



Erie County Association of School Boards

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Dear Members,

Snowstorms, Bills losing and Earthquakes—I was warned not to ask what’s next. The upcoming Virtual Capital Conference is Friday, February 10th, followed by the in-person Capital Conference on Wednesday, February 15th.

Advocating side by side with me will be ECASB Executive Director Dave Lowrey (E2CC BOCES), Erik Polkowski (Akron), Ed Schaefer (Cheektowaga), Wesley Schlossin (Cheektowaga-Sloan), Mary Jo Szucs (Holland), Heather Jacobs (Iroquois), James Michalek (Iroquois), Lesley Battaglia (Ken-Ton), Matt Chimera (Ken-Ton), Superintendent Sabatino Cimato (Ken-Ton), Todd Marquart (Ken-Ton), Kathleen Chiavetta (Lake Shore), Michael Franey (Lake Shore), and Kristin Schmutzler (Tonawanda).

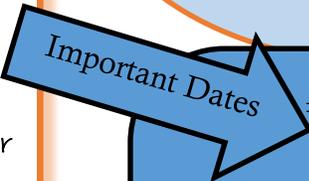
The ‘Time to Talk’ column highlights what we hope to accomplish while visiting our legislators in Albany.

Advocacy doesn’t end in Albany. Read on to learn about other events coming up.

Happy Valentine’s Day too!

Jane

Take Note The Legislative Handbook has been updated.
The Legislative Handbook is on the ECASB Website
Click on the link.



- ⇒ ECASB Award nominations are open. Nominations for deserving individuals continue. Visit <https://www.ecasb.org/awards-1> for details about the awards and nomination forms.
- ⇒ Capital Conference in person team heads to Albany on Feb. 15, 2023.
- ⇒ Next Legislative Team Meeting, March 16, 2023 6:30 p.m. - 8:30 p.m.
- ⇒ Legislative Dinner 2023 , May 11, 2023. Details coming soon.

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time to talk

Heading to Albany

A Conversation with the ECASB Contingency

Fifteen people from ECASB are heading to Albany for the NYSSBA Capital Conference on Wednesday, February 15. A few of the people going with me are veteran advocates while others are also going for the first time. Armed with good advice from Legislative Co-Chair Scott Johnson (Sweet Home), I feel prepared to meet with our legislators and to stand united with people who will share the needs of WNY public schools with our Albany decision makers.

Erie County Association of School Boards Executive Director David Lowrey is one of the veterans of the Capital Conference. David's interest also includes Erie 2 CC BOCES, where he has been a board member for the last 12 years. He also served on the Iroquois CSD board for 20 years. As a Erie 2 CC BOCES board member, he can't help but advocate for increasing the CTE salary cap. But he also sees advocating for districts to have a Special Ed reserve fund and finding ways to handle shortages of teaching staff, and staff in general, as important priorities.

Erik Polkowski (Akron) says attending the Capital Conference is a way to

build relationships so it's easier to ask for things. He also says, "It's important to meet them on their turf." He believes this is one way to take Albany back from the special interest groups. Erik's main advocacy points are about Broadband access and the electric bus mandate.

Michael Franey (Lake Shore) sees funding for mental health support for district students and staff as the main advocacy need for his district. He has attended the Capital Conference in person before; he said he "found the in-person meetings to be effective."

Matt Chimera (Ken-Ton), also has attended this conference in the past and states, "I went the last time it was in-person and found it to be worthwhile." Both Matt and his fellow Ken-Ton board member Lesley Battaglia are coming to Albany next week to advocate for Childhood Victim Act (CVA) funding legislation. Matt sees this as important not just in his district but in many others here at ECASB as well. Just one case settlement can throw off a district's budget.

It is clear there are many needs facing WNY, and all NYS public schools, right now. The people going to Albany understand they are not necessarily going just to talk about their own district, but rather are using the stories from their dis-

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district to help advocate for us all. It is no surprise that the same issues each sees in their own district land on the list of the top priorities we talk about at the ECASB Legislative Team meetings. Erik adds that he sees a need in many districts for SRO funding and “revision to the civil service and reduction in income caps to allow professionals that may have retired to bridge a gap” which in turn may help the teaching shortages. David also reminds us that we still need to focus on reconfiguring the Foundation Aid Formula. Lesley says, “we need to support the governor’s proposed budget increases; however, we need to oppose the governor’s support of charter schools.” As a government teacher, Lesley sees her attendance at the conference as a chance for legislators to “see that we are committed to our district. Making a trip across the state is a way to demonstrate that we feel the issues we are [advocating] for are important.” David adds, “The squeaky wheel gets the oil. I am not going away.” Roadblocks exist and when we can identify them, we have to find a way around them. David thinks one such roadblock is that legislators simply don’t understand the issues that districts are facing: “Think about it....many of our community members think they are experts about education because they experienced school. I think Legislators think the same way. When is the last time a legislator has been in school for a few days? If they did, they would realize that there is a world of difference from when they went to school. Showing up for a short time for a photo-op in a school doesn’t really give you a full picture of what is happening in school. I always enjoyed MTV’s Real World. I would like to see

Real World Albany, where legislators have their lives taped and have to work in a school for a few months. They would then truly understand the issues.”

Erik says, “I think the gamesmanship and inability sometimes to just pass a simple bill instead of mass multiple actions makes it difficult. I think the difference in WNY districts to downstate ones is often lost and we end up with a directive like electric buses which works in NYC, but not here in WNY.

Another roadblock might simply be the cost. Robbing Peter to pay Paul can only work for so long and eventually decisions will come down to which choice gives the state the best bang for its buck.

When you contact the legislator, “have a specific ask and tell a story of how it directly relates to [your district]. Personalize it and they will remember the story more than just bullet points of topics.” Lesley sees it as a chance to be with a group of like-minded board members from WNY.

Matt shares this viewpoint, adding, “In addition to the advocacy work we will be doing, I think getting to know others [who] share similar concerns is an important part of this.”

Erik shares that he is looking forward to, “The collaboration of the ECASB team as a unit supporting each other in a common goal and mission. We are stronger than we think and more powerful than we know. We have to use it to the benefit of our districts our communities and mostly our students.”

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. A basic training session was held on Sept. 29 and has been recorded. If you would like to view the video, please email Jane.



From the left: Senators Borrello, Gallivan, Ryan, Ortt and Kennedy.

Bills to Watch in the Assembly:

A902-This bill would require the department of education to report information regarding counselors, social workers and psychologists in schools and to implement a plan to increase the school counselor, school social worker and school psychologist to student ratio to nationally accepted standards and provide funding for such. There are no local sponsors. It was introduced on January 11 and referred to the education committee. A companion bill S01577, was introduced to the Senate on January 12. There is no local sponsor on this bill either. *This bill includes funding as opposed to bill S00054 (no Assembly companion bill) which is a mandate to employ a mental health care provider in every school building with no funding attached.*

A1279-This bill establishes the child victims act fund which provides grant awards in reimbursement to public school districts and voluntary foster care agencies located within the state who have been named as defendants in certain child sexual abuse legal cases and in which it can be demonstrated by the public school district or voluntary foster care agency that no insurance policy for the covered period can be located after a good-faith effort to do so has been made, there was a monetary judgment issued or settlement agreement with regard to such action and where it can be demonstrated by the public school district or voluntary foster care agency that payment in full of such judgment or settlement would put a substantial burden on the district's or agency's ability to execute its mission and negatively impact its existing student population. It is locally sponsored by **William Conrad** and **Monica Wallace**. It was introduced January 13 and sent to the ways and means committee. There is no Senate companion bill.

A1689-This bill would require instruction in civic education for grades 5 through 12 including instruction on the NYS constitution; federal, state, and local government; civic literacy; methods of public participation; and the rights and responsibilities of citizenship. It is locally sponsored by **Karen McMahon**. It was introduced on January 17 and sent to the education committee. There is no Senate companion bill.

A1810- This bill would amend the education law, in relation to creating a school board empowerment act which allows local school districts to declare a fiscal emergency under designated conditions and fiscally restructure so as to minimize adverse impacts on student education; and providing for the repeal of such provisions upon expiration thereof. It is locally sponsored by **Andrew Goodell**. It was introduced on January 23 and sent to the education committee. There is no Senate companion bill.

A02254-This bill relates to school districts evaluating capital improvement projects for such school district in the state for: compliance with the New York state climate leadership and community protection act, upgrading heating, ventilation or air conditioning to be more energy efficient, including, but not lim-

BILL ALERT - continued

ited to upgrading to an active solar heating system; installing solar panels or other sources of alternative energy; improving broadband accessibility and reliability; upgrading technology so that it is more resistant to security risks; structural improvements, including, but not limited to windows, roofs, foundations and walls; purchasing hybrid or electric school buses; and upgrading plumbing and electrical systems. There are no local sponsors. It was introduced on January 25 and referred to the education committee. There is no Senate companion bill.

Bills to Watch in the Senate:

S00989—This bill would permit passage of a school budget that will require a tax levy that exceeds the tax levy limit if approved by a majority of the votes cast. It is locally sponsored by **Robert Ortt** and **Patrick Gallivan**. It was introduced on January 9 and referred to the education committee. There is no companion bill in the Assembly.

S01010—This bill would amend the education law, in relation to allowing school districts to permit home-schooled students to participate in district interscholastic sports. It is locally sponsored by Robert Ortt. It was introduced on January 9 and referred to the education committee. There is an Assembly companion bill, introduced on January 13 and referred to the education committee. It is **A01072** and is locally sponsored by **Stephen Hawley, Joseph Giglio, Andrew Goodell, Karen McMahon, Angelo Morinello, and Crystal Peoples-Stokes**.

S01433—This bill would enact the "social media monitoring safety act" to provide data analytic resources and funding to every school district to facilitate the monitoring of social media activities to provide early-detection information of possible threats to a student's health and the safety of the school; makes an appropriation therefore. There is no local sponsor. It was introduced on January 11 and was referred to the finance committee.

S01444—This bill would require that the state fund any program which imposes a mandate upon municipal corporations or school districts; establishes criteria for any exemption from such law if such mandate is ordered by the judiciary, pursuant to an executive order or requested by the locality; establishes the New York state mandate review council. It is locally sponsored by **Patrick Gallivan**. It was introduced on January 12 and referred to the local government committee.

Bills Adopted:

J00071:



Stock images of Governor Kathy Hochul signing bills into law.

LEGISLATIVE BREAKFAST

REPORT

We gathered with *Assemblyman William Conrad, Assemblywoman Karen McMahon, Assemblyman Michael Norris*, and representatives from the offices of *Senator Patrick Gallivan, Senator Timothy Kennedy, Assemblywoman Monica Wallace, Assemblyman Patrick Burke* and *Assemblyman Stephen Hawley* on Sat., Jan. 21 at the Grapevine Banquets in Depew. *Governor Kathy Hochul* came to Western New York that morning, so our legislators had to pivot their schedules and leave early. We were still able, however, to deliver an impactful message, as evidenced by the phone calls coming into the ECASB the following week from *AM Conrad's* office. His staff took time to speak to us further on several key issues raised, wanting to write legislation to work towards some of our goals and to recommit to the CVA Funding Act bill (A1279). His staff also indicated he would be willing to sign on as a sponsor to several bills already introduced and supported by ECASB. With over 110 people from ECASB our legislators, who also value public education, are learning what issues our district's face and are becoming more knowledgeable in the ways they can promote legislation that makes NYS education better for all.

Legislators encouraged us to share *their* message: their doors are open and they want to talk to us. AM Conrad repeated a message he shared last year: "This cannot be a once a year conversation." ECASB and legislators need to speak repeatedly throughout the year and

keep the conversation current.

As such, the next event, a Legislative Dinner, is being planned for Thursday, May 11, 2023. At this dinner we hope to have several of our legislators take to the podium and share with us where Albany is on the issues we care about, what roadblocks they are facing getting legislation we support passed, and how we can help them navigate these roadblocks.

AM Conrad and AM McMahon both talked about how our advocacy cannot be just with local legislators either. We are up against lobbyists and special interest groups that regularly meet with legislators in Albany opposing the bills we support. At the very least, we need to be flooding the emails of all the legislators. ECASB staff helped create several email lists and we can now email every state senator and assemblymember, as well as email just those involved in the education committees of both houses. I will begin emailing them with memos of support and opposition as the Legislative Team continues to track specific bills. Remember advocacy works. ECASB and YOU need to continue to advocate for your district and the 30 ECASB member districts!

Advocacy Training

REPORT

Advocacy training was held prior to the legislative breakfast on January 21. Sixty five guests attended. In addition *Assemblyman William Conrad* and *Assemblywoman Karen McMahon* arrived early for the legislative breakfast and answered questions.

Frontier Advocacy Committee, had a panel discussion that was lead by Frontier Board Member Davis Podkulski. The committee shared the history of the committee and the work they are doing to advocate for Frontier CSD. Tiffany Tangel, a Parent Teacher Organization member, and students Cameron and Isabella also served as part of the panel discussion. Tiffany shared the PTO's concerns about dyslexia legislation, bringing bill A133 to the forefront of the conversation. This bill advocates for a dyslexia/dysgraphia taskforce to study the needs and implement programs based on the study.

Cameron and Isabella both spoke of student mental health and the impact of COVID-19 on education. Cameron shared some words that hit on the underlying reason we are all serving school districts: we do it for the children in our communities.

A second presentation of the morning was led by *Amanda Wyzykiewicz, Legislative Director* for *Assemblywoman Monica Wallace*. Amanda explained to the participants and took them through the legislative process in NYS. For a few members of the audi-

ence, it was the second time hearing the presentation.

Several times our guest legislators would chime in and help to answer questions.

One issue that was clarified was about looking at voting records of a legislator.

Often, a legislator will vote no to add-ons to a bill already introduced, but when looking at the public site to see how a vote goes, it sometimes may appear they voted no on the actual bill. Hence, it does not mean they did not support the bill, they just did not support the changes or add-ons to the bill in its final form.

Amanda said she fields calls from constituents who are angry with how AM Wallace voted because they are misreading the public record. This was intriguing, as just days before it was brought up in a Legislative Team meeting that someone was surprised that *Senator Patrick Gallivan* appeared to have voted against a bill that would help fund SRO programs. *Senator Patrick Gallivan* is generally a strong supporter of school safety legislation.

I am willing to bet the vote in question was actually a vote on add-ons that *Senator Gallivan* objected to, and not the actual bill.