

Massena Central School Board of Education Update
January 11, 2018

The Board of Education Meeting scheduled for Thursday, January 17, 2019 will begin at 6:30 pm in Room 314 of Massena High School. It is anticipated that the Board will go into executive session at 6:30 pm to discuss such topics as personnel on the agenda prior to the regular meeting. There will be a Finance Committee meeting at 5:30 pm in HS Student Affairs to discuss the 2019-20 budget preparations.

Public Hearing on Student Code of Conduct

The Policy Committee recently presented changes to the Board of Education on Policy 7310 Student Code of Conduct and Discipline. The revisions involve adding language for the prohibition of vaping and vaping devices on school property. Education Law Section 2801 requires a public hearing to be held for any changes to the Student Code of Conduct. The hearing will be held at 7:00 pm on 1/17/19 at the start of the regular Board meeting. Community members are welcomed and encouraged to attend.

Capital Project Update

Our newly selected architect, the IBI Group, will attend the Board meeting on Thursday for introductions and information about capital project planning. The next day on 1/18 they will meet with the Administrative Council for a Kick Off Meeting to begin laying out the process for obtaining staff input and selecting project scope prior to the public referendum scheduled for December, 2019. Attached to the Board agenda is the presentation from IBI including a proposed Pre-Referendum Schedule.

Mid-Year Update - District Goals 2018-19

In August, the Board of Education adopted the district goals for the 2018-19 school year. These goals align with our Strategic Plan including our vision, “We aspire to be a leading educational community that values diversity and prepares students to meet today’s goals and tomorrow’s opportunities.” These goals cover many key areas such as student achievement, Community Schools, capital project, school scheduling, student safety and many more. Attached to the BOE agenda is a mid-year progress report on the District goals. At the Board meeting on Thursday we will focus on those topics listed below but are open to questions from the BOE on progress in any area:

Block scheduling & Advisory at Junior High
On-line summer school
Digital citizenship
Math & writing improvements

NYPA Master Agreement

As has been reported previously, during the relicensing review with the Local Government Task Force (LGTF) in 2015, the New York Power Authority set aside \$1.5 million as part of an Energy Efficiency and Renewable Energy Savings Program. The purpose of the funding is for the eight involved municipalities to develop projects which generate energy savings or conservation through renewable power from solar, wind or other renewable generation. The LGTF includes St. Lawrence County, the towns of Louisville, Massena and Waddington, the villages of Massena and Waddington and the Massena and Madrid-Waddington school districts. The LGTF talked about a variety of projects with a particular focus on the installation of LED lights in each involved school and municipality.

As part of the process, each municipality is required to sign a Master Agreement with NYPA which establishes the relationship for the agency to provide the funding and complete the work. This agreement has been reviewed by the LGTF counsel as well as District counsel. I have attached it to the BOE agenda for your review and will discuss further in executive session on Thursday. The agreement will also be on the agenda for BOE action.

After the Master Agreement is in place there will be a Customer Installation Agreement (CIC) which will outline the specific scope of the project. Our goal is to focus on installing more energy efficient LED lighting in the elementary schools and outside lighting on all of our campuses. Talks continue between NYPA, the District, and our new architectural firm, IBI, to plan the project. Our goal is to have the new lights installed over the summer of 2019.

School Trips

There are two schools trips on the agenda for BOE review and approval. The trips, as listed on the Board agenda, are:

- High School Robotics Trip to Montreal - 2/27 - 3/2/19
- High School Trip to Costa Rica, April 2020

Regulation 8460R.1 Out of Country Trips requires Board approval for participation in both listed trips. We will discuss further at the Board meeting.

Donations to the District

We are pleased to announce that the District has received several generous donations over the last month. The list of donations for your review and acceptance are attached to the Board agenda and presented below:

- ALCOA 3 to Madison Elementary School \$500—to explore a water, energy or recycling issue at school.
- ALCOA to District - 30 Backpacks— handed out to low income students in need of a backpack to support their commitment to school.

- Massena Permanent Firefighters to District - 258 Winter Coats—to support students and families who need winter apparel
- Massena Memorial Hospital To District - Winter Coats and \$497.50 to purchase coats, hats, mittens, etc.
- Massena AMVETS & N. Lawrence Dairy to High School—refrigerator and two cases of yogurt to support HS Morning Blend Café
- Donation of TV Monitor to Jefferson Elementary School from Friends of Jefferson Parent Group \$1,439—to purchase Smart TV to be placed in cafeteria for faculty meetings, parent events, etc..
- Donation of Chairs from Akwesasne Mohawk Casino to High School

We appreciate the generosity of our community in presenting these donations. They will be of great use for supporting the education and well-being of our students.

Other News

Albany Update

The following information from NYSCOSS Deputy Director Bob Lowry describes some of the latest news impacting public education in New York State.

242nd State Legislative Session Begins — Governor's Budget Coming on January 15

As required by the State Constitution, the Assembly and Senate convened on the first Wednesday following the first Monday in January to begin their 2019 sessions this week. The opening of the legislative session has customarily also been the occasion for the Governor's State of the State address. But Governor Andrew Cuomo will again depart from tradition this year, combining the State of the State and Executive Budget presentations in a single event.

The Governor announced yesterday that the budget will be released next Tuesday, January 15. History was made in the Senate with the election of Andrea Stewart-Cousins of Westchester County as Majority Leader. She is the first woman to lead either house. Carl Heastie of the Bronx was re-elected Speaker of the Assembly.

Both leaders gave opening remarks. On education, Senator Stewart-Cousins said, "We will make sure all New York children have access to the quality education they deserve." She also voiced support for making the tax cap permanent. [Here](#) is a link to the Senator's prepared text.

Speaker Heastie did not explicitly reference education, but did state, "I promise we will not forget any community in upstate New York."

A key part of our advocacy message this year will be the legislature needs to care about every student, everywhere. This has always been true, but with a legislative body dominated by downstate and big city legislators after the partisan switch in the Senate, this message will need extra emphasis.

Who Represents Your School District in the Assembly and Senate?

On our website we have posted updated lists showing Assembly and Senate representatives for each school district. The two lists are arranged in alphabetical order of school districts. The lists show the percentage of the school district's 2010 Census population represented by each legislator. You should look at these percentages before deciding whether to contact a legislator. In some cases the percentages are very low and legislators might reasonably not regard such districts as part of their constituency.

Here are the lists:

- [Assembly](#)
- [Senate](#)

Tax Cap Data — Allowable Levy Growth Factor to be 2.00%

School districts now have all the state-generated data necessary to calculate tax levy limits for the May budget votes.

The state has provided the [Tax Base Growth Factor](#) for each district.

The Bureau of Labor Statistics just released the December Consumer Price Index figure, providing the final piece of data needed to calculate the Allowable Levy Growth Factor for 2019-20 school district budgets. It confirms what was already certain, the factor will be the maximum of 2.00 percent.

Federal Government Shutdown and School Nutrition Services

As we rapidly approach the longest shutdown ever of the federal government, concerns have risen over whether schools will continue to receive federal dollars for child nutrition programs. Child nutrition programs, such as school breakfast and lunch, are operated by the Department of Agriculture. The Department of Agriculture is one of the federal agencies that is part of this partial government shutdown.

However, the Department of Agriculture recently advised that sufficient funding exists to continue operating child nutrition program into March. This is some temporary good news, but if Congress and the President maintain their respective position on funding a border wall, this shutdown may actually begin to impact schools.

One hopes actual "leadership" will result in end of this shutdown before school operations are harmed.

Setback in Small Cities' School Finance Lawsuit

Yesterday, the trial court judge in the Maisto v. State of New York school finance lawsuit ruled against the eight small cities which brought the suit alleging that the state is failing to assure their students the opportunity for a sound basic education.

In a 2016 decision, the same judge had ruled against the small cities in an opinion later reversed by the Appellate Division of State Supreme Court. The Appellate Division directed the judge to do what she had at first failed to do — to assess the adequacy of inputs and outputs (school resources and student outcomes) for each district and determine whether insufficiency of inputs has caused the inadequate outputs.

In the new ruling, the judge weighs evidence presented by each side and concludes that sufficient inputs have been provided to enable each district to give its students the opportunity for a sound basic education as promised by the State Constitution.

In various passages, the decision notes that each of the district witnesses argued that schools must, "... provide supplemental services to students to address their challenges outside of school, including poverty, breakdown of the family structure, absence of parental guidance, challenges in communication, such as English as a second language, etc."

The judge concludes, "These circumstances certainly can provide challenges to the students in the learning environment, however, it is not the core mission of the educational system to repair these outside social concerns and problems... Put simply, the schools cannot, and should not, be held responsible for fixing all of the negative and difficult circumstances in each student's life." Notwithstanding the judge's conclusion, schools are routinely criticized and held accountable for student academic struggles that are rooted in family circumstances beyond school.

A small silver lining in the decision is that, by concluding that each of the districts has sufficient resources, the judge avoided engaging questions over the state's responsibility to fully fund Foundation Aid and the possibility of an adverse ruling on that point.

NYSSBA Releases Principles for APPR Legislation

Yesterday, the New York State School Boards Association released a statement and supporting materials outlining five principles for legislation to revise Annual Professional Performance Reviews, sure to be a prominent issue in the new legislative session.

Supporting materials, including a bill draft, are available [here](#).

We welcome getting your reactions and thoughts for other changes to APPR.

Here are the principles as explained by NYSSBA:

1. Eliminate the requirement to use state assessments as the student performance measure. Rather than being limited to scores on state tests, school districts should be able to select the measure of student performance, such as student portfolios or work samples. This would help reduce the possibility that APPR reform legislation could unintentionally lead to additional testing requirements in some school districts.
2. Remove the state aid penalty. The aid penalty prescribed in New York's APPR law punishes students if a district is unable to adopt an APPR plan and gain approval from the state education commissioner by an arbitrary state-imposed deadline. The effect is to

- push school districts to approve flawed evaluation deals that may restrict local opportunities for improvement and innovation, simply to meet the state's timetable.
3. Eliminate the requirement to include observations by "independent" outside evaluators. Principals or other trained administrators should remain the primary individuals who conduct teacher evaluations. School districts should have the option to allow observations by impartial outside evaluators and/or peers, but they should not be required to expend resources to bring in outside evaluators.
 4. Enable districts to differentiate between experienced teachers with a track record of success and other educators. Right now, when it comes to teacher observations, APPR is a one-size-fits-all model that does not distinguish between teachers who have a demonstrated record of success (such as three or more consecutive "effective" or "highly effective" ratings), and those who are less experienced or need more support. Providing more flexibility regarding the structure of observations – such as length, scope and other details – for teachers with documented histories of effectiveness would allow administrators to focus more on providing assistance to developing teachers.
 5. Do not expand collective bargaining obligations beyond those already in place. At a minimum, school districts should have the authority to select a student performance measure, determine whether to use an independent evaluator or modify the observation protocols for teachers who have a track record of success.

Albany Update (2)

The following information from NYSSBA Director of Government Relations Julie Marlette shows the outcome of several key education related bills acted upon by Governor Cuomo at the end of December. The bill he vetoed, which would allow school districts to exempt BOCES capital project costs from the tax cap calculation is particularly troubling. With St. Lawrence-Lewis BOCES in the midst of a project, this legislation would be helpful to reduce the financial impact on component schools.

2018 End of Year Summary

In the waning days of 2018, Governor Cuomo took action on a number of bills of importance to NYSSBA members. Overall, there were far more disappointments than celebrations. Among the most significant bills acted on:

- Adjustments to the BOCES DS Salary Cap: Vetoed

This bill passed both houses of the legislature for the first time in more than a decade. While that in and of itself was a great victory, unfortunately the final hurdle was not cleared. The signing of this bill would not have resulted in anyone getting an automatic raise, but rather would empower local BOCES boards with the ability to negotiate with their top employees. In his veto message, the governor indicated that since this would result in a cost that "would fall on state and local taxpayers and as such, should be dealt with in the context of state budget negotiations."

- Excluding District's share of BOCES Capital Expenditures from the Tax Cap: Vetoed

If adopted, this legislation would have made an adjustment to the property tax cap by clarifying that a school district's costs related to BOCES capital could in some instances be treated in the same manner as the district's own capital costs, which are exempted from the tax cap calculation. In his veto message, the executive stated that he had empowered State Department of Taxation and Finance to make such an adjustment, and used their failure to act as a justification for the veto, as well as saying the issue should instead be dealt with in the budget.

- Shortened Probationary Period for Administrators: Vetoed

In this instance, NYSSBA requested this veto. If enacted, this bill would have established a shortened probationary period for administrators who have received tenure in a previous district. While there was not universal opposition to the policy change, the bill as drafted included a number of technical flaws. Moreover, the bill failed to capture entire types of school districts including the Big 5 and small city school districts. The executive cited these as some of the reasons for the veto.

- Small Group Health Insurance: Approved

In a rare bright spot, NYSSBA-supported legislation was signed that would allow school districts with 51-100 employees to continue to be excluded from the definition of a "small group" for health insurance purposes. This carve out, first adopted several years ago, has prevented massive rate increases for more than 100 districts. The proposal as drafted would have extended the provision for 5 years, however, a last minute negotiation resulted in agreement to make a chapter amendment that will reduce that to 2 years.

- Adjustments to the Payment of Charter School Tuition: Vetoed

If enacted, the bill would have made adjustments to the schedule by which school districts are reimbursed for charter school supplemental basic tuition. This is a cost intended to be borne by the state, but the district of residence must pay the tuition first, and then be reimbursed by the state in the following school year. In districts where there is a concentration of charter enrollment, the cost of advancing this money can essentially wipe out any state aid increase awarded to the district. This bill would have adjusted the state payment schedule to reimburse districts in the same school year. As in the previous instance, the executive indicated this issue needed to be addressed in the context of the state budget.

- Building and Transportation Aid Amnesty: Vetoed

Four districts had pending legislation that would have addressed penalties they are facing as a result of clerical errors, such as the late filing of final cost reports for building aid projects, or other administrative issues. There was reason to be hopeful, as earlier this year two bills offering similar relief were signed. However, in the executive's veto message, there was reference to earlier vetoes of similar legislation, and provisions adopted to mitigate the impact of the penalties adopted in prior years, but no explanation as to why some districts received amnesty while others did not.

Three additional districts were awaiting action on pending legislation that would alleviate penalties for errors in the filing for transportation aid. These bills were also vetoed. In addition to referencing earlier efforts to help, once again this was identified as something that needed to be addressed in the context of the budget.

- **Special Act School District Methodology: Vetoed**

If enacted, this legislation would have authorized the State Education Department to establish multiple methodologies for certain schools and school districts within the state that are funded outside traditional school aid, and do not have taxing authority, including special act school districts. In his veto message, the governor indicated that such a bill was not needed. He stated, "SED currently has authority to establish a tuition rate 'methodology' for these schools which is 'based upon appropriate educational standards promulgated pursuant to regulations of the commissioner of education'." In addition, he stated that since 853 schools and special act school districts have to meet the same educational standards, the only reason for two methodologies would be a change in the standards; and, that "Altering established educational standards for students for the purpose of bringing greater state aid to school administration would be an objectionable policy."

- **Penalties for Delays in Construction Projects: Vetoed**

If enacted, this bill would have required school districts and other public entities to include clauses in construction contracts that authorize contractors to collect damages from school districts for delays in projects. NYSSBA asked for a veto of this bill, as it likely would have led to an increase in costs, ultimately borne by taxpayers, for school districts capital projects. Contractors already have the ability to recover losses incurred due to a public entity's, such as a school district's, gross misconduct, breach of contract or other unreasonable delays. In his veto message, the governor noted that the bill "would have the unintended impact of creating a significant administrative burden to all public entities, increasing public construction costs and legal costs" and transferring those increased costs to taxpayers.

Many of these issues, though disapproved, continue to be of importance to NYSSBA members and partners. NYSSBA Governmental Relations worked closely with many partners, including NYSCOSS and the BOCES Educational Consortium to advance these bills, and stop others where needed, and will continue to advocate for these and other issues in the weeks and months to come.

School Resource Officer Training

At the last BOE meeting a question about training for school resource officers was raised. Listed below is a recent posting from the NYS Office of Public Safety.

The Office of Public Safety in conjunction with the New York Police Juvenile Officers Association is pleased to announce a series of School Resource Officer trainings in New York State. School Resource Officers are police officers specially trained to be assigned to work within a school district in partnership with school officials. This assignment requires dedicated officers with specialized training to understand the unique relationships schools have with the

students, parents, and the communities they serve. This five-day training will provide the new SRO with a working knowledge of the School Resource Officer concept and other school based policing programs.

Course topics include:

Initiating & Implementing an SRO Program
Advisor & Communication Skills
SRO in the Classroom
Social, Emotional & Mental Health

Key Elements of the SRO
NYS Juvenile Laws
The Teen Brain & Trauma
School Security Surveys

In addition to the topics listed, this training will also include discussion on the recently enacted Raise the Age legislation that fundamentally transforms the way law enforcement officers in New York State handle cases involving juveniles. There will be a written examination and at least one graded practical exercise for each student.

These trainings will be offered in the following locations:

Schenectady County – January 28 – February 1, 2019
Suffolk County –February 11-15, 2019
Erie County – March 25-29, 2019

New Press Box Sign

As part of our roll out of the new mascot, a sign was erected on the back of the press box at Nicholas Field. Thanks to Director of Operations Greg Tessier for leading this effort.



Massena CSD In The News

Wednesday, December 26, 2018

“Alcoa contributes to Massena Central’s Backpacks Program” – North Country Now

The donation of 30 backpacks from Alcoa to the Community Schools Program is highlighted.

Link:

<http://www.northcountrynow.com/news/alcoa-contributes-massena-centrals-backpacks-program-0249906>

Friday, January 4, 2019

“Massena Central School cuts number of dropouts nearly in half since 2012-13” – Bob Beckstead, Courier-Observer

The report given by Stephanie Allen at the Board of Education meeting of December 13, 2018 is reported and highlights the improvement in graduation rates.

Link:

<http://www.mpcourier.com/dco/massena-central-school-cuts-number-of-dropouts-nearly-in-half-since-2012-13-20190104>

District Upcoming Events

1/17—Finance Committee Meeting—5:30 pm—HS Student Affairs; Board of Education Meeting—6:30 pm—HS Room 314

1/18—Capital Project Kick Off Meeting—8:00 am—CAB

1/21—Martin Luther King Day; No School

1/24—Policy Committee Meeting—6:30 pm—CAB

1/25—Regents Day; No School at HS

1/28—Facilities Committee Meeting—5:00 pm—Junior High Library