

ECASB Update

Member Districts: Akron, Alden, Amherst, Erie 1 BOCES, Erie 2 Chautauqua Cattaraugus BOCES, Buffalo, Cheektowaga, Cheektowaga-Sloan, Clarence, Cleveland Hill, Depew, East Aurora, Eden, Frontier, Gowanda, Grand Island, Hamburg, Holland, Hopevale, Iroquois, Ken-Ton, Lackawanna, Lake Shore, Lancaster, Maryvale, North Collins, Orchard Park, Springville Griffith Institute, Sweet Home, Tonawanda, West Seneca, Williamsville

Back-from-Albany Edition Spring 2010 Vol. 5, Issue 5

“Experience is a hard teacher because she gives the test first, the lesson afterwards.” — Unknown



Above: NYS Comptroller Thomas P. DiNapoli spoke to State Issues Conference attendees.

‘A nightmare of uncertainty ...’

More than a dozen representatives from ECASB were among the 300 school board members from across the state attending this year’s NYSSBA 2010 State Issues Conference last week in Albany.

The program brought school board members up to date on the current political climate and status of relevant legislation, and provided key talking points for meetings with state legislators. ECASB reps carried the talking points on mandate relief and prevention of cost-shifting to the offices of all 12 members of the WNY delegation before heading home.

They were important points, because good news is as scarce as money in Albany these days. The state’s current \$9 billion budget deficit is expected to balloon to a \$15 billion deficit next year, and continue growing.

The concerted effort of school board members and elected officials to find ways to contain costs is considered particularly crucial this year. As one speaker said, “Albany has a hard enough time getting its arms around difficult ideas when things are calm, let alone in politi-

cal chaos. What is needed is political stability. What we are facing now is a nightmare of uncertainty.”

In his address at a Monday breakfast meeting, NYS Comptroller Thomas P. DiNapoli said, “There are some positive signs, but job loss is still a big issue. We have the highest levels of unemployment within a quarter century.” He noted the need for a long-term strategy that will align income with expenditures and said his office would be releasing a multi-year financial plan.

“I understand the reality of the challenges that are out there. The recession is bottoming out but the problems are still out there and will not self-correct,” he said.

He recommended looking for ways to provide shared services and “consolidating functions where it makes sense and looking for changing impediments in legislation and law.”

He told the group, “It is better to build a budget that will hold together, even if the numbers are harsh and challenging.”

Notes from 2010 State Issues Conference ...



Meeting with Senator William Stachowski (center) were, from left, ECASB Executive Director Jane Burzynski, West Seneca BOE member Jan Dalbo, Depew BOE member Diane Benczkowski, ECASB Board President and Lake Shore BOE member Rick Vogan, and (front right) Linda Hoffman, NYSSBA Area 1 Director and Erie 2 CC BOE President.

Carrying the Message ...

Among the points ECASB stressed with legislators in Albany:

- Reject state aid cuts proposed in the Executive Budget.
- Support full funding of reimbursable expenses: BOCES, transportation aid, building aid and special ed.
- Oppose cost shifts onto school districts (i.e. preschool special education costs over 2%)
- Support creation of additional funds allowing better district planning from year to year.
- Support REAL mandate relief for school districts.
- State leaders must lobby federal representatives to ensure continued support for FEDERAL FUNDING for education.
- Continue to direct federal stimulus funds to education.
- Support timely passage of early retirement incentive legislation.
- Support continuation (80%) of current Special Education summer school funding.
- Support five-year rolling average of CPI for contingency budgets.
- Support opportunities for districts to increase shared and cooperative services.
- Oppose replacement of locally-elected school boards by mayoral control (currently an issue in Rochester City School District).

'... it's essential that school boards be clear on the game plan for what they want to achieve and stress it clearly.

Tell human stories. Don't have a policy discussion.

Put it in human terms.'

- Steven Greenberg, Greenberg Public Relations, in the segment, "NYS Politics: A Capitol Offence - Our Political Environment"

Notes from 2010 State Issues Conference ...



“Albany has for a long time been asking a lot of local governments and school districts without necessarily giving funding for it ...”
- Wayne Schlifke (at left), Erie 1 BOCES BOE, Immediate Past President/NYSSBA, meeting with Sam Hoyt’s Chief of Staff Robert Mayer.

Triborough - who’s law is it?

Starting with the ECASB Legislative Breakfast back in February and continuing through our State Issues Conference discussions in Albany, we have been hearing references to New York State legislators not having the authority to amend the Triborough Amendment. We took the issue to NYSSBA General Counsel Jay Worona, who has been making some follow up clarifications to elected officials. Excerpted from a recent e-mail from Jay:



“ I spoke to (him) about his comments pertaining to how the Legislature is not free to alter the Triborough Amendment. I explained ... the errors of his position. I offered to send information which will aid in better understanding the issues ... it is indeed a fair debate over whether the Legislature should amend the Triborough Amendment but its authority to do so is absolute. I really appreciate your bringing this to our attention. I will make sure that David Little and his staff are aware that we need to tell our SLN members not only about why Triborough should be amended but also that the Legislature does indeed enjoy the prerogative to do so.”

“Why would legislators be willing to see layoffs of staff yet continue to provide salary increases through Triborough?”

- Robert Bellafiore, Sr. Partner, Director of Public Affairs, Eric Mower & Associates, in the segment, “NYS Politics: A Capitol Offense - Our Political Environment”

Notes from 2010 State Issues Conference ...



The smiles belie the seriousness of the conversation outside Assemblyman Robin Schimminger's office but agreeing to pose are, from left, Scott Johnson and Dirk Rabenold (Sweet Home BOE), and Carla Thompson and Jennifer Wackowski (Lake Shore BOE). The Lake Shore Board last week voted to close two of its elementary schools in response to declining enrollment and funding.

"No matter how much effort is put forth by NYSSBA, the importance of a well-informed grassroots network of members cannot be overstated. The goal of grassroots lobbying is to show legislators that there is a large constituency of our members throughout the state who are informed and care about the decisions they will make affecting educational issues. Whether you make your interests known through writing, phone contact or personal contact, these activities make the association a viable political player. Without the strength of its members throughout the state, our efforts would fall on deaf ears."

- David Little, NYSSBA Director of Governmental Affairs

Our thanks to the ECASB members who traveled to Albany ...

Florence Johnson	(Buffalo/NYSSBA President)
Diane Benczkowski	(Depew)
Wayne Schlifke	(Erie 1 BOCES/NYSSBA Past President)
Linda Hoffman	(Erie 2 BOCES/Area 1 Director)
Nancy Renckens	(Erie 2 CC BOCES)
Joanne Martin	(Erie 2 CC BOCES)
Nancy Stock	(Erie 2 CC BOCES)
George Casey	(Grand Island)
Carla Thompson	(Lake Shore)
Jennifer Wackowski	(Lake Shore)
Rick Vogan	(Lake Shore/ECASB President)
Scott Johnson	(Sweet Home)
Dirk Rabenold	(Sweet Home)
Jan Dalbo	(West Seneca)
Ramona Popowich	(Williamsville)
Jane Burzynski	(ECASB)

Some good news ...

Some good news ... The Senate passed mandate relief bills last week to give school districts more financial flexibility. The effort would free up money that can be directed to programs and classrooms to help plug gaps left by the Governor's proposed \$1.3 billion reduction in state education spending.

• **The Paperwork Reduction Act** would reduce paper reporting and administrative time necessary for these reports by creating an electronic data collection system. The Assembly also has passed a similar version, and approval is now needed from the Governor's office.

The following three bills have been passed by the Senate and are now in the state Assembly.

1. **The Education Mandate Relief Act** seeks to minimize the impact of unfunded mandates on districts, allows school districts to share private transportation contracts and expands the services provided by BOCES. The bill also prohibits implementation of new school mandates after the budget has been adopted.

2. **Universal Pre-Kindergarten Flexibility** allows districts to use money for supportive services such as transportation.

3. **Flexibility in Claims Auditing** would allow school districts to appoint deputy claims auditors so bills can be processed more quickly.

With funding for schools simply not there, these measures are gaining traction because they are considered far more important than in the past. There is recognition that reducing mandates will help districts save money and help reduce layoffs and program cuts.

The Voters' Voice

The votes that make a difference don't happen just at your Board table. Many key votes are now taking place in the New York State Legislature. Here's how you can add your vote to urge the outcome that is best for kids and schools:

Monitoring Legislation

During the legislative session you may see "Call to Action" alerts more than once on the same bill. That's because NYSSBA staff members are monitoring the progress of both the legislation NYSSBA supports and opposes. They are taking advantage of each stage of the legislative process to advocate school boards' position. So, when you get a "Call to Action," be sure to click to send in your position on this issue.

ALSO,

CAPWIZ, on the NYS PTA web site, has a button that allows you to compose your own letter to local legislators.
<http://www.capwiz.com/npta2/ny/home/>

ALSO,

ECASB's Legislative Team meets from 7-8:30 p.m. on Thursday, March 25 at Cheektowaga High School to plan for Local Lobby Day(s) this spring here in WNY. If you would like to be part of this initiative, please join us at that meeting!

NOTE ALSO,

The NYS Conference of Mayors has developed a single issue web site www.StopTheTaxShift.org, to defend property tax taxpayers from tax shifts that may be pushed from the state onto cities and villages.



Participants listen attentively as David Warlick describes changes in information, and how that affects our lives.

David Warlick & the 4th 'R' ...

It's not often that ECASB is on the itinerary for someone en route from Shanghai to Manhattan to Australia, but so it was when internationally-known speaker David Warlick spoke at Michael's Banquet Facility on March 18th. Mr. Warlick's appearance was made possible by the WNY Joint Management Team (JMT), composed of Erie 1, Erie 2, Orleans-Niagara and Cattaraugus-Allegany BOCES.

In his discussion of 21st century literacy, Mr. Warlick illustrated how reading and writing have evolved into video reports, which incorporate both sound and imagery to create messages far more compelling than the traditional written report.

He discussed how arithmetic transcends mere numbers when it is used to illustrate, for example, the pattern of earthquake activity spurring the December 2004 tsunami that swept Indonesia and killed some 225,000 people.

Information, he noted, is increasingly networked, digital and abundant. It shapes how we connect with, relate to, and understand each other and our world.



"I had to brag," said one attendee, right, who stayed after the program to show a project to David Warlick, left.

This discussion continued the next day with teachers at Erie 2 Chautauqua Cattaraugus BOCES, in a staff development program examining how information has changed and the implications for teaching and learning. As Mr. Warlick noted, "The 21st Century teacher must be a master learner ... not that they will know all the answers, but that they will learn. It gives us permission to be learners and if you want students to be lifelong learners, we need to model that."

For more detail on his thoughts, please see <http://davidwarlick.com/wiki/pmwiki.php?n=Main.LiteracyAndLearningNarrative>

10 Strategies to Improve Communication During Labor Negotiations in Your School District

An NSPRA Tip of the Week

Source: Tom DeLapp, president, Communication Resources for Schools, Rocklin, Ca. tomdelapp@aol.com

1. Use an interest-based approach

- Disengage people from positions they take.
- Focus on common interests, not on competing positions.
- Create options for mutual gain (win-win).
- Establish objective criteria to judge progress.

2. Frame the Issues

- Avoid this cycle of hostility: accusation, defensiveness, counter accusation.
- Narrow points of contention; stick to them.
- Don't bash each other or the school system.
- When we criticize each other's performance or degrade the schools to make our point, long-term damage is done

3. Agree on the numbers

- Focus on spending priorities, not on whether the numbers are accurate.
- Create budget/finance advisory committees composed of experts from both sides.
- Find mutually acceptable comparison districts.
- Know what funds you have no control over.

4. Speak with clear voices

- Watch for end-runs to the public, staff and media by board members, union factions, and individuals.
- Designate spokespersons and channel communication through them to ensure quality control.
- Resist using rhetoric and posturing.
- Refrain from personal attacks and scape-goating.
- Don't make it personal and don't take it personally.

5. Make short-term decisions with long-term consequences in mind

- Avoid talking about winning, beating or settling with the opposition.
- Account for concessions made last year.
- When all is done, you're still going to have to work with each other.
- Use principals and site leaders as communication bridges.
- Segment negotiations from the ongoing education process.

6. Celebrate small successes

- Don't wait until the end to announce agreement, recognize small agreements along the way.
- Focus on how you're getting closer and not on how far apart you still are.
- Share the credit.
- Maintain a positive attitude no matter how tense the situation becomes.

7. Eliminate external factors as leverage points

- Many groups and individuals will try to capitalize on the controversy and conflict to advance their own personal, policy or political agendas. Watch out for:
 - i. Real and/or false-front community groups.
 - ii. Politicians, PACs and elections.
 - iii. State union and management leaders who advise getting tough.
 - iv. Wildcard taxpayers and school reform groups.
 - v. People with individual axes to grind who become whistleblowers.

8. Keep parents on sidelines but in the loop

- Brief parent leaders about the process before it starts.
- Issue joint bargaining team updates.
- Prepare a *Frequently Asked Questions* sheet.
- Hold periodic meetings with parent site councils, district parent advisory committees, and involve representatives from both sides to maintain a sense of cooperation.
- Resist using parents as picketers, protesters or letter-writers.
- Remember, many staff are or have been parents in the district.

9. Put a priority on media accuracy, not just coverage

- Inoculate reporters to their natural tendency to report the "conflict."
- Brief reporters and editors about the process, terminology, and players.
- Agree to a code of ethics the parties should follow when talking to the press.
- Adopt a policy of *no surprises* or negative hit pieces.
- Don't assume letters to the editors or calls to the district office are from plants by either side.
- Keep the media from being an agitator.
- Read the news articles to gauge public opinion.

10. Communicate jointly and separately.

- Get past the news media as your gatekeeper and conduit for sending messages to each other.
- Issue joint communications whenever possible.
- Maintain active rumor control by holding roundtable discussions with high-profile staff like secretaries.
- Keep a back door open for off-the-table dialogue between respective emissaries to float ideas.
- If necessary, help the other side to do a better job of communicating with its constituencies.

For more information and to learn more about NSPRA, please visit www.nspr.org.

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Parent Network WNY April Workshops

Roles of the Medicaid Service

Coordinator: April 6, 7-9 pm, Iroquois Intermediate School, Girdle Road, Elma. Learn about the responsibilities of a service coordinator and ways they can help your child with special needs get the services for which they are eligible.

Development of a Meaningful IEP

(Part 2): April 6, 6-8 pm, Parent Network, 1000 Main, Buffalo. What is an IEP? Receive tips and tools to become more involved in the planning of your child's education.

What to Do with All that Paper: Binder Building:

April 14, 7-9pm, KenTon SEPTSA, Ben Franklin Elementary 500 Parkhurst (use back parking lot entrance), Buffalo. Learn what papers to keep, why and how this may help you get services for your child. REPEATS April 17, 10:30 am-noon. Register: 816-3170

The Nurtured Heart Approach to

Difficult Behavior: April 20, 6-8 pm, Parent Network, 1000 Main, Buffalo. Understand how challenging children respond to normal parenting and why this parenting makes matters worse. Specific strategies designed to turn the child to a new pattern of success.

Attention Deficit Hyperactivity

Disorder (ADHD): April 24, 10:30am-noon, Parent Network, 1000 Main, Buffalo. Learn the characteristics of ADHD, treatment and strategies to help the child be more successful at home and school. Register: 816-3170.

Resolving Conflicts:

April 29, 10am-noon, Parent Network, 1000 Main, Buffalo. Learn to identify underlying causes of conflict and examine how each parent responds. Learn ways to manage or resolve conflict and understand your role in its management and resolution.

**(716) 332-4170 info @
parentnetworkwny.org**

ECASB Calendar

March 2010

- 25 Executive Board, 5-6:30 p.m., Cheektowaga High School, 3600 Union, Cheektowaga
- 25 Legislative Team, 7-8:30 p.m., Cheektowaga High School, 3600 Union, Cheektowaga
- 27 **Prospective School Board Member Workshop, 8:30-noon, Rm. B1**

April 2010

- 2** *Good Friday (Office Closed)*
- 10-13 NSBA Conference, Chicago
- 19-23 Spring Recess, E1B & E2CCB
- 29 Budget & Finance Team Program Discussion from 6-7 p.m., followed by Delegate Assembly, 7-8:30 p.m., Rm. B1

May 2010

- 18 Budget Votes/Elections in School Districts
- 20 Scholastic Achievement Recognition Dinner, Marriott
- 31** *Memorial Day (Office Closed)*

June 2010

- 5** **ECASB New School Board Member Academy, 8:30-12:30, @ Millennium**
- 10 ECASB Annual Dinner @ Salvatore's
- 12** **FORT: Registration ... 8:45-9 a.m.; Program ... 9-3:30 p.m., Rm. B1**
- 17 Executive Board Planning Meeting

SAVE the DATES:

- Aug. 4 ... WNY Education Law Conference
- Aug. 16 & 17 ... Social Studies Summer Seminar

March for Children on April 28 ... The Citizens' Task Force on Child Abuse & Neglect will sponsor a March for Children starting at 11:30 a.m. at Lafayette Square on April 28th, and ending at City Hall at noon. This march is in recognition of National Child Abuse & Neglect Prevention Month. A brief program will follow.

For more information about the March, the Citizen's Task Force and/or to arrange a child abuse prevention awareness activity, please contact Deborah Merrifield at 822-0919 or dmerrifield@joanamale.org

Children's System of Care Conference on May 7 ... The Children's System of Care, a partnership among the Erie County departments of Mental Health, Social Services and Probation, and families in Western New York, will sponsor its 2nd Annual Conference to coincide with National Mental Health Month and Children's Mental Health Day, on Friday, May 7 at the Buffalo Convention Center, starting at 8 a.m. Workshops will include: "Sexting" & Social Networking Among Youth, Gang Awareness, Family As Change Agent, and Youth Brain Development/Medication Use. For information: tracy@tracydiina.com