



Erie County Association of School Boards

Vol. 3; Issue 2; October 2023

ADVOCACY ALLIANCE MONTHLY YOUR MONTHLY UPDATE

Dear ECASB Members,

The Legislative Team is hard at work setting the priorities for the 2023-2024 school year. Every other year, the team surveys the member districts to set the priorities, and this year is a survey year. Hopefully, your district representative has reached out to discuss the survey questions with you. Responses are due soon, and the results will be discussed at the Legislative Team meeting on Oct. 19. Setting the priorities is a crucial step in preparing for our Legislative Dinner with our local legislators on November 16.

We hope to see as many ECASB members as possible at the Legislative Dinner. We already have many legislators committing to attending or sending their legislative director to the dinner. This is a great opportunity for the legislators to see us as a large organization supporting many voices advocating for public education.

There are a lot of great things happening in October. Later this month is the Kick-Off to Convention Social at Resurgence Brewing Company on Oct. 25, followed by the NYSSBA Convention here in Buffalo from Oct. 26-28. Be sure to visit the ECASB table on the first floor of the convention.

As the temperature drops it is a great time to cozy up with an ECASB candle and enjoy this month's offering of legislative news.

Cheers,

~Jane

**ECASB - where fun begins!
Find us on the first floor of the
convention in Buffalo .**

Important Dates

- ⇒ Rick Timbs Dinner at The Columns tonight, Oct. 12. Registration is at 5:30, Dinner begins at 6 p.m.
- ⇒ Legislative Team Meeting; October 19, 6:30-8:30 p.m. Rm A1
- ⇒ Convention Fun— ECASB will have a table on the first floor of the convention center. October 26-28.
- ⇒ Dave Little Dinner at Creekside Banquet Facility, November 2. Registration is at 5:30, Dinner begins at 6 p.m. Register through your district clerk by Oct. 25.
- ⇒ Register for the Legislative Dinner, November 16 at The Columns. Registration is at 5:30, dinner program begins at 6 p.m. Register with your district clerk by Nov. 1.

Our 2023-2024 Platinum Sponsors



time to talk

Teacher Shortages and Other Common Issues Between NYSUT and School Boards:

A conversation about advocacy with NYSUT Regional Staff Director Joe Cantafio

As school board members, we often hear ‘NYSUT’ and think contract negotiations and conflict. After sitting down and speaking with Joe Cantafio, the truth is, “We have more in common than not.”

Joe’s path to his role includes an almost 30-year career as a high school social studies teacher at West Seneca West High School. He was a football coach and incredibly involved in all aspects of the school district and local community. The son of a UAW leader, Joe became involved in the district’s local union running for president when APPR became an issue impacting teachers across the state. He says, “I became very involved when the governor passed APPR laws and our students were basically just test score numbers...when Governor Cuomo decided to attack public education and cut funding - that is when I got involved.”

“I am proud to say that the very first Call Out Cuomo Rally was held in West Seneca, where we had thousands of people from all across Western New York show up, and we led rallies and pickets in front of every school and every school district in Western New York, fighting against the over testing of our students.”

From the very beginning, Joe has been the kind of advocate who recognizes the value of making connections. He has collaborated with superintendents, teachers and even school boards to fight battles against what he calls, “...a spiteful governor who decided to go to war against public education.” Reaching across the aisle and recognizing he is in the fight for the long haul, Joe rolls up his sleeves and jumps into advocacy that benefits not just the teachers, but school administrators and school

boards as well. He is willing to work hard to do what is right for our kids.

Last year, Joe made a difficult decision. He says, “advocating for our students...became a very large part of my life. Last year, the NYSUT Regional Staff Director position opened up, and I decided with the things that are going on today with the attacks on public education and the attacks on our students... there’s so many outside political forces going on, that the opportunity to be an advocate full time was more than I could pass up.” He admits, “I miss the classroom like you would not believe. Teaching is a true vocation. But this opportunity seemed like it was what had to be done at this time and that is how I ended up here.”

Joe is a true advocate. I asked about the kinds of initiatives he has been involved with and what some of the top issues are that he is working on today. That sped the conversation into issues about teacher recruitment and retention and a campaign rolled out this past August: “Fix Tier Six.” This is a program designed to amend the teacher retirement program. As a school board member, you may be asking why this should concern you, but you cannot talk about the reasons why there is a teacher shortage and why young people today don’t become or remain teachers if you don’t look at Tier Five and Tier Six and see they just are not viable retirement plans. Joe spoke about how 20 years ago; Tier Four was a shambles and he concedes it took 20 years to correct it. Like any issue we advocate for, it takes time, and we must have patience. It is his hope to see better retirement plans set up for our new teachers that would encourage today’s youth to return to the teaching profession without having to worry about working until they reach age 63, just to get a pension of 26 percent, when teachers hired in earlier tiers could work until age 55 and have a pension of 60 percent. It is also important to note that currently 40 percent of the teachers in New York State are in Tier Six. It is an important fact because these are the people finding jobs in other fields to make a better living with a better benefits package, including retirement.”

Joe also talks about younger people today, entering

Our 2023-2024 Gold Sponsors



since 1884
danforth



Leadership • Innovation • Commitment



time to talk

the field. He says, “when somebody first gets a job, especially this generation, they are not really thinking of teaching as a big, long career. They think of things in the here and now”. These recruits spend five or six years as a teacher, but as they start to marry or have children, they realize there are better opportunities for better pay, benefits, and retirement programs.

Joe also brought out several concerns and issues we speak about as school board members, illustrating once again how we are on the same side. Other top issues NYSUT is working on include student safety and student mental health. “We need to get these kids into the schools where the programs are. Attendance issues are impacting all districts. If the kids are not coming to school, the programs cannot reach them.”

I asked Joe about a couple costly issues he had not mentioned that we as school boards have a focus on such as Childhood Victims Act funding and zero emission bus mandates. He reacts, “well yeah, absolutely. I mean funding is funding, right?” He continues, “Obviously whenever there’s common ground, we work together... the child victims’ situation, that’s going on is a very delicate one because what happened to those kids is horrific, right? ...that deserves a restitution, but as you say, if it causes more children to be harmed, in a different way...is there a way we can make sure it doesn’t happen again, and what is just and right but doesn’t have a negative impact moving forward.”

As far as the financial burdens of zero emission bus mandates will have, teachers have not yet realized the impact those mandates will have on them directly. Joe suggests school boards begin having conversations with their local union through the superintendent. Once teachers see how the mandate will affect the entire budget, they will bring the issue to Joe and his staff; NYSUT can become involved in helping advocate for solutions to the financial burden. He talks about how the local unions are elected people, just like a school board member saying, “We need to all respect one another as elected officials.” And with the strong position NYSUT holds in state advocacy, when we can go to our local senator or assemblymember and say we have a strong relationship with our local union leaders and they support the issue as well, it can go a long way to making legislators listen.

Joe makes a plea for teachers too. In today’s post COVID atmosphere, with financial struggles and learning loss, more often teachers feel devalued. He promotes the idea that “...people will work in a job if they feel valued. And how do people feel valued? If there’s strong leadership with strong vision.” He adds that that vision and leadership must also “...come from genuinely valuing the experts in the field or on the frontline and taking in their input. In doing so, they don’t have to

always agree, but when people feel genuinely valued, they will come to work every day and they will do what is asked of them.” It is just one more example of making genuine connections with people.

Joe states, “It seems like there’s a lot more that the teachers’ union and the school boards have in common than what you would think immediately. You always hear about the teachers and the school boards on opposite sides of the table because you’re negotiating contracts. But when that’s removed from the equation, we really are very similar in what we want and that is what’s best for kids and best for education.”



*Joe Cantafio,
WNY Regional Staff Director of NYSUT*

BILL ALERT

ECASB uses Bill Track 50 for our bill tracking and advocacy needs. If you also have an interest in tracking bills, email Jane at JSullivan@e1b.org; she will set you up with an account umbrellaed under the ECASB Bill Track 50 subscription. Support is provided.

New Bills:

A08086: Permits special education services and programs for preschool children with handicapping conditions to establish reserve funds. This bill was introduced on Sept. 29. It does not have a local sponsor. It is a companion bill to senate bill S07215, which was introduced on May 18. The senate bill also has no local sponsor.

A08050: Classifies possession of firearms on school grounds or municipal park property as a class B felony. It was introduced on Sept. 27 and has no local sponsors.

A08058: Requires cardiopulmonary resuscitation instruction as a part of the health education curriculum in all senior high schools. It was introduced on Sept. 27 and has no local sponsors.

A08062: Permits certain schools to provide hemostatic agents for use during emergencies. It was introduced on Sept. 27 and is locally sponsored by **AM Joe Giglio** and **AM Stephen Hawley**.

A08074: Authorizes a weighted selection process prioritizing children who would be eligible to receive free or reduced price lunch and/or who are English language learners for the allocation of certain prekindergarten seats in school districts where there are more eligible children than can be served in a given school year. It was introduced Sept. 27 and has no local sponsors.

A08076: Creates a school budget tax cap exemption for expenditures resulting from settlements or jury awards for civil actions brought against school districts under the child victims act. It was introduced on Sept. 27 and is sponsored by **AM William Conrad**, **AM Karen McMahon** and **AM Monica Wallace**. I sent them each a thank you post card. I have also sent support post cards to all the other local assemblymembers. Additionally, I sent support companion legislation to our local senators. On Oct. 5, **Senator Borrello's** office called to say he will *consider* this legislation and sponsorship of a companion bill in time for the January 2024 Legislative Session.

A08025: Prohibits the use of cannabis within thirty feet of a child or within thirty feet of any location in which children reside or attend for any recreational or educational purpose; provides for increased penalties for a second or subsequent violation. Introduced on Sept. 13, there are no local sponsors.

Bills Gaining Sponsors:

A00455: Enacts the "NY broadband resiliency, public safety and quality act" to provide for oversight of the resiliency, public safety and quality of broadband and voice over internet protocol service. Introduced on Jan.



Our 2023-2024 Silver Sponsors

Bill Alert Continued

9, local sponsors now include *AM Patrick Burke, AM Karen McMahon, AM Michael Norris and AM Monica Wallace.*

A00447: Establishes a maximum temperature in school buildings and indoor facilities; provides a definition of extreme heat condition days and the standard to measure room temperature. Introduced on Jan. 9, local sponsors now include *AM William Conrad, AM Karen McMahon, and AM Monica Wallace. There is a companion bill in the senate (S03397 introduced Jan. 31) that does not have local sponsorship.*

*Note to consider on this bill as well as others: The bill states that there is no impact to the budget, but they mean the state budget. This is a bill that will turn out to have unintended consequences in that to regulate temperature in a building, districts will be required to make all buildings outfitted with heating *and* air conditioning. This would be a considerable cost to taxpayers at the local level and would certainly impact school budgets. *

The following pages are addresses for our local legislators. Write to them and share your views on these bills! If you need post cards, please email me at jsullivan@e1b.org and I will have a set sent to you at your district.



IN THE NEWS

Articles that may interest you

In the Buffalo News, there was an article titled “[What we need to hear but wont about moving to electric vehicles](#)” on Oct. 1.

On Sept. 28, the governor’s office released a press release on the governor’s website titled [Governor Hochul Announces Partnership Between U.S. Department of Energy and New York State Energy Research and Development Authority to Accelerate Clean Energy Financing | Governor Kathy Hochul \(ny.gov\)](#)

Senators' Addresses

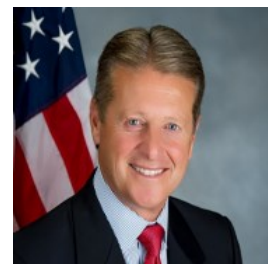
District 57 George Borrello

2-6 E. Second Street
Fenton Building, Suite 302
Jamestown, NY 14701
borrello@nysenate.gov



District 60 Patrick Gallivan

2721 Transit Road
Suite 116
Elma, NY 14059
gallivan@nysenate.gov



District 61 Sean Ryan

40 La Riviere Dr.
Suite 121
Buffalo, NY 14202
ryan@nysenate.gov



District 62 Robert Ortt

175 Walnut Street, Suite 6
Lockport, NY 14094
Ortt@nysenate.gov



District 63 Timothy Kennedy

37 Franklin Street
Suite 550
Buffalo, NY 14202
Kennedy@nysenate.gov



Assembly Members' Addresses

Stephen Hawley

121 North Main Street
Suite 100
Albion, NY 14411
hawleys@nyassembly.gov

**Karen McMahon**

5500 Main Street
Suite 224
Williamsville, NY 14221
mcmahonk@nyassembly.gov

**William Conrad**

34 Peuquet Parkway
Tonawanda, NY 14150
conradw@nyassembly.gov

**David DiPietro**

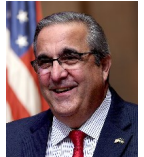
411 Main Street
East Aurora, NY 14052
dipietrod@nyassembly.gov

**Crystal Peoples-Stokes**

425 Michigan Avenue
Buffalo, NY 14203
peoplec@nyassembly.gov

**Joseph Giglio**

700 West State Street
Olean, NY 14760
giglioj@nyassembly.gov

**Patrick Burke**

3686 Seneca Street
West Seneca, NY 14224
burkep@nyassembly.gov

**Jonathan Rivera**

65 Grant Street
Buffalo, NY 14213
riverajd@nyassembly.gov

**Monica Wallace**

2562 Walden Avenue
Suite 102
Cheektowaga, NY 14225
wallacem@nyassembly.gov

**Andrew Goodell**

Fenton Building
2 E 2nd Street
Suite 320
Jamestown, NY 14701
goodella@nyassembly.gov

**Michael Norris**

8180 Main Street
Clarence, NY 14221
norrism@nyassembly.gov

**Angelo Morinello**

800 Main Street
Suite 2C
Niagara Falls, NY 14301
morinelloa@nyassembly.gov





Erie County Association of School Boards

2023-2024

Quick Response Team

Members:

David Lowrey, ECASB Executive Director

Jane Sullivan, ECASB Program Services Manager

Scott Johnson, Legislative Co-Chair, Sweet Home CSD

Kathleen Chiavetta, Legislative Co-chair, Lake Shore CSD

Erik Polkowski, Legislative Co-Chair, Akron CSD

Ryan Anderson, Orchard Park CSD

Ed Schaefer, Cheektowaga CSD

Kristin Schmutzler, Tonawanda City School

Michael Montoro, Cleveland Hill UFSD

Kristy Pingitore, Akron CSD

Representing:

- ⇒ Rural Districts
- ⇒ Small Districts
- ⇒ Large Suburban Districts
- ⇒ BOCES Districts
- ⇒ Small City School Districts
- ⇒ First Ring Suburban Districts
- ⇒ Native American Populations

*To contact our Quick Response Team,
email David Lowrey at dlowrey@eib.org
or call 716-821-7297*

Our 2023-2024 Platinum Sponsors

