

## MCSBA members meet with NYS lawmakers



On January 27, more than 100 MCSBA members met with lawmakers and aides at the MCSBA Legislative Breakfast. The major issue was funding for public education. Among the comments made was that the proposed \$727 million increase in state aid to public education is not enough. Lawmakers attending were Senators Richard Funke and Joseph Robach; Assembly Majority Leader Joseph Morelle; and Assembly Members Harry Bronson, Joseph Errigo, Mark Johns, and Peter Lawrence. Lawmakers who did not attend but sent delegates were Patrick Gallivan, David Gantt, Stephen Hawley, Brian Kolb, Robert Ort, and Michael Razenhofer. Also attending was Belinda Heckler from NYSSBA.



ABOVE: MCSBA Executive Director welcomes participants and introduces funding as the major legislative issue for public education this year.

RIGHT: Maureen Nupp (Fpt) asks question of lawmakers.



ABOVE: Senator Richard Funke, Senator Joseph Robach, Assembly Majority Leader Joseph Morelle, Assemblyman Mark Johns, Assemblyman Joseph Errigo, and Assemblyman Peter Lawrence.



More Legislative Breakfast coverage on page 5.



## February 2018 INDEX

Legislative Breakfast	1
From our executive director	3
Albany trip to meet with lawmakers	3
Information Exchange & Labor Relations Committees	4
Photo album: Legislative Breakfast	5
Position Paper: NYS Constitution & Public Schools	6-7
Position Paper: School Choice/Charter Schools	8

## From our president: 21<sup>st</sup> Century skills

Our Board of Education was asked the other day, “What are you doing to assure our students are being prepared for a world in which future jobs aren’t even invented yet?” I’m sure our Board of Education is not unique in being asked this question.

We read that in order to thrive in a rapidly evolving, technology-saturated world, schools must provide students with a broad set of “21<sup>st</sup> Century skills.” However, defining “21<sup>st</sup> Century skills” can be daunting. The term is used to describe every skill and attribute imaginable: soft skills, life skills, interpersonal skills, non-cognitive skills, workforce skills, etc. There is also debate as to what skills are most important and how such skills should be taught.

It is true that today’s students have powerful tools that allow them to acquire, even create, knowledge much more quickly than students of twenty years ago. But being able to “google” is no substitute for true understanding. Students need to be able to enjoy artistic and scientific achievements, and be able to speak, write, and read English well. They still need to understand the history of how we came to be the nation we are today. Students need to widen their horizons about how people behave and what historical and cultural forces shape that behavior. Twenty-first Century learning should be seen as an opportunity to acquire more knowledge, not an excuse to know less.



Mike Suffoletto

The best definition for twenty-first century learning that I have seen is from an article in *Edutopia* which stated that 21<sup>st</sup> century learning is “fusing the 3Rs with the 4 Cs.” If you can infuse reading, writing and arithmetic with critical thinking, communication, collaboration, and creativity you have 21<sup>st</sup> Century learning.

Thus, Board members are left trying to figure out what their role needs to be in the education of their 21<sup>st</sup> Century students. How do we hold ourselves and our districts accountable to these 21<sup>st</sup> Century outcomes that matter to our children’s future success? How do we collect data on these outcomes, build them into the work of our professional learning communities, and hold educators accountable to them? How does our strategic plan make the shift from knowing to doing; from teacher-centered to student-centered, from individual to team, from consumption of information to construction of meaning? Many schools and districts have been asking similar questions.

At its core, the role of education is to prepare students to become active, successful, and contributing members of society. In this sense the essence of education’s role has not changed in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century. However, by making sure our students are learning how to discern and synthesize information in addition to “knowing” it, we are re-defining what education is in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century, and what it can do for those students whose future jobs aren’t even invented yet.

*Mike Suffoletto*

# From our executive director: HOPE

Alfred, Lord Tennyson, wrote; “Hope smiles from the threshold of the year to come, whispering, ‘it will be happier.’”

As we begin 2018, there are many things to hope for; more state aid, less mandates, tax cap flexibility, successful budgets and successful students.

But, there are a lot of other things we could include in the list this year. As you lead your districts through the dark of winter and into the spring’s promise of renewal, here are some things I also want to hope for.

◆ That our state leaders recognize that you, as locally elected officials, working with your district leadership teams, are in the best position to know what your students need and what your community is able to provide.



**Sherry Johnson**

◆ That our children are surrounded with adult leaders at every level who model the kinds of behavior they need to witness as they grow to become full participating citizens.

◆ That we can find a way to heal the divisions that continue to be pervasive in our society so that our children know what it means to live and grow in an inclusive democracy. That we all can find a way to be the change we want to see in the world.

I know these come under the “hope springs eternal” heading, but as every New Year brings us challenges, it also brings to us a brand new beginning and the potential to reset the path. This year, I believe we need to urgently work to provide that path, so that we can continue to deliver hope to the next generation for a better tomorrow.

As you continue to work together to develop the kinds of opportunities you want to provide for the children you work so hard to represent, we want to reaffirm our commitment to supporting that work through program, advocacy, cooperation and collaboration. Happy New Year!

*Sherry Johnson*



**Be part of the MCSBA Trip to Albany**  
**March 5 - 6**

**Be an ADVOCATE for students!**  
**Meet with key legislative and education leaders.**

**All Board Members, Superintendents and District Administrators are encouraged to attend!**

**To register, contact Mary Talbot at [mary\\_talbot@boces.monroe.edu](mailto:mary_talbot@boces.monroe.edu) by February 14.**

# Dealing with student suicide

At the January meeting of the Information Exchange Committee, a group of administrators from Penfield Central School District discussed their district-wide efforts to support students after several Penfield students completed suicide. They shared their work as a team to review and adjust their current practices to move forward in a positive way after such tragedy. The team also shared strategies they used with the media.

Representing Penfield were Dr. Thomas Putnam, Superintendent; Dr. Leslie Maloney, High School Principal; Stephanie Dana, Counseling Department Chair; Brandon Fox, District TIG Coordinator and School Counselor; and Nancy Bradstreet, Director of Communications



ABOVE: Information Exchange Committee Co-Chairs Tammy Gurowski (Web) and Gary Bracken (Spe), with presenters from the Penfield District – Dr. Thomas Putnam, Dr. Leslie Maloney, Stephanie Dana, Nancy Bradstreet and Brandon Fox.



LEFT: Panel from Penfield presenting to the Information Committee on January 10.

# Teacher Immersion Fellowship Program

At their January meeting, members of the Labor Relations Committee learned about the Teacher Immersion Fellowship Program, an alternative to the substitute teacher shortage. Presenters Shannon Alvarado, BOCES 2 Supervisor for Exceptional Children, and David Leahy, Hilton Human Resources Director, shared that:

\* The Teacher Immersion Fellow Program (TIFP) began in the spring of 2016 between Hilton CSD and The College of Brockport to provide seven substitutes for the Hilton District. The following fall, the number of students enrolled doubled as Brockport CSD joined the program. TIFP has grown to include 79 students from four local colleges and is now set up and managed by BOCES through a Co-Ser 653 (Substitute Coordination Service).

\* Professional development is required for participants through BOCES Co-Ser 512. Districts participate in the candidate interview process. Districts pay a one-time fee to BOCES and hire participants. TIFP has reduced districts' substitute costs.

\* Candidates benefit from mentoring and networking with district staff as well as gaining experience working with students while earning money. It also allows districts to screen candidates for future staff vacancies.



ABOVE: Presenters David Leahy (Hil) and Shannon Alvarado (B2) with Labor Relations Co-Chairs Tom Abbott (Hil) and Irene Narotsky (Pit).

BELOW: Participants at the January 17 Labor Relations Committee meeting.



# Legislative Breakfast Album



LEFT COLUMN (TOP TO BOTTOM):  
Mark Kokanovich (Bri), Senator Joseph Robach, and Brian O'Connor (Hil).



Van White (Roc), Willa Powell (Roc), Kallia Wade (Roc), and Vincent Felder of Assemblyman David Gantt's office.



Dr. Bruce Capron (HFL), Irene Narotsky (Pit), Debbie Palumbo-Sanders (Vic), Funke Aide Zack Laffin, and Senator Richard Funke.

Peter Sullivan (Pit), Assemblyman Joseph Errigo, and Amy Thomas (Pit).

Phyllis Wickerham of Senator Gallivan's office and Courtney Panek (WC).

Kathy Dillon (CC, B2), Bob Cook (RH), Assemblyman Harry Bronson.



RIGHT: Jo Anne Antonacci (B2) and Sherry Johnson (MCSBA) at the breakfast with state lawmakers.



RIGHT:  
Brian Freeman (Web), Assemblyman Mark Johns, Suzanne Casey (Web), and Tom Putnam (Pen).



BELOW: Darrin Winkley, Dr. Lesli Myers, Terry Ann Carbone , MCSBA VP Lisa Ireland, and Jake Reimer, all from Brockport.

BOTTOM: MCSBA President Mike Suffoletto (Web), Trish Turner of Assembly Minority Leader Brian Kolb's office, Belinda Heckler (NYSSBA Governmental Relations Representative), Kristin Elliot (Vic), and Mike DeLaus (B1).





## The NYS Constitution and Public Education

The NYS Constitution states “The legislature shall provide for the maintenance and support of a system of free common schools, wherein all the children of this state may be educated.” (Article XI, §1)

**Therefore, the NYS Constitution mandates that our system of “free common schools” not be undercut by the diversion of funds to alternative “choice” school options such as charter schools, vouchers or education tax credits.**

<p><b>Charter Schools</b></p>	
<p><b>Accountability –</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• In the US and in NYS, charter school student achievement is, on average, no better than public school student achievement.</li> <li>• Studies clearly show that charter schools are more segregated and serve fewer students with high needs than traditional public schools.</li> <li>• Audits have shown charter boards put taxpayer dollars at significant risk. Since charter boards are not elected by taxpayers, this is taxation without representation.</li> </ul>	<p><b>Funding –</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Charter schools were initially legislated to be education innovation centers that would develop achievement strategies that could be use in traditional public schools. Charter schools have not met this charge.</li> <li>• After 20 years in existence, charter schools compete with public schools for funding, but are still allowed flexibilities and freedoms that traditional public schools do not get.</li> <li>• If NYS wishes to continue a separate “school choice” option then charter school funding and function should follow the current private school regulations.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Vouchers</b></p>	
<p><b>Accountability –</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Vouchers give dollars directly to families through voucher programs that allow them to choose the school that they believe is best for their child.</li> <li>• Vouchers could allow students to attend parochial schools, thus violating the NYS Constitution article that “prohibits the use of public property or money to support any school or institution of learning wholly or in part under the control or direction of any religious denomination.”</li> <li>• Like charter schools, the taxpayer would have no oversight on how these dollars are used.</li> </ul>	<p><b>Funding –</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The facile of the voucher idea is that all parents would be able to navigate the voucher program process and make an informed choice for their child.</li> <li>• It has been shown that vouchers do not cover all of the necessary costs associated with voucher programs thus eliminating the most needy families.</li> <li>• It is well documented that vouchers do not ameliorate the issues of poverty or equity, but would more likely be used by families already accessing the private school system.</li> <li>• Vouchers, if allowed for religious schools, would violate our NYS Constitution.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Education Tax Credits</b></p>	
<p><b>Accountability-</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Education tax credits allow a dollar for dollar credit from state income taxes for contributions to school districts, education foundations and scholarships by individuals and businesses.</li> <li>• There is no legal obligation or expectation that NYS support non-public sectarian schools or help private schools solicit donations.</li> </ul>	<p><b>Funding –</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Individuals and businesses with the resources to participate in education tax credits can receive a significant tax reduction which results in a loss of state income tax revenue to support public education.</li> <li>• These donations can be given to private and parochial schools to provide students scholarships which would circumvent the NYS Constitution.</li> </ul>

**Until our public schools are provided with the necessary resources to help ALL children succeed, the NYS Legislature should NOT allow funding to be diverted to support other choice options.**

# Data in support of the MCSBA position on School Choice

## Charter Schools

- When charter school advocates took NYS to court to challenge the constitutionality of how states fund charter schools, they contended that, they too, were “free common schools.” However, the State Appellate Court disagreed.
- In fact, the judges in reversing an order by the State Supreme court to allow the suit to continue, concluded that charter schools are a “different legal creation from traditional public schools” and charters independence to exclude some students and their exemptions from rules and regulations mean that they can’t use the Education Article as a basis for their lawsuit.
- Even further, the judges said; “To the contrary, to divert public education funds from the traditional public schools and toward charters would benefit a select few at the expense of the “common schools.”
- The NAACP has called for a moratorium on new charters, local oversight and increased transparency of current charter schools among other reforms.  
<http://www.naACP.org/latest/statement-regarding-naacps-resolution-moratorium-charter-schools/>
- The NAACP and many other studies have shown that charters increase the segregation in communities that already suffer from high concentrations of poverty and segregation.
- This holds true for the charter schools in Monroe County. Every current charter school in our area reflects an increase of segregated populations of students to a varying degree dissimilar to the Rochester City School District student population. Three charter schools fit the definition of hyper-segregated (80% African American) serving only 58 white students across the three schools. Source: MCSBA and ([www.data.nysed.gov](http://www.data.nysed.gov))
- In the August 23, 2017 edition of “Education Week”, a new poll indicated that public support for charter schools has significantly decreased with support from African-American respondents falling from 46% to 37% and from 44% to 39% among Hispanics.
- In a study reported by “U.S. News and World Report” published in March, 2016, researchers from UCLA’s Civil Rights Project, cited that charter schools suspend students at a much higher rate than non-charter schools, some by over 70%. Charter schools are not obligated to serve the students they suspend.  
[https://ampersand.gseis.ucla.edu/knowledge-that-matters-ucla-civil-rights-project-study-finds-higher-rates-of-student-suspensions-in-charter-schools/?\\_ga=2.68484754.2036743917.1507056730-556877891.1507056730](https://ampersand.gseis.ucla.edu/knowledge-that-matters-ucla-civil-rights-project-study-finds-higher-rates-of-student-suspensions-in-charter-schools/?_ga=2.68484754.2036743917.1507056730-556877891.1507056730)
- Both the Federal and State education departments have acknowledged that charter schools do not accept or retain students with disabilities or English language learners at near the percentages of the public school population.
- The Federal Inspector General’s Office determined last year that charter school relationships with charter management organizations posed a significant risk to USED program objectives. They also reported that the Education Department “did not have effective internal controls to monitor, evaluate and mitigate risks, nor did it ensure that the states’ department of educations were overseeing charter schools and their management organizations.”  
<http://www2ed.gov/about/offices/list/oig/whatsnew.html>
- The NYS Comptroller has cited through charter school audits this lack of control as well. However, it is important to note the Comptroller has indicated in some of these charter school audits that further investigation was impossible because “officials claimed the information was private and proprietary.” This lack of scrutiny further enables charter management companies to pass through tax payer dollars without accountability for their use.

## Vouchers

- Scientific American studied the scientific research on vouchers and found that vouchers have “mixed to negative academic outcomes and, when adopted widely, can exacerbate income inequity.”  
<https://www.scientificamerican.com/article/trump-administration-advances-school-vouchers-despite-scant-evidence/>
- Two researchers, one from Harvard and one from Stanford, concluded from their research that high income families increasingly live either in suburbs with expensive housing or enroll their children in expensive nonsectarian private schools. Meanwhile, low-income students remain disproportionately concentrated in high poverty public schools. Their view is that vouchers will not alter this pattern because they are not likely to provide enough money to allow access to the better schools. They found in their research of voucher programs in Louisiana, Ohio, Indiana and DC that the schools that accepted vouchers were of lesser quality than the nearby public school.

Source: *Education Week*, September 20, 2017.



## The State's Investment in Public Education

**Public Education continues to be a major economic driver for our local communities, our counties and the state. Without adequate funding to maintain quality public school districts for ALL our students, continued economic development across NYS will not be a sustainable goal.**

- Public school districts have two main sources of revenue; state aid and property tax levies. With the Tax Cap legislation, the State now controls both of those sources.
- Public school districts have significant cost drivers with mandates and pension contributions. These are also both controlled by the State.
- Public school districts face a growing need for resources to serve students who are homeless, live in poverty, are English Language Learners and have disabilities.

**School leaders have continually responded to concerns about local property taxes.**

- Prior to the tax cap, the 5 year average school property tax levy increase in Monroe County was 2.25%.
- Most public school districts have worked to remain within the tax cap in spite of decreases in funding due to the GEA, Foundation Aid freezes and the continue addition of costly mandates. Reserves have plummeted for many school districts during this time to make up for the funding gap. This has resulted in some of our schools meeting the fiscal stress measurement by the State Comptroller's office.
- Despite legislation that was approved to help school districts by allowing for PILOT growth and BOCES capital expenditures to be factored in the tax cap, no regulations were ever produced.
- The supermajority requirement has resulted in structural budget deficits and program cuts. It has also hampered the implementation of full day kindergarten which research shows improves student learning and closes achievement gaps. The supermajority overrides the will of the majority while inhibiting locally elected school board members to effectively govern.

**The Governor, the State Legislature, and the State Education Department must act to rebalance the equation of expectations on school districts with a realistic revenue stream and flexibility to allow for local decision making.**

- Foundation Aid needs to be fully functional recognizing that any change to rebalance the formula needs to have a comparable option for raising local revenue. Our school districts can't continue to be punished for their wealth aid ratios if they no longer can raise corresponding revenues to fill the state aid funding gap.
- Promised mandate relief has not materialized.
- The tax levy limit needs to be changed to allow school districts to comply with a 2% floor, or the CPI, *whichever is higher*. The tax levy limit, in its current form, has resulted in disruptions to long term budget planning, negative tax caps and community understanding.
- The supermajority must be eliminated so that, when necessary, a school district can ask for the community to override a tax levy limit without adding weight to dissenting voters' power.

**The New York State government has an obligation to support public education, and must explore every possible source of revenue to support this mandate.**