



Erie County Association of School Boards

Vol. 4; Issue 8; April 2025

ADVOCACY ALLIANCE MONTHLY

YOUR MONTHLY UPDATE

Dear Friends,

There are a lot of events happening before we hit the reset button and start the 2025-2026 school year on July 1. There are some great programs ahead.

For our advance planners, it looks like Board 'N Brews will be held on July 17, so mark those calendars now!

For anyone paying attention, as of the writing of this newsletter, you already know the state budget hasn't passed yet. One of the hold ups seems to be the details of banning distracting devices in school. It isn't that it isn't going to pass, (I have been reassured it will) but it is about the details of the mandate and funding it that are being debated. It may not be an issue you want passed, but if it is going to happen, at least we can keep up the pressure to be sure there is funding associated with the mandate. Now is NOT the time to stop communicating with your legislators! There is still advocacy work to be done. Make those calls.

Yours in Advocacy,
~Jane

Take Note...

- ⇒ Mark your calendar for the Delegate Assembly meeting on May 1st.
- ⇒ Mark your calendar for the statewide school district budget votes May 20th.
- ⇒ Mandated Governance Training and Fiscal Oversight Responsibility Training are right around the corner. If you have not completed your training, this is your chance! Your District Clerk can get you registered for the events. Governance training takes place in parts, with part one on June 3 from 5:15-8:15 p.m. and part two on June 7 from 8:30 a.m. to noon.
- ⇒ Mark your calendar for the annual dinner, this year on June 12th at Klocs, registration and basket raffle begin at 5:00 p.m.

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GLOBAL INSIGHTS IN A CONNECTED WORLD

IN THE NEWS

Links to interesting readings

Click on Links to go to the news source.

[Congressman Tim Kennedy Joins Educators and Community Leaders to Defend WNY Schools](#), from US Congressman Tim Kennedy's email (see right).

On the question of board politics being non-partisan:

[School boards, long locally focused and nonpartisan, get dragged into the national political culture wars](#)

[School board elections in the US: What research shows](#)



An Email From US Congressman Tim Kennedy

Dear Friend,

Education is the great equalizer – there is no American Dream without it. That's why I stood with WNY leaders and educators to push back against President Trump's executive order that would eliminate the Department of Education.

Here are just a few ways the Department of Education supports our students and community:

- ◆ Ensures students with disabilities have specialized education to reach their full potential
- ◆ Supports schools in low-income areas to level the playing field for every student
- ◆ Makes higher education more accessible, including for first generation college students
- ◆ Safeguards our places of learning from discrimination

This is not just about students, parents, and educators though. This is about the future of our community and our country. The best way to keep our students and local talent here in Western New York is by equipping young people with the knowledge and skills they need to succeed. In doing so, we will continue to lay the foundation for a future in which our workforce is competitive, our economy is strong, and our communities thrive.

As your Representative, I am fighting for policies that protect, invest in, and expand educational opportunities for our students.

Sincerely,

Timothy M. Kennedy
Member of Congress (NY-26)

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Capital To Classroom

Cell Phone Legislative Pulse for WNY School Boards

As we move deeper into the 2025 legislative session, it's clear that public education in New York State is once again at the center of pivotal conversations. From proposed changes to Foundation Aid and long-overdue discussions around mandate relief to cell phone and distracting device policies, the decisions being made in Albany will shape the future of our schools—and the responsibilities of our boards.

In moments like these, advocacy isn't just important—it's essential. ECASB has a long history of working together to amplify our region's voice. That unity is more important than ever. As local leaders, we must remain informed, engaged, and ready to act when opportunities—or threats—to public education arise.

I recently had a conversation with Assemblyman William Conrad as the result of a letter the Legislative Team sent out regarding a change in our position on the cell phone banning issue. We were neutral until our last meeting on March 20th, when the team voted to oppose any legislation of the issue that took away local control and created a mandate without any financial support.

AM Conrad was happy to see we did take a stand, but said it is too late in coming. The bill is going to be debated but ultimately, some aspect of legislation to reduce such distractions in schools is expected to pass. He also said he feels good about supporting it because 1.) he believed some type of funding will be behind this legislation and 2.) he feels strongly about getting cell phones out of the hands of kids during the school day. After attending several workshops and advocacy meetings, hearing stories and research, he feels the research supports a positive change in student mental health outcomes as well as posi-

tive changes in test scores and overall learning. I have seen similar research.

In our call, I stressed that it isn't that school boards do not see cell phones as a distraction, but that we don't want to see local governance usurped and we don't want to see yet another unfunded mandate. AM Conrad pushed back that if more schools acted on their own to quell the distractions, maybe the state wouldn't be forced to take action now.

This newsletter is designed to keep you in the loop on legislation that matters, and to provide you with practical tools to bring your board into the conversation. Whether it's passing a resolution, reaching out to lawmakers, or joining fellow members for advocacy days, every action counts. If the conversation with AM Conrad proves anything it is that we must act and we must do so in a timely manner if we want to continue to have our voices have an impact.

As budget negotiations in Albany stretch on, school boards can't afford to sit on the sidelines. This is the perfect moment to lean in and advocate for your district's needs before final decisions are made. Here are a few meaningful ways board members can take action right now:

1. Contact your legislator...again: Even if you've already reached out, a follow-up call or email can make a difference. Let them know that delays in the state budget create uncertainty for districts planning staffing, programs, and services. Be specific about how your district will be affected.

2. Collaborate with Neighboring Districts A united regional voice is stronger. Consider co-signing advocacy letters, joining ECASB or NYSSBA action campaigns, or coordinating outreach to lawmakers as a cluster of districts.

3. Share Your Story Publicly

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Capital To Classroom

Cell Phone Legislative Pulse for WNY School Boards Continued

Use your district's communication channels—or speak at a public meeting—to help your community understand what is at stake. Highlight programs or staffing that could be impacted by a delayed or reduced budget.

4.) Pass a Board Resolution: Adopt a resolution urging the Legislature and Governor to a.) Fully fund Foundation Aid as promised and prioritize public education in the budget and b.) committed to the budget deadline of April 1.



BILL ALERT PAGE

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.

The 2024-2025 Legislative Session Highlighted Bills

A07593 (Zero Emission Bus) This bill would require entities selling zero-emission school buses to provide an independent range estimate to prospective purchasers; requires the office of general services to promulgate regulations and to provide zero-emission school bus manufacturers with a list of parties that may provide independent range verification. There is no local sponsor and there is not a companion bill at this time.

S04748 (Zero Emission Bus) This bill would eliminate the zero-emission school bus mandate; authorizes the New York state energy research and development authority conduct a study to determine the feasibility of converting school buses to zero-emission vehicles. Local Legislator George Borrello is a bill sponsor. There is no companion bill at this time.

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