



Erie County Association of School Boards

Erie County Association of School Boards

Takes A Stand

Fall 2021– Fall 2023

Table of Contents

Introduction

Timeline

List of Legislative Teams

2021-2022 SURVEY RESULTS OVERVIEW

SHORT-TERM PRIORTIES:

COVID-19 Pandemic Concerns

Foundation Aid Funding

BOCES

Special Education

Broadband Access

Local Specific Concerns

Lottery Conundrum

Charter Schools

LONGTERM PRIORTIES:

Issues of Funding NYS Public Education

Special Education

APPR and Teacher Workforce Shortages

Other Workforce Shortages

Reporting Requirements

Issues of Mental Health

Miscellaneous Issues

FUTURE POSSIBLE PRIORTIES:

Introduction

Understanding the need for advocating for public education in the current climate of resistance to taxation, underfunding of public education and the erosion of local control, coupled with need to continually develop a highly educated student prepared for the future is a monumental task. Erie County Association of School Boards (ECASB) created a survey to ascertain where the ECASB member districts see their needs for advocacy as an organization. With clearly articulated priorities, the role of advocacy becomes focused and attainable. ECASB has identified the legislative priorities of our Western New York school districts into two levels of priorities in a wide variety of categories to create the ECASB Takes a Stand position statements. In addition, the survey was able to determine where ECASB member districts stand on other issues that affect education that may or may not currently be on the forefront. The legislative team members brought two short-term and two long-term legislative priorities for the individual districts they represent to meeting in the fall of 2021. From these priorities, we were able to identify common legislative advocacy needs of ECASB member districts. These priorities were highlighted at the Legislative Breakfast on November 13, 2021.

The next step in the process was a survey given to member district Boards of Education to determine the level of commitment to these priorities of each district through a Likert scale survey. A score of 1 being no support, 2 being low support, 3 being neutral support, 4 being active support and 5 being highly support.

The results of the survey resulted in identifying short and long-term legislative priorities for the position statements for the ECASB Takes a Stand document. The priorities will be revisited and revised every two to three years or as educational issues come to the forefront.

ECASB may at times conduct periodic straw polls of the ECASB Legislative Team Members to determine the everchanging needs of the districts and to garner the support, or lack there of to proposed NYS legislation. The data that is collected will help ECASB to update positions and keep potential issues at the forefront of their legislative priorities as it relates to ECASB members as a whole group.

ECASB would ask member districts to advocate either for or against the issues when they are meeting with their local legislators throughout the year.

History & Timeline

2021-2022

The inaugural survey was created and conducted in the fall of 2021. The 2021-2022 Legislative Team was asked to bring to the October meeting a list of short and long term priorities from their district. We used these to create a discussion about what would become the priorities all districts would rank. The survey instrument was then created by Program Services Manager Jane Sullivan. It was distributed to each member of the Legislative Team with instructions to share it with their Board of Education and send the responses back to ECASB, where they were tallied. From these responses, the Legislative Team was able to create a PowerPoint presentation shared with local legislators during the fall 2021 Legislative Breakfast.

2022-2023

In the fall of 2022, this document was created and approved by the 2022-2023 Legislative Team. Additional issues are added through Legislative Team discussions throughout the year. The issues outlined in this booklet are shared with local legislators at the fall 2022 Legislative Breakfast.

2023-2024

A new survey will be launched in the fall of 2023. Changes to the booklet will be approved by the 2023-2024 Legislative Team. Additional surveys are planned for the fall of 2025, 2027 and 2029.

2021-2022 Legislative Team

Leadership:

Scott Johnson, Co-chair, Sweet Home CSD

Kathleen Chiavetta ,Co-chair, Lake Shore CSD

Dwight Eagan, Advocacy Liaison, Orchard Park CSD

David Lowrey, Executive Director, Erie 2CC-BOCES

Jane Sullivan, Program Services Manager, Iroquois CSD

Members:

Erik Polkowski, Akron CSD

Michael Bennett, Alden CSD

Mark Smith, Amherst CSD

Larry Scott, Buffalo Public SD

Ed Schaefer, Cheektowaga CSD

Gary Sieczkarek, Cheektowaga-Sloan UFSD

Dennis Priore, Clarence CSD

Michael Montoro, Cleveland Hill

Justin Young, Depew UFSD

Paul Blowers, East Aurora UFSD

Jenn Horschel, Eden CSD

Raymond Carr, Erie 1-BOCES

Davis Podkulski, Frontier CSD

Dollene Christopher, Gowanda CSD

Ashli Dreher, Grand Island CSD

David Yoviene, Hamburg CSD

Michele Hovey, Iroquois CSD

Lesley Battaglia, Kenmore-Tonawanda UFSD

Kimberly Bukaty, Lackawanna City SD

Michael Sage, Lancaster CSD

Jason Baier, Maryvale UFSD

Michelle DeCarlo, North Collins CSD

Linda Hoffman, NYSSBA Area 1 Director, Erie 2 CC BOCES

Jessica Schuster, Springville-Griffith Institute CSD

Josh Feldmann, Sweet Home CSD

Kristin Schmutzler, Tonawanda City SD

Jan Dalbo, West Seneca CSD

Teresa Leatherbarrow, Williamsville CSD

2022-2023 Legislative Team

Leadership:

Scott Johnson, Co-chair, Sweet Home CSD

Kathleen Chiavetta, Co-chair, Lake Shore CSD, Erie 2CC-BOCES

David Lowrey, Executive Director, Erie 2CC-BOCES

Jane Sullivan, Program Services Manager, Iroquois CSD

Members:

Erik Polkowski, Akron CSD

Michael Bennett, Alden CSD

Mark Smith, Amherst CSD

Larry Scott, Buffalo Public SD

Ed Schaefer, Cheektowaga CSD

Gary Sieczkarek, Cheektowaga-Sloan UFSD

Dennis Priore, Clarence CSD

Michael Montoro, Cleveland Hill

Todd Bush, Depew UFSD

Paul Blowers, East Aurora UFSD

Jenn Horschel, Eden CSD

Renee Wilson, Erie 1-BOCES

Davis Podkulski, Frontier CSD

John Waterman, Jr. , Gowanda CSD

Ashli Dreher, Grand Island CSD

David Yoviene, Hamburg CSD

Mary Jo Szucs, Holland CSD

Jim Michalek, Iroquois CSD

Lesley Battaglia, Kenmore-Tonawanda UFSD

Kimberly Bukaty, Lackawanna City SD

Michael Sage, Lancaster CSD

Jennifer Pilarski, Maryvale UFSD

Michelle DeCarlo, North Collins CSD

Linda Hoffman, NYSSBA Area 1 Director

Ryan Anderson, Orchard Park CSD

Jessica Schuster, Springville-Griffith Institute CSD

Josh Feldmann, Sweet Home CSD

Kristin Schmutzler, Tonawanda City SD

Jan Dalbo, West Seneca CSD

Teresa Leatherbarrow, Williamsville CSD

Survey Results Overview

2021-2022 Member Districts:

Akron CSD
Alden CSD
Amherst CSD
Buffalo Public Schools
Cheektowaga CSD
Cheektowaga-Sloan UFSD
Clarence CSD
Cleveland Hill UFSD
Depew UFSD
East Aurora UFSD
Eden CSD
Erie 1 BOCES
Erie 2 CC BOCES
Frontier CSD
Gowanda CSD
Grand Island CSD
Hamburg CSD
Iroquois CSD
Kenmore-Tonawanda UFSD
Lackawanna City SD
Lake Shore CSD
Lancaster CSD
Maryvale UFSD
North Collins CSD
Orchard Park CSD
Springville-GI CSD
Sweet Home CSD
Tonawanda City SD
West Seneca CSD
Williamsville CSD

2022-2023 Member Districts:

Akron CSD
Alden CSD
Amherst CSD
Buffalo Public Schools
Cheektowaga CSD
Cheektowaga-Sloan UFSD
Clarence CSD
Cleveland Hill UFSD
Depew UFSD
East Aurora UFSD
Eden CSD
Erie 1 BOCES
Erie 2 CC BOCES
Frontier CSD
Gowanda CSD
Grand Island CSD
Hamburg CSD
Holland CSD
Iroquois CSD
Kenmore-Tonawanda UFSD
Lackawanna City SD
Lake Shore CSD
Lancaster CSD
Maryvale UFSD
North Collins CSD
Orchard Park CSD
Springville-GI CSD
Sweet Home CSD
Tonawanda City SD
West Seneca CSD
Williamsville CSD

ECASB supports items that averaged 4.0 or higher; maintains neutrality on items averaged 3.0 to 3.99; and opposes items that average 2.99 or lower. Question responses that were omitted were not calculated into the overall average.

Short-term Priority Statements

COVID-19 Pandemic Concerns:

The COVID-19 Pandemic has caused debate and gaps in quality education. While many needs have been addressed, some lingering issues remain.

- ECASB member districts support asking the new state leadership to affirm the commitment to fully fund COVID-19 pandemic programs for the next three years as previously promised.
- ECASB member districts support legislation that funds the cost of testing students, faculty and staff exposed to COVID-19.
- ECASB member districts support legislation to continue the established free breakfast and lunch program.
- ECASB member districts oppose legislation imposing vaccine mandates in NYS public schools.

Foundation Aid Funding:

The funding for education in New York State is in need of significant reform. The reform should reflect the needs of all children in New York State. The funding system should reflect the following characteristics: adequacy, equity, flexibility, predictability, and clarity.

- ECASB member districts support asking state leadership to follow through with the promise to fully fund NYS Public Education.
- ECASB member districts support legislation updating the formula used for foundation aid to make it equitable for all NYS school district.
- ECASB member districts support legislation updating the formula used to for foundation aid with up-to-date data.
- ECASB member district support legislation that prohibits any new unfunded or underfunded State or Federal mandates.

BOCES:

BOCES programs provide additional paths for schools to make students college and career ready in ways districts could not if operating independently. Funding aid for these programs is crucial to maintaining schools ability to offer these opportunities to students.

- ECASB member districts support legislation increasing the aid-able salary cap.

Short-term Priority Statements (Continued)

Special Education:

The growing cost of special education to meet the demands and needs of a growing population of students requires school districts to be conscious of efforts to keep school budgets balancing the needs of the student with fiduciary responsibility. Districts need to be able to plan responsibly for unexpected costs.

- ECASB member districts support legislation that creates a special education allowance reserve fund. Additionally, ECASB members specifically support the following related bills: <https://www.nysenate.gov/legislation/bills/2021/S2654> and <https://www.nysenate.gov/legislation/bills/2021/A1035>.

High-Speed Broadband Access:

High-Speed Broadband access allows for greater participation in student connection to aspects of online and hybrid education opportunities, keeping them up-to-date in a growing technological world.

- ECASB member districts support legislation for a statewide approach to connect all New York State families to high-speed broadband.

Lottery Conundrum:

Winners of a significant lottery amount can have adverse effects on a school budget.

- ECASB member districts support legislation that will exclude a lottery winners earnings in the wealth ratio calculation within a district. ECASB members specifically support the following related bills: <https://www.nysenate.gov/legislation/bills/2021/S08701> and <https://www.nysenate.gov/legislation/bills/2021/A9878>.

Charter Schools:

- ECASB member districts support signing a bill passed by the State Assembly and

Short-term Priority Statements (Continued)

Senate which would reimburse districts for supplemental charter tuition in the same school year the tuition is paid by the district.

- **ECASB member districts support public assets of closed charter schools in the city of Buffalo be returned in their entirety to the Buffalo Public School District in a timely manner.**
- **ECASB member districts remain neutral on passing and signing legislation prohibiting new charter schools in the City of Buffalo.**

Long-term Priority Statements

Issues of Funding NYS Public Education:

- ECASB member districts support legislation that fully funds a foundation aid formula without tiers.
- ECASB member districts support legislation that would increase funding for mental health initiatives in schools, allowing districts the flexibility in how those funds are best utilized.
- ECASB member districts support legislation that increases funding for IDEA to the 40% level promised when IDEA was founded.
- ECASB member districts support legislation that Tax Cap adjustments to include carry over, pensions exclusions and impacts of PILOTS.
- ECASB member districts support legislation that funds SRO programs.
- ECASB member districts support legislation that supports continuing and expanding Universal Pre-K programming.
- ECASB member districts support legislation that supports maintaining separate aid-able expenses such as BOCES and capital projects.
- ECASB member districts support legislation that restores the full SALT deduction and eliminates the \$10,000 cap.
- ECASB member districts support legislation that allows for greater than 4% in un-designated fund balance.
- ECASB member districts support legislation that modifies the tax cap formula by increasing it 1% when the Consumer Price Index (CPI) is over 4%.

Special Education:

- ECASB member districts support legislation that provides additional funds for the support of Career and Technical Education (CTE) as well as the creation of P-Tech programs.
- ECASB member districts support legislation that requires timely reimbursement for expenses outlaid by districts for Smart School initiatives, giving districts better cash flow and decreasing effects on end of year financial audit comments.
- ECASB member districts support legislation that would raise capital project outlay maximums from the current \$100K.
- ECASB member districts support legislation that increases state allocations for special education students.
- ECASB member districts support legislation that provides equitable funding for

Long-term Priority Statements (Continued)

costs associated with high needs students.

- ECASB member districts support legislation that provides mandate relief for specific special education services and eliminates specific services a district may not need but are costly to maintain under current mandates.

APPR and Teacher Workforce Shortages:

Return control to the local school districts.

- ECASB member districts support legislation that amends Education Law 3012-d to allow local control of the parameters and promote effective evaluation based on diverse needs.
- ECASB member districts support legislation that addressed the shortfall of teacher applications.
- ECASB member districts support legislation that addresses the improving diversity hiring statewide.
- ECASB member districts support legislation that grants “grow your own teachers” programs and waivers for certification fees for teachers.

Other Workforce Shortages:

- ECASB member districts support legislation that positively addresses the shortfall of administrative applications.
- ECASB member districts support legislation that positively addresses and helps to improve diversity hiring statewide.
- ECASB member districts support legislation that positively addresses the critical shortage of bus drivers.
- ECASB member districts support legislation that positively addresses expanding education thru the use of virtual instruction and district collaboration.

Reporting Requirements:

- ECASB member districts support eliminating the individual building expense reporting.
- ECASB member districts support eliminating duplicate reporting of
 - ⇒ (a) Transparency report for NYSED and NYS Division of Budget Standards,
 - ⇒ (b) Transparency report for ESSA,
 - ⇒ (c) Lead sampling criteria changes.

Long-term Priority Statements (Continued)

Issues of Mental Health:

- ECASB member districts support legislation that increases state funding for proactive mental health services and support in public schools.
- ECASB member districts support legislation that creates a permanent annual increase in the Health Services Grant to help offset the rising costs of providing nursing and health services.

Charter Schools:

Charter schools should not take away from public schools.

- ECASB member districts support legislation that places charter schools and other schools receiving federal and/or state money to be held to the same standards as public schools.

Miscellaneous Issues:

- ECASB member districts support legislation that increases aid to the visual and performing arts and to sports to create wider opportunities for students (i.e. purchase of instruments and equipment).
- ECASB member districts support legislation that increases aid for infrastructure maintenance the improvements of older buildings.

Future Possible Priorities

A number of issues will surface between survey years. These issues will be discussed in Legislative Team meetings. The Legislative Team will determine as a group the position of ECASB. Issues currently being discussed include:

- Legislation proposals that would require the state and federal government to fully fund all mandated programs.
- Legislation changing the current trajectory and implementation of electric school buses.
- Legislation providing funding pre-kindergarten in all schools.
- Legislation regarding changing foundation aid or any other state or federal aid being tied to federal and state level testing of students.
- Legislation providing additional funds for the support of career and technical educations as well as the creation and wider spread of P-Tech programs.
- Legislation opposing homeschooled and other non-public school children participating in public school activities and sports.
- Legislation supporting and funding the addressing of SEL programs, violence in schools.
- Legislation regarding paying parents for transporting their own children to school for immediate transportation relief
- Reintroducing the Child Victims Funding Act sponsored by Assembly Member William Conrad in the previous legislative session. It was bill A09138.
- Reintroducing the Lottery bill sponsored by Senator Sean Ryan in the Senate and by William Conrad in the Assembly in the previous legislative session. They were bills S08701 and A09878.
- Legislation that would propose a full funding of SRO programs in all public schools.

