



University of Pittsburgh

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Tri-State Area School Study Council

Seeking ways to increase organizational capacity in schools through problem solving, technical service, and staff development so all students will be better prepared to make contributions to both our democratic society and the world community

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TRANSITIONS

Congratulations and thanks to area educational leaders upon their retirements – and welcome to our newest superintendents.

See page 5 for superintendents who are moving on to other opportunities in retirement as well as for names of new superintendents in our area.

Spring Banquet and Workshops

70th Annual School Board and Distinguished Educator Banquet

The Tri-State Area School Study Council's School Board and Distinguished Educator Banquet is an annual opportunity to recognize outstanding achievement in education through the presentation of both the Distinguished Educator Award and the D. Richard Wynn Distinguished School Board Award. In addition, the banquet is a great time for all who attend and a wonderful networking opportunity for district administrators and Board members. This year the banquet was held on March 15th, 2018. *See page 2 for more on the banquet and this year's award winners, Distinguished Educator **Dr. Brian White**, Superintendent of Butler Area School District, and Distinguished School Boards **North Allegheny School District** and **West Allegheny School District**.*

The Future of Public Education in Pennsylvania

This year's free PASA/PSBA workshop was facilitated by Dr. Mark DiRocco, Executive Director of PASA, and Nathan Mains, CEO of PSBA. *See page 4 for details and a link to their presentation.*

Dr. Jean E. Winsand Workshop for Women in Educational Leadership

The 16th annual Winsand Workshop was held on April 4th at the Edgewood Country Club. The program, named in memory of women's rights activist and University of Pittsburgh Professor Emeritus Dr. Jean Winsand, provides a discussion of pathways to career success, empowering and inspiring women looking to make positive changes in their lives and careers. Each year the Dr. Jean E. Winsand Award is presented to a woman in education whose achievements are recognized as exemplary. This year's award winner is **Dr. Janet Sardon, Superintendent of Yough School District**. *See page 3 for more on this year's Winsand Workshop, including links to workshop materials.*

Upcoming Summer Events

21st Annual Dr. Samuel Francis School Law Symposium and Special Education Workshop Wednesday, June 27, 2018

Featuring two concurrent presentation tracts focused on School Law and Special Education. Visit the [Tri-State website](#) for registration and related materials.

2018-2019 Principal Leadership Development Workshop Series

Each year, Tri-State invites area school districts to participate in the Principal Leadership Institute, a series of workshops devoted to current issues in school leadership. Recent topics have included legal issues, school safety, growth mindset, transformational leadership, mental health issues, and more.

Application materials and deadlines will be posted on the [Tri-State website](#).

Distinguished Educator and School Board Banquet

70th Annual School Board and Distinguished Educator Banquet: In Review

The Tri-State Area School Study Council's School Board and Distinguished Educator Banquet is an annual opportunity to recognize outstanding achievement in education through the presentation of both the Distinguished Educator Award and the D. Richard Wynn Distinguished School Board Award. In addition, the banquet is a great time for all who attend and a wonderful networking opportunity for district administrators and Board members. The 2018 banquet was held on March 15th, 2018.

Distinguished Educator Award

Tri-State annually recognizes outstanding administrators, retired educators and University faculty for their contributions to education with the Distinguished Educator Award. This year's recipient, selected from a pool of notable candidates, is **Butler Area School District Superintendent, Dr. Brian White, Jr.** He is recognized for engaging and empowering all members of the community and creating a bold vision for the district. Distinctive qualities of his leadership include fostering transparent communication and creating opportunities for community involvement.

D. Richard Wynn Distinguished School Board Award

The D. Richard Wynn Award was commissioned by the Executive Committee during the 1988-1989 school year to symbolize the contributions of Dr. Richard Wynn, former Professor of Education at the University of Pittsburgh and Executive Secretary of Tri-State from 1974 to 1980. To be considered for the award, school organizations must demonstrate exemplary practices by school boards and school district personnel in addressing important issues that improve schooling for students.

Two boards were selected to receive the 2017-2018 D. Richard Wynn Award: **North Allegheny School District** and **West Allegheny School District**.



2018 Distinguished Educator award recipient, Dr. Brian White, with Tri-State director, Dr. Diane Kirk.. Above are previous Distinguished Educator Award recipients.



The **North Allegheny School Board** (left) is commended for its holistic approach to transforming student learning. They are recognized for supporting new ways to encourage engagement with technology, challenging traditional ideas about measuring student learning, and developing initiatives to facilitate student and staff wellness. These accomplishments stemmed from a collaborative process among the Board, professional staff, and community members.

The **West Allegheny School Board** (right) is recognized for its commitment to ensuring a quality education for all students. According to Superintendent Dr. Jerri Lippert, the board is credited with results at every level, such as early literacy initiatives, middle school curricula reform, and high school early college model development. They also expanded and aligned academic programming and renovated school buildings in fiscally challenging times—all without furloughs, programming cuts or tax increases. Finally, they faced challenges and controversy head-on and worked with stakeholders to effect change. ♦



Dr. Jean E. Winsand Workshop for Women in Education

16th Winsand Workshop for Women in Education: In Review

The 16th annual Dr. Jean E. Winsand Workshop for Women in School Leadership was held on April 4th at the Edgewood Country Club. Titled “The Balanced Leader: Achieving Professional, Social and Emotional, and Physical Well-Being,” the workshop offered participants opportunities to network with peers in the area and to discuss strategies for professional and personal development.

Topics and speakers included the following:

◆ **Leading With Trust Through Character and Competence**

Presented by Dr. Linda Hippert, Executive Director, Allegheny Intermediate Unit
Dr. Sharon Suritsky, Deputy/Assistant Superintendent, Upper St. Clair School District

◆ **Mindfulness for Leaders: The Basis for Caring and Connecting**

Presented by Dr. Stephanie Romero, Awaken Pittsburgh

◆ **Proactive Health Management for Women in High-Stress Positions**

Presented by Dr. Eirwen Miller, Allegheny Health Network

After participating in the above three sessions, participants gathered for a panel presentation titled **The Power of Networking**, introduced by Dr. Heidi Ondek, Superintendent of Quaker Valley School District and moderated by Angela Conigliaro, Director of Communications at Quaker Valley School District. The presenters included Dr. Mary Catherine Reljac, Assistant Superintendent of Franklin Regional School District; Denise Sedlacek, Assistant Superintendent of Baldwin-Whitehall School District, and Dr. Sharon Suritsky, Deputy/Assistant Superintendent of Upper St. Clair School District.

Please visit the [Tri-State website](#) to access presenters' materials.

Distinguished Female Educator Award

The Dr. Jean E. Winsand Distinguished Female Educator Award symbolizes the type of leadership Dr. Winsand displayed through her work with the Tri-State Area School Study Council from 1985 through 2001. The 2018 recipient is Dr. Janet Sardon, Superintendent of Yough School District. The school board reports that “her effective leadership of the board has resulted in a wealth of benefits to the students, staff, and community.”

In addition to her work as a superintendent, Dr. Sardon has served in Tri-State Area School Study Council leadership positions, including as president and vice president. She has also been a board member for the Consortium for Public Education since 2013, where she is currently the vice president. In 2010, she received the Educator of the Year award from the Steel Valley Chamber of Commerce. Finally, she has also mentored several Pitt students who have obtained their superintendent letters of eligibility.



Dr. Janet Sardon, 2018 Dr. Jean E. Winsand Distinguished Female Educator



Dr. Janet Sardon (R) with previous winners of the Dr. Jean E. Winsand Distinguished Female Educator Award.

“The Future of Public Education in Pennsylvania” Workshop Review

Tri-State Area School Study Council held the annual PASA/PSBA free workshop on March 16, 2018. The workshop was presented by Dr. Mark DiRocco, Executive Director, Pennsylvania Association of School Administrators (PASA) and Nathan G. Mains, CEO, Pennsylvania School Boards Association (PSBA). Topics from the program include:



- Political Update in Harrisburg & Washington
 - ESSA Updates
 - The Forces of Privatization
 - State Budget Outlook
 - Joint Advocacy Day: Tuesday, June 19
 - Why Good Governance is Imperative: The Importance of the team of Ten
- Workshop materials are available on the Tri-State [website](#).



School Safety Legislation and Resources

A number of state bills have passed one or both houses. The PSBA Legislative Report, available online, posts updates on legislation, including those listed below. As of April 30, the following have passed:

- ◆ Senate Bill 1136 Cooperative Part-Time Police Agreements
- ◆ House Bill 1232 ChildLine/School Safety Poster in Schools
- ◆ Senate Bill 1098 School Bus Stop Arm Cameras
- ◆ Senate Bill 1142 Safe2Say Program: This bill, which will be up for a vote soon, is designed to provide a way for individuals to anonymously report potential threats to law enforcement and schools.

In addition to the legislation referenced here, visit the state Department of Education [Safe Schools website](#) for additional resources and information.

In addition, in mid-March PASA posted a list of [School Safety Resources](#), including AASA and PASA position statements and other resources from government and other organizations.

Honors and Recognition

Congratulations to the following individuals and districts for a job well done.

Cornell School District, ranked #1 on the Overachiever List of the Pittsburgh Business times

PA Teacher of the Year 2018 finalists include these educators from Tri-State districts:

Adam Gebhardt, Jefferson Elementary School, West Jefferson Hills School District

Linda Granite, Marshall Elementary School, North Allegheny School District

Gregory Mason, Shaler Area High School, Shaler Area School District

Dr. Sharon Suritsky, Deputy/Assistant Superintendent of Upper St. Clair School District, received the *2018 Women in School Leadership Award from the American Association of School Administrators*.

The University of Pittsburgh’s School of Education awarded the following alumni:

Dr. Bart Rocco, Superintendent at Elizabeth Forward School District received the *Distinguished Pre K-12 Educator Award*

Dr. Amy Pfender, Director of Student Support Services at Upper St. Clair School District received the *Administrative and Policy Studies Departmental Distinguished Alumni Award*

Other Policy Updates

Keystone Exams

State Sen. Tom McGarrigle has introduced Senate Bill 1095 to provide additional graduation options for the Keystone Exams graduation requirement (which, as most of you know, has been postponed until the 2019-2020 school year).

For more details, please refer to the [PSBA website](#) or the [PA General Website](#) to access the bill.

Student Nutrition

We all know the impact that hunger has on student wellness and learning. Schools can apply for mini-grants to help provide breakfast for more students. For more information, please see the following:

- Gov. Wolf’s announcement about the program on the [governor’s office website](#).
- Grant criteria available on the [PDE website](#), including a list of recipients for 2018-2019.

In the summer, many community organizations work to fill the nutrition gap. To find access to meals in the summer, please see the [U.S. Department of Agriculture website](#), where you can enter an address to find the nearest options.

TRANSITIONS

Congratulations on Retiring!

The following superintendents have announced their retirements. We congratulate them all and thank them for their work in advancing excellence in education.

Dr. Eileen Amato, Greensburg-Salem School District
Richard Fine, South Allegheny School District
Dr. Linda Hippert, Allegheny Intermediate Unit 3
Alan Johnson, Woodland Hills School District
Phil Martell, Connellsville Area School Superintendent
Dr. John Molnar, Southmoreland School District
Dr. Patrick O'Toole, Upper St. Clair School District
Dr. Bart Rocco, Elizabeth Forward School District

Welcome Aboard!

Our congratulations to the following educators on their new leadership positions.

Dr. Tammy Andreyko, Superintendent, Quaker Valley School District
Dr. Joseph Dimperio, Acting Superintendent, South Side Area School District
Dr. Michele Dowell, Acting Superintendent, Belle Vernon School District
Dr. Lisa Duval, South Allegheny School District
Dr. David Foley, Superintendent, South Butler Area School District
Dr. Brendan Hyland, Superintendent, Plum Borough School District
Rosanne Javorsky, Interim Executive Director, Allegheny Intermediate Unit 3
Matthew Jones, Superintendent, Jeannette School District
Dr. Todd Keruskin, Superintendent, Elizabeth Forward School District
Vince Mascia, Superintendent, Southmoreland School District
David McDonald, Interim Superintendent, Connellsville School District
Sue Moyer, Superintendent, Duquesne City School District
Dr. Heidi Ondek, Executive Director and Superintendent, Western Pennsylvania School for the Blind
Dr. John Rozzo, Superintendent, Upper St. Clair School District
Christopher Sefcheck, Superintendent, Bethlehem-Center School District
Megan Van Fossan, Superintendent, Ringgold School District
Dr. Johanna Vanatta, Superintendent, Chartiers Valley School District

Are there vacancies in your district that you would like to advertise?

Are you looking for new professional opportunities?

Remember to visit the [Jobs Postings](#) page on the Tri-State website for information about school leadership vacancies. To post a position, please contact the office at tristate@pitt.edu.

School Discipline and School Safety – A Review

by Annemarie Harr, Esq.

Following the recent and tragic school shooting in Parkland, Florida, school districts have been forced to review their own policies and procedures relating to school safety, security and discipline. Schools have faced an increased number of threats and must be well equipped to deal with them.



Annemarie K. Harr

Under the school code, a student must be given notice of the reasons for a suspension as well as an opportunity to respond, unless it is clear that the health, safety or welfare of the community is threatened. If a threat to a school, its students and staff is made, it is likely that this notice requirement will be appropriately waived. However, if the district intends to remove the student for more than three (3) days, the student and parent must be given an opportunity to participate in an informal hearing. If the district intends to expel the student, then it must hold a formal expulsion hearing. If the expulsion hearing cannot be scheduled during the period of suspension, not to exceed 10 days, the district must, at the time of the informal hearing, determine whether the student's presence in his or her normal classes would constitute a threat or the health, safety, or welfare of others. If the district answers the question in the affirmative, then it may continue to hold the student out beyond the ten-day suspension period, but the formal hearing must take place within 15 school days from the date of suspension, unless both parties agree otherwise.

These provisions apply to all students, but students with disabilities are entitled to extra provisions. For students who are protected under the IDEA, a manifestation determination must be performed when a district proposes disciplinary measures that will result in a change of placement. A change of placement occurs when the removal is for more than 10 consecutive days, or the student has been subjected to a series of removals that constitute a pattern. The manifestation determination should be completed by the parent and relevant members

When dealing with any threat to school safety, districts should consult with their solicitor in order to determine the appropriate course of action.

of the IEP team. If the parent and school team determine that the behavior was not a manifestation of the student's disability, then the district may proceed with discipline consistent with the school code and the district's code of student conduct. If the behavior is a manifestation of the student's disability, the district may remove the student from his or her placement only if the student has brought drugs or weapons to school or has inflicted serious bodily injury upon another person. In situations where the behavior is a manifestation but the

continued on next page

Providing Students with a Continuum of Behavior and Emotional Supports

More schools are moving toward comprehensive academic and behavioral prevention and intervention frameworks, often termed Multi-Tiered Systems of Support (MTSS). This term encompasses Response to Intervention (RTI) and School-Wide Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (SWPBIS).

While most students will respond to primary Tier 1 supports that identify and promote behavioral expectations valued by the school community, some students will require a higher level of support. This support may be provided by Tier 2 or Tier 3 interventions, depending on the level of need. If these supports are exhausted and a student is still demonstrating behavior or emotional needs, school teams may determine that a multidisciplinary evaluation is warranted to determine the eligibility and need for special education services. When conducting this evaluation, school psychologists often consider whether the student satisfies special education criteria as a student with an Emotional Disturbance. Where a student satisfies the criteria of Emotional Disturbance, they are eligible for special education. In contrast, a Socially Maladjusted student is generally ineligible for special education but may require other behavior interventions administered through general education.

continued on next page

Providing Students with a Continuum of Supports, *continued*

Currently, interdisciplinary research is being conducted by Rebecca Heaton Hall and School Psychologist and Adjunct Professor in the school psychology program at The Pennsylvania State University, Dr. Jessica Dirsmith on the use of intervention, prevention, assessment, and appropriate identification of students' behavioral and emotional needs. This research analyzes hearing officer and federal court decisions to determine the evidence and facts generally relied upon by courts in identifying students as Emotionally Disturbed or Socially Maladjusted. The data collected suggests that students who manifest consistent anxiety or depression over the course of at least one school year will likely qualify as Emotionally Disturbed. Additional data researched suggests that courts also look to prior partial hospitalizations, inpatient psychiatric treatment, and periods of homebound education. Dr. Dirsmith and Attorney Hall's research is ongoing and it is anticipated that their findings will be available by June 2018. ♦



Attorney Rebecca Heaton Hall

School Discipline and School Safety, *continued*

student has not brought drugs or weapons or inflicted serious bodily injury on another person, the district must return the child to their previously determined placement and either (1) conduct a functional behavior assessment, if one has not already been conducted, or, (2) where the student already has a positive behavior support plan, update the support plan as necessary.

In a situation where a student with a disability makes a threat to a school district, it is recommended that the district issue a Permission to Re-Evaluate in order to determine the appropriate placement for the child moving forward. Similarly, if a student who is not receiving special education makes such a threat, the district should consider issuing a Permission to Evaluate in order to determine if the child requires special education or additional services. If the student already has a Positive Behavior Support Plan, the District should place provisions into the plan in order to support school safety. If the student is not a student who qualifies for special education, the district should consider developing a safety plan for the student, in order to minimize the risk that any such threat materializes.

As a reminder, districts require reasonable suspicion in order to search students. In order to meet this standard, the district must show that there are reasonable grounds for suspecting that the search will reveal evidence that the student has violated or is violating the law or school rules, and that the search measures are reasonably related to the objectives of the search.

When dealing with any threat to school safety, districts should consult with their solicitor in order to determine the appropriate course of action to take based on the individual circumstances. ♦

We're Speaking...

- Attorney Ira Weiss has been named the chair of the Pennsylvania Family Support Alliance. The mission of the statewide organization is to protect children from abuse and neglect through education, parent support and community outreach.
- Attorneys Annemarie Harr and Rebecca Heaton Hall will be presenting on the topic of "504 Plan Legal Essentials" for the National Business Institute's seminar in Pittsburgh on April 30, 2018. Ms. Hall will present on "How to Determine Eligibility for a 504 Plan" and "Evaluating Students Under 504 Plans" while Ms. Harr will address the topic of "How to Draft a Personalized 504 Plan and Documentation to Include."
- Attorney Jocelyn Kramer and Attorney Hall will be co-presenting for FrontlineEducation on May 10, 2018 at the DoubleTree Hotel - Green Tree in Pittsburgh. Ms. Kramer and Ms. Hall will discuss "Hot Topics in Pennsylvania Special Education Compliance & Law."
- In March, Attorney Weiss spoke to the Western Region Pennsylvania Association of Career & Technical Administrators at the Parkway West Career and Technology Center. Mr. Weiss presented on the topics of Act 6, Act 55 furlough provisions and new reporting requirements for career readiness.

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This issue of In Brief: School Law Update is meant to be informational and does not constitute legal advice. Should districts wish legal advice on any matter, they should contact their legal counsel or request a legal opinion from Weiss Burkardt Kramer, LLC.

Photos from Spring Events



Top Row, L-R: Presentation to West Allegheny School Board, Dr. Brian White and previous Distinguished Educators gather for a photo, presentation to North Allegheny School Board.

Middle Row: Dr. Diane Kirk and Dr. Orville Winsand share a laugh at the Winsand luncheon; Dr. Sardon with her Yough School District colleagues; Dr. Kinloch (Dean, Pitt School of Education), Anthony Piscioneri (PSBA), and Dr. Shafiq (Chair, Administrative and Policy Studies, Pitt School of Education) listen to speakers at the Distinguished Educator Banquet.

Bottom Row: Winsand Workshop presenters Dr. Eirwen Miller (Allegheny Health Network), Dr. Stephanie Romero (Awaken Pittsburgh), and Dr. Sharon Suritsky (Upper St. Clair School District) and Dr. Linda Hippert (Allegheny Intermediate Unit).

Tri-State Area School Study Council

The Forum is a publication of the Tri-State Area School Study Council. Your comments and suggestions of topics for future publications are always welcome.

The information in The Forum is for the general knowledge of the reader. For more specific information, rely on the advice of your solicitor.

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