

## **Meeting with Secretary Rivera**

On December 18, 2018, Glenn Miller, David Belanger, and I met with Secretary of Education Pedro Rivera for an informal conversation about libraries and education.

At the start of the meeting, we asked about his current priorities, and he identified two: Creating a workforce vision for PDE and early literacy, specifically the Governor's Ready to Start Task Force.

When asked if he would suggest that we wait to hear more about the GAC's role in workforce development, initiated as a result of the Governor's Executive Order, or that we present a plan, he suggested that we move forward with identifying any issues or ideas that are important to libraries. Our planning session prior to this meeting focused on this topic.

The Governor's Ready to Start Task Force is creating a four-year framework of strategies to address health, human services, and education policy for infants and toddlers, from birth to three years of age. Susan Pannebaker from the Office of Commonwealth Libraries has begun participating in their work. Among the priorities relevant to libraries are: Helping families to understand services available in their community (Family Place), grandparents raising grandchildren, and early literacy.

We also discussed funding for public libraries and offered examples of how the long period of level funding is affecting library service across the state. We learned that, like previous Democratic administrations, there is a belief that increasing library funding is the responsibility of the legislature, not the Governor.

Following the meeting, we discussed the Secretary's new role as President of the national Council of Chief State School Officers. His platform focuses on equity. We will use future opportunities to discuss how services such as POWER Library and the Statewide Library Card advance equity in library service for all citizens of Pennsylvania.

We will meet next in the Spring. Among the items on our agenda for that meeting, in addition to equity, will be: Including libraries in grant-funded projects, workforce development, and, of course, funding.

## **LSTA Funding**

For the third year in a row, President Trump's budget recommends closing out the Institute for Museum and Library Services (IMLS) and, with it, defunding the Library Services and Technology Act (LSTA). LSTA plays an important role in the operation of the Office of Commonwealth Libraries and provides many benefits to local libraries. The American Library Association asks

that we contact our representatives and urge them to support funding for IMLS and LSTA in budget negotiations.

## **Public Library Subsidy**

The Pennsylvania Library Association is asking library supporters to talk to state legislators and ask for an increase of \$20 million in the Public Library Subsidy over two budget years.

Representative Stan Saylor, Majority Chair of the House Appropriations Committee stated that increasing library funding is one of his top three priorities.

## **Guidelines for Pennsylvania School Library Programs**

At our next meeting, we will discuss and act on the recently completed Guidelines for Pennsylvania School Library Programs. The Guidelines identify eight indicators of an effective school library program, including:

1. Led by a certified school librarian and appropriate support staff
2. Serve as an integral and valued part of the learning community
3. Engage learners in instructional opportunities that address multiple literacies and diverse perspectives
4. Are fully integrated into a collaborative learning community
5. Champion intellectual freedom as every learner's right
6. Provide learners with equitable access to a certified librarian and resources at their point of need
7. Provide a space that promotes thinking, creating, sharing, and growing
8. Actively engage learners in decision-making

The guidelines are intended to provide a blueprint for PA schools and school districts in planning an effective program that promotes excellence in school libraries for the benefit of all learners.

The document was developed by a large group of individuals active and experienced in PA school libraries, including GAC member and PSLA President Allison Mackley and Susan Pannebaker from the Office of Commonwealth Libraries.

GAC members will soon receive a copy of the Guidelines for review. Acceptance of the document will be on the agenda at the next business meeting, to be held at the PSLA Conference in Hershey.

## **Reappointments**

We have received requests for reappointments from four Council members, and they will be forwarded to the Governor for action. A fifth member has indicated a decision to resign from Council.

## **Shrinking Materials Budgets**

The Philadelphia Inquirer recently ran an article detailing how diminishing budgets are affecting the availability of books and other materials in the city's libraries. Library administrators are shifting funds from the materials budget in order to save jobs, and this is creating long wait times for materials and undermining the depth of the library's collections.

The article mentions the state standard for libraries to spend at least 12% of the annual operating budget on collections and points out that the Free Library has had difficulty meeting that threshold in recent years.

This is illustrative of what is happening in libraries across the state. The Office of Commonwealth Libraries is issuing waivers to libraries that, for economic reasons, are unable to meet the standard, including the Free Library of Philadelphia.