

## Current Issues in Education:

### Deputy Secretary Matt Stem (PA Department of Education)

Literacy Advocacy Update—Millie Henning (KSRA Literacy Advocacy Committee Chair)

KSRA Conference

October 23, 2015

- Welcome and introduction of Deputy Secretary Matt Stem by Millie Henning (KSRA Literacy Advocacy Committee Chair)
- Deputy Secretary Stem introduced himself as a “strong supporter of literacy in the state of Pennsylvania”. Stem brought greetings from Secretary Pedro Rivera. The team (including Secretary Pedro Rivera) “believes in keeping students in the center” of education decisions made in the state. Stem has strong ties to the Lancaster area: 7 years as a teacher/ 7 years as principal of Fulton Elementary in the School District of Lancaster.

### Question and Answer Session:

*Gov. Corbett made many cuts to education funding. We are expected to do more with less resources. How does the current administration plan to help?*

- o PDE plans to address the issue of resources
- o Recognizes that the shift to the PA Core/ College & Career Ready takes time and resources
  - How do districts align curriculum when resources are scarce?
  - Becomes a time/ resource issue
- o Does not believe a “program” to be the answer
  - PDE is revising curriculum frameworks to provide guidance to districts
  - iTunes U courses aligned to standards
- o PDE SAS
  - Changes being made to the site to make it more user-friendly
  - Assessment creator may be rebranded to be more “user friendly and robust”
- o PDE recognizes the need for districts to have the time that they need to engage in the work that needs to be completed for curriculum/ standards alignment

*Will PDE be looking at the number of assessments given (# of PSSAs and Keystones in same year) and the appropriateness of the current assessments?*

- o PDE is looking at the appropriateness of assessments
- o Lawmakers asking same questions
- o Looking at what other states are doing
- o Federal government has strict guidelines for ESEA
- o PDE looking at length of assessments, appropriateness, etc.
- o PDE wants accountability to be reasonable and authentic...conversations are taking place...willingness to think about what is best for kids

*What steps is PDE taking to improve early education in our state? Lowering compulsory school age? Etc.*

- o Early education is a priority for Gov. Wolf...Wolf believes in investing in Pre-K education
- o Stem does not deal with early education...Michelle Figlar is deputy secretary of Office of Child Development and Early Learning
- o Robust early education programs are in existence

*What does the collaboration with other states look like?*

- o Different cross-state groups exist (Council of Chief State School Officers)

- o Sharing what is working...what needs to be changed
- o Shared assessments?—does not seem to be heading in that direction
- o Emphasis on high accountability and rigorous instruction

*How can we improve funding resources/ fair funding across the state?*

- o Basic Education Funding Committee has met
- o Needs-based funding found to be successful
- o High poverty/ high # of ELLs weighted more heavily with formula
- o Legislation stalled...Contact legislators about the need for equitable funding

*How does PDE collaborate with teachers?*

- o Collaborates with approximately 800 teachers across the state...but not enough
- o Stakeholder group meetings
- o Currently lacks formal structure for 2-way communication with teachers
- o PDE is focused on staying connected to classrooms

*Does PDE listen to what teachers say or what legislators say?*

- o Goal is to get teachers and lawmakers in the same room
- o PDE works with the I.U.s
- o Needs to have a more systematic approach

*Other points:*

- o There are no plans to add additional Keystones at this time.
- o Project Based Assessments are a concern. PDE is trying to support districts in a timely way.
- o A bill has been introduced to delay the Keystone graduation requirement for 2 years. The bill is sitting in the House Education Committee.

PDE looks forward to maintaining a relationship with KSRA.