



# The Montage

PEA's Newsletter

February, 2014

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## State of the Association

Neil Linville, President

In the past two years as your president, I have learned more than I could have imagined about education, politics (from the local to state level), and politics' role in education. I've also learned of the paramount importance of clear and regular communication with our members and with our administration. Add to this my own personal experience and I've come to the conclusion that the relationship between PEA and our school administration is not that dissimilar to that of a marriage. In order for a marriage to be successful, each party must be willing to compromise and acknowledge the importance of the other's opinion and situation in general. This is when true collaboration occurs and success is realized. As soon as this ceases, so too does the relationship.

Compromising and collaborating are easier said than done, especially when looking at two issues of importance in recent months. One example of this is **PayChex**, the company our district has hired to handle our payroll and benefits needs. We recognize this decision is solely that of the administration and school board. However, PEA leaders, and many of you teachers, knew this probably wasn't a good idea. Yet, in the spirit of collaboration, we didn't make much noise at the discussion table because we knew the fair thing to do was to acknowledge the importance of the administration's stance on this and to see how it played out. Needless to say, teachers' concerns were warranted. It's time to have serious discussions with administration to find real, permanent solutions to our payroll issues. If there's one constant in life, it's that you don't mess with people's income. Thankfully, as of the writing of this article, PEA is scheduled to meet with administration and PayChex representatives to find these solutions.

Another recent decision would be the implementation of TAP. TAP, by far, has been a topic of polarizing viewpoints and consistent controversy. To review, we were in a very tight timeline and under much more hostile leadership at DOE when administration made this decision. PEA worked with administration to implement TAP because the alternative was the RISE model, created by Tony Bennett's DOE leadership. We simply did not have time to create a model ourselves. As TAP has proven to have some strengths, it is certainly not what I expected, and I, along with the majority of teachers, am very concerned with its accuracy in measuring the quality of teaching and with its consistent implementation. We voice these concerns in regular discussions with administration to find solutions. **We have given TAP its due consideration after almost two years, almost three years in two buildings, and have compromised a great deal to give TAP a chance, which is becoming increasingly difficult.** We have regular meetings with administration to discuss our concerns, and they are listening and I believe they are trying to address them. Dr. Little, Mrs. Carpenter, and Mr. Bohannon are also in buildings daily talking to teachers and observing TAP's implementation. While we certainly appreciate the administration's willingness to listen and consider our concerns, **we teachers, PEA, are ready to do more than listen to one another. We're ready for real solutions to either fix TAP or to find or create another model that improves teacher instruction while accurately measuring classroom teaching.**

Another lesson I've learned these past two years is that change, any major change, is not swift—unless it's awful and comes from the state legislature. Patience is needed, and this is especially hard for me personally. Ask my wife and she will tell you that I have to work EXTREMELY hard at being patient. Patience is necessary, however, and know that PEA has been very patient. We certainly know teachers have been. We have been very considerate and have been team players with the decisions made in recent years, even the ones we didn't like from the beginning. It's time for administration to recognize this more than ever, and teachers need to know that your PEA leaders will ensure they see our compromising approach. The burden of compromise needs to be shifted a bit away from teachers.

Finally, what does any of this mean? Our unity, your membership to PEA, are paramount for us to ensure we are able to guide or influence decisions at the discussion table and to ensure we continue to secure the best negotiated agreement we can bargain. We currently have a solid membership, but I'd like to see more join our prestigious association. Bluntly, the more members we have, the more we can do for teachers.



## Extreme Scrutiny Underway: Exercise Caution

Matt Henninger, 1st Vice President

As we all well know at this point, public schools are the object of extreme scrutiny. Students, staff, and school districts are *often* treated like statistical pieces of data that are tested, gathered, sorted, grouped, graded, analyzed, and compared. Not many stones are left unturned in that regard. In light of this, I'd like to take a moment to offer a word of caution: be very careful in what you say, what you write, what you post, and what you do. Be careful in the classroom. Be careful in the hallways. Be careful in the office and the lounge. Be very careful on social media. Intentions cannot always be measured. Facial expressions can be ignored. Lighthearted jokes can be misinterpreted. A gesture or phrase devoid of personal effect can be easily distorted or manipulated. If an allegation is made, an investigation will ensue. A school district's number one priority is the safety of its students; I think we could easily find that statement on most school websites. Many times these investigations go unnoticed and nothing comes of them, but they're still not fun for the one who is being questioned. Whether fair or not, our words and actions inside and outside of the classroom can be scrutinized. In an effort to avoid unwanted stress and heartache, we need to make every effort to be very mindful and intentional.

### PEA Leadership

Neil Linville (PMHS), President  
Matt Henninger (PMHS), 1<sup>st</sup> V.P.  
Danielle Brooking (PMA), 2<sup>nd</sup> V.P.  
Steve Dawson (PMHS), Treasurer  
Kyle Hanefeld (GV), Secretary  
Matt Henninger, Membership Chair

### Perry Education Association

P.O. Box 47432  
Indianapolis, IN 46247-0432  
<http://www.perryea.org>  
789-4414, PEA Office

### Special points of interest:

- HSBT Health and Wellness Center  
6925 S. Harding Street  
497-6140
- 24/7 Nurse Line (888-279-5449)
- Anthem Member Services (800-345-2460)



## The State of Early Childhood Ed.

By: Kyle Hanefeld, Secretary

When I was watching the State of the Union Address, the notion of funding early childhood education was brought forth to the nation. When this was being presented, I couldn't help but reflect upon the current state of education. Even though many levels of education were discussed, I would like to focus on early childhood education at the preschool and kindergarten levels.

Since preschools operate in many different styles and practices, academic preschools focus more on preparing four-year-olds for the daily grind of kindergarten. Some studies have indicated that focusing a high percentage of time on academic needs with little socialization time have shown no significant student academic improvement at later educational levels.

However, many proponents of academic preschools state that both the academic and socialization needs are to be well balanced. Some schools offer three academic days with two days of socialization throughout the week with success while other schools have found that balancing both needs throughout the course of a day have also proven to be successful. However, both types of academic preschools stated that many "active students" may not do well in this environment as a result of having to remain attentive for 20 to 30 minutes. Therefore, a more play-based preschool was suggested for students who may not be able to maintain the rigor of an academic preschool. Martha E. Mock, assistant professor at the University of Rochester Warner School of Education, recently stated, "Young children learn best through meaningful interaction with real materials and caring adults and their peers, not through the drilling of

isolated skills."

Regardless of the academic or play-based type of preschool environment, I believe that there is a need for a reform of our early childhood educational development. More and more of our current students who are entering kindergarten are doing so with much less knowledge and social capabilities than a generation or two ago. Additionally, our kindergarten teachers are often teaching in classrooms that often push the student-to-teacher ratio at 30:1. If students are entering kindergarten with more critical needs than years ago, we need to also place our focus on funding full-day kindergarten.

Currently, each kindergarten student receives \$2,472 in funding through the state of Indiana. This amount is almost 50% less than the cost of a student in first grade that quite often will be taught with fewer students in the classroom than that of their kindergarten class the previous year. If we could fund full-day kindergarten, I foresee class sizes becoming more manageable, thus empowering the teacher to further his or her students' learning with more one-to-one time as well as small grouping scenarios.

At a time when salaries are becoming increasingly attached to student performance on standardized tests, we need to strive to further support our students with early childhood education. By investing with our youngest students and future students in Indiana, I believe this investment will promote the needs that our students face at all levels of education.



## The Dawson Monologue

By: Steve Dawson, Treasurer/HSBT Board Member

### TRF Update, Part 3

At its December meeting, the Indiana Public Retirement System (INPRS) Board of Trustees voted to continue with its plan to **reduce the amount** that retirees receive and to use an outside provider for the annuities; however, Board Chairman Ken Cochran stated, "The Board recognizes that one or more bills on this topic could be introduced in the 2014 legislative session."

Several bills that impact your retirement have been introduced. Most notably, House Bill 1075 prohibits INPRS from using an outside provider for annuities, and it requires the board to set a rate of return each year based on actual investment rates and market performance.

PEA will continue to follow this and other legislation that impacts you.

### Earn \$400 Per Hour!

The Hoosier School Benefit Trust is again scheduling wellness screenings in each building. Identifying and treating chronic medical conditions is one of the few ways to control health costs. Every dollar that the school corporation does not spend on premiums is a dollar that we can try to bargain for your salary.

Employees who participate in the fifteen-minute screening and complete the online health assessment will receive a **\$100 gift card**. I have stressed the importance of offering screening times when teachers are actually available. Please take advantage of this benefit.

Your results are confidential--they are **not** shared with HSBT or Perry Township. An aggregate report is prepared to help identify our medical needs and to guide wellness programs.

Yes, my headline was misleading--you cannot do it four times to earn \$400.

