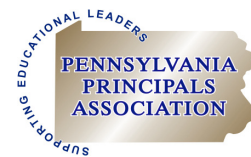


Executive Director's Notepad . . .

Fall – a time for reflection and change



**By Dr. Eric C. Eshbach,
PA Principals
Association
Executive
Director**

The onset of autumn is marked by change. The change in temperature, the vibrant changes in leaf color and the changes associated with a new school year are all indicative of the fact that nothing in life stays the same. My early indications from conversations I've had with principals around the state tell me that this fall has been a much more peaceful start to the school year for most of you. Last year at this time we were struggling through the challenges of mask mandates, learning loss, and uncertainty from the ongoing pandemic. While those have certainly been replaced by other challenges, my hope is that the fall of 2022 has been more productive and more peaceful than the fall of 2021.



In our democracy, autumn also ushers in a significant change in our government. For the first time in many years in Pennsylvania, we will have the opportunity to elect, not only a new governor, but also a new U.S. Senator. The changes that will be inevitable with these changes will most likely have a significant impact on education in the Commonwealth. While the PA Principals Association does not go to the extent of endorsing specific candidates, I certainly encourage you to do your homework and study the platform of each candidate before you make your selection. Though I've never been a single-issue voter myself and realize there are many issues in selecting our state and national leaders, I believe it is imperative that you keep at the forefront of your decision making the impact these candidates will have on your work, your staff, your students and your community.

Whether you are voting for the next governor, Pennsylvania's next junior U.S. Senator, your state senator or state representative, ask yourself the following questions:

1. Which candidate has vocalized their support for the challenges your school faces?
2. Which candidate understands the impact the inequity of school funding has on your school and your students?
3. Which candidate is more interested in ensuring all students succeed and help to build a strong, vibrant economy and citizenry?
4. Which candidate seems to be more interested in special interest groups and accepting money from groups that take money away from public education?
5. Which candidate has made themselves accessible to our school community and has at least listened to our concerns?
6. Which candidate has made attempts to understand the challenges we face by visiting our schools and talking with our staff and students?

7. Which candidate believes all students have the right to a high-quality, fully funded education and has defined how s/he will advocate and vote to ensure that happens?

The answers to these questions should be relatively easy to find by simply researching the candidates online. The absence of substantive answers to these questions should tell you something about how highly the candidate values education.

The natural change that occurs in our democracy surrounding elections makes our nation unique and makes our citizens critically important. While 2022 might be considered an “off-year election,” it is anything but that for Pennsylvania. *Let us remember how vitally important the decisions we make at the polls are to the children and communities we serve.*

Dr. Diane Kirk Honored with the 2022 Educational Excellence Award

Diane L. Kirk, Ph.D., recently retired Clinical Associate Professor in the University of Pittsburgh’s School of Education, and the Director of the Tri-State Area School Study Council, is the recipient of the **PA Principals Association’s 2022 Educational Excellence Award**. The association’s most prestigious award is given to a person who has been a “friend of public education” and who has made significant contributions to the attainment of educational excellence in the commonwealth’s elementary and secondary schools. Dr. Kirk was presented with this award at the PA Principals Association’s LEAD22 Conference on Sunday, Oct. 16, 2022, during the Awards Dinner.

In addition, Dr. Kirk was surprised with a retirement celebration, surrounded by 100 colleagues, her family and friends, held on Wednesday evening, August 17, 2022, at the Edgewood Country Club in Churchill, PA. Dr. Eric Eshbach, PA Principals Association Executive Director, presented her with a beautiful planter, and along with Dr. Carol Sprinker, PA Principals Association board member, revealed that she was selected to receive the 2022 Educational Excellence Award. Dr. Eshbach said, “Dr. Kirk’s commitment to Pennsylvania educational leaders and to public education made her the perfect choice to receive the PA Principals Association’s most prestigious award. She is well known across the commonwealth for her work as a leader, teacher and a mentor.”

In her esteemed 50-year career in education, Dr. Kirk has served as a teacher, assistant principal, principal, assistant superintendent and superintendent of schools (Peters Township School District from 1997-2006). For the last 17 years, she has served as an associate professor of education at the University of Pittsburgh where she managed the superintendent, principal and curriculum and instruction internship courses in the Department of Administrative and Policy Studies that all students must complete in order to gain certification in Pennsylvania. As the Director of the Tri-State Area School Study Council, Dr. Kirk manages Tri-State’s activities, including research and development assistance for member school districts, conferences and professional development opportunities.

Dr. Sprinker who nominated Dr. Kirk for this award, said, “Dr. Kirk is a fierce advocate of public education and strong supporter of educational leaders across the commonwealth. She values relationships, models professionalism and encourages career development for principals and superintendents. She’s a teacher, mentor, counselor and friend who

will be greatly missed at the University of Pittsburgh.”

Dr. Kirk holds a bachelor’s degree in education from Youngstown University; a Master of Science in education and her elementary principal certificate from Duquesne University; and a Ph.D. in educational administration from the University of Pittsburgh.

“I am so honored to be recognized for doing what I love doing so much and for working with these people who are trying to manage these very challenging jobs. We need strong, resilient leaders who are compassionate about children in principal roles. I’ve worked with so many students across the commonwealth, and mainly in western Pennsylvania, who are now in principal roles, and it is very gratifying,” shared Dr. Kirk.

Dr. Kirk resides in Pleasant Hills, PA (South Hills of Pittsburgh). She has one son, John E. Kirk IV.



PA Principals Association Executive Director, Dr. Eric C. Eshbach, presented the 2022 Educational Excellence Award to Diane L. Kirk, Ph.D., at the annual Awards Dinner on Oct. 16 held during the LEAD22 Conference at Kalahari Resorts Poconos.