

Executive Director's Report to the Board

February 26, 2009

News

PAIUnet is being utilized by the Secretary Zahorchak and Governor Rendell. On February 4, Secretary Zahorchak video streamed his 2009-2010 budget presentation to over 250 sites. He delivered his presentation from our very own CAIU Juniata Room, and then visited with about ten of our district superintendents immediately following. Then, on February 25, Governor Rendell came to the CAIU to deliver his second of four civics lessons to hundreds of schools throughout the Commonwealth. The technology services needed to make these events possible are a collaborative effort among CAIU, Chester County IU and Tuscarora IU.

The Senate Education Committee held a hearing on the Graduation Competency Assessments on February 19. Committee Chairman Piccola invited me to testify. My testimony, which supported GCAs with several conditions attached (recognition of trade competency assessments for vocational students, differentiated diplomas, and the elimination of the 11th grade PSSA), was well-received by the committee members present as well as by PDE officials.

The CAIU plans to partner with TechQuest (Technology Council of Central PA), Carnegie Mellon University, and the National Civil War Museum to provide a highly engaging resource for students and educators. Carnegie Mellon has patented the "synthetic interview." The goal will be to use this fascinating technology to create opportunities for students to actually interact with historical figures by interviewing them in a virtual environment. We are just entering into the initial conversations with these partners, but the possibilities are very exciting. More information will follow in the coming months.

The CAIU has received several grants recently. Two are aimed at assisting teens who are pregnant or parenting so that they have access to the resources needed for healthy pregnancies and to be effective parents as well as to continue getting an education to become productive members of society. Another is for serving homeless students by ensuring the districts' homeless liaisons have the information and resources they need to comply with federal and state law regarding homeless students.

On January 26 I was invited by Delta Development Group to attend an event featuring Senator Arlen Specter. I had a chance to chat with him briefly about education issues. I was also invited by Senator Piccola to meet with him and his staff on January 28 to discuss a variety of education topics. Both of these opportunities have opened up lines of communication with those who influence education policy affecting our districts. Likewise, I met twice recently with Mayor Reed in continuing my work with Harrisburg School District.

Cabinet members completed three more district visits with administrators from Susquenita, Susquehanna Township and Shippensburg. These visits have gone very well. We are collecting positive feedback and great ideas for improving or adding to our existing services in support of our districts.

On February 23, I participated in a "Project 720 Credential" Advisory Council meeting. PDE is exploring the possibility of creating a credential or accreditation for high schools. I will keep you informed as this effort progresses. The Council was comprised of representatives from K-12, post-secondary, and workforce development agencies.

Updates

Capital Area Intermediate Unit

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To date, eight districts have officially responded with letters of intent to participate in the on-line learning initiative. Three districts have indicated they will not be participating at this time. Superintendents are asked to return a letter of intent by the end of this month. However, contractual obligations to participate are not due until the end of March to allow time for board discussion and action as needed. To that end, Mark Hennes and the Communications Committee led by Dr. Elaine Eib of Upper Dauphin, hosted a Board Member Information Night at the CAIU on February 4. Nine superintendents and nearly forty board members from our member districts attended.

All of the superintendents have signed documentation necessary to receive benefits from the 1.9 million dollar, 3-year eFund grant we were awarded. Most of the funds, per state requirements are directed toward the non-recurring costs associated with the wide area network. The remaining funds are dedicated to offsetting non-recurring costs associated with the on-line learning initiative.

The Champions for Children Capital Campaign recently received a pledge of \$150,000 over three years from a donor who wishes to remain anonymous at this time. To date, we are approaching nearly \$500,000 in pledges, with our leadership gifts kickoff event scheduled for March 23 in the Atrium of the Capital Blue Cross offices on Elmerton Avenue. The campaign DVD and brochures are nearly finalized.