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Near the A.W. Beattie Career Center in McCandless (Allegheny Co.), five graduate students from China live in two apartments. Each day, they walk to Beattie, where they use video cameras to teach Chinese classes to middle and high school students throughout the region.

The program is one of many in the county that uses a regional computer network coordinated by the Allegheny Intermediate Unit. Starting this summer, the programs will use a new Regional Wide Area Network — one that will provide those services cheaper and faster. “It’s the beauty of bulk purchasing,” Jon Amelio, chief technology officer for the AIU, said of the cost savings realized by the new contract. “This was a huge collaborative effort.” The cost savings over the current provider will be dramatic. “In a nutshell, districts will save anywhere from 40 to 70 percent over what they’re paying now,” Mr. Amelio said.

The Regional Wide Area Network connects schools in Allegheny County to each other over fiber-optic cable and also connects schools to the Internet and to Internet2, a high-speed network for educational institutions. The county already has an RWAN that has been in operation since 2008, but because of the relatively high cost under the current provider, the AIU decided to rebid the contract, Mr. Amelio said. The AIU received bids from six companies and chose DQE Communications in the South Side, a subsidiary of Duquesne Light, to provide the network, starting July 1.

in on the high side

Pittsburgh Post-Gazette
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A new network means that the fiber-optic network that the schools already have will need to be rebuilt, but because DQE has existing infrastructure throughout most of the county, it will not be building the entire network from scratch, said Lisa Williams, manager of marketing and wholesale services. In addition to being cheaper, the service will also be more reliable, which makes all the difference for programs such as the one at Beattie, which serves 178 students in 15 schools in eight school districts. “The network

has to be strong, that’s the biggest backbone,” said Sandy Niggel, assistant director of curriculum and instruction there. “If the network can’t handle it — or if it’s unreliable — the kids just won’t be receiving instruction.”

The new contract will affect electronic learning at virtually every level in the county, from preschool students using smartboards at the AIU’s Head Start in Carnegie to high school students in the South Park School District using online software to design a project for a 3-D printer. “The biggest primary use is going to be this high-speed Internet access that is really heads and shoulders above what a private organization could get or what we could buy on our own,” said Richard Platts, director of technology for South Park. “This is exponentially going to increase what we’re able to do.”

Under the current contract, districts are paying \$1,500 a month to be on the RWAN. Under the new DQE contract, that same speed and connection will cost districts \$550 per month. Because of that savings, many districts are deciding to upgrade the speed of their service, getting 10 times their current speed for \$895 per month. The price for Internet service has gone down 85 percent, Mr. Amelio said — from \$7 per megabyte per second to \$1. The cost for an entire district for a month of Internet service will be only about \$100, he said. “The Internet is becoming a commodity,” Mr. Amelio said. “We are acting as a consortium and vendors love that. They can sell it a lot cheaper.” — *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette*

In language that would have gotten him thrown off any domestic air carrier, Gov. Tom Wolf has laid out a vision of biblical wrath and celestial cataclysm if the General Assembly fails to raise taxes.

Twenty-three thousand educators cast to the streets, woebegone pensioners deciding between insulin and bread, 221,000 impoverished children with “nowhere to go,” victims of domestic violence chased into the long night — all this and more is his prediction should lawmakers not gather their senses and raise the income tax by 11 percent.

I have heard speeches by the late Ian Paisley that were less fraught, and been panhandled by street drunks with more finesse. Wolf's performance was one for the ages, a reckoning out of the Old Testament as told by the dean of students. He spoke of a "ticking time bomb," which doubtless had some in the galleries turning a quick glance to the nearest exit. He summoned images of a train careening toward a crash. He invoked "a fresh start," and the budget document he released broke with decorum, if not tradition, by carrying his photograph next to his campaign slogans of two years ago as if this were simply a campaign visit to a red county.

He accused legislative Republicans of walking away from a budget agreement that one chamber never passed, and acted as if his prior tax demands had not been rejected unanimously by both parties. In a rhetorical flourish worthy of Queen Victoria, he warned them, "do not send me another budget full of gimmicks that are too cute by half ... I will not be amused. I will not be fooled."

Common legislative speech craft speaks of a "target-target" approach. There are two targets. The best of them will speak to both on different levels. Thus, Wolf spoke past the House and Senate members assembled to hear his wisdom, and reached out with words of panic to the general population. Nobody in the chamber believes his predictions that the state will implode without tax increases. They know that Wolf has political debts to pay, particularly to the two state teachers unions, and the state is already investing more of its dollars in basic education than at any time in its history.

In fact, 15 years ago, the general fund budget was \$20 billion. Today it is \$30 billion. It would take a mighty gust of inflation to drive those numbers. Legislators know we have less of a revenue problem than we have a spending problem. They should know. In the course of the last 15 years, they helped to cause it with a pension buyoff, primarily benefiting teachers, that has now crushed us under a \$57 billion unfunded liability.

The scare language was for the folks back home. His mission completed, Wolf returned to the General Assembly with language that at once tickles my sense of whimsy and shocks my common sense. "But if you won't face up to the reality of the situation we're in," he told them, "if you ignore that time bomb ticking, if you won't take seriously your responsibility to the people of Pennsylvania – then find another job."

After legislators retrieved their lower jaws from the floor, Wolf summed up the moment by intimating that they lack courage, are unreasonable and cannot count. In short, in a crisis that called for the governor to hit the reset button, he pressed the detonator. Having doubled – no, tripled – down on belligerence, Governor Fresh Start has now brought the stakes to a vertiginous level. He must realize that if none of these vivid horrors come to pass, he will look foolish. He is banking on stratospheric property tax increases, seemingly unaware that school boards, too, can be voted out of office once they go too far.

Most of all, he risks turning the stopgap budget into the commonwealth's default fiscal setting. That's a bad thing. If he is really sincere in this matter, he will implore Democratic leaders to insist on a straight-up vote on the proposed taxes that must be enacted to halt the Day of Reckoning.

Run the budget bill now. Put it on the floor. If the governor and his party mean what they say, they will summon the courage he thinks legislators lack, and vote to increase income taxes by 11 percent. They will tax the Marcellus. They will expand the sales tax to over basic cable and insurance premiums. Surely, if this governor espies a true mandate in his election, the electorate will rally 'round him and his legislative compadres, hoist them on their shoulders and carry them back

to Harrisburg this election day without throwing a single one of them off the first bridge.

If not, the governor must face a fact to which I and my former colleagues have reconciled ourselves: Pennsylvanians didn't elect Tom Wolf; they voted out Tom Corbett. As any budgeteer will tell you, numbers can mean different things. – ***pennlive.com* op-ed from Dennis Roddy, who served as a special assistant to Gov. Tom Corbett. [Gov. Wolf has his own pennlive.com op-ed](#)**

Sling TV said Thursday it has added HBO-owned Cinemax to its programming line-up, marking the first time the cable channel will be available on a standalone Internet TV service. Sling TV, the Dish Network Corp.'s \$20-a-month Internet streaming service, will charge an extra \$10 a month to customers who sign up for its "Best of Live TV" or Sling International base package for Cinemax, which includes a live channel, as well as more than 500 on-demand films and TV shows. Until now, Cinemax was only available on traditional cable packages. Dish shares were trading up 3.9% in early afternoon trade, as the S&P 500 was down about 2%. HBO parent Time Warner Inc. was up 3.6%. – ***Fox Business***

Donald Trump and Univision said Thursday that they have resolved the lawsuit that the Republican presidential contender filed after the company decided last summer not to broadcast the Miss Universe and Miss USA pageants. Trump owned the pageants at the time but has since sold them. Univision dropped plans to televise the contests following remarks Trump made about Mexicans during the announcement of his presidential candidacy. The New York developer, making a promise to build a wall on the nation's Southern border, said that Mexico had sent some criminals illegally into the United States. Univision claimed Trump had "offended millions" with his comments. He fired back with a \$500 million lawsuit claiming the Spanish-language broadcaster unjustly broke a contract. Trump said the two sides had amicably resolved their differences, and neither side gave details about the settlement. – ***Associated Press***

The spokesman for Attorney General Kathleen Kane is acknowledging that some agency employees are disappointed their boss wasn't ordered removed from office by the state Senate. Press secretary Chuck Ardo on Thursday attributed the disappointment largely to all the attention brought by the criminal case against Kane, the suspension of her law license and lawmakers' efforts to remove her from office. He says those employees want the spotlight on their agency to end. A resolution to oust Kane failed Wednesday in the Senate. Some of Kane's top deputies have publicly challenged her. Some gave testimony that helped produce charges against her that she illegally leaked grand jury information and then lied about her actions. Some also question whether agency cases could be undermined by last year's suspension of Kane's law license. Kane has denied any wrongdoing. – ***Associated Press***



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