getting what they need. I can tell them all the stuff on the internet isn't true, but with all the information that is out there, they need help figuring out credible sources."

Burrell is speaking for more than her own situation. She is president of the Pennsylvania State Librarians Association, which has managed to get bipartisan legislation introduced in the state House of Representatives to require a certified school librarian in every school.

"Resources have expanded so much in recent years that students need someone to help them navigate," Burrell said. "The classroom teachers have so much on their plates already. If there is a librarian in the school to help with those specialized resources, it makes everyone's lives so much easier and provides so much more for students." 

Join the conversation

Stay current on education news. Share what's going on in your schools. Discuss professional issues, and weigh in on the latest state policy debates. **Join the conversation.**

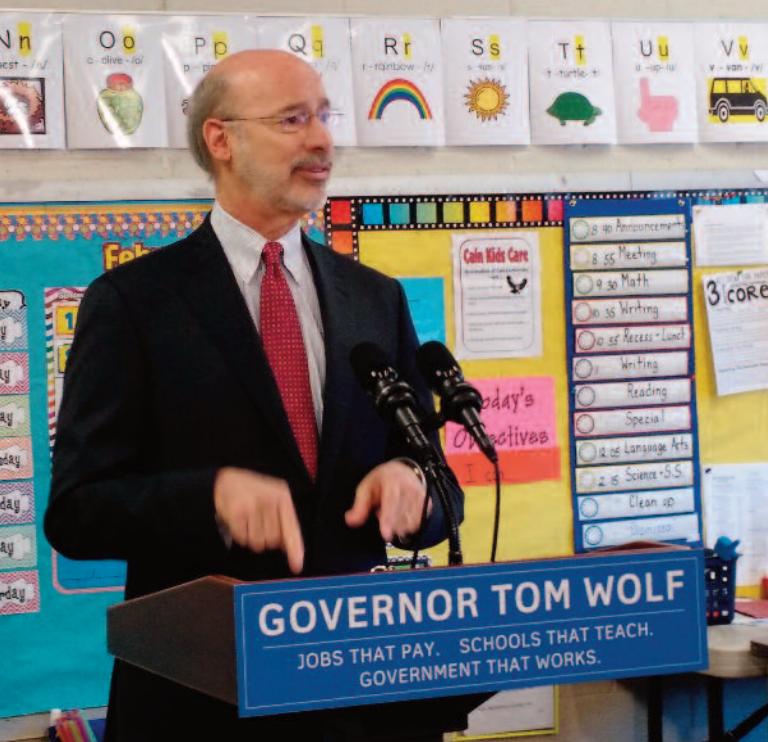




Gov. Wolf is Standing Up for Us

- Historic school funding increases
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Members, Wolf bring pension law a long way

After four and a half years of debate and nearly 1 million emails and phone calls to lawmakers from PSEA members, the General Assembly finally passed a pension bill last month that DOESN'T include many of the provisions that PSEA has been fighting against.

Gov. Tom Wolf, who's stood up for PSEA's pension principles since he took office, was key to keeping the worst pension ideas out of the final bill. He worked with lawmakers to shape the proposal and signed it into law on June 12.

"This pension plan isn't perfect, but it's far better than the proposals we've seen since 2012," said PSEA President Jerry Oleksiak. "I'm absolutely convinced that we arrived at this place for two reasons: PSEA members' incredible advocacy and Gov. Tom Wolf."

The new pension law has no negative impact on current PSEA members and even makes some positive adjustments for members hired between July 1, 2011 and June 30, 2019. Those members now have option 4 lump-sum withdrawal rights and can benefit

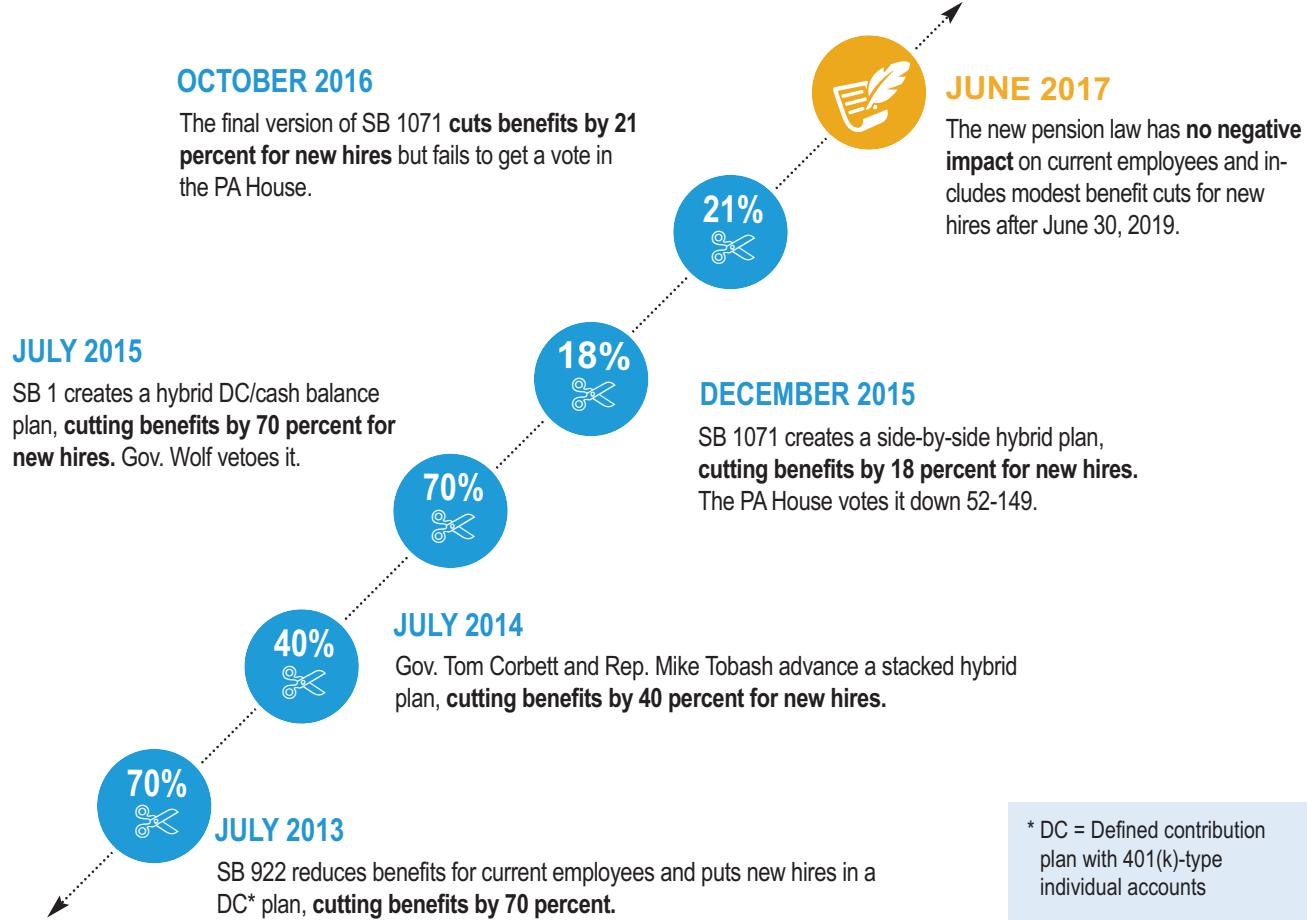
from "upside risk sharing," which allows employee pension contributions to decline when investment returns exceed targets.

Most important of all, the new law protects the integrity of Public School Employees' Retirement System and State Employees' Retirement System, ensuring that the pensions PSEA members have earned and paid for will be there for them when they retire.

Since 2012, lawmakers have actively debated five other pension plans, which would have cut retire-

A TIMELINE:

The new pension law contains none of the worst elements included in several pension bills introduced over the past four years.



Employees hired after June 30, 2019, will have three retirement benefit options.

1

Default: 1.25% Multiplier

Employee contribution: 8.25%
 5.5% - Defined benefit
 2.75% - 401(k) account
 Employer Contribution: *
 2.25% - 401(k) account
9%-11% pension benefit reduction

2

Lesser: 1% Multiplier

Employee contribution: 7.5%
 4.5% - Defined benefit
 3% - 401(k) account
 Employer Contribution: *
 2% - 401(k) account
21%-24% pension benefit reduction

3

401(k)-type Plan

Employee contribution: 7.5%
 Employer contribution: 2%
44%-49% pension benefit reduction

Compared with benefits for members hired after June 30, 2011

*Employer contribution for defined benefit to be determined (approximately 0.8%)

ment benefits for some or all PSEA members by as much as 70 percent.

"PSEA adopted a set of pension principles so that we could gauge the impact of any pension proposal against what we believe is the right thing to do for our members' retirement security," Oleksiak said. "This new law is closer to meeting those principles than any other proposal we've seen."

PSEA members hired after June 30, 2019, will have three new retirement options. The default option, in which members will enroll automatically if they don't select one, will amount to a 9 to 11 percent reduction in retirement benefits compared to the benefits members hired between July 1, 2011, and June 30, 2019 would receive.

In a message to PSEA members,

people who educate our children and serve our communities."

Even though the new pension law will not take effect until July 1, 2019, and will not negatively impact PSEA members hired before then, PSEA has made it clear to members that the Association will keep them updated about the law and make sure that members hired after June 30, 2019, have a full understanding of their pension options.

"We've worked hard to keep members updated about what was happening in the state Capitol," Oleksiak said. "And we're going to make sure that all members hired after this law takes effect know exactly what their retirement options are so that they can make the best possible choice."

But, as four and a half years of

After four years of bad bills, legislative debates, and unprecedented PSEA member advocacy, PA state lawmakers passed a pension bill that:

Has NO negative impact on current employees

Makes a modest reduction in benefits for new employees hired after June 30, 2019

Preserves the integrity of pension funds for future and current employees

Positively impacts employees hired between June 30, 2011 and June 30, 2019

Wolf explained his thinking on the new law. He emphasized how strongly he has opposed attacks on public sector unions and how he fought to ensure that any pension proposal has no negative impacts on current employees, adequately funds PSERS and SERS, and provides a fair retirement for future school and state employees.

"We needed a balanced approach to these problems to protect your retirements and taxpayers," Wolf said in his message. "This ... will prevent future pension debt while ensuring a secure retirement for the

fighting bad pension plans comes to a close, Oleksiak emphasized just how crucial PSEA members' advocacy has been to the final outcome.

"Without PSEA members speaking out – again, and again, and again – this would have been far worse," Oleksiak said. "PSEA members stopped bad pension bills from becoming law. I'm incredibly proud of the work our members have done on this, and it just shows what a powerful force we can be when we all stand up and speak out – together." 

Career and tech ed students gain alternate path

For the second time in the past year, Gov. Tom Wolf has signed legislation greatly aiding career and technical education students and instructors.

Wolf last month signed into law legislation stating that career and tech ed students' passing the so-called NOCTI exam will meet graduation requirements even if they aren't proficient on the Keystone Exam, which could be a graduation requirement for state high school

Studies, said this legislation further strengthens the importance of the NOCTI exam.

When the NOCTI exam was introduced eight years ago, Namey noted that it was a lot like the PSSAs in that students really had no stake in it. It was just for instructors to see how students were doing.

But that started to change a couple of years ago when students who score

Namey noted both pieces of legislation were priorities of PSEA's Department of Career and Technical Studies.

"We in career and technical education have been blessed this past year with legislative victories that PSEA has been able to help accomplish on our behalf," he said.

Another big moment cited by Namey was Wolf's appearance last spring at SkillsUSA Pennsylvania, a



David Namey, standing center, president of PSEA's Department of Career and Technical Studies, watches as Gov. Tom Wolf signs a bill giving career and tech ed students an alternate path to graduation.

students in 2019.

NOCTI is an exam administered in various career and tech ed fields by the National Occupancy Testing Institute.

Since the Keystones have been introduced, however, career and tech ed students who lack proficiency in certain subject areas – i.e., English literature, algebra, or biology – are pulled from their career and tech studies to do remedial work on the Keystones.

David Namey, a teacher at the Wilkes-Barre Area Career and Technical Center and president of PSEA's Department of Career and Technical

"advanced" on the NOCTI can receive articulated credits at colleges around the state. Making it an alternate path to graduation over the Keystones further stresses the importance of NOCTI for students.

The legislation was sponsored by Reps. Mike Turzai, R-Allegheny, and Mike Tobash, R-Schuylkill/Dauphin.

Last summer, Wolf signed legislation that gave career and tech ed instructors additional time to earn credits for their Vocational II certification. The previous timeframe was squeezing many educators.

sort of "state championship" for 1,700 of Pennsylvania's career and tech ed students.

He said the governor's appearance was a big show of support for career and technical education.

"A lot of good things are happening in the area of career and technical education," Namey said. "I've been in it for 41 years and to see a renewed interest and emphasis on career and technical education in Pennsylvania does my heart good." □

Restored funding fulfills major Wolf promise

Gov. Tom Wolf has delivered on one of his major campaign promises.

By committing to a \$100 million increase in basic public education funding in the 2017-18 state budget, the governor has nearly reversed the devastating \$1 billion cut in public school funding lawmakers approved in 2011.

Legislative leaders were still negotiating a final state budget when this issue of *Voice* went to press, but the \$100 million funding increase for public education seemed secure.

"Gov. Wolf committed himself to public education funding when he campaigned for governor, and he has kept that promise in every state budget since he's been in office," said PSEA Vice President Dolores McCracken. "There is still plenty of work ahead, but this puts a dark chapter behind us."

McCracken noted that Wolf has been adept at playing both offense in standing up for public education and educators, and defense in fending off bad policy proposals.

"Gov. Wolf has fought for good pro-public education policies, and he has stopped legislation that threatened our schools and our Association," McCracken said.

An aggressive offense

In addition to nearly reversing the \$1 billion in funding cuts of 2011, Wolf has listened to educators' laments about testing.

He postponed the Keystone Exams

as a graduation requirement. And, when the state forwards its plan under the new Every Student Succeeds Act to the federal government this fall, it is expected to propose a greatly reduced reliance on standardized testing, and greater weight on classroom performance and projects in evaluating student achievement.

employee and anti-union pension forces in the Legislature and their well-heeled supporters.

Wolf worked with a bipartisan group of legislators to craft a new law that preserves the defined benefit pension system, has no impact on current or retired PSEA members, and protects the solvency of the Public School Employees' Retirement System.

Other key actions:

- Vetoed a budget that failed to restore school funding cuts.
- Promised to veto bills that would attack union rights, including proposals to prohibit the direct deduction of union dues.

Tough re-election fight

The gubernatorial election is 16 months away, but the campaign is very much underway.

Wolf is already in the crosshairs of deep-pocketed national interests with anti-union, anti-public school agendas.

An early favorite for the Republican nomination to oppose him, state Sen. Scott Wagner, R-York, is one of the most strident critics of public schools.

He once rented a helicopter, flew over several school districts, and from his lofty perch pronounced all was well.

"It is not too early for our members to get involved in advocating for Gov. Wolf's re-election," McCracken said. "The future of public schools and public education jobs is very much on the line." □

State budget updates on website

As this issue of *Voice* went to press, negotiations were continuing between the Wolf administration and legislative leaders on the 2017-18 state budget. The latest information on the budget and other legislative issues can be found at www.psea.org.



PREVIOUS
LEARNING LESSON
UPDATE

Learning Lessons

Great ideas, Great schools

This story is part of a regular series, "Learning Lessons: Great ideas, Great schools," that features educators who are doing great things or conducting great programs in Pennsylvania's public schools. For other stories in the series go to www.psea.org/learninglessons.

Walking into the Business Incubator classroom at Big Spring High School, students are hard at work. Some are hand-sewing panels on the underside of an umbrella, others are examining a wooden sunscreen dispenser box, and a third group is working on populating a website with T-shirt designs.

Voice first introduced Big Spring EA member Cherie Powell in the July 2016 issue. Powell spearheaded the Business Incubator Program at the Cumberland County school – a "Shark Tank"-style class for aspiring entrepreneurs.

Students were matched with local business mentors. And, at the end of the school year, student groups pitched their ideas to a panel of investors, hoping to gain capital to move on to the second year of the program, which would see them bring their ideas to life and make a profit.

Two businesses from the first year of the Business Incubator Program moved forward to the second phase – Sunpax, which aimed to sell miniature packets of sunscreen in loca-

tions where people often forget to bring it; and Hasani Umbrellas, which proposed to design a better, wider, wind-resistant umbrella.

Hasani changed its company name and mission after running into manufacturing roadblocks.

"They were only able to find a willing manufacturer in China," Powell said. "The cost to create a prototype was beyond their budget, so they decided to alter their plan."

The group changed its name to TEKS, and they've created a more fashionable, selfie-friendly umbrella, appealing to today's cell phone-toting millennial generation.

"They are sewing coordinating fabrics on the bottom sides of the umbrellas to make a

fashion statement," Powell said. "They have recently met with a company that will print fabric designed by the students and cut to their specs to speed the creation process."

Sunpax has found success at local golfing establishments, including Penn National Golf Course in Fayetteville and Eagles Crossings Golf Course in Carlisle, as well as Saylor's



Cherie Powell exams a box made by Sunpax to sell sunscreen.

Market, a grocery store in Newville.

"They conducted market research to determine potential locations for offering their sunscreen," Powell said. "They created a wooden display box with 24 individual sunscreen pens to market to businesses for resale of the individual sunscreen pens."

No easy grade

Students in the two groups are learning about different forms of business ownership and different techniques for marketing their products.

"Each team creates weekly goals for things to be completed and to market their business," Powell said. "The students must manage this while learning how to further improve."

The first year of the class included 31 students, split into six teams creating products. In its second year, Powell found far fewer students entering the program.

"Level 1 this year consists of one team," she said. "They are manufacturing a T-shirt and eventually other accessories with an American theme. Shirts will be American made, and their logo includes an American flag. Students will donate a portion of their profits to Operation Gratitude, which sends care packages to the military."

Powell acknowledged the decline in enrollment for the class, which is an elective. Most students see these types of

courses as an opportunity for an easy grade, but that was not the case in Powell's class.

"It was more challenging than students expected and required significant work outside the classroom," she said.

Teaching style altered

With far fewer students in the Level 1 class, Powell has adapted her teaching style.

"Lessons are taught in more of a roundtable discussion, rather than a lecture style," she said.

The Level 1 class meets at the same time as Level 2, so the novice entrepreneurs can observe and learn from their more experienced peers.

"Many of the students are already making plans for next year," Powell said. "They will hopefully begin selling their merchandise at trade shows, school events, and possibly on a webpage."

Despite some challenges – including losing the ability to have career coordinator Lisa Black in the classroom due to scheduling conflicts and staffing cuts – Powell believes the course continues to be a benefit to her students.

"This is such a valuable course," she said. "Students are learning so many things that the average adult has never experienced. They are learning about the importance of good communication skills and learning how

to deal with rejection from business professionals. All of these lessons will have such a positive impact on our students."



Students in the TEKS group, top, sew bright fabric on the underside of umbrellas. Below, students in year one of the program work on adding patriotic T-shirt designs to their website.



See it for yourself!
Watch this program in action at
www.psea.org/LearningLessons

Got a story? If you know about a program that would make a good feature for "Learning Lessons: Great ideas, Great schools," please email Cassandra Davis at cdavis@psea.org.



Wilson phys ed teacher blends body and mind

Physical education brings to mind the body, but to a nationally recognized Wilson High School teacher it's about the whole person.

Elizabeth Burkhart's approach to a variety of activities, mindfulness, identifying the personal interests of students, and teaching life sports earned the Berks County teacher SHAPE America's Eastern District's High School Physical Education Teacher of the Year Award.

SHAPE America is the nation's largest organization of health and physical education professionals, and its Eastern District – one of six nationally – comprises 11 states, the District of Columbia, the Virgin Islands, and Puerto Rico.

The award qualified Burkhart to be one of six finalists for SHAPE's national award.

"It's a wonderful acknowledgement. I

try to do my best every day in school, so it's nice to get this kind of recognition," said Burkhart, who has been teaching for 10 years. "But I'm just doing my job."

Rather than a standard curriculum for the entire class, Burkhart said she incorporates a variety of activities to find something each student likes. A short list includes different forms of yoga, aquatics, strength training, and life skills.

"I try to meet all my students' needs, and give them life sports and activities," she said.

She also incorporates mindfulness, which she describes as "the ability to be fully present, aware of where we are and what we're doing, and not overly reactive or overwhelmed by what's going on around us. The mind body connection creates various benefits which can help students academically and physically."

Burkhart does that through medita-

tion, progressive muscle relaxation, imagery, and mindful movement, a technique where students focus on every movement within their workouts by thinking

about what muscles they are using, how it feels, how their body works, and how the movement benefits their body systems.

"Elizabeth possesses the passion, work ethic, and skills necessary to be an outstanding health and physical education teacher," said Pete Rinella, department chair at Wilson. "Our entire community has benefitted greatly from her devotion and effort." □



Elizabeth Burkhart

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\$200,000 – \$299,999	\$1,150
\$300,000 – \$399,999	\$1,600
\$400,000 – \$499,999	\$2,000
\$500,000 – \$599,999	\$2,500
\$600,000 – \$699,999	\$3,000
\$700,000 – \$799,999	\$3,500
\$800,000 – \$899,999	\$4,000
\$900,000 – \$999,999	\$4,500
\$1,000,000+	\$5,000

* Valid for real estate purchases or listings anywhere in the U.S. except where prohibited by law.
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Meet the new PSEA.org

In May, PSEA launched a new and improved psea.org. The new site is optimized for mobile devices and includes useful information for every PSEA member. Check it out on your smartphone today.

Digital media pilot huge success

During the May House of Delegates, PSEA Treasurer Rich Askey addressed PSEA members and told them about three numbers: 4,242,735; 937,637; and 30.

His presentation to the delegates was about the success of PSEA's digital media pilot program.

And the numbers he shared meant that Pennsylvanians had noticed PSEA's four 15- and 30-second digital commercials more than 4,242,735 times and watched the ads to completion 937,637 times – all in the 30 days between April 4 and May 4.

The ads ran on Facebook, news sites, and other websites frequented by the target audience PSEA identified.

"This pilot program was an experiment. But, as we've reviewed these results, we think it was a success," Askey said. "We believe that using digital media and commercials like these is the most efficient and effective way to

go in the future."

The pilot program stemmed from a debate during the December 2016 House of Delegates focused on a PSEA-driven public relations campaign. Between January and March, the PSEA Budget Committee, which Askey chairs, studied

ing the Association to build on the pilot program's success and implement a cost-effective, statewide public relations campaign to improve public perception of and support for public education and PSEA.

The Association is planning an aggressive campaign with more 15- and 30-second digital ads, beginning in January 2018.

"Pennsylvania's public schools are among the best in the nation, and the incredible work that PSEA members do every day is what makes our schools great," Askey said. "Using digital media, we can tell our members' great stories and remind people how important our members are to their local schools and the students who learn there."

Even though the digital media pilot program is over for now, Pennsylvanians can still view the commercials at www.psea.org/ourstory. □



View the commercials at
WWW.PSEA.ORG/OURSTORY

the options. In April, PSEA launched the digital media pilot program.

The day after Askey's presentation to the May House of Delegates, members approved a new business item authoriz-



Francis "Butch" Santicola, Adler Friend of Education Award. After a distinguished career spanning more than four decades with PSEA, Santicola continues to advocate for labor and public education.



Todd Russell, Educational Leader Award. Russell has been instrumental in engaging the Central Region's Cluster II in community service projects.



North Star ESP, Local Association Award. The local is involved in various community service projects that provide lunches and supplies to kids.



Shane Thompson, Student Leader Award. Thompson, a fifth-grade student in the Cumberland Valley School District, runs lemonade stands to raise awareness and collect donations for people in need.



Beverly's Birthdays, Community Leader Award. The nonprofit organization provides birthday parties for needy children in the Pittsburgh area.



Charlie Batch, Community Leader Organization Award. A former Pittsburgh Steeler, Batch runs the Best of the Batch Foundation that helps thousands of kids and families in western Pennsylvania.

PENNSYLVANIA STATE EDUCATION ASSOCIATION

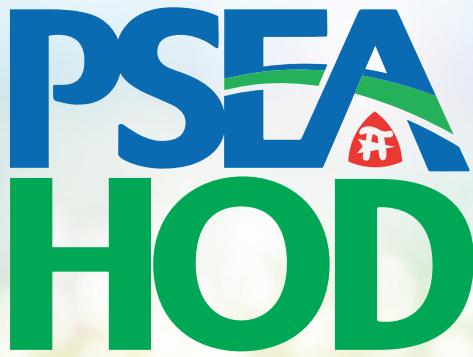
Celebrating Excellence

2 0 1 7

Since 2005, PSEA has presented Celebrating Excellence Awards to recognize individuals, local associations, and organizations that go the extra mile for public schools and communities.

Read all of this year's recipients' stories at www.psea.org/celebratingexcellence/winners.





PSEA state officers re-elected to new terms

PSEA's entire slate of state officers was re-elected to new, two-year terms at the May House of Delegates in Pittsburgh.

Jerry Oleksiak will begin a second term as president on Sept. 1. Dolores McCracken, and Rich Askey also will start second terms as vice president and treasurer, respectively.

Oleksiak is a special education teacher in the Upper Merion Area School District, Montgomery County; McCracken is an education paraprofessional in the Council Rock School District, Bucks County; and Askey is a music teacher in the Harrisburg School District, Dauphin County.

Oleksiak served two terms as PSEA vice president and two terms as treasurer prior to being elected president, and McCracken served two terms as treasurer before becoming vice president. Oleksiak, McCracken, and Askey were elected to their current positions in May 2015.

In addition to the state officers, Kevin Deely of the Easton Area School District, Northampton County, and Debbie Lee of the Abington School District, Montgomery County, were elected to three-year terms as NEA state directors.

Elizabeth Brill, also of the Easton Area School District; Joanne Ruse of the West Chester School District, Chester and Delaware counties; Stephanie Towles of the Reading School District, Berks County; and Kevin Yurkanin of the Hazelton Area School District, Luzerne, Schuylkill, and Carbon counties, were elected to one-year terms as NEA alternate state directors.

Todd Miller, of the Wayne Highlands School District, Wayne County, was elected to a three-year term as pension plan director.



Jerry Oleksiak, PSEA president



Dolores McCracken, PSEA vice president

Rich Askey, PSEA treasurer



NEA Vice President Becky Pringle, a member of PSEA, spoke to the delegates.

PPE and PSEA help organize book drives

PSEA members know how important it is to encourage students to read. That's why many local associations are working with Partners for Public Education to collect books for students who need them.

Partners and members of the PSEA Communications Committee are helping facilitate book drives this fall by providing materials and assistance to locals. Their goal is to see book drives in every PSEA region.

Planning a book drive?

If your local would like to hold a book drive this fall, you can find sample fliers and other resources, including applications for small grants from the PSEA Education Foundation at www.psea.org/bookdrives.

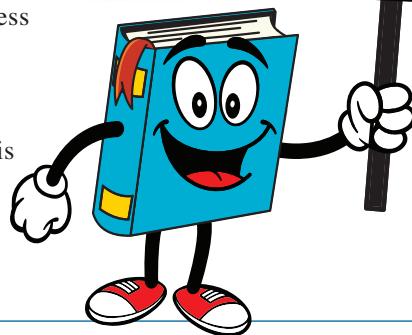
Book drives should be designed around the needs of the families in the communities where they are held. Book collections may focus on books for specific age groups, such as Pre-K or school-age children, or focus on a theme, such as health and wellness or preserving the environment.

Reading resources

Partners for Public Education is committed to providing resources to parents and educators to help children of all ages become better readers. 



PARTNERS
for Public Education
Our Schools - Our Communities - Our Future
www.partnersforpubliced.org



Find Partners' resources to promote good reading habits in children and make age-appropriate book recommendations at
www.partnersforpubliced.org/reading.

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PSEA World Cafés drive Central Bucks bargaining

Bill Senavaitis' participation in PSEA's World Café process did more than help shape the Association's mission, vision, values, and goals.

It provided the Central Bucks EA president with a model to prepare one of PSEA's largest locals for contract negotiations.

PSEA held 18 World Cafés across the state in 2015-16 that included roundtables made up of 454 members from all aspects of the Association – EA, ESP, PSEA-Retired, Student PSEA, and HealthCare-PSEA. Their thoughts were cataloged and then reviewed by another group of members and staff, who converted them into proposed mission, vision, values, and goals that the PSEA Board of Directors approved a year ago.

During the World Café process, Senavaitis wanted to start preparing for bargaining well ahead of the expiration of the Central Bucks EA's contract on June 30, 2018.

So, last September he essentially took PSEA's statewide World Café model and applied it to an individual local.

"I wanted to hear from every facet of

our membership," said Senavaitis, an eighth-grade language arts teacher. "I wanted to make sure we had a school psychologist; I wanted to make sure we had a school counselor; I wanted nurses represented; I wanted people at the top end of the salary scale and those who are just starting out."

He ended up with a diverse 26-person team that split into groups that were assigned different aspects of bargaining – i.e., salary, health care, contract language. They held several roundtables at the Mideastern Region office in Montgomeryville, with participants rotating among different subject areas.

A bargaining survey was sent to members over the Thanksgiving and Christmas holidays, and more than 1,000 members responded. The roundtables then reconvened to discuss the data and ended up with a one-page list of bargaining priorities.

The Central Bucks EA was fully prepared for bargaining in February – 16 months before the expiration of the current contract.

It turned out to be fortuitous timing.

Around the same period, the Central Bucks administration approached the EA about starting early-bird discussions.

"It really worked out," Senavaitis said. "I would have felt terrible if they had approached us about an early bird and I would have had to say, 'OK, but hang on until I can get a bargaining team together.'"

Several small, informal discussions have been held involving Senavaitis, a PSEA UniServ, and the district's human resources director and solicitor.

The 26-member team has been broken into four committees, and Senavaitis said the chairs of each will make up the bargaining team when the two sides get to the table.

When they do, another part of the team's approach, similar to the World Café process, will be the local's values.

"We put together a one-page list of our values," Senavaitis said. "This is the heart of what we want to get at. Let's drive bargaining in regard to our values and what is best for our kids." □

Tee it up 'fore' public education

The 22nd Annual Carmen J. Matino Friends of Public Education Golf Tournament is July 28 at the Range End Golf Course in Dillsburg. All proceeds from the tournament, which is on the Friday concluding the Gettysburg Summer Leadership Conference, benefit the Lucy A. Valero Memorial Scholarship Fund. The fund helps to support public education in Pennsylvania by providing scholarships to students who are pursuing careers in public education.

Interested in golfing or want more information? Contact Wendi Witherow at 800-944-7732, ext. 7127, or wwitherow@psea.org.

Discounted Penn State football tickets



All PSEA members, family, and staff can purchase discounted tickets to Penn State's game with Nebraska on Nov. 18 at Beaver Stadium.

The tickets are being offered as part of PSEA and Penn State Athletics' Educator's Appreciation Event. Tickets normally priced at \$97 are available for \$80 near the upper sideline 20-yard line, and tickets normally priced at \$67 in the upper north end zone are available for \$50. Attendees who would like to sit together can do so by placing one large group order.

Orders should be placed by Nov. 3 by contacting Sam Starrett of Penn State Athletics at (814) 863-1222, or emailing him at sus725@psu.edu.



'Free Little Library'

Six locations in Lebanon County now have a "Free Little Library" thanks to EAs that are part of PSEA's Lebanon County Education Council. Working with the United Way of Lebanon County, the council agreed to sponsor the libraries, which are cabinets on poles for community members to share books for others to use. Those borrowing are asked to share one of their own when they return the books. EAs sponsoring a "Free Little Library" within their school districts are Lebanon; a partnership of Cornwall-Lebanon and the Lebanon County Career and Technology Center; Palmyra; Eastern Lebanon County; Annville-Cleona; and Northern Lebanon.

Important IRS filing for locals

Section 6033(e)(1) of the Internal Revenue Code requires PSEA to notify its members regarding a reasonable estimate of the portion of their dues that are allocable to lobbying and political expenditures and will be nondeductible for the coming year. PSEA estimates that 10 percent of the membership dues for the 2017-18 membership year (September 2017 through August 2018) will be used for lobbying and political expenditures.

Member Spotlight



Gerald Cernicky Westmoreland County PSEA-Retired

PSEA-Retired member recently won \$5,000 in the PSEA-PACE Stand Up for Public Education giveaway. He believes in regularly supporting PSEA-PACE.

"It's important to me," he said.

Cernicky is always ready to act when it comes to education issues – whether its voting for pro-public education candidates, going to meetings, contributing to PSEA-PACE, or writing to senators or representatives.

And he encourages those around him – both retired and active members – to do the same.

"I knew all along, PSEA had our back," Cernicky said. "This is my way to pay back and say 'thank you.'"

Cernicky found his true passion as a health and physical education teacher.

"I absolutely loved every minute of my teaching," he said. "I came in with the same attitude the very first day to the very last day."

He spent 35 years educating elementary students at Kiski

Area School District in Westmoreland County.

The job was a busy one. When he began teaching, the district had 20 elementary schools. Cernicky said he went to a different school every day, with two colleagues sharing the load.

He believed in a cross-curricular approach to physical education, and he mirrored his teaching with the lessons his students were learning in their other classes.

"The philosophy I used was a sound mind and a sound body," he said. "After they graduated, I hoped they would carry on a prescription of health and fitness."

Cernicky also explored technology use in the classroom over the years. He served as the head of the physical education department and, because of his interest in technology, he was responsible for teaching some classroom teachers how to use smart boards.

He traveled the country giving presentations on the use of technology in health and fitness. He also connected with colleagues from around the world, sharing ideas and experiences.

"When the kids walked in, they knew they would get something more special," Cernicky said. "People probably think we just throw out the dodgeball. But we are so much more than that."

Keep speaking out about testing

Standards aligned curriculum. Standards aligned standardized tests. PSSAs. Keystones. Pre-assessments. Test prep.

With so much testing and test prep in your schools, it must feel like there is no room for flexibility to reach all of your students. It can feel like your creativity as an educator is stifled.

At the Student PSEA conference, I had the opportunity to hear two of your colleagues, A.J. Juliani and Anthony Gabriele, share stories about how they have taken back their classrooms through innovative practice and supportive school leaders. It was an uplifting presentation that gave our student members (and me) hope for a better means of educating our students.

The energy for such innovations is developing in members and parents alike. We have heard from many of you who are frustrated with the intensified focus on federally mandated standardized testing, and, today, PSEA is providing you with a way to voice those concerns directly to policymakers in Harrisburg.

Last month, PSEA joined with legislators at a state Capitol press conference to introduce a five-bill package that reimagines standardized testing in your classrooms. Annual testing may still be a requirement under ESSA, but that doesn't mean we can't find other ways to rid our schools of the stress and focus associated with these tests.

These bills would provide flexibility to school boards and parents with regard to graduation requirements and manda-

tory test taking. They would alter the PSSA administration timeline so the tests and results can be better used to inform instruction and curriculum, use tests for government accountability measures only, and make use of the Keystone Exams as a graduation requirement a local school district decision and not a state mandate.

You can read more about the details in this edition of *Voice* or at www.psea.org/testing,



Last month, PSEA joined with legislators at a state Capitol press conference to introduce a five-bill package that reimagines standardized testing in your classrooms.

where you can also find links to advocate for these bills.

What these bills propose is connected to a PSEA policy paper we issued in March, titled "A Balanced and Research-Based Approach to Standardized Testing."

We're very grateful that these legislators, Republicans and Democrats, have stepped up and joined us in our mission to change the culture of federally mandated standardized testing in Pennsylvania. They are listening to you, respecting your professional expertise, and acting to take the recommendations

you've proposed and make them into policy.

Introducing these bills is a first step, and it will take time and attention to get these bills to the governor's desk. But this is a priority for your Association, because your Association knows that it is a priority for you.

So, keep asking those questions. Keep speaking out about testing. And keep lending your professional expertise to these conversations. ▶

Email Jim Vaughan:
jvaughan@psea.org

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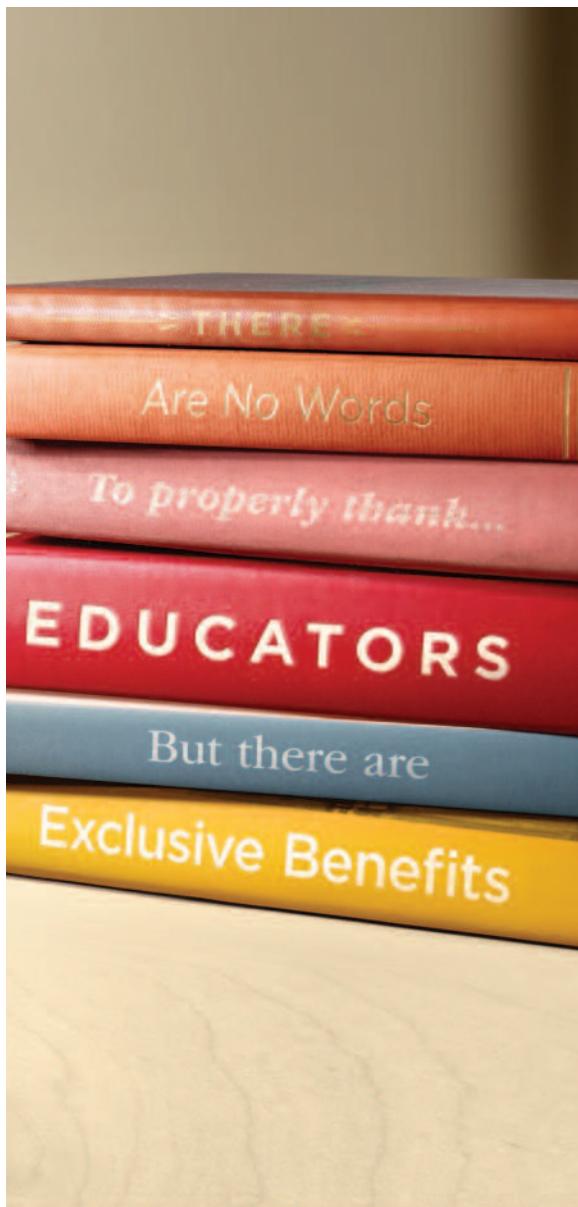


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