



# Law conference updates district leaders



On September 27, school district leaders and attorneys representing districts from Monroe and surrounding counties gathered to discuss several legal issues facing schools. The topics and presenters were:

**School board responsibilities for employee relations** led by

*Lynda M. Van Coske, Esq.*, Labor Relations Administrator, Monroe-2 Orleans BOCES; and *Edward A. Trevvett, Esq.* Harris Beach PLLC.

**How to successfully handle student discipline matters in your school district** led by

*Jennifer M. Schwartzott, Esq.*, Bond, Schoeneck & King, LLP; and *Joseph G. Shields, Esq.*, Ferrara Fiorenza PC.

**LEGAL UP-DATES**

**\* School Food Service: Update on State-Wide Certification Matching Process and Prohibition Against Meal Shaming**

**\* Post-Janus Labor Relations: Taylor Law amendments and the Janus decision**

led by *Claire G. Bopp, Esq.*, Bond, Schoeneck & King, LLP; and *Daniel J. Palermo, Esq.*, Harris Beach PLLC.

The School Attorney's Committee of the Monroe County Bar Association and MCSBA have collaborated to present at least one school law conference each year since the 1980s.



**PRESENTERS**

ABOVE: Attorneys Anne McGinnis, Claire Bopp, Dan Palermo, Lynda Van Coske, Ed Trevvett, and Joe Shields.

LEFT: Attorney Jen Schwartzott.

BELOW: MCSBA President Mike Suffoletto (Web) welcoming participants and making introductions.

BOTTOM: MCSBA Executive Director Sherry Johnson discussing materials participants received.



More pictures on page 4 ➔

# News Scope

MONROE COUNTY SCHOOL BOARDS ASSOCIATION  
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President – Mike Suffoletto, Webster CSD  
Vice President – Kathy Dillon, Monroe 2 – Orleans BOCES, Churchville-Chili CSD  
Past President – John Piper, Penfield CSD  
Treasurer – John Abbott, Monroe 2 – Orleans BOCES  
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## From our executive director: Celebrating You!

One of the top reasons that new board members cite for wanting to serve on a board of education is that they want to give back to the community and believe that board service is an effective way to do that. Indeed, it is. Mahatma Gandhi said that “The best way to find yourself is to lose yourself in the service of others.” What better way to express that statement than in giving back in service to children.



**Sherry Johnson**

Board service is not easy. There is much to learn. School law and school finances are complicated, ever evolving and do not mirror what board members experience in their jobs or in other public service arenas. Board service is time intensive, not just for the steep learning curve, but in attendance at meetings, subcommittee meetings, professional development requirements and advocacy needs. Board members take their evenings, weekends and vacation time from work to participate in all of these activities, plus events at schools where they can witness student efforts. Board service requires working with a team of others from diverse backgrounds in a collaborative and professional manner. And, just when you think that you are hitting your stride, it is time to run for re-election. Putting oneself out to the community for public scrutiny can be daunting in and of itself.

But, the rewards for such a commitment are unmeasurable. Board members provide the support and oversight to make sure that all of the children that walk through their school doors have what they need to succeed, not just at school, but

in life. From their first bus ride in, to the nutritious breakfast and lunch, the warm, caring and competent adults, the rigorous curriculum and other engaging activities, to making sure that school buildings are safe, clean and welcoming environments for students, staff and the community, board members strive to work with their superintendents to provide for all of these critical components of school. To see kids thrive and grow and to watch them proudly walk across the stage at graduation is such an incredible way to find yourself!

This October, we once again, honor those who have taken on this noble endeavor. Whether you are in your first year, or are into your 4<sup>th</sup> decade of service (yes, we have such a member!), we dedicate this month to celebrating all of you. This year, through the ACT for Education steering committee we are coordinating activities during School Board Recognition week that will bring other elected officials, business leaders and media into our school buildings so that they can witness the great things that happen in public schools every day and that help them see the results of your considerable efforts. The week will culminate with many of our members heading to NYC for the 99<sup>th</sup> NYSSBA Convention where school board members will take the time to further develop their board skills, listen to inspirational speakers and vote on the advocacy agenda at the NYSSBA business meeting.

At MCSBA, we couldn't be more proud to support such dedicated and engaged members. We want you to know that it is our privilege to provide you with the information and tools that you need to continue to aspire to serve. Thank you for all that you do!

*Sherry Johnson*

# From our president: Board Voting

As MCSBA updated its mentoring efforts, one of the questions that came up at our new board member training was why do Boards always seem to vote unanimously in favor of the proposals generated by district superintendents. This track record troubled some of our new members.

As one member said to us, “It concerns me greatly that all the board decisions have been unanimous. Doesn’t this indicate that the Board does not have diverse thinking, and without diverse thinking, you can’t come up with creative solutions.” Another indicated, “No more 7-0 votes! I am here to “rock the boat!”



Mike Suffoletto

As long as a vote is reached independently, is there really anything wrong with a 7-0 vote? What the uninitiated do not seem to understand are the behind-the-scenes processes by which board members are brought up to speed on issues that the administration is working on and how those items are forwarded to the board meeting agenda.

It is true, to be sure, that hundreds of unanimous votes come on routine business – the adoption of a meeting agenda, the approval of the previous meeting’s minutes, adopting new or revised board policies, approving transfer of funds, accepting monthly financial reports, for example. But it is also true that unanimous decisions have been made on substantive issues like hiring of a high-level personnel, curriculum decisions, and budget adoptions.

For all items that require board action, the administrative staff provides substantial documentation to board members for study in advance of board meetings. In addition, most board members are provided an opportunity to have their questions answered when they review this documentation before any public motions are made.

In the week prior to a board meeting, the Board president and vice-president meet with the superintendent to review the agenda, ask questions about agenda items, and consider whether time is right for an item to come before the Board for consideration.

Board unanimous votes are not “rubber-stamping.” When unanimous decisions are reached, it often times indicates that Board members have had ample time to study the issues and agree with the given action. Unanimity can be considered a sign of the strong collaboration among the board and the administration.

The National School Boards Association, in its publication *The Key Work of School Boards Guidebook*, describes effective school boards “as a united team with the superintendent, each in their respective roles with strong collaboration and trust.” It stands to reason that if board members trust one another and the superintendent, unanimous votes are common place.

So how do you convey to the public (and new board members) the reasoning behind 7-0 or unanimous votes?

\* Should the Board recap the process by which a decision was reached? (“*The item was vetted in committee and this was the recommendation.*”)

\* Should the Board try to engage the vocal minority voices in the community in an attempt to diffuse the possibility of an issue “going viral” with misinformation?

\* Should more of the agenda review process take place during the regular board meetings so that the public has a better chance of hearing all that goes into the decision making process?

These are questions that every board will wrestle with.

Regardless, whether there is a split vote or a unanimous vote, the Board must stand together on the decisions that are made on behalf of the district.

*Mike Suffoletto*



## SAVE THE DATE!!!

# SED-approved financial training for school board members

October 13, 7:30am -3:30 pm

DoubleTree Inn , 1111 Jefferson Road

To learn more go to <https://www.monroe.edu/webpages/mcsba/>





# Law conference photos



ABOVE LEFT: Tom Putnam (Pen) and Dawn Santiago-Marullo (Vic).

ABOVE RIGHT: Phil Oberst (EI), John Abbott (B2, EI), and Sue Allen (EI).

LEFT: Mark Kokanovich (Bri), Lou Alaimo (Bri), Jill Vigdor Feldman (Bri).

RIGHT: Gene Mancuso (HFL) and Karen Brown (B2).



# Standing committees set priorities

## Legislative Committee



At their first meeting of the school year, members of the MCSBA Legislative Committee identified the following issues as priorities for 2018-2019: school safety, mental health, ESSA implementation, APPR and opting out, full funding of the education formula, and legislative relationships. The committee is developing two position papers: “Keeping our Schools Safe and Secure” and “Supporting the Emotional Well Being of Students.”

LEFT: 2018-2019 Legislative Committee Co-Chairs Joyce Kostyk (Fpt) and Dennis Laba (B2).

BELOW: The Legislative Committee in session on September 5.





# Standing committees set priorities

## Information Exchange Committee

TOP ROW (l to r): 2018-2019 Information Exchange Committee Co-Chairs Jon Ottney (Pen) and Tammy Gurowski ( Web).

UPPER RIGHT: with presenters Mark Kokanovich (Bri), Jo Anne Antonacci (B2), and Elizabeth Murray ( Causewave).

RIGHT: Elizabeth Murray speaking to MCSBA members.



At their first meeting of the school year, members of the Information Exchange Committee heard about ACT for Education and its communications initiative in partnership with Causewave from Jo Anne Antonacci, District Superintendent, Monroe 2-Orleans BOCES; Mark Kokanovich, Board President, Brighton CSD; and Elizabeth Murray, Program Manager, ACT for Education.

It was noted that ACT for Education has become “an unprecedented initiative by our local public schools, area businesses, and community members to share what’s good about our schools.”

## Labor Relations Committee

During their first meeting of the school year, Labor Relations Committee members heard a presentation entitled “*Never Settle for Second Best: Build a Teaching Staff that Makes You Want to Stand Up and Cheer*” delivered by Michael Dodd , Esq. of Ferrara Fiorenza PC.

M. Dodd stated that tenure decisions are critical, noting that tenure has the most direct impact on students, covers a long duration of time (up to 30+ years) and impacts the culture across district. He discussed the criteria for employment for probationary and tenured teachers.

He discussed best practices for granting tenure which included:

- Make sure employees understand tenure is something earned; see tenure as a certificate of quality for future students’ education.
- Have tenure standards clearly defined by the superintendent and board.
- Think about tenure as a process rather than an event.
- Provide feedback to teachers relative to where they stand on meeting tenure standards, especially if they are not meeting the standards.
- Follow due process.
- Be prepared to explain your decisions.



TOP : Labor Relations Committee Co-Chair Gary Bracken (Spe) with presenter Michael Dodd, Esq. of Ferrara Fiorenza PC.

ABOVE: Labor Relations Committee members during their meeting.

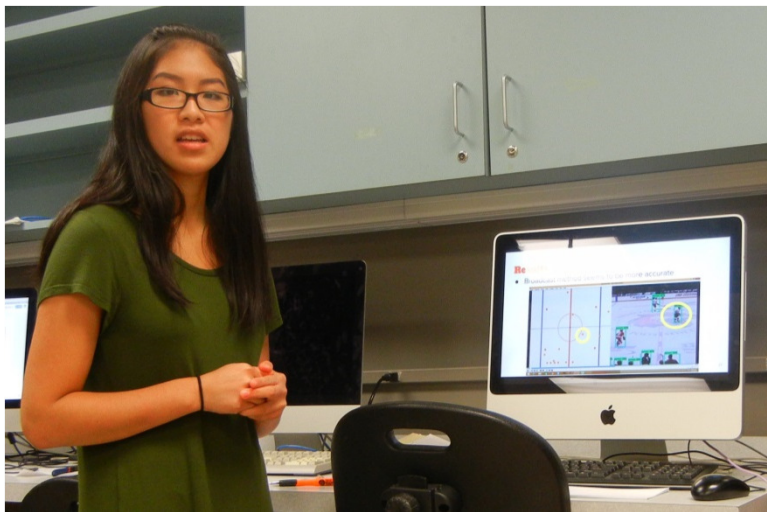


# Summer High School Internships



ABOVE Intern Emerald Rafferty of Victor showing stages of document restoration on a palimpsest (early document that had its original print scraped off so it could be reused, creating layers of information). RIT-CIS is well known for its efforts to restore ancient documents.

BELOW Intern Emma Mahoney of Gates Chili discussing how she and her research partner digitized movements of hockey players to help coaches analyze their movements.



The intern program is a highly competitive program for high school students, and has sparked successful academic and professional careers for participants. Applications from interested high school juniors are due in February each year.

To learn more, visit the CIS Outreach page: <http://www.cis.rit.edu/interns>, or contact CIS Associate Director Joe Pow at [pow@cis.rit.edu](mailto:pow@cis.rit.edu) or (585) 475-7323.

This past summer was the nineteenth year of the high school summer internship program at RIT’s Center for Imaging Science. This year, five high school students between their junior and senior years from Brighton, Gates Chili, and Victor worked side-by-side with scientists on imaging-related research projects. Participants maintained blogs recording their experiences and presented their research at a symposium at the end of their internships in August. This year’s interns worked in the CIS fields of **HISTORIC DOCUMENT RESTORATION**, **HOCKEY ANALYTICS**, and **MACHINE LEARNING** (testing algorithms that enable computers to analyze images or videos).

Other research groups within the Center for Imaging Science that host summer Interns include:

- \* **REMOTE SENSING** - collecting and analyzing images of the earth taken by specialized airborne or space-borne cameras;
- \* **VISUAL PERCEPTION** – using eye-tracking devices to understand the subconscious visual “strategies” people use when performing various tasks;
- \* **ELECTRON PARAMAGNETIC RESONANCE** - using low frequency electron paramagnetic resonance (LFEP) spectroscopy to study objects with cultural significance to determine their authenticity;
- \* **SENSORS AND ADVANCED INSTRUMENTATION** – developing imaging technologies to solve real world problems, such as detecting skin cancer with polarized light, and improving the performance of space-based telescopes;
- \* **OPTICS AND LASER-BASED MANUFACTURING** – investigating how various materials respond when exposed to very short pulses of high powered laser light to determine whether this technology can help manufacture components for photonic devices;
- \* **PERFORM LAB** – researching visually guided action, human motor control, eye movements, and visual prediction, using state of the art image capture and processing systems with virtual reality headsets and motion capture systems.



# RMSC & Our Schools



The Rochester Museum & Science Center works with our school districts to provide a wide variety of learning experiences for our students of all ages.

Opening on October 5 is the *SoundSense* exhibition with interactive displays, created by RMSC staff, which enable students and teachers to explore sound and music from the perspectives of physics, biology, neurology, and psychology. School groups will be able to explore vibrations, learn about the new science of *Global SoundScapes*, and participate in the Electricity Theater which produces musical thunder.

Also available to student groups is a coordinated program describing geologic features both locally and planet-wide. Students tour displays that show how earth systems shaped our local geology. In addition, a *Plates in Motion* presentation using the high-tech *Science on a Sphere* globe illustrates the motion of plate tectonics and its resultant earthquakes, volcanism, and sea-floor structures.

RMSC programs for student groups support the NYS learning standards.

Shown in the center photo is a representative of the Seneca Nation describing Haudenosaunee culture to a class of students.

Other pictures in the top two rows show students of a wide range of ages actively engaged in learning various scientific principles at the RMSC.

Shown in the bottom row, left, are students observing changes in weather patterns on a large suspended globe at the RMSC's *Science on a Sphere* exhibit. Using data provided by the National Aeronautical and Space Administration (NASA) and the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), the globe can show tectonic plates, regions of volcanism and earthquakes, the earth's surface without water, weather such as the development of hurricanes, and political boundaries to meet the needs of a classroom discussion.

Shown in the bottom row, right, are students inside a Faraday cage in the RMSC *Electricity Theater* where they are safe from the pictured electrostatic discharges from Tesla coils.

More information on all RMSC programs for school groups can be accessed at <http://www.rmhc.org/educators/search>, as well as an application form for scholarship help. Teachers always have free RMSC admission with a district ID badge.

Further questions can be directed to Dr. Harold Clark, Senior Director for STEM Learning and Community, RMSC, at [hclark@rmhc.org](mailto:hclark@rmhc.org) or 585-697-1921.

**RMSC learning experiences for student groups**

- \* *Inquiry Room* programs that enable students to explore a variety of topics including living things;
- \* *Inventor Center* maker space that presents students with a problem to be solved with available materials;
- \* *Science on a Sphere* which projects images of planets, the sun, and earth on a globe using data from NASA, NOAA, and other agencies—to provide a 3-D, global perspective on phenomena such as earthquakes and weather;
- \* Overnight stay at RMSC with organized learning activities before and after an evening meal, 'camping' out with the mastodon, and morning studies;
- \* Docent tours and live science shows on a variety of topics;
- \* *RMSC Delivers* programs that bring RMSC instructors and learning materials to school classrooms.





# NYSSBA Board Officers Academy



ABOVE: Kevin McGowan leading a discussion.

RIGHT: Darci D'Ercole, Director of Leadership Development at NYSSBA, with panelists Mark Kokanovich (Bri), Mike Suffoletto (Web) and Gary Bracken (Spe).

On Friday, September 28, 15 MCSBA members attended the New York State School Boards Association Officer's Academy. They participated in discussions on several leadership topics: Managing Difficult People, How to Run Effective Board Meetings, Building Relationships with Your Superintendent and a Panel Discussion entitled Speaking from Experience. Our own Dr. Kevin McGowan, Brighton Superintendent, was the presenter on Building Relationships with Your Superintendent. MCSBA President Mike Suffoletto (Web), Board President Mark Kokanovich (Bri), and Board President Gary Bracken (Spe) took questions from the attendees during the panel discussion.

Darci D'Ercole, Director of Leadership Development at NYSSBA, presided over the day at the Hilton Garden Inn.



LEFT: Dr. Dawn Santiago- Marullo, Karen Ballard, Tim DeLucia, and Debbie Palumbo-Sanders (all from Victor).

RIGHT: Bob Cook (RH) and Annmarie Strzyzynski (RH).



## Area 2 meets to discuss NYSSBA Resolutions

On Saturday, September 29, MCSBA members joined other NYSSBA Area 2 members and voting delegates at the Canandaigua Academy to discuss the resolutions that will be voted on at the NYSSBA Convention business meeting in New York City on October 27. Belinda Heckler from the governmental relations department at the New York State School Boards Association attended to provide up-to-date information to members.

Mark Elledge (Pen), the NYSSBA Area 2 Resolutions representative, facilitated the discussion. MCSBA, Four County SBA and Genesee Valley SBA hosted the event. There was excellent dialog and discussion of the resolutions. Those attending will report out to their Boards on how the group felt about each resolution and the results of the straw vote taken.



LEFT (clockwise starting with those facing the camera):

Lisa Benati-Chidsey (Pen), Matt Metras (WD), Diane McBride (RH), Belinda Heckler (NYSSBA), Chairman Mark Elledge (Pen), Bill Yaeger (Pen), Sue Craugh (Marcus Whitman), Lyn Gay (WFL BOCES), Four County SBA Executive Director Tom Nespeca (B1), and Peter Forsgren (Fpt).