



Erie County Association of School Boards

Vol. 3; Issue 3; November 2023



ADVOCACY ALLIANCE MONTHLY

YOUR MONTHLY UPDATE

Dear ECASB Members,

The plans for the legislative dinner next week are coming together. This year our legislative chairs will lead a team of presenters through the presentation, making it more streamlined and concise while allowing for more voices to be heard. We will again hold a Q&A at the end and ask legislators to jump into the conversation wherever they wish.

Legislators attending include Assemblyman William Conrad, Assemblyman Jonathan Rivera, and Senator George Borrello. Representatives will be in attendance for Assemblymembers Stephen Hawley, Crystal Peoples-Stokes, Patrick Burke, Monica Wallace, Michael Norris, Karen McMahon and David DiPiero and for Senators Patrick Gallivan and Robert Ortt.

The more people we have attending from ECASB, the stronger our voices are. If you want a lowkey advocacy event to jumpstart your understanding of what advocacy is and how to become involved, this is the perfect opportunity. Enjoy a meal and listen as our Legislative Team presents the top ECASB priorities to our elected officials and their representatives. This is exactly how I, myself got started in advocacy.

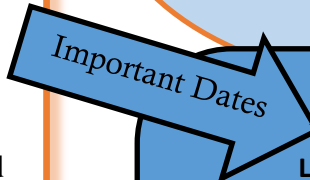
There is more information in the following pages, related to advocacy at ECASB.

Cheers,

~Jane



Don't forget to sign up for ECASB events!



Important Dates

- ⇒ Register TODAY 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. 9.
- ⇒ Register for Fall Speed Boarding, Nov. 30 at Erie 1 BOCES rooms B2a&b from 6:30-8:30 p.m. Be sure to read the event flyer emailed from David Lowrey.
- ⇒ Please email Jane by Nov. 30th (jsullivan@e1b.org) to let her know you would like an appointment with your state legislator during our local winter advocacy campaign that will be held in December and early January.

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time to talk

The Key to Advocacy is Knowledge:

Lessons from Caroline Bobick



Amid the controlled chaos of the NYSSBA Annual Convention, I sat down on the exhibition floor to have lunch with Caroline Bobick, a Senior Governmental Relations Representative at NYSSBA. She graduated from Binghamton University with a bachelor's degree in philosophy, politics, and law;

and received her master's degree from Columbia University's School of International and Public Affairs in Economic and Political Development. She began her career in education as an English teacher to speakers of languages other than English. Caroline taught in Honduras, Turkey, and New Paltz, New York working for the Ulster County BOCES.

Prior to joining NYSSBA in 2017, Caroline worked as an Excelsior Service Fellow on the education policy team in the NYS Governor's Executive Chamber. Caroline was tasked with helping manage the Governor's Common Core Task Force and Heroin and Opioid Task Force, coordinating the Empire State Excellence in Teaching Program, and bringing forth education proposals to support needy students and effective instructors.

While working in the governor's office, advocates came to her rather than she having to seek them. This helps her now in that she understands being on the other side of the table and she learned how to connect with people. She gained insight in the value of being able to net-

work groups of people together for common goals.

Caroline describes her career path as "not typical. I did not study state government in school, but I was in the right place at the right time." Her background in education rather than government and politics gave her key skills the committee was looking for in candidates. Caroline believes her writing skills highlighted her as the perfect choice to work on the governor's task force. Having this work experience enables Caroline to lead people in government positions while also being able to speak in the plain language of the average citizen.

"Working in the governor's office has its advantages," says Caroline. There, she was in a space where people were open to share views. She listened and learned so much.

Once thing she stresses to school board members is that we are elected to our positions; we *are* in positions of power, and we can use that power to reach out to anyone we want to learn from. She encourages board members to "reach out to superintendents, university professors, teacher union leaders, parent PTO leaders and anyone else who you can learn from to help better your knowledge and understanding to help us become the best people to lead a school district and advocate for its needs. You must learn about budgeting, advocacy, and governance." NYSSBA and ECASB activities and trainings can help board members do this.

When asked about advocacy and the best approach to it for members to get started, she said, "If it is your personality, storm in! Ask for permission for what you want. *Sometimes* it is granted!"

One of the hardest elements of advocacy to navigate, in Caroline's view, is working around the ways government can impede local level control.

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Time to Talk Continued

To work around this, one thing she recommends is to work with NYSSBAs member relations and leadership development team for micro credentials and training.

If you're new to advocacy you can take your time and learn. Caroline suggests, "*Read your NYSSBA emails. Emailed advocacy updates contain valuable information... There are links to register for webinars.*" Many of the advocacy emails offered from NYSSBA in November and December are previews of what will take place in January when the state legislature reconvenes.

Caroline also reminds us of the virtual conference on advocacy taking place on Feb. 2, 2024, and the in-person advocacy Capital Conference event in Albany on Feb. 7, 2024. She says, "Capital conference is a good introduction to advocacy, the budget process and budget negotiations and having one-on-one meetings with state legislators." Seasoned board members can do the talking, but anyone remotely interested in advocacy can learn at the Capital Conference. By midday, you could become comfortable enough to do some of the talking!

Caroline reminds us that there are numerous places NYSSBA and ECASB members can go to learn more about the issues facing NYS public education. On Oct. 16, NYSSBA held its annual business meeting and adopted the NYSSBA priorities. Not long after, an email was sent to members with the results of that meeting and the updated position statement handbook was created. It is available on the NYSSBA website under the advocacy tab.

Caroline works closely with the ECB (Educational Conference Board), an organization that networks NYSCOSS, NYSSBA, NY-SUT, PTAs, ASBO, the Big Five, and SAANYS together every month. ECB creates a paper with the top recommendations with universal support. When we advocate and an issue rises to a level of support from all these organizations, we begin to see progress. Advocacy is a time-consuming activity and progress can be slow. Progress and effectiveness come from the advocacy model of "slow and steady." Don't let up on your asks. Take BOCES CTE for exam-

ple; why do we still need to ask after 30 years? Caroline says, "because we have to. If we stop, they will stop thinking it's an issue."

Caroline confirms the priority list is growing, and we each must decide what issues our own districts need to fight for. One of the top issues she sees is Zero Emission Buses (ZEB). During the NYSSBA annual meeting, four or five positions on the topic were discussed by delegates, including asking the state to repeal the mandate, allow lengthy waivers, and seeking more guaranteed funding (not just hoping to win a grant) for implementation. She admits it changes the current strategy NYSSBA had been taking, especially given that NYSSBA delegates voted in favor of adopting the total repeal of the mandate.

Like any organization, there are people in distinct roles who specialize in specific areas, but when you recognize you possess a little knowledge about a lot of things, it helps you network and that makes you an advocate! Caroline invites you to participate at whatever level with which you are comfortable, but do not stop learning from those around you. Attend trainings, come to capital conference, learn what you need to know and then, *jump in*.



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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:

A08216- Establishes that instruction in financial education be provided to pupils in grades nine through twelve; establishes what should be included in such curriculum including the basics of financial planning, budgeting, borrowing, interest rates, personal insurance policies, etc. There is no local sponsor, but the bill was introduced on Nov. 6 as a companion bill to **S04601** introduced in February 2023.

A08144-Permits passing a school bus on a public highway with six or more lanes when traveling the opposite direction of the stopped school bus while separated from such school bus by a median or permanent barrier. Introduced on Oct. 13, it is locally sponsored by **Assemblyman Michael Norris (144)**.

A08151-Authorizes passing school busses on public highways when the highway has at least six lanes and is divided by a median or permanent barrier and the school bus is traveling in the opposite direction of the passing vehicle. Introduced on Oct. 13, there are no local sponsors.

A08108- Establishes workplace readiness week to educate minors in relation to their workplace rights; requires eleventh and twelfth graders to receive education on workplace rights; requires a document on workplace rights to be provided to any minor seeking working papers. Introduced on Oct. 13, there are no local sponsors.

A08123- Requires school districts to refer a newly-registering child with a disability for evaluation within forty-eight hours of the time of the first contact between the school district and the person or entity registering the student with the school district, provided a request for referral has been made. Introduced on Oct. 13, there are no local sponsors.

A08156- Establishes workplace readiness week to educate minors in relation to their workplace rights; requires eleventh and twelfth graders to receive education on workplace rights; requires a document on workplace rights to be provided to any minor seeking working papers. Introduced on Oct. 13, there are no local sponsors. It is a companion bill to **S07693**, introduced on Oct. 10, with no local sponsors

Signed by Governor

S006549/A07049-Relates to the contracting of indebtedness by city school districts; removes provisions relating thereto. It was signed on Oct. 25. There were no local sponsors.



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Bill Alert Continued

Also Signed by Governor

S01733/A05180--Requires local boards of education, BOCES, charter schools and non public schools to adopt policies to promote student voter registration and pre-registration, including procedures for providing access to voter registration and pre-registration applications during the school year and assistance with filing such applications and informing students of the state requirements for voter registration and pre-registration.* This bill was signed on Sept. 20. Local sponsors are all in the Assembly: *William Conrad (140), Karen McMahon (146), and Monica Wallace (147)*.

*Note to consider-When a bill states that there is no impact to the budget, they mean the *state budget*. Too often bills turn out to have a considerable cost to taxpayers via their school budgets at the local level and would certainly be considered an impact. Its time to start asking legislators to recognize the costs they are passing on to our districts.*



IN THE NEWS

Articles that may interest you

Portland Teachers on Strike, Closing Oregon's Largest School District-New York Times/Buffalo News.

What Happened When a District Banned All Cellphones- New York Times/Buffalo News.

DR. RICK TIMBS

Post Dinner Follow Up

After the Dr. Rick Timbs dinner, I started to think about the foundation aide formula. Who better to turn to than Dr. Timbs, himself. My question was... "I realize that the data used for the foundation aid formula is decades old and one reason it is stuck in status quo is because legislators don't want to be the legislator whose districts lose out if they simply updated the formula using the same data but with the most recent census. I am curious though, has anyone actually run the current formula using the recent data to see what school districts/legislative districts lose out and how much they change, or is it just that everyone knows someone loses out so they don't bother?"

Dr. Timbs response:

To answer your excellent question let me make a couple of comments supported by the data: The 2023-24 Foundation Aid amount given to every district this year consisted of one of two parts- The calculated amount due to a district based on the existing Foundation Aid Formula using the most recent metrics and formula.

Or

A 3% increase in the Foundation aid paid to a district last year regardless of what the current formula calculates to.

The latter group of districts are referred to as "Save Harmless" or "Hold Harmless" districts.

Based on the most recent data sets, (new ones are due in November) all districts either got "what the current formula said they were "owed" or an automatic 3% increase over the amount of Foundation Aid paid to the district last year referred to as a "due minimum" increase, regardless of the current formula.

There are at least two problems with the current situation.

The current formula is, in some parts outdated, other parts insufficient to measure district/ student "need" and or the district capacity to fund a reasonable share of the cost of education its own students, and in other parts, simply maintaining some level of increase over the previous year regardless of what the formula calculates.

All of this creates greater "inequities" of different varieties.

Some districts may be "underfunded" due to the insufficient weightings, appropriate metrics, etc. to measure district "need" or "capacity", while other

districts are blatantly funded, a little or a lot, and (in some cases in the millions of dollars over what the current formula calculates to.

To over simplify a bit, it boils down to how much should each district get based on the two principles of "equity" and adequacy" (It doesn't do any good to come up with a formula that is equitable (distribution of funds) that is not adequate (enough funds).

The law of unintended consequences rears up its head as no legislator wants to politically "short fund any of their own districts, so some amount of inequity is bound to exist.

Additionally, the distribution of power in the legislature is skewed toward large poor districts (think the Big Five ... Rochester, Buffalo, Syracuse and Yonkers with NYC) and simultaneously many wealthy school districts that represent significant influence and are voting blocks.

In short, the 2023-24 Foundation Aid amount given to every district this year is all they will get with the current formula subject to significant demographic and wealth changes compared to state averages.

I hope this in part answers your question.

Please give me a call if you would like to discuss this further.

Regards,
Rick



Dr. Rick Timbs poses for a photo with members of the City Of Tonawanda School Board.

DAVE LITTLE

Dinner Report

Dave Little of the Rural Schools Association made his presentation personal this year, showing a picture of his baby grandson and declaring, “we have five years to fix this.” He shares that New York State spends 30 billion dollars on public education, the highest amount spent per pupil across the nation. “Yet...Education Weekly ranks every state for the efficiency and the effectiveness of how they distribute their money,” Dave reports, adding that New York ranks dead last every time in recent years.

Dave goes on to explain, “Literally every other state pays for 60% of the cost of public education. They all have the same provision in their state constitution that we do [to provide a sound basic education to all]...which assures that their state complies with every child getting the sound basic education. New York is backwards. Locally we pay 60% and the state pays about 35% and the federal government pays about 5%.”

What does this mean? “When Governor Cuomo talked about how much we pay per child, what he never talked about was the fact that the State of New York wasn’t paying the bill. They’re paying about a third and the local taxpayers were paying two thirds, which means on average were fine.” He goes on to explain that geographically, some areas spend as much as \$75,000– to \$120,000 per child while others struggle to meet the most basic requirements. Add to that, the 2% tax cap vs. the 8% inflation rates we are experiencing which creates a disparity between the haves and have-nots. Dave’s son, graduating in the top of his class, was not accepted by Ithaca college because his basic rural education was not at the level of his peers from wealthier suburban and urban districts. He was accepted at

RIT. He had an awful college experience, constantly trying to keep up with his peers from the more affluent districts.

The answer to the disparity seemingly lies in the formula. Dave says, “If they start to work today on a new formula, expect that new formula to operate five years from now.” He also reminds us that when we are told we are “fully funded,” it simply means we are on “safe-harmless.” That means you are only seeing increases of 2%, which is not even keeping up with inflation.

Dave shared a story of when a specific unnamed legislator requested the formula to work in favor of a specific school district. The story was meant to demonstrate that the formula can be manipulated. “This whole business of some kids get it and some kids don’t and it depends on where your parents live and what zip code you’re in...that can’t be what our founders had in mind when they decided that everybody needed a sound basic education.” What do we do now? That’s the argument. Districts getting 4% state aid aren’t going to care, but districts getting 75% state aid, it means everything. “getting cut to 10%, it could be the difference between day and night,” asserts Dave.

And there bad news is this: there is no viable solution on the horizon.