



Kurt S. Browning,  
Superintendent of Schools



March 5, 2015

# School Matters

## Opening Message

I know this has been a challenging week for middle and high school students, teachers, and testing coordinators who are dealing with online testing issues. It has been frustrating for me, but staff from ARM, Communications & Government Relations, and I are advocating for you. I have been in direct contact with Senator Bill Montford and Education Commissioner Pam Stewart, and Spencer Pylant has discussed the ongoing issues with Senator John Legg and Senate Majority Leader Bill Galvano. Superintendents have been telling state leaders for two years that we need to make sure that the new tests and the online testing platform are reliable and capable of handling hundreds of thousands of students testing online at one time. I think our legislative leaders have heard our pleas and I am hopeful that we will see some changes soon.

The DOE assures us that AIR is making improvements to the testing platform. ARM staff has communicated directly with officials at DOE and AIR to let them know exactly what issues you are experiencing, and they are investigating the causes and solutions. The DOE commissioner informs us that she has asked AIR to respond to every service ticket for lost test answers by the end of the day Thursday.

Thank you for persevering during this trying time. I will keep you informed of any progress we make. Meanwhile, we will continue computer-based testing tomorrow, with the hope that the problems have been addressed. Please continue to contact ARM with any testing issues you experience.

## Professional Development



In Part 6 of our Insightful Educator Series, Evette Striblen (from the Offices of Teaching and Learning) walks through the creation of a secondary education learning scale. To view, please visit: <http://bit.ly/1JQdKqy>.



## Bus Driver Recruitment

The district is hiring bus drivers. Starting pay is \$12 per hour. Please share this information with friends or family members you think may be interested. Anyone who is interested can call 813-794-1862 for more information.

## Legislative Update

The 2015 Legislative Session convened on Tuesday, March 3, and legislators hit the ground running on education issues. The following is a list of actions taken Wednesday on bills of interest:

**SB 152** – Disability Awareness by Ring – PASSED

Requires disability awareness instruction in K-12 schools.

**SB 602** – Students With Disabilities by Gaetz – AMENDED AND PASSED WITH A COMMITTEE SUBSTITUTE (CS)

Revises the Florida Personal Learning Scholarship Accounts (PLSA) Program.

**SB 154** – Hazardous Walking Conditions by Hays – PASSED

Requires a district school board to correct hazardous walking conditions and provide transportation to students who would be subjected to hazardous walking conditions; requires state or local governmental entities with jurisdiction over a road with a hazardous walking condition to correct the condition within a reasonable period of time, etc.

**SB 616** – Education Accountability by Legg – AMENDED AND PASSED AS A COMMITTEE SUBSTITUTE (CS)

Reduces the number of statutorily-required assessments by eliminating the current requirement that a school district administer a local assessment for each course that is not assessed by a statewide, standardized assessment; limits the amount of time for test administration to no more than 5% of total school hours per student, per year, with exceptions; eliminates certain mandatory tests; revises teacher performance evaluations by requiring the student performance component to be at least 33%, the instructional practice component to be at least 33%, and the professional and job responsibilities component to be no more than 33%; requires that the instructional practice component of a teacher's performance evaluation have multiple observations by administrative personnel; authorizes a new requirement that the professional and job responsibilities component of a teacher's performance evaluation to utilize peer reviews; etc.

**SB 688** – Opening and Closing of Public Schools by Montford – AMENDED AND PASSED WITH A COMMITTEE SUBSTITUTE (CS)

Revising a requirement for the uniform opening date of public schools to allow an opening date of up to 21 days before Labor Day; etc.



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## NIE Teacher of the Year Award

Visit [tampabay.com/nie](http://tampabay.com/nie) to nominate an educator (or yourself) for the Tampa Bay Times NIE Teacher of the Year award. Nominations accepted through March 20, 2015. Eligible teachers must be a K-12 teacher in Citrus, Hernando, Hillsborough, Manatee, Pasco or Pinellas counties. NIE activities must have been implemented during the 2014-2015 academic year.

## Community Fun Day Business Expo

The Central Pasco Chamber of Commerce is hosting the Community Fun Day Business Expo 2015 on Friday, March 6, from 4 p.m. to 7 p.m., and Saturday, March 7, from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. This event will be held at the Land O' Lakes Recreation Complex. For more information, please visit: <http://bit.ly/1zhuzQ2>.

## Chasco Fiesta Hunger Walk

The Chasco Fiesta Hunger Walk, occurring on Saturday, March 14, promotes hunger awareness and raises funds for hunger relief in Pasco County. Sign up to participate at <http://bit.ly/1I95XmR> as an individual walker, create or join a team (you can join the Superintendent's team), or become a business sponsor.

## Dancing Into Retirement

After over 21 years with Pasco County Schools, help us wish **Billie St. Louis** well as she "Dances into Retirement." There will be an event to celebrate her service to the district on Monday, March 23 from 4:30-7:30 p.m. at The Wilderness Lake Preserve Activities Center. Please RSVP by March 13, to Shannon Hill at (813) 794-2630 or via email at [shill@pasco.k12.fl.us](mailto:shill@pasco.k12.fl.us).

## Measles Information

The Department of Health is taking a proactive position with regard to measles. Although there are no confirmed cases in the state, the DOH in Pasco has been in touch with the district to help us prepare in the event a case is confirmed in one of our schools. Principals received a letter Tuesday detailing procedures they should follow. Next week, we will be sending a joint letter from the DOH in Pasco administrator and the superintendent to schools to send home with students. Since we have unvaccinated children in schools, it's important that we let parents know that we will remove unvaccinated students from any school at which a case is suspected – for 21 days or more. Staff should consult with their health care provider to make sure they have protection against measles.

Tomorrow, March 6, is **National Dress in Blue Day** for colon cancer awareness. For more information, please visit: <http://bit.ly/17bYXob>.

## Kudos

I want to personally thank **Christa Vail** for all of her guidance and assistance with our EBD and ESE students and parents. In the most challenging situations, she steps back, discusses the problem with those involved, and puts a plan together to meet the needs of the students. She always takes the time to see the big picture! We are grateful to have her in our county! Our students, parents, and teachers, are blessed! –Karen Ward, Assistant Principal, Centennial Middle School

## Free MOSI Membership

Pasco County Schools employees can redeem the free membership online by going to this website: <http://www.mosi.org/become-a-member/education-memberships.aspx>



Air Force Sgt. Andrew Beck surprised his son, Andrew "Deuce" Beck, Jr., at Seven Springs Elementary School, after a year in Korea. Watch the [video](#).

## NPR Recreation & Aquatic Center

New Port Richey Parks and Recreation is offering memberships to the NPR Recreation and Aquatic Center to all Pasco County School Employees at the reduced rate reserved for city residents. An adult membership for the year would cost \$200 (plus tax) instead of \$250. Family memberships for the year would be \$330 (plus tax).

March is  
National Nutrition Month  
National Music in Our Schools Month