

The Consortium for Public Education

A member of the Public Education Network

INSIGHTS Just In ...

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Editor's Note: Since our founding, we've proudly sent our partners, supporters and friends *Insights*, a print newsletter that provides close-up looks at our work, our events and our programs and alerts our schools and their staffs to all of the opportunities we offer. With our new electronic edition, we inaugurate *Insights Just In*, to ensure that we reach you as soon as we have something important to share. We hope you enjoy the updates.

Other Voices: "Education is not the filling of a bucket, but the lighting of a fire." -- William Butler Yeats

Ring in the new!

The Consortium for Public Education welcomes all of you who are beginning a new school year back to your districts, to your students and the work ahead. Like you, we always experience a sense of renewal in September. It quickens our pace; it sharpens our focus. We share your passion for cultivating a culture that prizes learning and the diversity of experience that deepens it. We also support you in the most important of missions: ensuring that *all* of the students in our schools and our region receive an outstanding public education. Thank you for the many things all of you do every day to help our kids succeed! All of us here wish you a most rewarding and enjoyable school year and look forward to working with you. Feel free to call on The Consortium's staff to learn more about any of the programs we offer.

Deadline nearing for *Journey to Learn* registrations

The deadline to register for The Consortium for Public Education's 2009 *Journey to Learn* is Monday, September 14th. The annual multi-district professional development opportunity takes place on Friday, October 23rd this year, from 8:30 a.m. to 11:30 a.m., and is expected to offer 149 different workshops presented *by* educators *for* educators. Teachers, administrators and other education professionals wishing to participate can obtain a listing of workshops and registration forms from their school building or district coordinators.

Participants are encouraged to select workshops offered outside their home districts so that they can learn about successful practices and teaching techniques being used elsewhere and share them with colleagues. Each registration should include a first choice of workshop and an alternate in case the first selection is over-subscribed. Confirmation notices of the workshop to be attended will be sent to the home

addresses of all registrants.

Journey to Learn has grown to cover some 16 school districts since its inception. Last year's event drew some 2,500 teachers, administrators and other school district professionals, up 400 from the previous year. Districts participating this year include: Belle Vernon Area; Bentworth; Bethlehem Center; Brownsville Area; Charleroi Area; Clairton City; East Allegheny; Frazier; McKeesport Area; Monessen City; Ringgold; South Allegheny; Steel Valley; Trinity Area; West Mifflin Area and Yough.

Consortium's 'town hall' meeting with First Lady is SRO

A 'town hall' meeting at which Pennsylvania's First Lady, U.S. Third Circuit Court Judge Marjorie O. Rendell, will engage high school students from across the region in a dialogue about democracy is expected to be "standing room only."



Registration for the event, which The Consortium for Public Education is hosting Monday, September 14th in the music hall at The Carnegie Library of Homestead, is close to 1,000 students and advisers from more than 30 districts. The music hall's seating capacity is 1,022.

The Consortium's Associate Executive Director Steve Seliy said, "Our schools have been tremendously enthusiastic about participating in an event that calls on their students to express views on civic duty, civic life, civics education and the processes that make our democracy work."

He noted that Judge Rendell, one of whose missions as First Lady has been to increase emphasis on civics education, has encouraged schools to find ways to make democracy "come alive" for them. "A town hall meeting is the kind of experience that does that."

Supporting your programs: *here's an opportunity!*

District and school professionals who benefit from programs offered through The Consortium for Public Education will have an opportunity to show their support on Wednesday, October 28th. That's the day The Pittsburgh Foundation has chosen for a publicized launch of a new web platform that nonprofits can use to raise funding through individual donations. To celebrate launch of the website, called Pittsburgh Gives, The Pittsburgh Foundation is providing a 50-cent match for every dollar raised. Individual donations will be matched only up to \$2,500. The Pittsburgh Foundation also has put a \$200,000 limit on its overall

Pittsburghgives.org
a resource of The Pittsburgh Foundation

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matching funds.

The Consortium is among a small group of nonprofits selected to participate in the launch of Pittsburgh Gives. The platform provides community organizations with "profile pages" where they can describe their programs, identify key staff and board members and supply financial information. The pages each also contain a "Donate Now" tab that donors can use to make their contributions electronically, via credit cards. The Consortium's profile can be accessed at <http://pittsburghgives.guidestar.org/NonprofitProfile.aspx?OrgId=3419> or from The Consortium's own web site.

The October 28th "match day" event begins at 10 a.m. sharp. Donations made even minutes before the starting time will not be eligible for the matching funds. However, because the available matching funds are limited, donors are encouraged to make their contributions at 10 a.m. or within minutes afterward. In order to expedite processing that day, those planning to donate also are encouraged to visit the Pittsburgh Gives platform in advance to create accounts, so that they needn't take the time on the day of the match.

"We're so appreciative that The Pittsburgh Foundation is giving us this wonderful opportunity," said The Consortium's Executive Director, Linda Croushore, Ed.D. "We hope all of you who benefit from The Consortium's work will participate with donations and encourage your colleagues, friends and family to help raise the funding on which our programs depend."

TFIM and Digital Storytelling participants to document G-20

So what does the G-20 summit have to do with my region or me? Former North Allegheny High School teacher and founder of Blackberry Studios, Eric Graf, is inviting students to ask themselves that question and to fan out across the city in search of answers when global leaders converge on Pittsburgh September 24th.



Members of The Consortium for Public Education's career exploration program, *The Future Is Mine* (TFIM), along with participants in The Consortium's Digital Storytelling initiative are among those who will join in the G-20 project, for which Graf has developed an advance lesson plan that will be distributed to their teachers.

"It's a great opportunity for students to begin the school year with a sense of discovery about the world," said The Consortium's Associate Executive Director Steve Seliy, who oversees TFIM and Digital Storytelling.

After working together in class to learn about G-20, students and the teachers accompanying them will meet at Graf's studio in Lawrenceville between 8 a.m. and 9 a.m. for a workshop on using Flip Video cameras supplied by The Consortium and the editing software that comes with them. At the studio, the students will pair off to conduct video interviews in which they first ask each other what implications the meeting of finance ministers, central bank governors and heads of state might have for them and their communities.

After discussing those questions between them, the students, accompanied by faculty advisors, will go Downtown and use video cameras to document the atmosphere in the city as leaders from 19 of the world's largest national economies and the European Union convene. Following their excursions, students will compare notes and re-interview each other "to see whether their perceptions had changed," Graf said. Some students may even want to talk with passersby to get their observations on the G-20. Graf plans to have the students upload their videos to the Ning networking site established over the summer for TFIM members.

The G-20 summit, at the David L. Lawrence Convention Center, is expected to draw not only delegates, but also their staffs, thousands of journalists from around the world and, of course, protestors. Some consequences of the gathering will be immediate and strictly local: for example, heightened security will no doubt close entire streets and maybe restrict access to certain sections of the city. Although Mayor Luke Ravenstahl has begun issuing permits for protest gatherings, there also likely will be restrictions placed on them.

The restrictions raise constitutional issues that students might want to explore. Decisions made during the summit itself have global economic implications that students also could weigh.

Although G-20 discussions might seem remote from daily life, the trade and economic policies set among nations trickle and sometimes even cascade over industries and communities, Graf noted. For example, Pittsburgh and its surrounding communities were changed irrevocably by the collapse of the steel industry. At the time, steel manufacturers frequently cited the influence of trade policies in the contraction the U.S. industry underwent.

Video documentation is a way to engage students in the meaning of an event that otherwise might seem arcane by letting them "experience being out and around an event that is worldwide controversial," Graf said. As a former English teacher, Graf said he also believes the communications skills kids learn using digital media also help them across the board in their classes and eventually in jobs. The technology requires them not only to acquire technical ability, but also to learn visual and verbal presentation techniques. Moreover, it makes them gain a more sophisticated understanding of the effect of media on them and events.

The Consortium will be providing faculty advisers from TFIM and Digital Storytelling

programs with details on participation. However, those interested in sending students are welcome to call TFIM Program Assistant Gina Barrett at 412-678-9215.

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