

June/July 2013

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PSEA

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Pennsylvania State Education Association | The Voice for Education

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## PSEA Mission

To advocate for quality public education and our members through collective action

## The Voice for Education

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June/July 2013

[www.psea.org](http://www.psea.org)

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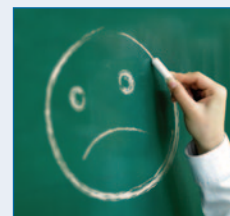


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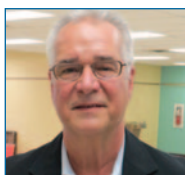
### A SAD TALE

The story of Gov. Tom Corbett's administration has been one sad chapter after another for public schools and educators – historic funding cuts, a push for tuition vouchers, attacks on pensions. But a happy ending is possible, and PSEA members can be the authors.



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## What future do you want?

**H**ow many PSEA members would say this?

*"I don't need my pension."*

How about this?

*"I like school funding cuts."*

Or this?

*"I want more standardized tests, and I love larger class sizes."*

Would you?

I didn't think so.

PSEA members want to keep the pensions they've earned – and paid for. PSEA members want to restore Gov. Tom Corbett's nearly \$1 billion in school funding cuts. PSEA members want fewer standardized tests and smaller class sizes. And PSEA members want to educate their students.

But just wanting it doesn't make it happen.

So, how many PSEA members would say this?

*"I don't give to PSEA-PACE."*

Unfortunately, too many.

That's what we need to change. And we can start today.

You see, if you don't contribute to PSEA-PACE, you might as well say that your pension isn't important to you, or that the governor's school funding cuts are just fine, or larger class sizes and more standardized tests are acceptable.

As you'll see in this edition of *Voice*, neglecting to give to PSEA-PACE is the very best way to be part of the Tom Corbett fan club.

You don't want to join that club. And, if you've accidentally signed up, there's a very easy way to quit. All you need to do is put money in the envelope in the center of this magazine so that you can say this:

**"I GIVE TO PSEA-PACE."**

PSEA-PACE is PSEA's Political Action Committee for Education. It's how we raise money to support pro-public education candidates and help

them to win elections. Not a nickel comes from dues dollars, and every contribution is voluntary.

So, you need to choose to give to PSEA-PACE. It's up to you.

But the choice you make isn't just about dollars and cents. And it's not just about politics and elections.

It's about how you want public education to look the day after the November 2014 election.

If you don't need your pension, or don't mind school funding cuts, or want more standardized tests and larger class

If this is the future you want, if this is your vision for public education in Pennsylvania, you need to help make it a reality. Giving to PSEA-PACE is how you can do it.

Each and every one of the terrible consequences our schools and students have suffered over the past two years occurred because Tom Corbett is in the governor's office.

We can change that.

I can't tell you what a difference a \$10, or \$20, or \$52 contribution to PSEA-PACE can make.

Thousands and thousands of PSEA members, acting together, making contributions, adds up to a lot of money – money that we will spend electing a new, pro-public education governor who shares our vision for the public schools.

At PSEA's May House of Delegates, I outlined our vision for public education. View my comments here [www.psea.org/hod/may2013](http://www.psea.org/hod/may2013).

Please take a moment and contribute to PSEA-PACE today. Because, on the day after the November 2014 election, someone will ask you this.

"Did you help defeat Tom Corbett?"

And, if you contribute to PSEA-PACE, you will be able to say this.

**"YES!"** 🟩

Email Mike Crossey:  
[mcrossey@psea.org](mailto:mcrossey@psea.org)



*Michael J. Crossey  
PSEA President*

## How many PSEA members would say this? "I don't need my pension." How about this? "I like school funding cuts."

sizes, then there's no need to contribute.

But if you want to make a difference, if you want to end the school funding crisis, invest in our schools, and ensure that you have the resources to give every student in your school a great public education, then please give.

I know it's not always easy to give money.

But a contribution to PSEA-PACE isn't just another fundraiser. A contribution to PSEA-PACE is about getting the future we want for public education.

Gov. Corbett doesn't want what we want for Pennsylvania's public schools.

He is attacking them. He is robbing them of their resources. He is making it harder and harder to give every student a great public education.

We want to invest in public schools, not cut their funding. We want to give students opportunities to learn and succeed in life, not give tax breaks to big corporations. We want to teach Pennsylvania's children, not convert our schools into test factories.

## Jobs at PSEA

For a list of all PSEA job vacancies, visit [www.psea.org/jobs](http://www.psea.org/jobs)

## Adler Friend of Education



*Fritz Heinemann, left, president and CEO of EconomicsPennsylvania, received this year's Adler Friend of Education Award (see story on EconomicsPennsylvania on page 22). PSEA President Mike Crossey is at right.*

PENNSYLVANIA STATE EDUCATION ASSOCIATION

# Celebrating Excellence

## Human and Civil Rights



*Student Leader Award winner Logan Alucci, center, with, from left, PSEA Vice President Jerry Oleksiak, Treasurer Dolores McCracken, President Mike Crossey, and Executive Director John Springer.*



*Rudolph Burruss, center, received this year's Community Leader Award. Burruss is a member of the State College Educational Support Personnel Association.*



*Michael Healey, center, a world cultures teacher at East Stroudsburg High School, received this year's Educational Leader Award.*



*Jacquelyn Smith, center, director of the Bethel Academy After School Program in the Lower Merion and Haverford school districts, accepts the Community Leader — Organization Award on behalf of the program.*

The evening, which preceded the May House of Delegates in Pittsburgh, exemplified the transformative power of community service, and duly recognized those individuals and organizations striving the most to make a difference.

**Find more information at**  
[www.psea.org/celebratingexcellence](http://www.psea.org/celebratingexcellence).

## NEA honors Marc Kornfeld

**P**aul Kornfeld, second from left, receives a plaque from NEA honoring his father, the late Marc Kornfeld, a long-time PSEA UniServ, at the 2013 Higher Ed Conference in Portland, Ore. With Paul, from left, are Nate Greenawalt, PSEA UniServ; Rick Dulaney, a member of the State College & University Professional Association; Fran Cortez Funk, SCUPA president; and Andrew Doherty, a member of the Pennsylvania Association of Higher Education, a PSEA committee. 🟩





## PSEA officers re-elected at House of Delegates

**P**SEA's three statewide officers have all been re-elected to new two-year terms starting Sept. 1.

Michael J. Crossey was re-elected president at the PSEA House of Delegates in Pittsburgh in May. W. Gerard Oleksiak was re-elected vice president, and Dolores M. McCracken was re-elected treasurer.

Crossey, a teacher in the Keystone Oaks School District, Allegheny County, is a former PSEA vice president, and a former Western Region vice president.

Oleksiak is a teacher in the Upper Merion Area School District, Montgomery County. He is a former PSEA

treasurer, and a former president of the Mideastern Region.

McCracken is a paraprofessional in the Council Rock School District, Bucks

County. She is a former treasurer of the ESP Region, and served in various capacities in the Council Rock ESP. 



*President*  
*Michael J. Crossey*



*Vice President*  
*W. Gerard "Jerry" Oleksiak*



*Treasurer*  
*Dolores M. McCracken*

## PSEA's 2013 Innovative Teaching Grants

### **Susan Almgren**

Franklin Regional EA

*Unpacking History:* An antique truck packed with clothing, art works, music, games, artifacts, and literature that depict various times and cultures of history.

### **Gail Ungar**

South Allegheny EA

*Water, Art, and Us:* An enrichment program for upper elementary students that uses scientific and art inquiry methods in authentic learning settings. Students are scientists and artists as they study regional water. Students will create a mural art installation with Pittsburgh artist Carolyn Speranza.

### **Gerald Quinn**


Albert Gallatin EA

*Quinn's Quest – A Search for Treasure in*



*From left: Judy Metzler, Council on Instruction and Professional Development chair; ITG winners Susan Almgren, Gerald Quinn, and Gail Ungar; and Dolores Zawistowski, a member of the council.*

*Local History:* A competitive educational project that improves a student's awareness of his or her historical, governmental, and educational community.

Participants receive a clue that leads them on an adventure through their community in search of buried treasure. 

## Oklahoma EA establishes tornado relief fund

The same bravery shown by educators during the tragic shooting at Sandy Hook Elementary School in Connecticut was also on display during the recent tornadoes that barreled through Oklahoma. With a 16-minute warning, educators at Plaza Towers Elementary School in Moore, Okla., evacuated some students to a nearby church, while others stayed behind to help get remaining students in as safe of situations as possible. One teacher put six children in a bathroom stall and draped herself over them.

When tornadoes passed, educators helped pull children from the rubble. "You don't go into teaching for the money," said Linda Hampton, Oklahoma Education Association president. "You go into teaching because you care about kids." The Oklahoma EA has established the OEA Tornado Relief Fund to aid EA and ESP members who have been adversely affected by the tornadoes.

Donations can be made at [www.oeatornadorelief.eventbrite.com](http://www.oeatornadorelief.eventbrite.com).

## Future teachers hone craft

**"L**ighting Our Way to a Brighter Future" was the theme of the 2013 Student PSEA conference attended by 250 future educators in Scranton.

The conference focused on three core values of the Student PSEA program: professional development, community service, and political awareness.

Students chose from 14 different workshop sessions, including special education, teaching diverse students, problem-solving, communicating about

education issues, technology, and the new educator evaluation system.

PSEA President Michael J. Crossey talked about the need to become aware of the political environment. David Jaden, NEA Student Program chairman, encouraged members to remain active in the association and work for quality education for all students. Ryan Devlin, 2013 Pennsylvania Teacher of the Year, gave an inspiring keynote address.



In addition to the conference, 120 students and PSEA Vice President Jerry Oleksiak participated in the pre-conference Outreach to Teach. Some students taught lessons at an elementary school, while Oleksiak led a discussion with high school students and Student PSEA members about education.

Students also raised more than \$2,000 for PACE. ■

## 'New Frontier' focus of DPS conference

"DPS Roundup: Supporting Our Students in the New Frontier" is the theme of PSEA's Department of Pupil Services Annual Conference Aug. 7-8 at the Ramada Inn & Convention Center, State College.

The conference will include an address by LouAnne Johnson, who has authored best-selling education books, and sessions on the proposed evaluation systems for pupil services professionals, and various other topics affecting DPS members.

Further information is available at [www.psea.org/dps/conference](http://www.psea.org/dps/conference).



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## Common Core Standards delayed

Implementation of Common Core Standards and the Keystone Exams are now in limbo.

After the State Board of Education this spring approved aligning curriculum under the so-called Pennsylvania Common Core Standards and requiring passage of the Keystone exam for high school graduation, it was thought the new regulations would take effect July 1.


However, after concerns from some legislators, Gov. Tom Corbett decided to delay implementation until “minor modifications” can be made.

“We anticipate they will make a few tweaks, and this will be done relatively soon,” said Christopher Budano, PSEA assistant director of education services.

He said current regulations adopted in 2010 will remain in effect, including:

- Implementation of the national Common Core State Standards beginning July 1.
- Keystone Exams in Algebra I, English Literature, and Biology.
- Discontinuation of the PSSA in 11th grade and use of the Keystone Exams in Algebra I and English Literature as part

of the state’s accountability system under No Child Left Behind.

- Completion of a culminating project as a high school graduation requirement.
- Demonstration of proficiency in the academic standards as a high school graduation requirement, including the use of designated Keystone exams (or an approved district alternative or Advanced Placement or International Baccalaureate exam) as a factor in computing student course grades for graduation beginning with the class of 2015. 

## School safety bill advances

A bill supported by PSEA to improve school safety has passed the state Senate.

The bill sponsored by Senate President Pro Tempore Joseph Scarnati, R-Jefferson, would increase safety grants from \$500,000 to \$10 million annually.

PSEA worked with Scarnati on the

legislation, which PSEA President Michael J. Crossey said “recognizes both the importance of school resource officers, and the value of research-based programs such as schoolwide positive behavior supports, bullying prevention, and alternative education.”

The bill was before the House Educa-

tion Commit-

tee as *Voice*

went to

press, and the

funding amount

likely will be part of

the 2013-14 state budget

deliberations. 



## Special ed funding commission created

A 15-member commission has been created to develop a new special education funding formula in Pennsylvania.

Under the legislation signed by Gov. Tom Corbett, the commission has until Sept. 30 to make recommendations to the Legislature to replace the current formula, which has been the same for two decades.

The commission, which includes two legislators from the four legislative caucuses, the four chairs of the House and Senate education committees, and three Corbett administration officials, will hold public hearings throughout the state.

## Advocates push arts education

Although all aspects of public education have been adversely affected by nearly \$1 billion in state funding cuts the past two years, arts education programs have been particularly hard hit.

PSEA is among the organizations, educators, elected officials, and concerned citizens making up the Pennsylvania Arts Education Network, which held an advocacy day at the state Capitol recently. The coalition is calling for:

- Reinstatement of the Governor’s School

for the Arts, a summer program that had more than 10,000 participants over a 30-year period before being eliminated for funding reasons.

- Creation of an “endorsement” credential for theater and dance teachers.
- Requiring at least one credit in the arts for high school graduation.

Speakers at an advocacy day press conference noted the career opportunities arts education in public school has provided to students.

“We take great pride in our museums,

our galleries, our theatres,” said state Sen. Pat Browne, R-Lehigh. “It’s critical that the arts remain part of our educational system.”

Other speakers included Margaret Bauer, executive director of the Pennsylvania Music Educators Association; Gene Frank of the American Alliance for Theatre and Education; and Leeann Rhoades of the Pennsylvania Arts Education Association.

For more information, visit

[www.artseducationpa.org](http://www.artseducationpa.org). 

A hand in a white shirt sleeve is using a white chalk to draw a sad face on a green chalkboard. The face has two circular eyes and a curved line for a mouth. The hand is positioned on the right side of the board, with the chalk tip touching the right eye.

# A SAD TALE

But **YOU** Can Help Write a

# HAPPY ENDING

**T**he polls tell the story.

A recent Franklin & Marshall College poll headed by G. Terry Madonna, one of Pennsylvania's most respected public opinion pollsters, found that 46 percent of the state's residents disapprove of Gov. Tom Corbett's job performance, up from 43 percent since February. The latest Quinnipiac Poll put the governor's disapproval rating at 47 percent.

Obviously, far more than public school educators, who

have seen 20,000 of their colleagues lose their jobs, academic programs that benefit students slashed or eliminated, school districts pushed into financially distressed status, and now their retirement security under attack, are being harmed by the policies of this administration.

The exceptions, who likely make up the bulk of the governor's feeble 38 percent approval rating, are corporate and business interests who have been extolled tax loopholes and tax



breaks at the expense of middle- and low-income Pennsylvanians.

And therein lies a warning that bellows to PSEA members to maintain the drumbeat of advocacy in terms of making their collective voices heard among members of the state Legislature, and in supporting pro-public education candidates through grassroots work and contributions to PSEA-PACE (see the center section of this issue, page 15).

“The polls right now mean nothing,” said PSEA President Michael J. Crossey. “The powerful and well-heeled corporate interests are going to rally to their champion in the governor’s mansion. It will take all the resources and advocacy our members, public school parents, and our friends in other unions can muster to change the current political environment.”

The anti-union, anti-public education, pro-voucher Koch brothers can be expected to use their billions during the 2014 elections, as will other powerful entities and individuals with like-minded agendas.

Representatives of two major organizations representing business interests in the state, the Pennsylvania Chamber of Business and Industry, and the Pennsylvania Manufacturers Association, actually spoke out in defense of an insensitive Corbett comment implying that the reason for Pennsylvania’s dismal jobs picture is that the unemployed are largely drug users who can’t pass employer drug tests.

Need anyone say more?

Educators, as they should well know by now, can be expected to be singled out for the same kind of disparagement.

Leslie Nicholas, a language arts teacher in the Wyoming Valley West School District who this year won the distinguished NEA Member Benefits Award for Teaching Excellence, honed in on exactly that in a speech to the PSEA House of Delegates in Pittsburgh in May.

Nicholas noted he started his teaching career during the time when the 1983 “Nation at Risk” report was released that cast America’s education system as failing.

“Since then teacher bashing has been an official sport, particularly in political circles,” he said. “And every once in a while another report comes out from a group of prominent people, usually not educators, saying our education system is failing us and assigns culpability to teachers.”

Expect more of the same during the 2014 elections.

Still, first things first. The 2014 gubernatorial race may effectively be underway, but as this issue of *Voice* went to press the Legislature was starting the home stretch of finalizing the 2013-14 state budget (see story page 14).

The stakes are enormous for PSEA members and all public employees: the governor wants to change pension benefits for current and future public school employees; he wants to privatize the state liquor system at the expense of 4,000 public sector jobs; the governor’s basic education funding proposal restores only \$90 million of the nearly \$1 billion he has cut over the past two years; and he wants to expand corporate tax

largess at the expense of available revenue that would make his severe budget cuts avoidable.

Crossey noted that while the past couple of years have been difficult, PSEA member advocacy and contributions to PACE have stymied the governor on such issues as tuition vouchers, and making a teacher evaluation system far less draconian than Corbett and former state Education Secretary Ron Tomalis originally proposed.

“Yes, we do have to change the political environment in Harrisburg in the 2014 elections, but we can’t lose sight of the difficult battles staring us in the face right now,” Crossey said. “Keep up the emails, phone calls, and personal contacts to legislators. Our collective voice has and does have an impact.”

## Corporate fat cats spoon fed

Public schools and most programs benefitting middle- and low-income families are starving, but the governor certainly has served it up for corporate interests.

“Business is somewhere between happy and joyous about Corbett’s goals and accomplishments,” Capitolwire Bureau Chief Peter L. DeCoursey wrote in a recent column. “They love the fact that this guy cut education and welfare, and most everything else to give them tax breaks.”

With apologies to famed poet Elizabeth Barrett Browning, why does big business love this governor? Let us count the ways:

- Phasing out the Capital Stock and Franchise Tax on businesses by 2015 at a cost of nearly \$600 million over the next two fiscal years.
- Proposing to reduce the Corporate Net Income Tax by 3 percent over the next 10 years.
- Proposing to exempt start-up companies with a tax credit even if they owe no state taxes.
- Proposing to exempt sales tax on the purchase of corporate aircraft, jet parts, and aircraft and repair.
- Offering \$1.7 billion in tax credits for Shell Oil Company, whose parent Royal Dutch Shell is the second most profitable corporation in the world, to build an ethane cracking plant in western Pennsylvania.
- Proposing to allow business owners to bequeath business assets to their heirs with no inheritance taxes.
- Imposing only a modest “local impact fee” on natural gas companies drilling in the Marcellus Shale, making Pennsylvania the only natural-gas producing state not to levy a drilling tax.
- Continuing to look the other way on the “Delaware Loop-hole,” which allows major national corporations like Walmart and Toys R Us to avoid paying taxes on certain assets in Pennsylvania.

The potential revenue from all of this reaches well into the billions – far more than enough to restore the nearly \$1 billion the governor has cut in state basic education funding over the past two years.

Look at it this way: Even without the various proposals in his 2013-14 budget, the governor's business tax breaks in his first two budgets mirror the education funding cuts.

"All told, corporate taxes have already been cut by \$800 million since Gov. Corbett took office," Kathy Jellison, president of Local 668 of the Service Employees International Union," wrote in an op-ed in *The Harrisburg Patriot-News*. "These corporate tax cuts have a price: lost revenues create a hole in the state budget."

Perhaps the most egregious example is the natural gas industry, which backed Corbett strongly in his first election bid.

Once in office, Corbett stacked a Marcellus Shale Advisory Committee with corporate interests. Not surprisingly, the committee recommended only a modest fee to offset local environmental and infrastructure issues and no significant drilling tax.

The governor's reason: he was fearful these companies would go to other states. Huh? Every other natural-gas producing state levies such a tax. Where were they going to go?

Neighboring West Virginia, for example, has a drilling tax that studies have shown if duplicated in Pennsylvania could raise \$24 billion over the next 20 years.

A recent *Associated Press* analysis said the taxes imposed

on the industry in Texas and Oklahoma had an effective rate on volume of 7 and 7.5 percent, respectively. The effective rate currently for the fee imposed by Pennsylvania is 4.3 percent, and is heading downward to what will be an effective rate of just 1.3 percent, according to the analysis.

"Other gas-producing states assess reasonable severance taxes," said an editorial in *The Scranton Times-Tribune*. "State lawmakers and Gov. Tom Corbett should stop shortchanging the Pennsylvania taxpayers they purport to represent, and establish a fair severance tax on natural gas extraction."

It's too bad the governor doesn't have the same concern about companies leaving the state when it comes to the Delaware Loophole, which works this way: A company sets up a holding company in Delaware – just a post office box will do – and uses it to divert certain legally allowed assets to that company to shield them from Pennsylvania's corporate taxes.

The Pennsylvania Budget and Policy Center estimates the loophole alone costs Pennsylvania taxpayers \$500 million to \$600 million annually.

"This approach costs all of us," said Sharon Ward, the center's director. "When companies don't pay, the rest of us pay more in the form of higher property taxes, underfunded schools, mounting college tuition, and a weakened economy."

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## 'Big bong theory'

The governor contends all this corporate tax largesse is aimed at job creation – the old trickle-down economic theory.

But the only thing that seems to be trickling down is pain to the middle-class and lower-income families because Pennsylvania ranks 49th in the country in job creation.

The governor, however, claims that the jobs are there, but people are either lazy or drug abusers or both.

Remember, he said two years ago that the reason for the state's high unemployment rate was that people wanted to exhaust all their unemployment benefits before returning to work.

Well, this spring the governor came up with another explanation, one which *The Philadelphia Daily News* headlined in a cover story: "Big bong theory."

"There are many employers who say, look, we're looking for people, but we can't find anybody that has passed a drug test," Corbett said during an interview with PAMatters.com.

Most jaws dropped, except of course those of interests who are benefitting from the governor's policies.

Gene Barr, president of Pennsylvania Chamber of Business and Industry, a long-time opponent of efforts to close the Delaware Loophole by tightening accounting standards, called the outcry an "overreaction" that "lends nothing to reasoned debate."

Reasoned debate?

Well, it may certainly be a topic during next year's gubernatorial debate.

U.S. Rep. Allyson Schwartz of Montgomery County, one of several Democrats who has either formally announced a candidacy or is expected to do so, said Corbett's excuse for his own failed policies is "blaming and insulting the people of Pennsylvania."

And former state Environmental Protection Secretary John Hangar, who like Schwartz has formally announced his candidacy for the Democratic nomination next year, said "as long as we have Tom Corbett as governor, Pennsylvania is going to be in the middle of a jobs crisis."

## Political involvement sets the PACE

Seasoned political observers say this has been the earliest start to a Pennsylvania governor's race in history.

In addition to Schwartz and Hangar, York County businessman and former state Revenue Secretary Tom Wolf has formally announced he is seeking the Democratic nomination. State Treasurer Rob McCord is also expected to announce, and Kathleen McGinty, a former aide to Al Gore who preceded

Hangar as Environment Protection secretary, also is reported to be considering a run. Several other Democrats also may throw their hats in the ring.

This level of interest to take on a sitting governor seeking re-election underscores the miserable record of the Corbett administration, which is being borne out in the polls. In fact, there also has been noise of a Republican primary challenge to Corbett.

But the summer of 2013 and November of 2014 are an eternity in politics, and the corporate interests and anti-public education and anti-union backers of Corbett's will not allow their puppet to go down without pulling all the strings, particularly financial ones.

"It's an old saying but money is the mother's milk of politics," PSEA's Crossey said. "Our PACE ask will play a major role in determining whether we can change this toxic political environment educators and their students have had to endure since the governor took office."

It goes beyond the governor's office.

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**...the corporate interests and anti-public education and anti-union backers of Corbett's will not allow their puppet to go down without pulling all the strings...**

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Electing pro-public education candidates to the state Legislature – the entire House and half of the Senate will be up for election in 2014 – is equally important.

"Like it or not, we simply can't get away from politics when we close the classroom door, or drop off children from the bus," Crossey said. "If that day ever existed, it's long gone. If we are going to protect our pensions, if we are going to restore funding, if we are going to get those 20,000 educators who lost their jobs back in the schools where they belong and where their students need them, it's going to take a lot of resources."

NEA honoree Nicholas, a member of Wyoming Valley West EA in Luzerne County, noted that in reality education should be a shared partnership between educators, parents, and the community at large.

"Unfortunately, right now education professionals are in this alone," Nicholas said. "And because we're alone, we damn well better stick together." ■

## Pension issue, budget in home stretch

**T**he final weeks of June are the home stretch for the state budget process, meaning it's important for PSEA members to keep up the volume through emails, letters, phone calls, and personal contacts with their legislative representatives.

Pensions, public school funding, and closing corporate tax breaks to provide revenue are all issues in play that affect the professional and personal lives of educators.

As this issue of *Voice* went to press, here is what the issues looked like:

### Pensions

The governor's proposals to change benefits for current members of the Public School Employees' Retirement System, and put future members into an inferior defined contribution plan have been formally introduced as legislation by state Sen. Mike Brubaker, R-Lancaster County, and Rep. Chris Ross, R-Chester County.

In addition to sharply reducing retirement security for future employees and costing taxpayers more money to administer, the changes would cost the average PSERS' member – 11 years of service and an annual salary of \$50,000 – \$16,166 annually in retirement based on an assumed working career of 35 years.

PSEA President Michael J. Crossey reiterated the Association contends any change in benefits to current employees, which the governor wants to do by changing the pension formula to lower retirement payouts, represents a violation of the contract clause of the state constitution. Past court cases involving public employee unions have upheld that legal principle.

Corbett and his budget secretary, Charles Zogby, contend that future benefits of current employees are legal as long as benefits earned to date are honored.

"It's an impairment of contract and it's illegal," Crossey said. "We'll be in court in the blink of an eye."

The good news is there seems to be some recognition of the legal perils on the part of key legislative leaders of the governor's own party, including Senate Majority Leader Dominic Pileggi, R-Delaware. Another positive development was the House Republicans unveiling a budget proposal that, unlike the governor's, did not anticipate the governor's plan passing.

The bad news is that Pileggi has indicated he is open to at least switching new employees to a defined contribution plan.

But if Pileggi and lawmakers look at the facts, they'll find not only do defined contribution plans undermine retirement security, as has been shown in the private sector, but that states switching to them from defined benefit plans find they are more costly to administer.

West Virginia and Nebraska switched to defined benefits plans after trying defined contribution plans. Alaska switched to a defined contribution plan and discovered what PSEA and others have contended will happen here – employer contributions skyrocketed for employees still in the defined benefit plan.

State Treasurer Rob McCord has noted that the combined

\$41 billion in unfunded liability to PSERS and the State Employees' Retirement System still has to be paid regardless of whether changes are made to current and future employees' benefits.

The governor's plan, he said, would make employer contributions lower in the short term, but actually add \$5 billion to the debt by 2019, which McCord notes would be just when Corbett is leaving office should he win a second term next year.

The irony here is that current PSERS' members would be punished under the governor's plan even though they were contributing an average of 7.5 percent of their salaries to their pensions while the state gave itself a "pension holiday" and made no contributions for much of the first decade of the 2000s.

The pension holiday is one of the main reasons for the unfunded liability. Yet, PSEA members and other public employees made compromises under the Pension Reform Law of 2010 that will provide \$33 billion in future cost savings for PSERS and SERS over the next 30 years.

### Funding

When Corbett took office two years ago, there was no public education funding crisis. The governor made sure there was one by slashing nearly \$1 billion in basic education funding.

Nearly 20,000 educators have lost their jobs, class sizes have ballooned, and arts and foreign language classes, and after-school programs have either been sharply reduced or eliminated.

The governor is proposing to add \$90 million in education funding in his 2013-14 budget, but is linking that to his liquor privatization proposal passing and using the proceeds from that.

"Now it's clear what this is all about," said PSEA Treasurer Dolores M. McCracken. "Manufacture a crisis and then use it to advance your agenda."

House Republicans proposed a budget in late May that called for \$10 million more in public education funding than Corbett, or \$100 million.

But much more is needed to undo the damage of the past two budget years.

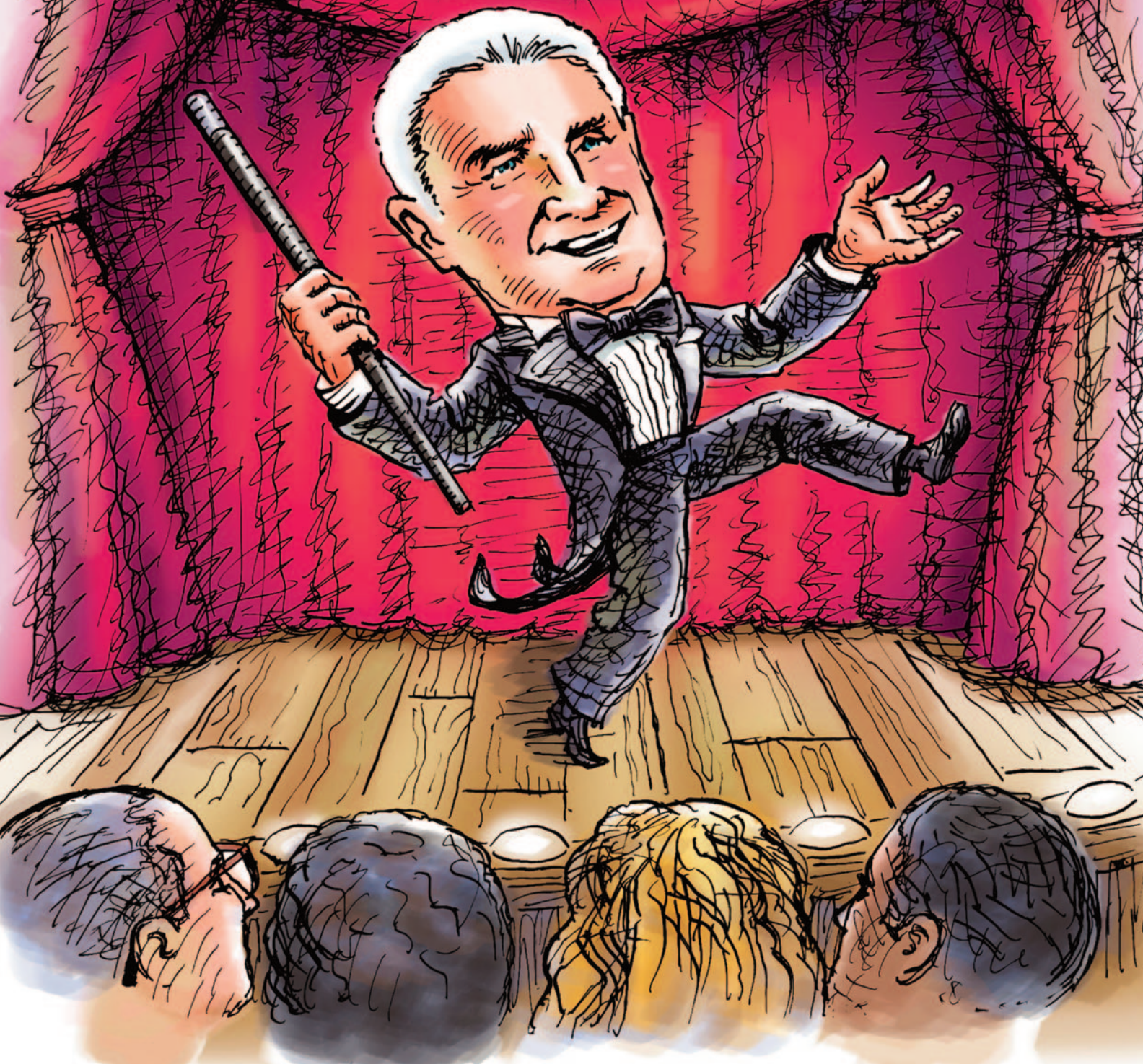
The Pennsylvania School Funding Campaign ([www.paschoolfunding.org](http://www.paschoolfunding.org)) has called upon the governor to restore the nearly \$1 billion in cuts over the next three budget years, starting with a \$270 million increase in 2013-14.

The campaign, like many public education interests, notes the revenue is readily available if the governor would stop giving tax breaks to major corporations, and close existing tax loopholes (see previous story starting on page 10).

"Billions of dollars are literally available," McCracken said. "But the governor is more interested in pleasing corporate donors and then he is the education of Pennsylvania's children, and the jobs of middle-class families." ■

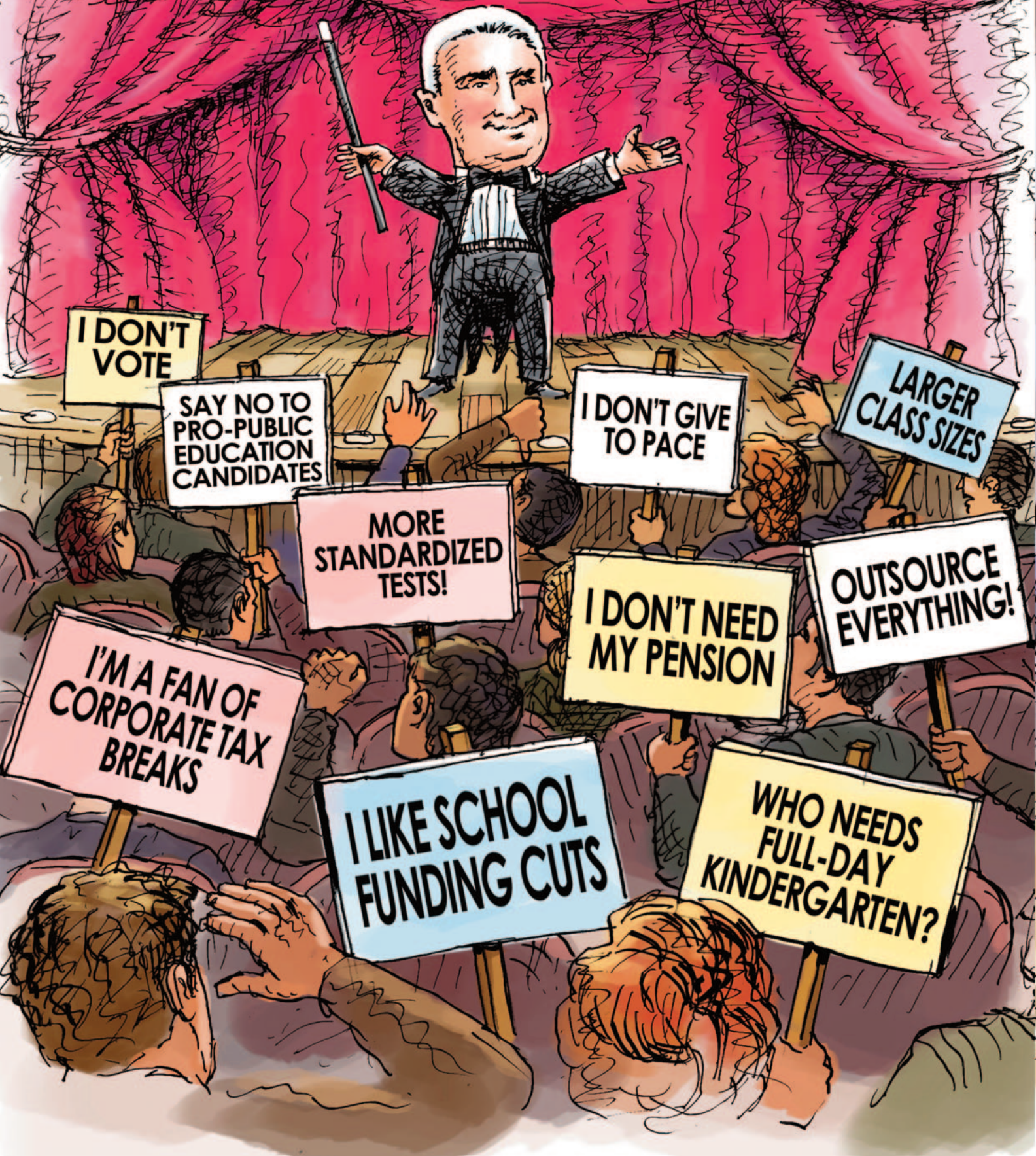


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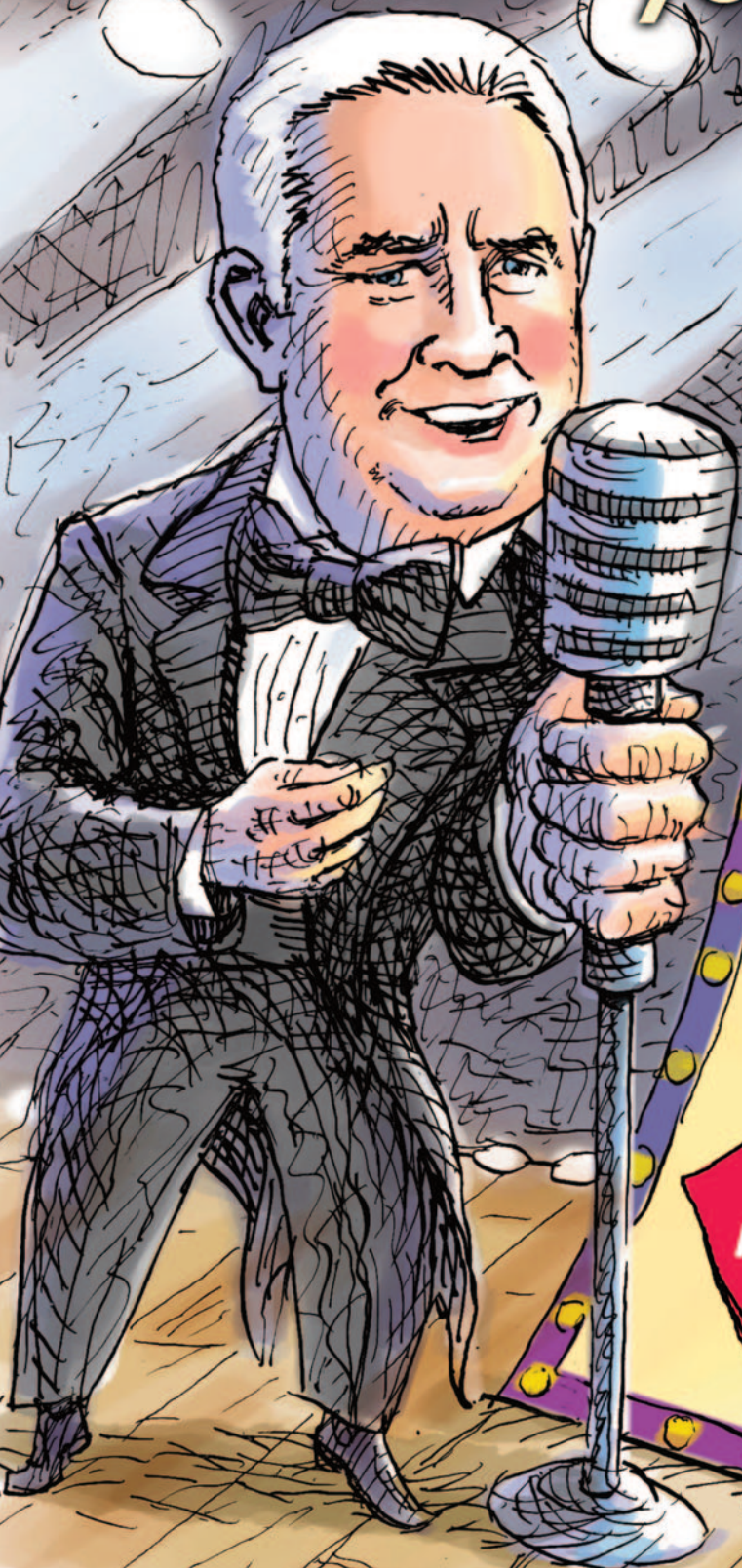


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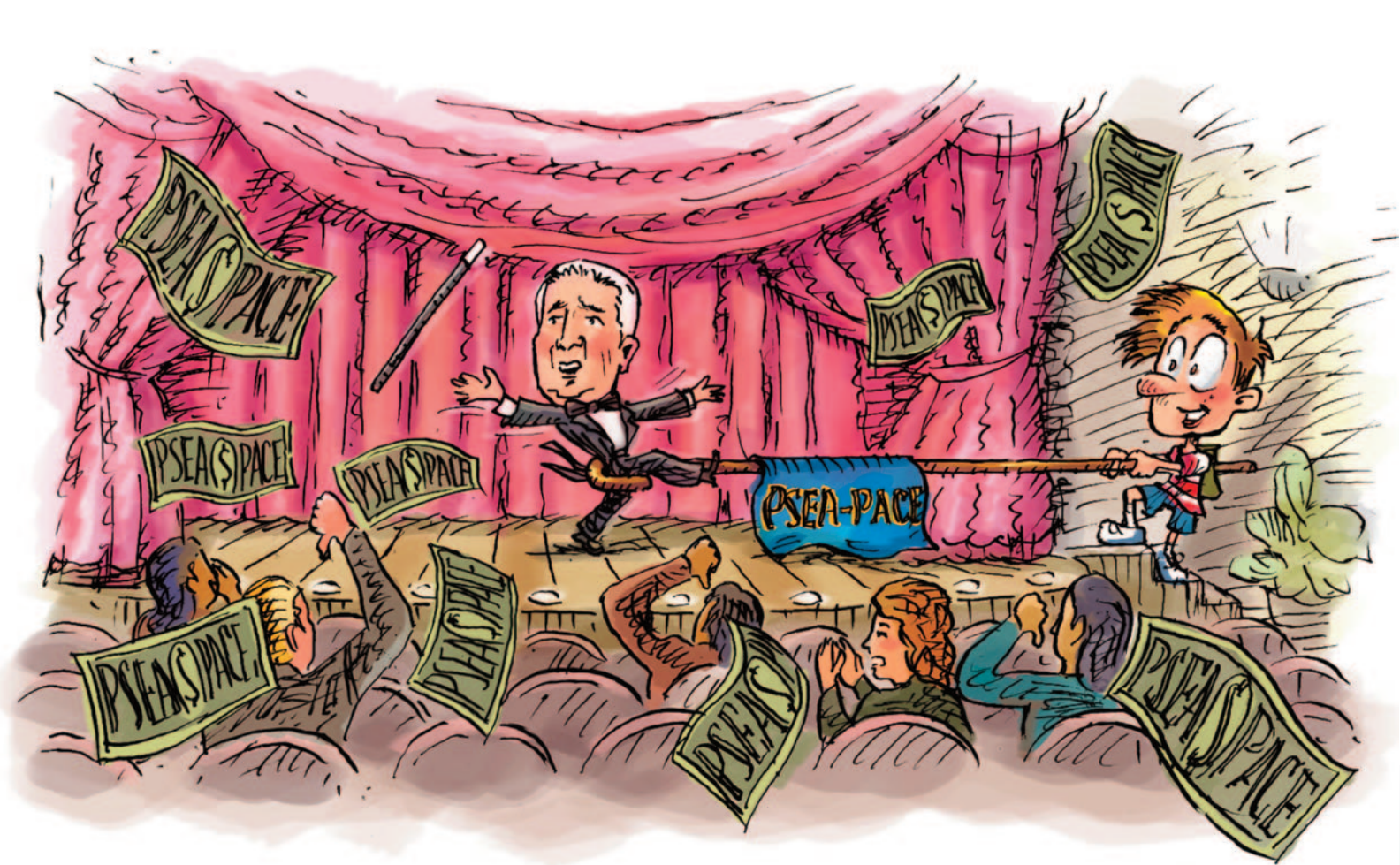


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Don't be part of the Tom Corbett fan club.  
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Help get Tom Corbett off center stage.

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This story about financially distressed school districts is the latest in a series appearing in *Voice* on “Kids, Cuts, and Consequences.” The series looks behind the scenes at the school districts hit hardest by Gov. Tom Corbett’s nearly \$1 billion in cuts to public education.

**E**very student has the right to a quality public education; the state constitution guarantees it. Yet Gov. Tom Corbett has compromised the education of thousands of students across the state.

Corbett slashed nearly \$1 billion from Pennsylvania’s public schools over the past two years, creating a school funding crisis that is getting worse.

It is no wonder that districts are finding themselves in “financial distress” status.

Across the state, Corbett’s unprecedented budget cuts have forced districts to eliminate vital programs that enrich students in order to make ends meet. Not to mention it is the responsibility of each school district to foot the bill for students who attend cyber charter schools and charter schools within the district.

But rather than properly funding public education, the governor instead offered a “solution” to the funding problem by imposing a new school district financial recovery law for “distressed” schools.

Act 141 of 2012 sets up an “early warning system” to identify districts that may be experiencing financial difficulties, places them on Financial Watch Status, and requires the Pennsylvania Department of Education to analyze these districts’ finances and provide technical assistance to remedy problems.

So far, four school districts have fallen under this new form of quasi-state control: York City, Duquesne City, Chester Upland, and Harrisburg. Each district has a state-appointed chief recovery officer or receiver to administer a financial recovery plan, giving a disproportionate amount of power to individuals who are not accountable to the communities their decisions will impact.

Educators and support professionals in each of these districts and beyond have made concessions, including salary freezes, reduced benefits, and teaching outside of their area of expertise.

York City teachers recently voted to continue to negotiate elements of a plan authored by the chief recovery officer, which proposes that teachers take up to a 10 percent salary cut for each of the next four years and cut their benefits by up to 50 percent.

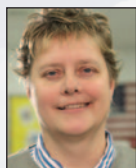
“We’re prepared to negotiate elements of this proposal with the school district,” said Bruce Riek, president of the York City EA. “We don’t like it, but we are committed to putting our students first — even when the governor and his allies have not.”

## Educators sacrifice for students

Educators in York City simply cannot do it alone. Funding cuts need to be restored because the devastation to public education there, like in so many other school districts across the state, continues to mount:

- York City has eliminated or cut all extracurricular programs: clubs, cheerleading, swimming, and performance arts. The current coaching staff is being paid for through residual funds or through fundraisers.
- The district altered the instruction program to close two middle schools. The remaining elementary schools teach grades K-8.
- There is a reduced schedule for art and physical education at the elementary level, and no guidance counselors. Specials teachers see students in each of the elementary buildings only one time over a six-day cycle.
- There has been a reduction in staff at every level and in almost every subject. Reading and math coaches are gone, along with intervention specialists.
- Last year, 88 professionals were furloughed.

PSEA members have made many sacrifices to educate students, spending thousands of hours with them, watching them learn and grow, sharing in their enthusiasm for learning as well as their frustrations if they are struggling. They recognize that it is their job to meet the needs of each individual child, and they strive to meet those needs no matter what.



"Where does it end? We are as lean as it gets when it comes to teaching staff in our district. The losers in all of this are the children and the community."

**Sherri Magnuson**  
Harrisburg EA President

Up until this point, they have done well stretching their time and resources to fill the gaps the lack of support from the state has created. Members stay after school, arrange meetings with parents, purchase books and supplies to reward academic progress and good behavior, and more.

In districts where poverty overwhelms many students and their families, PSEA members provide support and guidance for students' emotional and academic needs.

## Where does it end?

Harrisburg School District has lost 300 staff positions in the last three years.

"Where does it end?" asked Harrisburg EA President Sherri Magnuson. "We are as lean as it gets when it comes to teaching staff in our district. The losers in all of this are the children and the community."

Fortunately, Harrisburg EA has an open dialogue with the district's chief recovery officer, allowing the parties to work together to find solutions to the district's problems. But the chief recovery officer had only three months to develop a plan. It took years to put this and other districts into financial peril, and Corbett's last two budgets haven't helped matters.

The governor's proposed 2013-14 state budget would increase public school funding by only \$90 million more than public schools received this year, leaving a massive, \$766 million funding gap that remains unfilled. And districts must submit their budgets at the same time the state budget is due. For those working on recovery plans, it was crunch time as this issue of *Voice* went to press.

Rushing to meet deadlines for budgets and recovery plans is compounded by the fact that in other financially distressed districts, locals have not been included in talks during the recovery process.

Chester Upland EA President John Shelton said PSEA members are largely in the dark about staffing as the financial recovery process moves forward in the district.

"We want to work with the state-appointed chief recovery

officer moving forward," said Shelton. "Time is of the essence, and multiple proposals have been made about what schools will be open and how they will operate, but we have not been included in the conversation."

"For as many sacrifices as we have made for our students and our unwavering commitment to them, it is disappointing that we are not involved."

Duquesne City School District's receiver is considering a plan that would transfer elementary students at the Duquesne Education Center to the neighboring West Mifflin Area School District. However, teachers at the center do not know their fate for the coming school year.

## PSEA creates task force

PSEA is fighting for students and members in each of these districts, and is working closely with those on the financial recovery watch list: Reading, Steelton-Highspire, Aliquippa, and Wilkinsburg. At the May House of Delegates in Pittsburgh, delegates approved creating a new task force that includes leaders of affected locals.

The task force will offer guidance and support for districts under financial recovery or on the watch list, and districts with large populations of students with special needs, high poverty levels, high concentrations of minorities, or high charter school populations that are especially harmed by cuts in school funding.

It will also include efforts to change the political environment by helping to elect pro-public education candidates who support adequate and equitable funding for all public schools.

"Since this began, we have gotten everything that we have asked for from PSEA," Magnuson said. "Every phone call has been answered, and staff is working with us hand in hand."

"My entire career has been in Harrisburg, and I still believe we can turn this around. We are invested in the community, and we are invested in the kids. Otherwise, we wouldn't be here." 🍏

"For as many sacrifices as we have made for our students and our unwavering commitment to them, it is disappointing that we are not involved (in the recovery conversion)."

**John Shelton**  
Chester Upland EA President

See more of Kids, Cuts, and Consequences at [www.psea.org/kcc](http://www.psea.org/kcc). Watch videos of members telling their stories – and tell yours.

► **Your story matters. Tell it. Today.**

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## New evaluation system starts in fall

The pilots are over, and the 2013-14 school year will usher in implementation of the state's new teacher evaluation system.

The full impact won't be felt, however, until the 2015-16 school year – the point at which three years of data will have been accumulated for the student testing portion of the evaluations, and the final portion of the evaluation system is put in place.

Although PSEA had no role in the new evaluation system, PSEA Vice President Jerry Oleksiak noted the Association successfully lobbied during the legislative process last summer to make sure that if student tests were going to be included, that multiple measures of student achievement be incorporated.

PSEA also lobbied to ensure that the use of testing was greatly reduced from the Corbett administration's original proposal for a system based on as much as 50 percent of test scores.

The final months of the current school year saw a pilot of the Pennsylvania Value Added Assessment System or PVAAS. The Pennsylvania Department of Education is now determining how PVAAS – based on student scores on the state assessment tests – will be used to judge individual educators in regard to the growth in student achievement.

Carla L. Claycomb, PSEA director of education services, said that such factors as co-teaching, a teacher on sick or maternity leave for part of a school year, and student transfers can all skew PVAAS scores in individual cases.

"We have concerns; actually not just 'we'" Claycomb said. "A number of national researchers have raised issues with the validity of this."

Harris L. Zwerling, PSEA assistant director of research, said in addition to the issues cited by Claycomb, PVAAS does not take into account a student's background, including such factors as home life, or disciplinary or attendance

histories. Moreover, PVAAS assumes that other factors such as school resources, peer group influences, and community inputs are the same across the state.

"How is a teacher responsible for truancy, or violent behavior?" Zwerling asked.

Furthermore, he said not only has PVAAS never been validated nationally for use in teacher evaluations, the PSSAs have not been validated for that purpose either. The National Academy of Sciences' Bureau of Testing said value-added systems shouldn't be used "as the sole or primary basis" for making high-stakes decisions about educators, "because the extent to which the measures reflect the contribution of teachers themselves, rather than other factors, is not understood."

SAS, the company which is running PVAAS without competitive bidding by the state and whose testing system was founded by a University of Tennessee researcher using an agricultural production measurement technique, contends that three years of prior test scores are all that is necessary to account for differences in backgrounds of students, and all other educational inputs that might influence test score (PVAAS) growth.

But Zwerling said many researchers have found just the opposite.

He said there have been studies where simply including different measures such as parental education will flip the position of teachers from low to average or even high performing.

Two aspects of the overall evaluation system that will start with the 2013-14 school year are teacher observations and building-wide measures of student achievement.

The building-wide measures, which will count as 15 percent of a teacher's evaluation and will be part of a state school "report card," will rate each school on a scale of one to 100 based on the following formula:

- Academic achievement, 50 percent of the final measurement. This includes proficiency on the PSSAs and Industry Certification Exams, and a measure designed to reflect the extent to which a school is closing achievement gaps.
- Academic growth, 40 percent. This measurement reflects the extent to which students meet annual growth expectations as measured by the PVAAS.
- Other academic indicators, 10 percent. This includes graduation rates, promotion rates, attendance rates, and measures that reflect the availability of Advanced Placement, International Baccalaureate, and dual enrollment programs.

Like the use of a student's PVAAS results for use in evaluating an individual teacher, Claycomb said PSEA also has concerns about the validity of building-wide measures.

"It's not a valid or reliable measure of individual teacher effectiveness," Claycomb said, adding it also could demoralize teachers and students in districts that are low performing largely as the result of their lack of affluence.

Oleksiak, who served on a PSEA liaison committee with the state Education Department, said the Association will continue working toward improving the system in future years.

"It's by no means a perfect system," he said. "But it's a lot better than the starting point, and a lot better than what has been implemented in other states. We will continue advocating for improvements."

Nearly 200 educational entities took part in the pilot program this year. PSEA conducted webinars on the new system with more than 2,000 members participating.

A video presentation for members unable to participate and a list of "Frequently Asked Questions" are available at [www.psea.org/evaluation](http://www.psea.org/evaluation). ■

## Financial literacy adds up in schools

**E**conomics and financial education in schools once was – and in too many cases still is – basically confined to high school courses for honor or gifted students aspiring to be accountants, business executives, stockbrokers, or similar careers.

That is changing, thanks in large part to EconomicsPennsylvania ([www.economicspa.org](http://www.economicspa.org)), a non-profit organization supported philosophically and financially by PSEA, and perhaps most importantly in classrooms in a growing number of school districts across the state. So impressive is the group's work that it's president and chief executive officer, Fritz Heinemann, was selected as this year's Adler Friend of Education Award recipient (see page 6).

PSEA President Michael J. Crossey serves as a vice chair of the statewide board composed of current and retired business executives, higher education officials, public education leaders, military officers, and professional athletes.

EconomicsPennsylvania, supported by donations and fundraising events, feels it's important for students at all levels to understand essential economic and financial literacy concepts, to apply those concepts in problem-solving skills, and to understand the global economy.

And the organization does mean at all levels.

Susan Mattes Bostian, gifted coordinator for the Nazareth Area School District in Northampton County and

president of the Nazareth Area EA, incorporates financial literacy in her gifted kindergarten classes.

"We talk about spending, saving, and sharing," said Mattes Bostian, who among her other duties also serves as vice president for educational programming for EconomicsPennsylvania.

In addition to those topics, Mattes Bostian said students are also learning about auto leasing vs. buying; renting an apartment or home vs. buying; personal investment instruments like certificates of deposit; and entrepreneurship.

Recognizing that financial literacy can be particularly challenging for students from low-income families and less affluent school districts, EconomicsPennsylvania's sister program, Free Enterprise, is geared specifically toward Title I schools.

While financial literacy can be taught as an individual course or as an after-school club, the general idea is to incorporate it into the entire curriculum since financial literacy applies to virtually any subject area – from the obvious application to math, to history and to the arts.

As a high school civics teacher in the Keystone Oaks School District in Allegheny County, John Murphy teaches students about the importance of Wall Street to the overall economy; the role of the Federal Reserve Board; and federal and state banking regulations.

"Until this year, I largely taught these topics to honor students," Murphy said.

"I was really happy this year to get an opportunity to teach them to core students, and it has gone really well."

One of the problems facing teachers like Mattes Bostian and Murphy is convincing school district officials of the importance of financial literacy, particularly in a day and age when state funding cuts are squeezing resources and staff.

"Even though it's so needed, financial literacy is a push," Mattes Bostian said. "It's not a priority for some schools because it's not required by the state."

As part of its efforts in schools, EconomicsPennsylvania sponsors an Economic Challenge program, gives aspiring student entrepreneurs opportunities to compete for grants, conducts a free, four-day summer camp at Bloomsburg University, and also offers the popular Stock Market Game.

Under the latter, teams of students at the elementary, middle school, and high school levels use a hypothetical \$100,000 to invest in stocks, mutual funds, and bonds.

At the basic levels, students do buy and sell transactions, but progress to short-selling and margin buying at advance levels.

Sometimes high school teams compete against their local member of Congress. When the high school team wins, Mattes Bostian said with a laugh, "It really helps with funding since they then realize the need for financial education." 🍎

## Teaching Excellence nominee

**C**hristy Rehm, an English teacher in the Conewago Valley School District in Adams County, is PSEA's nominee for the 2014 NEA Foundation Award for Teaching Excellence.

In addition to being an outstanding classroom teacher, Rehm is the high school language arts curriculum leader and department chair.

Rehm, a member of Conewago Val-

ley EA, is also a member of the Dover Area School Board, and has opened her home as a campaign headquarters for pro-public education candidates.

Each spring, NEA affiliates submit nominees for the award, which recognizes, rewards, and promotes excellence in teaching and advocacy for the profession.

NEA will award five finalists the

prestigious Horace Mann-NEA Foundation Award for Teaching Excellence, and one national winner will be selected early next year.

PSEA's 2013 nominee, Leslie Nicholas, an English teacher in the Wyoming Valley West School District in Luzerne County, won the national award. 🍎



## Turning dropouts into grads

**W**hen Joel Vanucci took over as dean of students in the Keystone Oaks School District 25 years ago, he noticed a high number of dropouts.

So, he contacted some of the more than 100 students who left the Allegheny County district during the previous five years before graduating, and found reasons ranging from teen pregnancy, to disciplinary issues, to academic struggles. But there was a commonality.

"The vast majority told me nobody seemed to care," Vanucci said. "If you are worth your salt as an administrator, you can't have that."

He convinced about 10 students to return to an evening program he set up to help them get their degrees. A quarter century later, Project Succeed, an alternative education and retrieval program for dropouts, just graduated its 2,000th student.

One of them was Eileen Shields, a 72-year-old mother, grandmother, and two-time breast cancer survivor who was forced to drop out in 10th grade after her mother became seriously ill and she had to become the family's caretaker.

Shields attended her grandson's graduation at Keystone Oaks a year ago, and mentioned to her daughter how she never got to walk in a commencement line.

Her daughter approached Vanucci about Project Succeed, got her mother an appointment, and Shields walked that

walk on June 6.

"I'm proud of myself," Shields told *The Pittsburgh Post-Gazette*. "Now I can say to myself, 'I did it!' And the next time I fill out a job application, I can put down that I graduated in 2013."

Vanucci says that while Shields is not unusual in the program – the oldest graduate was 75, and there have been two sets of mothers and daughters, and a father and son who graduated together – the majority range in age from 18 to 23.

Amazingly, 72 percent of those who have successfully completed the Project Succeed program have gone on to what Vanucci terms "post-secondary activity," ranging from four-year colleges, to community colleges and trade schools, to the Armed Forces. The students attend classes in the evening, taught by a team of six teachers who work under Vanucci. They also receive mentoring in filling out job applications, preparing resumes, and job interviews.

The course work – English composition, speech, math, science, social studies, computers, and a vocational component – is anything but easy. Like the regular student body, there is homework. And there is accountability.

"If you miss one assignment, Mr. Vanucci is asking why," 18-year-old John Washko told the *Post-Gazette*.

Vanucci "retired" five years ago – as dean of students Project Succeed was just one of many responsibilities – but the

PSEA-Retired member is at Keystone Oaks High School every morning to do administrative work for the program, and back again in the evenings when classes are in session.



Joel Vanucci

Project Succeed gets no federal or state funding; Vanucci raises money through grants and private fundraising. He cites the Laurel, Grable, PNC, Eden Hall, and Buhl foundations in the Pittsburgh area for their monetary support. Since 1988, more than \$1 million have been raised.

A key funding boost also came five years ago when seven other western Pennsylvania school districts joined with Keystone Oaks to form an eight-member consortium that now makes up Project Succeed. The districts pay \$12,000 a year and may send up to 12 students to the program.

Although it would seem Vanucci is as full-time in retirement as he was during his dean of students' career, he doesn't see it that way. It's more a labor of love.

"It's a passion," Vanucci said. "You see the results. You see that you've helped people. That's gratifying." 🍎

## Teacher of year finalists announced

Eleven members of PSEA are among the 12 teachers selected by the Pennsylvania Department of Education as finalists for 2014 Teacher of the Year. They are:

- Daryl Balseiro, Big Spring School District
- Amy Alleman Burke, Cumberland Valley School District
- Erin Cernuska, Bellefonte Area School District
- Linda Coll, Northern Lebanon School District
- Tracey Fritch, Rose Tree Media School District
- Carol Aten Frow, Belle Vernon Area School District
- Lori Gallagher, Hatboro-Horsham School District
- Anthony Grisillo, Rose Tree Media School District
- Jen Klobucar, Yough School District
- Nicole Miletto, Hatboro-Horsham School District
- Kyle Norman, Brockway Area School District

The 12th finalist, **Nicola Hipkins**, teaches in the Bethel Park School District, Allegheny County. She is a member of the Bethel Park Federation of Teachers.

## Interboro EA member's song aids Sandy Hook

**L**ike all teachers, the tragedy at Sandy Hook Elementary School in Connecticut hit home to Chris Ofalt.

So, the elementary teacher in the Interboro School District, Delaware County, decided to apply talents he uses in his non-teaching time to pay tribute to the victims.

An accomplished guitarist and singer who regularly performs a blend of folk and acoustic rock at venues in suburban Philadelphia, Ofalt put together a song about the tragedy for Voices For Heroes Inc., a charitable group set up to raise funds toward the construction of a new school, upgrades to the existing one, funeral expenses, counseling services, and memorials.

Ofalt's production can be viewed by going to YouTube and searching for the

title "Sandy Hook Elementary School Original Tribute Song - Why?" It was awaiting posting on the Voices For Heroes website ([www.voicesforheroes.com](http://www.voicesforheroes.com)) as this issue of *Voice* was going to press.

"Sandy Hook was not only a tragedy, it was a tragedy affecting children and at a school," Ofalt said. "That really hit home to me."

After hearing about Voices For Heroes, Ofalt knew he had his outlet to do something.

The group is putting together two CDs to help raise funds – the first and the one initially posted on the website featured only Connecticut-based artists. The second, and the one in which Ofalt's song is included, features artists from throughout the rest of the country and the world.

Ofalt's own website, [www.chrisofalt.com](http://www.chrisofalt.com), speaks to what a

quality musician the Interboro EA member is, and the breadth of work and experience beyond the classroom world he feels so passionately about, and which still occupies the majority of his time.

He is thankful he has education and musical skillsets to blend to pay tribute to the Sandy Hook victims, and to help their families and the Newtown, Conn. community.

"Music can be a great form of musical expression, and an outlet," Ofalt said. "Hopefully my song contributes to the healing, even if in just a small way." ▀



Chris Ofalt

## Erie teacher and students raise bar for Sandy Hook

**M**ark Mikolajczak and the students at Erie Central Career and Technical School wanted to send a message to the families of victims of the tragic shootings in Newton, Conn.

"We wanted to let them know that the people of Erie cared," said Mikolajczak, a member of Erie City EA. "One of the students lost his dad recently, and others had just lost grandparents; they understood what it feels like."

So Mikolajczak and his class of freshmen and sophomores came up with the idea of creating memorial bars for each of the 26 victims at last December's shootings at

Sandy Hook Elementary School.

Each bar was engraved with the victim's name and the words "true hero." The bars for the 20 students who were slain included something personal about each, such as "lover of horses."

Once completed, Mikolajczak personally delivered the bars to St. Rose of Lima Roman Catholic Church, which is located near Sandy Hook.

In addition to paying tribute to the victims, the project also included an educational aspect since students learned about the manufacturing process of creating the bars and engraving them.

Freshman Tyler Balczon told

*The Erie Times* ([www.goerie.com](http://www.goerie.com)), which did a feature story on the class project, that Mikolajczak is a "very sensitive person" who passed that quality on to his students during the project.

It's not the first time Mikolajczak has had his class do a tribute project. In 2002, he and his students manufactured key chains for soldiers serving overseas.

The nature of the Sandy Hook tragedy, involving a school, educators, and students, really affected Mikolajczak.

"It struck me deeply," he said. "I felt so bad that 20 children and six of my colleagues were brutally murdered by a demon." ▀

## Chambersburg EA efforts aid Sandy Hook fund

**C**hambersburg EA members helped raise nearly \$5,000 to aide the victims of the Sandy Hook Elementary School shooting in Connecticut.

Teachers and other staff of the Chambersburg Area School District

paid into a fund to be allowed to wear blue jeans to school, and a check for \$4,928 was sent to the Sandy Hook School Support Fund.

The fundraiser was the idea of instructional support teacher Karim Powanda, and the Chambersburg EA or-

ganized the effort and collected the money.

In addition to the fundraiser, Chambersburg teachers have been working with district officials in the aftermath of the Sandy Hook tragedy to help improve safety procedures. ▀





## Student PSEA member defies obstacles

Cerebral palsy and family financial difficulties pose a tough challenge to not only going to college, but succeeding.

Diana Livingston not only overcame those obstacles, she graduated from Penn State Berks recently at age 20 – two years ahead of her peers – with a bachelor's in childhood and early adolescent education.

Livingston, whose twin sister Kisandra graduated with her, says that if anything, the challenges motivated her to succeed.

In addition to her illness, which has required 13 surgeries, her mother is a single parent who suffers from a brain tumor. So, she has had to rely on scholarships for her college education.

Livingston and her sister started taking night classes at a community college because their high school didn't have a dual enrollment program. By the time they finished 10th grade, they already had earned 40 college credits and took their SATs early.

Prior to graduating, Livingston, of Lehigh, completed her student teaching in April at Haak Elementary School in Reading.

Her teaching mentor, Sandra Madeira, a member of Reading EA, said Livingston "has just blossomed as a teacher."

"Over the last year, she has learned to adapt her instruction to meet the dif-

fering education needs of all the students in the classroom," Madeira said. "But most important of all, she cares about her students, about the people they will become, and about their character, as

"I went through elementary school, middle school, and high school in a wheelchair. When I got to college I was determined to learn to walk," Livingston said. "My mom wasn't too happy, and there were a lot of scrapped knees, but it was worth it."

Livingston still uses the wheelchair for long distances, but she can get around without it, including discarding it for her student teaching.

"My teaching mentor allowed me to bring in a stool, and I had the wheelchair on hand in case I needed it," she said. "But for the most part I got around the classroom pretty good."

She has several job interviews lined up, and she has applied to graduate school at Harvard.

Asked which avenue she'd prefer, a job or grad school, Livingston's response was typical of her: "Oh, I think I can do both."

She noted that while in middle school and high school, she attended her regular classes during the day, then often had an after-school club or activity, then was at the community college for her night

classes by 6 p.m.

"I look forward to the challenge," Livingston said. "I know they say the first year of teaching is the hardest, but I think I'm up for it. I just know my first class is going to be amazing."

One thing is for sure, those students will have an amazing person teaching them. ■



*Diana Livingston and children in her student teaching class.*

well as their academics."

While at Penn State Berks, Livingston was a member of the Student Government Association, the Campus Activities Board, the Honors Club, and the National Science Teachers Association.

And she scored one other major accomplishment – she learned to walk.

## South Fayette ESP circle special needs kids

**T**hanks to Helen Cardillo, special needs students in the South Fayette School District are surrounded by a "Circle of Friends."

That's the name of the club that Cardillo, a member of the South Fayette ESP, formed 19 years ago to support programs helping special needs kids.

The club is a mix of special needs students and students from the mainstream student body. They do a number of fundraising projects, including the Down's Syndrome Dash running event, an annual Mardi Gras, and the Penny Challenge.

The challenge was one of the first events that Cardillo, a paraprofessional who this spring celebrated her 20th year in South Fayette, put together when she first organized the club.

The first year the Penny Challenge largely involved asking students and

faculty to donate their spare change. The Circle of Friends club raised \$500.

By this past spring, the event had grown to a fundraising competition among all classes within the South Fayette School District, with the winning class getting to go bowling. It raised \$13,600.

"It took us 19 hours to count the money," Cardillo said.

Proceeds from the Penny Challenge and other events go to various programs that support special needs kids, including the Special Olympics and the Steel City Icebergs, a Pittsburgh ice hockey team for special needs kids.

Cardillo's motivation comes from having a 28-year-old daughter with Down's Syndrome.

"Through her I met some wonderful people in some wonderful organizations," Cardillo said. "And what I



*Helen Cardillo*

learned is all of these organizations and programs rely on donations. And they really make a difference in these kids' lives."

Wonderful people making a difference – like Cardillo and the Circle of Friends. 🍎



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## Teacher says 'hoorah' to Marine experience

**A** simulated boot camp on a Marine Corps base probably isn't most educators' idea of a conference, or a good time for that matter.

But not only would Aliquippa EA member Brandon Ledonne disagree, he'd "recommend it for anybody."

Ledonne was one of 40 educators selected for the four-day Marine Corps Educators Workshop in February in Parris Island, S.C. The workshops are held by the Marines at various bases throughout the country as part of public relations efforts to show what young men and women go through during 13-week basic training.

"I thought it was going to basically be a marketing program, but I assumed incorrectly that it was to get teachers to encourage students to join the Marines," said Ledonne, who has no military background. "It wasn't. It was strictly informational."

And hands on.

Educators were roused at "zero five"

(5 a.m. in civilian time) the first morning to get on the bus, then step off on to the legendary "yellow footprints," which greet all new recruits and signify their first steps from civilian to becoming a Marine.

A drill instructor greeted the educators, and Ledonne said that while everything was simulated, "it was still extremely tense."

"PT," or physical training, was optional participation for educators, but Ledonne and many others took part in as much as possible, including firing an M16 machine gun and repelling a 75-foot wall.

"The instructors mentioned part of being a Marine meant overcoming fears, and many of the educators did when they descended the wall," he said.

A Marine martial arts instructor also gave the group a demonstration, which was followed by teachers getting a chance to "pugle stick" against one of the Marines.

As impressed as the educators were with the Marines, the respect was mutual. Ledonne said a general and the Marines who facilitated the program all expressed appreciation with the work educators do.

One of the best experiences, Ledonne said, came on the final day when the educators got to observe the Marine Corps colors ceremony, along with new Marines' graduation ceremonies.

"Both ceremonies were heartfelt and emotional, and got the hair on the back of your neck standing" Ledonne said. "Probably the most invigorating was when the new Marines were dismissed from their platoon for the final time – absolutely amazing." 🍀



*Brandon Ledonne*

## PSEA Nights at PNC Park

- **Sunday, June 16, vs. LA Dodgers**  
*Kids/Dads Replica Sunday Cap*
- **Friday, June 28, vs. Milwaukee Brewers**  
*Free T-Shirt Friday Giveaway*
- **Sunday, June 30, vs. Milwaukee Brewers**  
*Kids Pirates Drawstring Backpack*
- **Sunday, July 14, vs. NY Mets**  
*Kids Pirates Tumbler Cup*
- **Friday, August 2, vs. Colorado Rockies**  
*Free T-Shirt Friday Giveaway*

For questions or to purchase tickets:  
Call Mark Niskach at  
412-325-4493 or email  
[mark.niskach@pirates.com](mailto:mark.niskach@pirates.com).

Tickets limited.



## COLLECTIVE BARGAINING CONFERENCE



## SAVE THE DATE

Fall and a new school year may seem far off at the moment, but local presidents, negotiators, and treasurers are reminded to save the date for PSEA's annual Collective Bargaining/Local Presidents Conference.

**October 25-26 at the Sheraton Center City, Philadelphia.**

More information and registration materials will be available in August at [www.psea.org](http://www.psea.org).

## PPE effort soars in Chambersburg

It's an irresistible pun, but one that also captures the essence of what Partners in Public Education is about: The PPE effort in the Chambersburg Area School District took off at a kite festival.

To involve the community means getting out into the community.

"It was our first event. We set up a table and talked to many parents," said Susan Spicka, a mother of two school-age children and a key organizer of Chambersburg Area Partners for Great Public Schools, Franklin County.

And yes, she laughed, "you could say things really took off."

Chambersburg has been one of the more active PPE efforts since PSEA launched the initiative in 2011 to join parents, community members, and educators in promoting public education ([www.partnersforpubliced.org](http://www.partnersforpubliced.org)).

In addition to its community outreach efforts, the group has a Facebook page and a blog.

Just \$1 buys a PPE membership that keeps members abreast of developments in public education, and offers opportunities for advocacy.

Interestingly, Spicka isn't even a resident of the Chambersburg Area School District. She lives in the neighboring Shippensburg Area School District, where her children will be entering fourth and sixth grades next fall.

She became interested in PPE after learning about it at a pro-public education rally at the state Capitol in 2011, and immediately thought of Chambersburg.

"We already had a pretty successful parent program in Shippensburg, but I knew something like that was more difficult in a big sprawling district like Cham-

bersburg (the state's 22nd largest district) with a lot of buildings and a diverse population," Spicka said. "I had gotten to know a lot of parents in Chambersburg so that was a good starting point."

They started reaching out to various groups involved with the district, such as those involved with after-school programs, special needs kids, Title I and Title III students, and PTAs.

They learned of the kite festival that a Chambersburg Hispanic center was holding, and the table attracted much interest.

After that event, the group coordinated a program in which a district administrator who oversees special needs programs met with parents and community members to discuss the district's programs, and its future plans, including the use of technology. 🍎

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## Future teachers receive Valero Scholarships

**W**ith college tuition and costs rising every year, students pursuing higher education can use all of the help they can get. This spring, the goal of becoming a teacher got a little bit easier for several future educators, thanks to PSEA's Lucy A. Valero Scholarships.

Scholarship recipients for 2012-2013 and 2013-2014 were honored at the 2013 Student PSEA Conference in Scranton.

Outstanding Student PSEA members

receiving \$3,000 scholarships were: Caitlin Hinkle, Millersville University; Jacey Royer, Penn State University; Heather Dachiu, York College of Pennsylvania; and Allison Breiner, Millersville University.

In addition, \$500 scholarships were awarded to four deserving high school students: Courtney Crowley, Central York High School; Zachary Mrozek, Bloomsburg Area High School; Anna

Rifilato, Richland Senior High School, and Analyse Gaspich, Lower Dauphin High School.

Lucy Valero was committed to finding students who would make great teachers and helping them toward that goal. PSEA honors her spirit and Pennsylvania's promising future educators with the annual Lucy A. Valero Scholarships. 🍀

## Membership/Treasurers Workshops

PSEA's annual Membership and Treasurers Workshops are scheduled in July and August. The workshops, which are conducted by PSEA's financial management staff for local presidents, treasurers, membership contacts, chairpersons, and other officers are:

- **July 30**, Edinboro office, Northwestern Region
- **July 31**, Hunker office, Southwestern Region
- **Aug. 1**, Altoona Ramada Inn, Central Region
- **Aug. 5**, Wilkes-Barre office, Northeastern Region
- **Aug. 6**, Montgomeryville office, Mideastern Region
- **Aug. 8**, Harrisburg, Holiday Inn East, Southern Region
- **Aug. 14**, Webinar, participate in this online workshop from any computer with high speed internet
- **Aug. 17**, Webinar, participate in this online workshop from any computer with high speed internet.

Membership training is held from 9 a.m. to 1:30 p.m., and treasurers' training is from 10:45 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. Participants may register for either or both sessions. Lunch is provided. **Register online at [www.psea.org/mtw](http://www.psea.org/mtw) by July 15.**

## Hit links 'fore' Valero fund

The 18th Annual Carmen J. Matino Friends of Public Education Golf Tournament is scheduled for July 26 at the Range End Golf Course in Dillsburg, about 20 miles south of Harrisburg along Route 15. Proceeds from the tournament benefit the Lucy Valero Scholarship Fund, which provides annual scholarships to future teachers attending Pennsylvania colleges and universities. The \$75 fee includes a continental breakfast, greens fees, cart rental, and luncheon.

Registration materials and additional information are at [www.psea.org/tournament](http://www.psea.org/tournament) or call 800-944-7732, ext. 7127

## IMPORTANT IRS notice on union dues deduction

The Revenue Reconciliation Act of 1993 requires PSEA to notify its members regarding a reasonable estimate of the portion of their dues that are allocable to lobbying and political expenses and will be nondeductible for the coming year. PSEA estimates that 12 percent of membership dues for the 2013-2014 membership year (September 2013 through August 2014) will be used for lobbying and political expenses.

**DISCLAIMER:** This content is intended for use by PSEA members and their immediate families. PSEA-PACE supports friends of education in state and local elections. Contributions to PSEA-PACE are voluntary and members have the right to refuse to contribute without reprisal. A member may contribute more or less than the suggested amount, or not contribute, without it affecting his or her membership status, rights, or benefits in NEA, PSEA or any of PSEA's affiliates.

Contributions to PSEA-PACE are not deductible as charitable contributions for federal or state income tax purposes. Only U.S. citizens or lawful permanent residents may contribute to PACE. No dues dollars can be given to political candidates.

Jimmy



*Geez, the governor's a one-man wrecking machine.*

## Graduates of Pennsylvania Public Schools

### The Power of a Great Education

Graduates of Pennsylvania Public Schools is a regular feature in *Voice*.  
Send any suggestions to *Voice* Editor John Troutman at [jtroutman@psea.org](mailto:jtroutman@psea.org).



#### Alice Neel –

1918 graduate of Darby High School, Delaware County

- One of the great American painters of the 20th century, and a pioneer for female artists
- Portrait subjects often include early black and women activists, and trade unionists
- Painted 1970 cover of feminist Kate Millett for *Time* magazine.



#### Dennis Miller –

1971 graduate of Keystone Oaks High School, Allegheny County

- Comedian who has made well-known political shift from left to right that is reflected in his comedic work
- Got big break when landed part on "Saturday Night Live" in 1985
- Served as color commentator on ABC's "Monday Night Football" from 2000 to 2003.



## The PSEA way

**Y**ou take the time to work through a problem with a struggling student. You lend a sympathetic ear to the student who is having trouble deciding what to do after graduation. You volunteer to help those less fortunate in your local neighborhood or community.

Many times the difference you make is not readily apparent that day or maybe even that month. Then, one day you run across a former student at the grocery store, and he or she excitedly proceeds to describe in great detail a lesson or insight you provided which is still cherished today.

I understand that politics can be very frustrating for those who make a difference and want to continue to make a difference. So often it seems politicians ignore what people really want. Take for example, adequate funding for education. Did the citizens of Pennsylvania really want to eliminate 20,000 education jobs when they elected Tom Corbett as governor? Did they want their school district to eliminate art, music, and full-day kindergarten?

Of course not. Yet that is exactly what happened during the first 2 1/2 years of the Corbett administration. When Gov. Corbett and his allies pushed their anti-public education agenda, we could have hunkered down and hoped for the best.

But we didn't. That's not the PSEA way.

Instead, we improved the way we do things, threw it into overdrive, and capitalized on this transformative moment in the great history of PSEA. We've risen to the occasion many times in the past, from the marches on Harrisburg in 1968 and 2001, to the multiple voucher battles we won during both the Ridge and Corbett administrations. Each of these moments in our history changed our organization in a significant and positive way.

One year ago, our challenges were equally, if not more, daunting. We faced an extremely critical election that would either fuel or frustrate Gov. Corbett's anti-public education agenda.

We knew that our ability to thwart the efforts of those who seek to destroy public education would once again depend on PSEA members coming together to stand up for public education.

And did we ever. We joined together to set new records and break new ground. It began with our 2012 Election Plan, which identified and supported the 742 members who served as Building Election Advocates. These member volunteers had tens of thousands of conversations with their colleagues about the importance of supporting pro-public education candidates.



The results were impressive. Our post-election polling confirmed that this critical member-to-member communication resulted in a significant increase in support for PSEA's recommended pro-public education candidates. PSEA's recommended candidates swept all three statewide offices. Now, Gov. Corbett's actions are subject to legal review by Attorney General Kathleen Kane, and financial review by Auditor General Eugene DePasquale.

The governor's misleading statements regarding our pensions are forcefully refuted by Treasurer McCord, and we changed the dynamic in the state Senate, where the victories won by three PSEA-recommended candidates increased the number of pro-public education votes in that chamber.

But that was just the beginning. The structural framework we created for the 2012 election provided the foundation for our next big challenge, beating back Gov. Corbett's attack on our pensions.



*John F. Springer*  
PSEA Executive Director

In our "Keep The Promise 2" campaign, we expanded and enhanced the member-to-member network that served us so well during the 2012 election. We now have 3,293 members who volunteered to serve as Building Advocacy Coordinators. These volunteers educated their colleagues about the current pension reform debate and were essential in driving more than 200,000 communications to the Legislature on the pension issue.

The activist network we built through these successful campaigns will serve us well as we confront the challenges posed by the governor through the remainder of his term in office. Clearly there will be much more work to be done because the risks in the current political environment are so huge. But so is our resolve.

The 2014 election will be a watershed moment for public education in Pennsylvania. If we want education policy to reflect our aspirations, each and every one of us will have to do our part to elect pro-public education candidates into office.

In the meantime, keep standing strong for your students, your schools, your profession, and your communities. Together we will build a brighter future for public education in Pennsylvania. And in doing so, we will continue to make a positive difference in the lives of the children in the Commonwealth. 🍎

Email John Springer:  
[jspringer@psea.org](mailto:jspringer@psea.org)



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