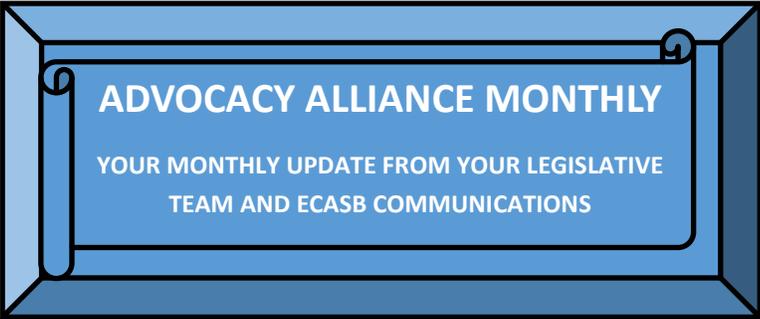




Erie County Association of School Boards

Vol. 1; Issue 5; January 2022



ADVOCACY ALLIANCE MONTHLY

YOUR MONTHLY UPDATE FROM YOUR LEGISLATIVE TEAM AND ECASB COMMUNICATIONS

Dear Members,

As I write my monthly greeting, it is bitter cold outside. I have a fire in the fireplace and the Christmas décor decorating the mantle has been replaced with valentine Gnomes and icicles.

The hustle and bustle of the holiday season has ended and many of us are finally able to slow down and take stock of the previous year and all its accomplishments as we look with hope to the future year ahead. I recently read an article that said many people dread this new year more than usual, and that hope seems to be fleeting. It brings to mind the old Barry Manilow ballad about it being just another new year's eve, let's make it the best. I spent my last evening of 2021 at Shea's seeing the production of "Hamilton." It was amazing. And I could not stop hearing the song lyrics in my mind as I wrote this month's Time to Talk article about the Sweet Home Student Government Association. If you haven't seen "Hamilton," give me a call; we can have dinner and watch it together on my Disney TV account!

It is important to note that the COVID-19 pandemic has altered the plans of yet another NYSSBA event, and the Capital Conference scheduled for Feb. 9 will now be a virtual event. Reach out to our ECASB office or to NYSSBA directly if you have any questions or concerns regarding the event. Don't let this change stop the momentum.

Reach out to your legislator using the ECASB post cards given to your district's legislative team representative. Advocacy doesn't stop because face-to-face meetings with the legislator's have been interrupted.

May 2022 bring you joy, peace and happiness both professionally and personally.

Sincerely,
Jane



- ⇒ ECASB Advocacy Training: Jan. 29 , 2022, 8 –10:30 a.m., RmB1
- ⇒ ECASB Local Advocacy week: Jan. 31-Feb. 4, 2022
- ⇒ Rick Timbs (Dessert Forum): Feb. 3, 2022, 6:30– 8:30 p.m., RmB1
- ⇒ NYSSBA Capitol Conference Virtual: Albany, Feb. 2, 2022
- ⇒ NYSSBA Capitol Conference: Albany Virtual Lobby day Feb. 9, 2022.



- ⇒ Send an ECASB post card to your legislators advocating for your district's needs.
- ⇒ Let us know if you are going to the NYSSBA Virtual Capital Conference– Email Jane at JSullivan@e1b.org.
- ⇒ Send in nominations for ECASB Awards today.



A Word From Legislative Co-Chair Scott Johnson



For the veterans on the Legislative Team, you have heard us talk about the Capital Conference before. Our new members may not have heard about it yet, but you definitely will. The Capital Conference is an event run by the New York State Association of School Boards (NYSSBA). They have held it annually in early February, and it has traditionally been a two-day event. The first day was always spent with NYSSBA staff and several speakers, usually including the SED Commissioner. The second day started

with a breakfast and speaker, then the attendees converged on the Capital and the Legislative Office Building to meet with our elected representatives. NYSSBA provided some basic training and the materials to share with the electeds and highlighted which topics we should discuss and any pertinent legislation in the works. We also encouraged our members to bring the concerns of ECASB and their own districts.

Beyond just the time spent discussing issues, we would recommend everyone take time to visit our State's Capital Building. I personally am awestruck at the beauty of the building and seeing the process in action. One year, the two assemblymen who represent Sweet Home took us on the floor of the assembly and had our names read into the official proceedings as special visitors. Sitting in the gallery and watching the flow of people and listening to the workings of the chamber is fascinating. The million-dollar staircase and the hall of flags are must see parts of any tour.



Unfortunately, the last paragraph is a bit of a tease. Since the arrival of Covid-19, this has become a virtual event. I shared it anyway, so that when we get back to normal, you know more about the event and reasons to attend. This year, the Capital Conference is being held on two days a week apart. On February 2nd, the normal day one activities will take place via a webinar. NYSSBA staff will review the proposed executive budget with us and talk about the current issues. In addition, there will be a speaker from the State Education Department (SED). On February 9th, they are holding a virtual lobby day. Instead of in person visits to their offices, we will have *Zoom* meetings with the representatives and/or their staff. The staff members who would be in attendance are usually the representative's expert on education issues. Even if you have met with your representatives locally, this virtual meeting with the Albany staff is important. They are typically more involved with the budget and actual written legislation than the local staff may be. Local staff typically are more involved with direct constituent issues. These two days are well worth the time and effort, and we encourage you to strive to join us. If you have any questions about the Capital Conference, please reach out to myself, Kathleen Chiavetta, Jane Sullivan or Dave Lowrey. Thanks,

Scott

IN-PERSON LOBBY DAY WILL NOW BE VIRTUAL

Samantha Englemyer, the member relations specialist from NYSSBA sent the following email this past Monday:

As you know, New York State has seen a sharp increase in COVID-19 cases following the holiday season. It is with this in mind, that we regret to inform you that NYSSBA's Annual Lobby Day on February 9th, will now be a virtual event. We recognize the strong impact in-person lobbying can make on such important issues, but the state has announced they are closing the Legislative Office Building (LOB) building to the public and we no longer have the option to lobby in-person. Lobby day will now be held virtually, and details surrounding that will be released shortly.

Visit the NYSSBA website at <http://www.nyssba.org> for more information.

Comic Corner



"IT SAYS SO MUCH ABOUT YOUR LIFE and LEGACY IF PEOPLE THINK YOU DIED TOO SOON AT 99."

time to talk

Sweet Home Student Government Association: A Model for Advocacy

During the Round Robin portion of a Legislative Team meeting in the fall of 2021, Board Member from Sweet Home CSD, *Kailey McDonald*, shared news about a program at Sweet Home High Schools that piqued my curiosity. I dug a little deeper and uncovered yet another district doing great work in promoting advocacy and creating authentic student learning experiences.

The Sweet Home Student Government Association (SHSGA) advisor Mary Bruce, an AP History and Global History social studies teacher at Sweet Home High School had developed the program 5 years ago.

In 2017, a conversation began about how students could become more involved in making changes and having their voices heard within the district. As the culture of the district and the high school changed, so did the needs and wants of the students. Students needed an organized way of communicating with district leaders. By May of 2018, a new SHSGA began with an actual constitutional convention, modeled after our very own national form of government. Students, with the help of district leaders, drafted a 25-page constitution with bylaws, laying the foundation of the SHSGA. The program would have grade level senators, a vice president, a president, and a cabinet for the seven identified committees.

The SHSGA held its first full election in September of 2018. Then Principal Scott Martin, Executive Assistant to the Superintendent and Clerk to the Board of Education Sherry McNamara, and Director of Finance and Plant Services Donald Feldmann reached out to the Erie County Board of Elections (ECBOE) for help in the election process. Since then, ECBOE has become actively involved in the annual elections providing ballots and the voting machines. Students petition to run for an office, and campaign in school for a week. Official ballots provided by the Erie Country Board of Elections are as real as they ones we use each November (fig. 3). Social Studies teachers take time in class to explain the ballot and how to cast a vote. When students are old enough to participate in local, state, and national elections, they will know exactly what to do. On election day, students visit the voting area set up in the school's main foyer during social studies class to cast their vote for the senate (fig. 4), the vice president, and the president. The senate body is comprised of six freshman, six sophomores, five juniors and five seniors. The vice president can be either a junior or a senior. The president must be a senior. Typically, about 12 students will run for the senate seats at each grade level.

After elections, the newly elected president appoints a chairperson for each of the seven committees. These people become the president's cabinet members, after they are confirmed by the senate.

Any student can serve on a committee, allowing *all* Sweet Home students to have a voice and be involved. The seven committees are based on district level committees. Committees included: Academics and Student Life, Athletics, Diversity and Inclusion, Environmental Actions, Food and Nutrition, Music and the Arts, and Technology.



Fig. 1



Fig.2

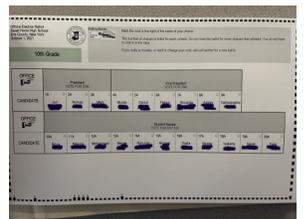


Fig. 3



Fig. 4

Above: various photos of Sweet Home's Student Government Association election process.

The program is all about student engagement, giving students a role as advocates of change, and providing space to develop leadership skills. In the area of mental health, the cabinet leader, in charge of Academics and Student Life, worked with her committee and the school social worker to create the Kindness Campaign. Now, each Friday, the committee passes out handwritten cards, created earlier in the week by the committee members. The cards with positive affirmations are given to the student body. Sometimes they are accompanied with a piece of candy. The notes allow all students to garner a sense of belonging. Another initiative of SHSGA was to replace the Styrofoam lunch trays with recyclable trays.

The technology committee worked with the districts technology department to implement a student run help desk in the library. With a 1-to-1 iPad implementation in the district, it was important for students to be able to go to a peer for help learning to use the programs imbedded in the software.

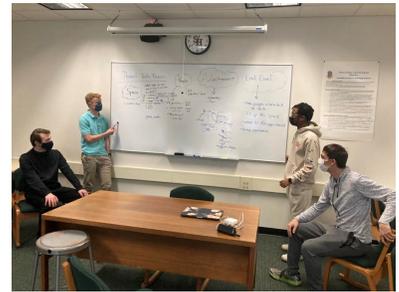
SHSGA and the president are currently working with district leaders to develop a lofty goal of building a greenhouse capable of growing and sustaining a portion of the entire district's nutrition program. Mrs. Bruce admits that there is a level of needing to manage student expectation. Even Students are learning that a venture of such proportion is a multi-year project. The project may start with just a space for a large garden in the spring. Students are also learning what a capital project in the district would look like, how it is funded and how it needs voter approval from the community at large. Students are currently seeking a grant from New York State to partially fund this initiative. Students are learning the life lesson of short-term goals for long term gains.

On occasion, a committee will have to address the Board of Education. Such was the case when students wanted to change a board policy on hats in school.

The Sweet Home Board of Education includes an ex-facto officer; the student in the role of the SHSGA vice president, takes a seat on the Board of Education. At every level, from the Board of Education and Superintendent Michael Ginestre, to the current high school Principal Antonio Perry, everyone is finding ways to work with students as they advocate for changes and improvements the SHSGA wants to see in the district.

While some students are re-elected from one year to the next, the group continually evolves. Many students come with little to no leadership experience. The current vice president is a junior who has an incredible gift for rallying students to participate. His enthusiasm and tremendous leadership style is bringing a truly diverse group of students together for common goals.

It is inspiring to watch, says Mrs. Bruce. She finds such joy in watching students become great organizers of change. It is exciting to see students take ownership of the school and the experience they will have during their years of high school. "I am lucky I get to do this," she says.



Above: Students, faculty, administrators and staff work together with cabinet members to find common ground and goals for the SHSGA and Sweet Home School District.

Below: Sweet Home High School and the Sweet Home Central School District Logo.



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 and send you a link to the online training recording made during the November 2021 legislative team training session.

Bill S07619– This bill would amend the education law relating to absentee ballots for school district elections during a declared disaster emergency. It was referred to the Rules Committee on Dec. 22, 2021. It is sponsored by Education Chair *Shelley Mayer*. Read the full bill by visiting <https://www.nysenate.gov/legislation/bills/2021/S7619>.

Bill S07615-This bill would establish the Early Learning Child Care Act, imposing a payroll tax on certain employers for the purposes of addressing child care affordability, accessibility, and quality for families with children under five years of age; establishing the early learning child care fund; establishing the early learning child care program to provide subsidies to cover children to attend early learning child care programs; establishing the New York State child care board. It was referred to the Rules Committee on Dec. 17, 2021. It is sponsored by *Jessica Ramos*. Read the full bill by visiting <https://www.nysenate.gov/legislation/bills/2021/S7615>.

Bill S07600-Establishes that any person who knowingly engages in a repeated course of cyberbullying of a minor is guilty of an unclassified misdemeanor punishable by a fine of not more than one thousand dollars, or by a period of imprisonment not to exceed one year, or both. It was referred to the Rules Committee on Dec. 15, 2021 and is sponsored by *local legislator, Edward Rath*. Read more about this bill by visiting <https://www.nysenate.gov/legislation/bills/2021/S7600>.

Bill A08516/S07547-Relates to notifying parents of their right to refuse the inclusion of certain behavioral interventions in their children's individualized education plan or behavioral intervention plan. It was referred to the Education Committee on Dec. 13, 2021 and is sponsored by *Chris Burdick*. Read more about this bill by visiting <https://www.nysenate.gov/legislation/bills/2021/A8516>. *Peter Harckham* is sponsoring a companion bill, referred to the Rules Committee on Nov. 24, 2021. This bill can be viewed by visiting <https://www.nysenate.gov/legislation/bills/2021/S7547>.

If you have not already told us, We want to hear from you!

Wednesday, February 9, 2022, is the NYSSBA Capital Conference. ECASB will be setting up meetings with our local legislators in their Albany offices. We need to know who is planning on attending so we can include you. Email Jane Sullivan at JSullivan@e1b.org by noon on January 17, 2022 to let us know.

Meet the New York State Senate Committee on Education Members



Each month, ECASB highlights a member from the New York State Senate Committee on Education. This month ECASB introduces you to the Honorable Samra G. Brouk

NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

SAMRA G. BROUK

(D) 55TH SENATE DISTRICT

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Senator Brouk represents New York's 55th District which includes our neighbors in the Rochester area: portions of Monroe and Ontario counties, including Rush, Mendon, Pittsford, Perinton, Fairport, Penfield, East Rochester, East Irondequoit, Naples, Bloomfield, Victor, and the east side of the City of Rochester.

Senator Brouk was born and raised in the City of Rochester and surrounding suburbs, before earning her B.A. in Psychology at Williams College.

Senator Brouk works to help provide quality services, greater opportunities, and vital support to those in need. Her public service includes involvement with the Peace Corps and working with local governments to improve recycling efforts, improve services for seniors aging within their homes, and address inequalities in the public school system. As a leader in non-profit community development, she has spent a decade building educational, environmental, and senior services initiatives in her own community and across New York State.

Senator Samra Brouk (SD-55) and Assemblymember Aileen Gunther (AD-100) have introduced legislation that would require employers to conspicuously post information and resources pertaining to mental health. S7577 would require workplaces to post information with mental health resources in a shared space.



Meet the New York State Assembly Committee on Education Members



Each month, ECASB highlights one member from the New York State Assembly Committee on Education. This month we introduce Assembly Member, the Honorable Doug Smith.

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Doug Smith, born and raised in Long Island, is the State Assemblyman for the 5th District, which includes portions of the towns of Brookhaven and Islip, including Holbrook, Lake Ronkonkoma, Ronkonkoma, Holtsville, Centereach, Selden, parts of Farmingville, Islandia, North Patchogue and Stony Brook in Suffolk County on Long Island. He serves as Ranking Minority Member of the Education Committee.

Mr. Smith was elected to his position in April of 2018 in a special election to fill a seat of an unexpired term. He was re-elected to his seat in November of the same year. Prior to his election, he served his community alongside Assemblyman Al Graf, serving as his Chief of Staff. One of his main battles was a charge “against the flawed Common Core curriculum,” says his website.

Mr. Smith is a graduate of St. Joseph’s College, where he earned a degree in mathematics, adolescent education, and is a NYS certified mathematics teacher for grades 7-12. His official website reports that during his college years, “he spent nights teaching adult education courses, and on the weekends helped educate homeless and underprivileged youth in the Sachem School District.”

His official website also shares that Mr. Smith “is a small business owner who operates a website design and hosting company.”

Mr. Smith and his wife, Elizabeth, live in Holbrook with their daughter.

Monday, January 10th, Mr. Smith posted to Facebook: “Right now we are taking a vote on the floor of the New York State Assembly on 2 sets of proposed district maps for Congress, State Senate, and State Assembly drawn by the Independent Redistricting Commission. Plan A was drawn by the Democrats and only supported by Democrat Commissioners, Plan B was drawn by the Republicans and only supported by Republican Commissioners. This is not what the people of New York want to see happen. For that reason, I am voting NO on both sets of partisan maps - which will send it back to the Independent Commission, who can and must do better for all New Yorkers. This Commission should send the Legislature ONE set of maps that is agreed upon by people on both sides.”

