

December 2010 – January 2011

## Meeting with Albany officials to share concerns



About 30 MCSBA members and district administrators traveled to Albany in early December to meet with key staff members of the NYS Legislature, Budget Office, and Education Department. The major issues discussed during these sessions were mandate relief and proposed property tax cap legislation.



Margaret Burns Photos

TOP LEFT: President Dick Rasmussen (HFL), Executive Director Jody Siegle, John Piper (Pen), Kathy Dillon (CC), and Ray Gabriel (Bro) at the meeting with Senate Democrat officials.

ABOVE: Garry Stone (Bro), Marie Cinti (Pen), and Kathy Dillon (CC), with NYS Budget Examiners Brian Cechnicki and Christine Kauflin.

Sherry Johnson Photo



ABOVE: Greg Roberts, Program Director, Ed/Higher Ed, Senate Democrats Program & Counsel; Diane Ward, Aide to Senator Suzie Oppenheimer; Joanne Douglas, Senate Democrats Program & Counsel; Vice President Aggie Seneway (Hil), Tom Langelotti (Bro), and Garry Stone (Bro).

LEFT: Steve Beauvais (Hil), Sue Casey (Web), and Gene Mancuso (Pen) at meeting with budget officials.

BELOW: Lauri Hofmann (HFL), Marie Cinti (Pen), Mark Kokanovich (Bri), Marv Sachs (Bri), Tom Nespeca (Web), Shawn McKinnon (Senate Republican Counsel and Finance Office), Jeff Crane (WI), Sue Casey (Web), Alka Phatak (Pit), and Barbara Cutrona (Hil).





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### Upcoming Meetings for MCSBA Members

- 1/5 Information Exchange discussion of facilities use policies
- 1/12 Legislative Committee discussion of redistricting
- 1/26 Labor Relations discussion of types of negotiations
- 2/5 Legislative Breakfast

## From our president: *Upcoming challenges and opportunities*



**Dick Rasmussen** greater clarity and detail regarding the challenges we will face in the coming months — and perhaps the same regarding some opportunities as well.

Among the challenges is sure to be a property tax cap proposal. Among the opportunities may be the possibility for significant mandate relief.

Implementation of change in either of these areas will require agreement and action by both the governor and the legislature — and therein lay both our challenge and our opportunity.

During our recent MCSBA trip to Albany one of the messages we consistently heard from legislative and SED staff members was the need for us to educate our state legislators on the specifics of measures like the property tax cap and mandate relief and how those measures can affect our schools and our kids.

While they applauded the kind of quantitative data and reasoned analysis we so often provide, they emphasized the need to tell our stories in ways that connect directly to the impact on kids

and teachers in the classroom. We need to make the connection between legislative decisions and the impact on kids at the emotional level — in terms of people, not just numbers.

As an example they cited one of the statements in our briefing materials: that in 2010, over 1,200 teaching and staff positions were eliminated in Monroe County. That's a significant number, and it represents a significant economic impact. But it is just a number, and numbers by themselves can lose their meaning. What did those 1,200 positions mean to our kids on Monday morning? The message makes a stronger connection when it says those cuts mean that because a librarian's position was eliminated the kids in the local elementary school no longer have access to the library in their building or the services once provided to them and their teachers by their librarian, and so on....

During the upcoming months we will have opportunities to send these messages, tell our stories, and educate our legislators. Here are four clear opportunities.

If you haven't already done so, invite your local legislators to visit your schools and spend time with your students and teachers, as well as with administrators and board members. Tell your stories. Highlight the value of your programs, share your successful outcomes, and make clear the impact of critical legislative choices on students and educational outcomes.

Participate in our MCSBA Legislative Breakfast on February 5. Meet with your legislative representatives and their staff advisors as well as other representatives from the area. Continue to tell your story.

Represent your District in our small group meetings with local legislators and their staff members this spring. This is a prime opportunity to speak directly with our local, state, and national representatives and to reinforce our individual messages in an effective way.

Join us for our March trip to Albany and meet with the leadership of the state legislature and SED. Our group carries with it a high degree of credibility and respect among state leaders. Your participation can strengthen our messages and make them more effective.

Please don't hesitate to participate in these efforts, regardless of whether you have participated in the past. These are challenging times, and the small steps we take individually will have a collective effect that will be "greater than the sum of its parts." Take the opportunity; help us meet the challenge — for our kids, for the future of our communities.

"I am only one; but I am still one.

I cannot do everything,  
but still I can do something.

I will not refuse to do  
the something I can do."

— Helen Keller

*Dick Rasmussen*

## Executive Committee visits RMSC

The December meeting of the MCSBA Executive Committee was held at the Rochester Museum & Science Center so members could tour exhibits and hear from RMSC President Kate Bennett about the many educational programs the museum offers with and for schools. During the business meeting that followed the touring and dinner, members approved an MCSBA position on student health and wellness (see p.8).



LEFT: Ken Kathan (Fpt), Dan White (B1), and Jon Hunter (Fpt).

UPPER RIGHT: Ken Kathan (Fpt) and John Carlevatti (Pen) looking at exhibit.

LOWER RIGHT: Brent Kecksemety (Pit), Kim McCluski (Pit), and President Dick Rasmussen (HFL) with mastodon.

BELOW LEFT: RMSC President Kate Bennett and Ray Giamartino (ER).

BELOW: Dave Dimbleby (Hil) and Mark Davey (GC).



From our executive director:

### *Inflation doesn't disappear just because you want it to*



Jody Siegle

Although there has been talk about a property tax levy cap for years, every sign indicates there will be an earnest effort to pass one in the coming year. During the recent election it seemed as if every candidate supported a cap.

Candidates sometimes added that any cap needs to be accompanied by mandate relief but they neglected to provide details about mandate relief. Not so with the cap, though, which the Governor-elect says should be 2% or 120% of inflation, whichever is lower, unless over-ridden by a supermajority of 60% of the voters.

What is the logic of a 2% maximum limit? Inflation may be low right now but history shows that will change. A review of the Consumer Price Index (CPI) reveals that inflation runs higher than 2% approximately 75% of the time. So establishing a 2% ceiling for local property tax levy increases without adding other revenues makes it inevitable that when costs rise with inflation, the purchasing capacity of schools and other local governments will erode.

Why risk having a cap with a rigid limitation? We all know that good policy provides guidance for a variety of circumstances. A cap that adjusts to inflationary increases could control tax increases over time without disconnecting from reality. But an absolute limitation

that ignores normal economic fluctuations is unrealistic. California is the perfect example of what that approach produces!

The state government needs to focus on its own house. Local governments and school districts are conscientiously studying every dollar in their budgets. To really help local communities, Albany needs to confront its own spending habits and the mandates that drive cost increases far in excess of inflation. Anything else is a distraction.

And, as the Governor-elect has proposed, any new mandate - and a cap would be a mandate - should have a sunset provision, so if one is passed, it won't lock in a poor idea forever.

*Jody Siegle*

Help our lawmakers understand how their actions affect our students and programs.

Participate in our February 5 Legislative Breakfast and our March 28-29 Albany trip!

Look for registration information for both these events in your email and join your colleagues in this effort.

# Finance conference covers board fiduciary responsibility



TOP: Peter Sullivan (Pit).

ABOVE: Ray Gabriel (Bro) and Nadine Hanlon (Ken).

BELOW: Scott Covell (Fpt) speaking about district fund balance and reserves; and Frank Nardone (CC) speaking about the contents of financial reports.

The finance conference is an annual presentation co-sponsored by the Monroe County Association of School Business Officials (MCASBO) and MCSBA. The SED-approved conference is required by law to provide at least six hours of instruction in board member fiduciary responsibility.

As required by state law, new school board members from Monroe and other counties in our region met in early November with school business officials to learn more about their responsibility for the financial health of their districts.

Churchville-Chili Board President Sherry Johnson reviewed the school board role in district financial planning and oversight.

John Abbott, Member of the Monroe 2 – Orleans BOCES Board of Education and East Irondequoit Deputy Superintendent, discussed types of fraud that school districts may face and strategies to safeguard district assets.

Dr. Michael Mamo, Gates Chili Assistant Superintendent for Business, reviewed the board role in the district budget process.

Raymond Wager, CPA and external auditor for many school districts in our region, described internal, claims, external, and Comptroller audits as well as their purposes.



ABOVE: Gary Lawniczak (CC), Brian O'Connor (Gre), and John Piper (Pen); Carol Davis (WC) partially hidden behind J.Piper.

BELOW: Business Official Presenters John Abbott (EI) and Dr. Michael Mamo (GC) with Jim Crider (GC).



ABOVE: Sherry Johnson (CC) leading a discussion of board responsibilities for district financial health.



Fairport Assistant Superintendent for Business Scott Covell defined the types of reserve funds as well as their uses and limitations..

Frank Nardone, Churchville-Chili Assistant Superintendent for Business, described types of financial reports and how to use them to better understand district finances.

## Regents Committee meets with Vice Chancellor Milton Cofield



Pictured at their November 4 meeting are MCSBA President Dick Rasmussen (HFL), Mark Kokanovich (Bri), Jody Siegle, Dr. Pamela Kissel (CC), Board of Regents Vice Chancellor Dr. Milton Cofield, Dr. Kenneth Graham (RH), Kim McCluski (Pit), Tom Gallagher (WC), and Kathy Dillon (CC). Also attending but not pictured were Jeff Crane (WI), Jeanine Cushman (EI, Web), and Judy Wadsworth.

Members of the MCSBA Regents Committee met with Dr. Milton Cofield, Vice Chancellor of the NYS Board of Regents on November 4 to discuss a variety of issues.

Among the concerns are the aggressive timelines for compliance with the recently adopted regulations for implementing Race to the Top initiatives. It was explained that the RTTT deadlines must be met to maintain eligibility for the federal funds that support RTTT.

It was also explained that the think tank being established is being supported by funding from the Regents Research Fund which is managed by the University of the State of New York (USNY). USNY has its own funding streams outside of the regular state budget. This funding is needed because of state cuts in support to the SED at a time when that agency has

been given more responsibilities, especially in leading RTTT compliance efforts. The think tank will assume some of the responsibilities once designated to SED employees, in that it will make recommendations about curricula, assessments, and evaluations.

Dr. Cofield noted that the emphasis on charter schools was not a Regents idea, but one that was adopted by the NYS Legislature.

The MCSBA Regents Committee consists of Association officers, Legislative Committee Co-Chairs, and superintendents who are members of the MCSBA Steering Committee, as well as Association representatives to the Chancellor's and Commissioner's School Board Advisory Councils..

## Meeting with Regent Wade Norwood



ABOVE: Mark Kokanovich (Bri), Jody Siegle (MCSBA), MCSBA President Dick Rasmussen (HFL), Regent Wade Norwood, MCSBA Vice President Aggie Seneway (Hil), and Kathy Dillon (CC).

BELOW: Regent Wade Norwood, Aggie Seneway, and Kathy Dillon.

MCSBA Regents Committee members met on November 29 with Wade Norwood, Member at Large on the NYS Board of Regents. Among the issues discussed were the need for improved communications between SED and practitioners, controlling special education costs, and the need for inter-agency collaboration to better meet student needs.



## County health services to students

BOCES 1 and 2 collaborate each year to update professional staff on strategies to help students with mental health issues. The Fifth Annual Regional School-Based Mental Health Conference, held this past November, attracted 65 school practitioners. The program for the day included a keynote presentation on reducing risk and fostering resilience in children dealing with separation and divorce. Participants could also choose among three other presentations on the following topics: traumatic brain injury, child/adolescent depression, and navigating services for high risk students.

This last topic was presented by Chuck Allan (HFL), Children's Project Coordinator & FACT Education Liaison for Monroe County, and FACT (Family Access and Connection Team) members. This group described available county services to assist students with mental health problems and families in crisis, as well as referral matters and funding.



LEFT: Bill Hurley, BOCES 1 Coordinator of Mental Health Services; Betsy Ames, BOCES 2 Mental Health Department Chair; and Chuck Allan (HFL), Monroe County Children's Project Coordinator & FACT Education Liaison at recent mental health conference hosted by our two BOCES.

# Members share efficiencies used to cope with less revenue

Board members and administrators participated in the November 10 Information Exchange Committee discussion of strategies they're using to deal with the current economic situation that involves lower revenues with no decrease in the costs of expensive mandates (IDEA, Triborough Amendment, health insurance, retirement, etc.).



TOP LEFT: Cheryl Repass (CC).

ABOVE: Adele Bovard (Web), second from right, sharing input, as Dr. Kevin McGowan (Bri), Gary Valenti (Bri), Martha Sciremammano (Bri), Mike Suffoletto (Web), and Denise Anthony (RH) listen.

FAR LEFT: John Piper (Pen), Margy Richards (ER), and Louis Alaimo (Gre) listening to Dr. Michelle Kavanaugh (HFL).

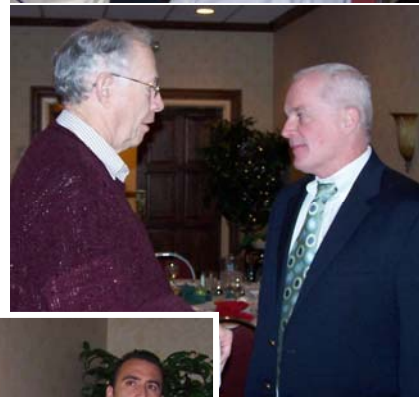
Dave Lane (GC) and Dr. Mark Davey (GC).

Among the steps highlighted by member districts are the following:

- Moving to more efficient lighting and windows,
- Turning off desktop computers at 6:00 pm.,
- Keeping support staff hours to less than 30 to avoid insurance costs,
- Removing small appliances from classrooms,
- Charging a fee for use of small appliances,
- Cutting overtime,
- Moving jobs from full- to part-time,
- Instituting 4-day work week in the summer (charging for use of buildings on 5<sup>th</sup> day),
- Changing bus routes to cut fuel consumption,
- Using student transfer sites to cut number of buses and student travel time, centralizing bus stops, increasing walking distances, changing school start times to allow for fewer buses,
- Taking over after-school care to generate revenue,
- Surveying health insurance participants to find savings,
- Moving driver education to continuing ed.,
- Discontinuing use of county security officers,
- Instituting flex hours for B&G staff to avoid extensive overtime, especially in winter,
- Eliminating some supplementary coaches as well as some sports, capping coach stipends,
- Conducting time analysis of support staff tasks,
- Conducting an inventory of all programs to prioritize and determine funding,
- Surveying size of high school classes and setting minimum student numbers,
- Seeking cost-cutting measures from Section 5 athletics consortium.

## Federal health insurance law & local consortium

The new federal health care plan will have a direct effect on the ability of our regional health insurance consortium to control the increases in cost for health insurance coverage in coming years. These effects were described to board members and administrators during the December meeting of the MCSBA Labor Relations Committee.



TOP: George Howard (B2) listens as Gary Stottler (HFL) asks a question.

ABOVE: George Howard (B2) with Labor Relations Co-Chair Tom Gallagher (WC).

LEFT: Presenters Jim Fichera (Web), Gary Valenti (Bri), and Michael Martone of Providium.



# How Monroe County districts fare in RttT sweepstakes

As a percentage of the \$696,646,000 the state will receive from its Race to the Top grant, most school districts in Monroe County will not receive much in the way of funding as can be seen in the list at the right. Furthermore, since the money will be distributed over four years and only for specific purposes tied to the RttT initiatives, local communities may not notice the influx of this money because it will not support regular district budget activities.

Half of the grant goes to the State Education Department (SED) to support the specific goals outlined in their grant application. These include developing a statewide student/teacher data system, improving teacher preparation and evaluation, developing new curriculum and assessments aligned with international benchmarks and the Common Core standards, and turning around low performing schools. The SED plan puts aside \$125,000,000 to create an additional grant application process for local districts to apply for more funding that supports RttT initiatives.

The \$348,300,000 for local school districts is being distributed by a formula tied to each districts' Title 1 allocation. As a result, about 70% of the available funding will go to New York City schools. For the same reason the Rochester City School District will receive a substantial grant.

Districts must use their grants in accordance with several specific requirements. The money is to be used within a four year period and will be provided to districts only as it is needed for specific expenditures, not in a lump sum. Only 15% of the money can be spent in the first year, between October 2010 and June 2011. 25% of the money must be used to implement an evaluation plan for teachers and principals. The remaining funds are limited to the allowable uses specified by the grant and selected by the local Network Teams established to oversee the use of these funds. Each district had to submit its plan for using its grant to SED by November 8.

In Monroe County, the Fairport Central School District opted not to participate. They concluded that the cost of participating, given the significant reporting requirements attached to the grant oversight, would exceed the available financial benefit.

FINAL Race to the Top Subgrants 10/29/2010 Participating LEAs (50% of Total)	
Participating LEA	Final RTTT Grant
Brighton	\$62,024
Brockport	\$139,685
Churchville-Chili	\$103,940
East Irondequoit	\$164,192
East Rochester	\$81,925
Eugenio Maria De Hostos Charter	\$57,471
Gates Chili	\$156,659
Greece	\$522,651
Hilton	\$107,276
Holley	\$53,441
Honeoye Falls-Lima	\$17,623
Kendall	\$35,548
Penfield	\$35,499
Pittsford	\$25,518
Rochester	\$8,180,818
Rush-Henrietta	\$189,879
Spencerport	\$101,661
True North Roch. Preparatory Charter	\$40,166
Urban Choice Charter	\$58,375
Webster	\$153,674
West Irondequoit	\$80,970
Wheatland-Chili	\$38,662



Pictures by Barbara Bennett, NYSSBA

ABOVE: 2011 NYSSBA officers pictured at the Association's convention in October are First Vice President Tom Nespeca (Webster), President Florence Johnson, Second Vice President Lynne Lenhardt, and Treasurer Michael Masse.

RIGHT: John Abbott (Monroe 2 – Orleans School Board Member and East Irondequoit Deputy Superintendent), chair of the NYSSBA Dues Committee, reporting his committee's recommendation to freeze dues for the next two years. The recommended resolution was passed by convention delegates.

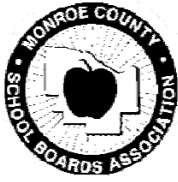
## NYSSBA convention

Those who attended this year's NYSSBA Convention helped to determine NYSSBA's legislative priorities through the annual meeting resolutions process. Approved were resolutions seeking state support for professional development, state guidelines for locally developed evaluation practices, and a NYSSBA committee to study the merits of a Constitutional convention for school boards.



# Executive Committee approves position on student health

The following statement was approved by the MCSBA Executive Committee at its December 8, 2010 meeting. This position will be shared with state and federal officials and lawmakers.



## Student Health & Fitness

MCSBA members have taken a number of steps to ensure that schools support student health.

- Several federal and state laws already govern what foods schools can serve to students.
- All districts in NYS, to meet state mandates, have worked with local citizens to establish health and wellness committees and written wellness policies and plans. Many such plans were in existence before the state mandated them.
- Since the early 20th Century, schools have taught nutrition and health to all students.
- A number of regional initiatives have been implemented without government imposition. In Monroe County, school districts worked independently and voluntarily to remove trans fats from menus.

**MCSBA OPPOSES any additional UNFUNDED mandates to school districts regarding student health. Schools are the one governmental agency already leading the way in student health initiatives.**

**MCSBA RECOMMENDS that the State recognize the value of recess. Recess provides an important time for developmental play and physical activity. New York State should allow time spent at recess to count toward the mandatory requirement for physical activity.**

**MCSBA RECOMMENDS that the state support agencies that affect children when they are outside of school to fill the gaps that are really hurting children.**

**The State and Federal Governments should:**

- \* **Take steps to make healthy foods, which tend to be more expensive, available to needy families.** Laws that help families pay for more nutritious foods would have an immediate benefit for children.
- \* **Take steps to make ALL neighborhoods safe, so children can play freely outside when not on school property and travel to and from school without fear.** Laws that support public safety initiatives would directly promote child health.
- \* **Focus agricultural subsidies on foods beneficial to children's health.**
- \* **Make sure that NO changes to education law are made without first ensuring that the issue is not already addressed in other laws or regulations.**

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2010