



Perspectives

Newsletter of the Pennsylvania School Study Council

<http://www.ed.psu.edu/educ/pssc>

Winter 2009

**Become a
PSSC
Member
today!!!**

Membership Information is available on line at:

[www.ed.psu.edu/
educ/pssc](http://www.ed.psu.edu/educ/pssc)

Inside this issue:

Executive Director's Perspective	2
Study Trip to Australia	4
PSSC Survey Report	5
Overview: PSSC Awards	6
Law and Ed Institute	7

2008/2009 PSSC Research Grant Award Program

During the Spring Semester of 2008, the PSSC surveyed member organizations on their information needs and research priorities. A systematic collection of our members' needs has not been done in the past. The response rate was modest, but the results were interesting. We consider this first effort a pilot for a more elaborate survey to be conducted in the summer of 2009.

The information we gathered this year was summarized and published as a report to the PSSC membership. (see also Survey Report Article in this issue). From the data analysis, several areas of need were identified. This data has allowed the PSSC to develop a set of research priorities for consideration by Penn

State research faculty and graduate students. We will, as well, use the information to develop targeted professional development opportunities for our membership.

The research priorities that we have identified will be promoted among the students and faculty of the College of Education. We are also able to offer financial support to faculty and students during the 2008 – 2009 academic year. Specifically, we are making available **up to ten (10) research support grants of \$1000 each** to graduate students and / or faculty interested in working with, or in support of, PSSC member districts on research projects that conform to our identified research pri-



orities. Half of these grants will be awarded in the next few weeks as a first round of grants. The remaining grants will be awarded after February 15, 2009.

If you have questions or require further information, please contact Paul Begley at 814-863-1838 or ptb3@psu.edu.

Executive Director's Perspective

Democratic School Leadership: Ethics, Responsibility and Authority.

Democracy is often associated with American education. Democratic leadership processes are considered desirable for schools because they reflect socially mandated ethical commitments to collective process. However, I argue that democratic leadership is relevant to education in other ways. Democratic leadership processes can be readily justified as a professional necessity, as much as an ideologically appropriate approach to leading schools effectively. This necessity is the outcome of our increasingly culturally diverse communities

and a world transformed by the effects of technology and the forces of globalization. These rational professional justifications for democratic leadership in schools are grounded in the nature of the school leadership role, the social contexts of our communities, as well as an ideological social mandate.

In the last issue of *Perspectives* (September / October 2008) I described the three broad purposes traditionally associated with education as the *meta-values* of school leadership. To recap quickly, these three purposes are generally acknowledged as the constituting values for public school education. One purpose is *aesthetic*, becoming



all that you can be, and the classic liberal notions of what it is to be a well-rounded educated person. A second purpose of education is *economic*, learning to earn, acquiring the skills and knowledge to be a contributing member of society. The third purpose is *ideological*, encompassing both the socialization of learners as citizens and the perpetuation of a society's cultural norms and values.

Given the democratic focus of this column, one might naturally conclude that I would emphasize the potential contributions of school leaders to the ideological purposes of education --specifically, how to inculcate and promote democracy as a fundamental social value and an ethical guide to proper citizenship. As much as this may be an important dimension of the educational enterprise, my approach to discussing the theme of democracy and leadership extends beyond democracy as a social ethic that ought to be championed by school leaders for normative or trans-rational reasons. I make the case for democratic leadership processes in

2008-2009 Executive Committee

Officers:

President	Thomas M. Shivetts	BLaST Intermediate Unit 17
Vice President	William B. Bush	Elk Lake School District
Treasurer	Elaine Cutler	Bellefonte Area School District
Past President	Kathryn B. Gruber	Sullivan County School District

Secondary Principal Representative

Craig Butler State College School District

Superintendent Representatives

William A. Clark Milton Area School District

College of Education Representatives

David H. Monk, Dean	College of Education, Penn State
Kyle Peck, Associate Dean/Outreach	College of Education, Penn State
Jacqueline Stefkovich, Associate Dean/ Graduate Studies	College of Education, Penn State
Gerald LeTendre, Department Head, Education Policy Studies	College of Education, Penn State
William Hartman, Professor-in-Charge	College of Education, Penn State

PSSC Staff

Dr. Paul Begley, Executive Director	Email: ptb3@psu.edu
Dr. Jillian Reese, Associate Executive Director	Email: jvr123@psu.edu
June Kim, Research Technician	Email: jsk21@psu.edu
Dipali Puri, Project Director	Email: dxp175@psu.edu

Executive Director's Perspective, Continued

schools as a practical necessity for the current educational context. This is because the achievement of democratic consensus on educational issues, among even traditional educational stakeholders, has become more difficult in many communities. In many schools the members of the professional teaching staff can be the product of one cultural background or socio-economic context, while the students and school community can be representative of one or more other cultural backgrounds. Some urban schools have such a diversity of cultures represented within the school that it can be difficult to recognize, much less accommodate, the variety of social customs. Moreover, even among people who share a commitment to democratic process, orientations towards authority, free speech, and respect for hierarchy can vary greatly.

My work with school administrators from many countries has revealed that democratic processes are common to many societies. However, I have also discovered that the nature and meanings associated with social values like democracy can vary considerably. They are actually isomorphic. By isomorphic is meant social conditions or value postures may share the same shape or meaning from country to country, but are actually structured of quite different elements in the sense of being outcomes of different cultural formation. For example, school administrators in countries such as the United States, Sweden, Canada and Hong Kong are much inclined to

profess a belief and commitment to democratic processes and democracy in general. Yet the nature of democracy in each country is clearly based on sharply contrasting notions of what constitutes free speech, social consensus, and appropriate political participation by the citizenry. A comparison of the acceptable standards of free speech in the United States and China is an obvious example. However, these variations in interpretation of what is appropriate democratic activity can occur even within a single nation or culture, not just among nations. Such is the nature of ethics when they are adopted as guides to action. Trans-rational values of any sort, and ethics and principles in particular, are rather vulnerable to multiple interpretations in application from one social context to another. And when unexamined values are applied in arbitrary ways justified in the name of democratic process, they can be anything but democratic. The essential, and often absent, component that would make adherence to a value genuinely democratic is dialogue.

Even with a value as foundational to our culture as democracy, there are enough variations in interpretation possible within the United States that meanings must be negotiated and reconfirmed before assumptions can be made by leaders on how members of a given community understand the term. Negotiation and interpretation are at the core of democratic practice. Furthermore, it is not enough for school leaders to

merely emulate the values of other educational leaders currently viewed as experts. Educational leaders must become reflective practitioners and authentic in their leadership practices. However, the pursuit of self-knowledge is only the beginning. Once a degree of improved self-knowledge has been achieved through personal reflection, administrators must then take additional steps towards authentic leadership.

That is, they must strive to develop sensitivity to the values orientations of others. This sensitivity can emerge from a commitment to the familiar democratic values of dialogue and interaction with others in order to give meaning to the actions of the students, teachers, parents and community members with whom leaders interact in a situation or context. The pay-off to this form of leadership occurs when understanding the value orientations of others provides leaders with information on how they might best influence the practices of others towards the achievement of broadly justifiable social objectives. In this way school leaders can act in ways that are grounded in more than just their personal convictions. Rather they will use dialogue and interactions as leadership processes that contribute towards educational and social objectives as opposed to simply championing a democratic ideal. This is how I would define leadership effectiveness for our schools of today.

Paul Begley,
Executive Director

PSSC School Study Trip to Australia

The Pennsylvania School Study Council (PSSC) has organized a school study trip to Australia for the first two weeks of March 2009. Participation in this school study trip is open to all members of the PSSC. Arrangements have been made with university institutions and schools in three separate regions of Australia that are interested in hosting portions of the study trip. These institutions include the Australian Catholic University in Sydney, the University of Southern Queensland in Brisbane, and James Cook University in Cairns. In each case the university will identify schools for participants to visit and coordinate a local program of events. Details about timing and a proposed program agenda are provided below.

Individuals interested in being included as participants in this project, or just wanting more information before committing, should contact Paul Begley directly at ptb3@psu.edu or 814-863-1838. Further details will be worked out in coming weeks.

Proposed Timing:

First two weeks of March 2009, one week being the Penn State Spring Break.
 Depart Friday February 27
 Sydney area from Sunday March 1 to Wednesday



March 4
 Brisbane area from Thursday
 March 5 to Sunday March 8
 Cairns / Port Douglas area
 from Monday March 9 to
 Friday March 13
 Return to USA Saturday
 March 14

Approximate Costs

Total cost of the study trip per person is expected to be approximately \$4000USD per person, and considerably less for two people sharing accommodation. The airfare is the largest single cost item.

Airfare: Washington- Dulles, LA, Sydney, Melbourne, Cairns return. \$2000USD

Hotel in Sydney (Ibis Hotel, Darling Harbour) \$170AUD per night
<http://www.hotelibisdarlingharbour.com.au/>

Hotel in Brisbane area, TBA

Hotel in Port Douglas (Le Cher du Monde) \$90AUD per night
<http://www.lecherdumonde.com.au/>

Meals and Incidentals: 14 days in country @ \$50USD per day = \$700

- US dollar currently enjoys an extremely favorable exchange rate against the Australian dollar

Proposed Program

Sydney host: Charles Burford, Australian Catholic University
 - one day at the university
 - one day visiting affiliated schools
 - one day local touring

Brisbane host: Eion McAllister, Queensland Education
 - one day at the university
 - one day visiting area schools
 - one day of local touring

Cairns host: Maree Dinan-Thompson, James Cook University
 - one day at the university
 - one day visiting affiliated schools
 - two days local touring (Great Barrier Reef and Daintree Rainforest Region)

2008 Survey of Member School Districts' Research Priorities

During the Spring Semester of 2008, the PSSC surveyed member organizations on their information needs and research priorities. A systematic collection of our members' needs has not been done for a number of years. The information collected through this survey will allow PSSC to develop targeted professional development opportunities as well as a set of research priorities for consideration by Penn State research faculty and graduate students. From the data analysis, several areas of need for specific data or information were identified.

Methods

In July 2008, the PSSC issued an invitation by mail and email to superintendents and executive directors at all PSSC member institutions to participate in the survey. Interested superintendents and executive directors were instructed to complete the survey or delegate the task to someone else in their educational institution. More than one person from an institution could complete the survey. As part of the survey, respondents were asked to provide identifying information to allow PSSC to direct future resource opportunities to those who have identified specific needs and to appropriately connect researchers with school districts where interests converge. However, the identity of individual respondents and institutions will be kept confidential for the purposes of this report.

The survey was designed by PSSC Executive Director, Paul Begley, and conducted online at www.surveymonkey.com. The 18-question survey was comprised of a combination of open-ended and multiple choice questions, broken down into three major sections:

“Your Issues, Priorities and Needs”, “Professional Development”, and “School Safety.” Respondents were able to provide as many as six answers for most of the open-ended questions. Responses to each section of the survey were compiled and grouped by topic where possible in order to identify prominent trends in the data.

Of the 84 PSSC members invited to participate, we received 25 respondents from 21 educational institutions for a 29.8% response rate. Among the respondents were 14 superintendents, one assistant superintendent, three administrative assistants, two professional development coordinators, one director of education, two principals, one executive director, and one person who chose not to report his/her position. Seventeen of the 25 respondents answered all questions on the survey.

Issues, Priorities and Needs

We asked members about their perceptions of the most important issues and / or challenges being experienced in their school districts and intermediate units. Responses covered a breadth of topics, but a few prominent trends emerged as data were compiled. Respondents most commonly listed as priorities matters relating to student achievement, particularly as it relates to special education and other student subgroups, test scores and reading / mathematics competencies. Budgetary and funding issues were cited almost as frequently as priorities.

When asked to list their educational priorities for the coming year, respondents most commonly reported basic skills instruction (reading, math, writing) followed closely by the topics of special education, particularly the use

of Response to Intervention, school improvement and reform, student achievement/improvement of test scores, the use of data and technology, and professional development. A number of respondents also indicated interest in partnering with Penn State researchers.

PSSC Research Priorities for 2008 - 2009

Using the data provided by the analysis of survey responses has allowed us to identify the following **research priorities** for the 2008 – 2009 academic year:

- Impact of Curriculum Alignment on Achievement and / or Instructional Time
- Student Achievement in Special Education
- Strategies to Engage ESL and Low Income Families
- Meeting AYP for Special Ed Sub-Groups
- School Climate Initiatives
- Studies on the Leadership of Rural Schools
- Strategies for Integration of Moral Literacy Across the K-20 Curriculum
- State of the Art Pre-service and In-service Leadership Development Programs
- School Leadership for Social Justice (e.g. Inclusive Education, Green Schools, Aboriginal Education)
- Specific Interventions in Mathematics or Reading Design and Implementation of Pre-K Programs

Paul Begley,
Executive Director

PSSC 2008 Awards Ceremony Overview



PSSC confers Awards for Outstanding Service to Public Education in three categories: Excellence in Administration and Supervision, Excellence in Instruction, and Excellence in Support of the Public Schools for board members, volunteers, or business/community entities.

Nominations for the **William E. Caldwell Award** are considered based on a diversity of accomplishments as well as the obvious contribution to the broad field of administration and supervision. The recipient of the **Walter J. DeLacy Award for Excellence in Instruction** demonstrates ongoing

accomplishments both in and out of the classroom with service to a variety of students, and has contributed to improving instruction beyond the individual classroom. Finally, the **William S. Vincent Award for Excellence in Support of the Public Schools** is given to an individual, or group of individuals, who demonstrate ongoing support that reaches a broad range of students and schools.

An awards committee reviews each of the nominees and evaluates them based on a pre-established set of criteria. Only the information received with the nomination packet is considered.

This year's awards were presented at the Kick-Off Dinner of

the Annual PASA-PSBA School Leadership Conference. The 2008 recipients of outstanding service to public education awards were:

William S. Vincent Award for Support of the Public Schools
Michael Conn, Milton Area School District

Walter J. DeLacy Award for Excellence in Instruction
Richard Victor, State College Area School District

William E. Caldwell Award for Excellence in Administration and Supervision Thomas Shivetts, IUI7

Get Published!

Submit your work to PSSC's peer refereed journal...

THE BEACON

Manuscript Requirements:

Generally, manuscripts should be between 2,500 and 5,000 words in length. Prospective author(s) must include a statement which indicates they agree to the submission of the manuscript, and that the manuscript has not been published, and is not under consideration for publication, in part or in substance, elsewhere.

Manuscripts should be double-spaced and leave wide margins. Manuscripts should not identify the author(s) of the work. A separate page should be included which provides the author(s)' details, including contact information (address and e-mail).

Send to Dipali Puri, editor at dxp175@psu.edu

Coming This Summer: Law and Education Institute for Administrators

The 2009 Pennsylvania State University Law and Education Institute will be held during the third week of June (Monday the 22nd through Friday the 26th) and we will once again be offering Act 45 credits to those who attend the Institute for its entirety. In addition, there will be a class option for those who would like to earn School Law or Personnel Management course credits at Penn State. The dates and times of this class will mainly coincide with the Institute save for the Sunday immediately prior to the Institute and the Saturday immediately following the Institute (June 21st and June 27th). During these two days classes will be held from 8:30 AM until 5:00 PM.

Prominent lawyers and professors will once again be conducting workshops on a wide variety of legal topics, including religion, student rights, charter schools, technology, special education, and employee rights. The goal of this event is to prepare administrators to deal with legal situations that may arise in their districts.



The conference will be held at the brand new Katz' Law Building on Penn State's main campus in State College, Pennsylvania. The Law and Education Institute is the first joint effort between the newly relocated Penn State Dickinson School of Law and the Penn State College of Education, and it features prominent members of both schools along with some of the top legal and policy-related minds in Pennsylvania.

Last summer, Dr. Gerald Zahorchak, Pennsylvania's Secretary of Education, delivered the keynote address at the opening reception and dinner. He spoke eloquently about specific statewide initiatives that the Pennsylvania Department of Education is currently undertaking, and what public school administrators can expect to see as a result of these different initiatives.

Dr. Zahorchak then opened the floor for questions, which many of the attendees enjoyed and took full advantage of.

Successful lawyers and academicians from across the nation have once again agreed to come to State College and offer their knowledge and experience in various fields of educational law as a way to inform current administrators about potentially damaging or detrimental legal issues. These different legal and policy-oriented professionals will conduct a multitude of different informative forums that include but will not be limited to: discussions, lectures, workshops, and role playing activities in an effort to not only teach those in attendance, but truly engage them in an environment of active learning.

For further information about The Law and Education Institute, please contact:

Dan Schochor
drs328@psu.edu
Dept. of Educational Leadership, Penn State



PSSC
200 Rackley Building
University Park, PA
16802

Phone: 814-865-0321
Fax: 814-865-0070
Website:
[www.ed.psu.edu/educ/
pssc](http://www.ed.psu.edu/educ/pssc)

Serving Pennsylvania Educators since 1947

The Pennsylvania School Study Council

Founded in 1947, the Pennsylvania School Study Council (PSSC) is a partnership between Penn State University and member school districts, intermediate units, and area vocational-technical schools. PSSC is dedicated to improving public education in Pennsylvania by providing up-to-date research information, professional development activities and technical assistance that will enable its members to provide top quality educational services to students.

Mission:

We believe that....

- PSSC's primary function is to provide services in response to identified member needs.
- PSSC services should be unique and have a competitive advantage.
- PSSC services should be easily attainable, timely, effective and helpful.
- PSSC must respond to changing circumstances with creativity and innovation.
- PSSC must use an entrepreneurial approach to providing services to its constituency.
- Professional integrity and responsible management of resources is essential.
- Personal contact is an important component of services offered and delivered.
- Integrity and collegiality must characterize relationships between PSSC, member LEA's and the University.

Perspectives
The Pennsylvania School Study Council
200 Rackley Building
University Park, PA 16802