

Executive Director's Notepad . . .

PAESSP - Why Be A Member?



*From the desk of
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Since becoming the executive director of PAESSP two years ago, I have come to appreciate even more why every principal in the state should be a member. Nearly 90% of the principals in the state are active members of PAESSP and PAESSP is the largest affiliate member of both national principal associations; but this is not a reason to join, only an indication of how many of your colleagues think it is important. I'd like to take just a few minutes to remind each of you about the benefits of being part of the association. Please share this article with those who might not yet be members – you will be providing them with an important service.

Why be a member?

Legal Support. I have heard over and over again in my conversations with principals, “I never thought this would happen to me.” When things are going well we all have a tendency to think this way, but I assure you, no matter how outstanding a principal you are – they can and do. Every year, we handle more than 500 phone calls and approximately 60% of these are legal in nature. They range from simple advice in how to proceed legally in a specific situation on the job to threats of termination. In many of these cases, the principal involved has had outstanding evaluations and their leadership skills have never been questioned before. Principals have few places to turn for assistance, but PAESSP is one place you can turn to for support. We have experience in dealing with a wide range of legal issues and our organization provides financial support in cases where your job is threatened. This financial support ranges from \$1,000 to \$10,000, and is accumulated at \$1,000 per year for continuous membership. The other good news is that most districts pay for your membership.

Professional Development. We currently offer three PIL-certified courses that count toward your required Act 45 credits. We offer these courses at our state conference and in a summer institute. They provide an excellent opportunity to earn credits and miss only a few days of school. Better yet, as a member, you receive a discount for these courses that would be equivalent to approximately 25% of your annual dues. Additionally, we have teamed up with Drexel University to offer a doctoral program for principals. Our members will receive exclusively a \$275 discount per course or an equivalent savings of \$2,196 per year based upon the program for cohorts. We also offer a large discount to our members attending our annual state conference – which has been highly rated for its quality – recruiting from the top educational experts throughout the United States. See our web site for more information on all of these programs.

Act 93 Assistance. We are the number one consultative association for Act 93 questions and suggestions. We provide documents and expertise when requested by members.



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We often consult on what should be in Act 93 agreements, how to structure them, the process for requesting a meeting with the board, etc. We also have contact with expert groups to present methods of enhancing the financial qualities of your agreement in areas other than salaries for your group. Our members exclusively have the ability to visit our web site and obtain salary comparisons for themselves as they relate to other districts throughout Pennsylvania. This database is an excellent starting point for obtaining good data on salaries in your area and throughout the Commonwealth. Finally it should be noted that when cases involving disputes about Act 93 arise we are available to assist you and your group. In some cases, we have contributed extensively (in excess of \$25,000) to defend the sanctity of the contractual nature of an Act 93 Agreement once passed by a school board.

Legislative Actions. PAESSP is highly regarded in Harrisburg and at the national level. We frequently weigh in on issues important to principals and provide testimony and lobby at the state and national levels. Most recently, we have formed a task force of principals throughout the state and examined high stakes testing. We have published the findings of this group in a White Paper that has been distributed to all of our members and our legislators. Using this as a base, we have served a leadership role with a coalition of 22 other educational groups to oppose Keystone Exams (GCAs) in their current form. We lobby annually at the national level to secure funding for federal programs and have recently suggested changes beneficial to educators in the old No Child Left Behind legislation which we hope will be acted upon this year.

Consultation and Collegial Interactions. As a member of PAESSP, we are just a phone call or e-mail away from consultation. We frequently consult with members on how to proceed with difficult situations, dealing with teachers, dealing with board members and a myriad of other issues. We have experience as principals and superintendents, we have been there and done that, and we have the advantage of seeing how similar issues have developed in other places. Our advice to principals has been rated a 5 out of 5 by those who have received it. Even more importantly, your membership in our professional organization gives you access to networks of professionals throughout the state and nation. *No person is an island – we all need a network of support.*

Other Benefits. Your membership includes both state and national membership. You will receive national publications at no charge and quarterly copies of the ***Pennsylvania Administrator***, our awarding-winning magazine that won five awards this year alone. You will also receive regular e-mail updates on legislation, our bi-monthly electronic newsletter, ***The Advisory***, and our bi-weekly electronic newsletter, ***You Need to Know***. Additionally, you will receive a free copy of our publication, ***The Principalship and Your Legal Rights and Responsibilities, Volumes I & II***. You will also be eligible for discounts at state and national events.

If you are not currently a member, please join today! Membership information is available on our web site – **www.paessp.org**.