



MCSBA members attend federal education conference

School board members from all states of our union traveled to Washington D.C. in early February to meet federal officials to discuss federal support for public education.

Participants in the National School Boards Association Advocacy Institute Conference this year did not meet with many lawmakers since they were meeting to keep the government from shutting down on February 8. Members did meet with key legislative staff.

Participants heard about current federal education issues from noted presenters who included Cokie Roberts, NPR news reporter, who was a crowd pleaser.

A list of topics discussed at conference meetings can be found on page 3.



TOP: Rodney George, NYSSBA Board Member from Area 2; Natalie Sheppard (Roc); Sherry Johnson (MCSBA); Willa Powell (Roc); and Belinda Heckler, NYSSBA Governmental Relations Representative.

MIDDLE: NSBA members meeting with Senator Gillibrand legislative aides in an alcove of the Russell Senate building.

BOTTOM: Willa Powell (Roc) asking a question of Kevin Gannon in Chris Collins' office; Also seen is Lynn Gay of the Wayne-Finger Lakes Board of Education

RIGHT: National pollsters Celinda Lake, President of Lake Research Partners, and Brian Nienaber, Vice President of the Tarrance Group, shared predictions about the 2018 mid term elections.



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From our president: 21st Century skills

Thank you to all who participated in the MCSBA Legislative Breakfast at Shadow Lake in January.

We were extremely pleased with the turn out for the event, and thought the venue offered a pleasing and appropriate place to discuss issues with our elected and appointed representatives. The seating arrangement offered a unique opportunity to advocate, not only with people from your own district but with individuals from other districts as well, for those issues so important to public education.



Mike Suffoletto

Special thanks are offered to our Legislative Committee Co-Chairs, Mark Elledge and Valerie Baum for their efforts. Let us not forget the extraordinary efforts of our Executive Director and staff, Sherry, Beckie and Mary for all their hard work. This event could not have run as smoothly as it did without their efforts.

Thank you to all the Board of Education members and District officials who provided outstanding conversation and information at their tables getting our message across to the legislators regarding what we believe to be best for providing the necessary environment in our Districts for our students' success.

On a personal level, I was humbled and surprised when a few board members asked me for a copy of my opening remarks. I was humbled because I didn't think anyone was actually listening, and I worried that some of the legislators may have thought that I was lecturing them. (In fact, I probably was. But

I didn't think they were listening either.) I was surprised because I have heard these same words (maybe said a bit differently) from many of you in the past.

Here are my opening remarks related to public education:

Since Sherry and Beckie do not have a “Mother Goose” video readily interpreting educational terms such as “tapioca,” which hopefully our legislators remember, let me use this pulpit to offer a few comments.

**An underlining thought for today should be:
What is the importance of public education?**

Public education is perhaps the single most common and binding experience for Americans. The foundational conception of public education is not about Republicans or Democrats, and it has never been, before now, about profit.

Public education has always been about the development of each child as an individual to the fullest extent of his or her abilities for the ultimate benefit of society. Public schools are about Community, about Democracy, about Civility.

I cannot think of an important issue facing America where public education doesn't have a role in providing a solution. Public education means education that is publicly financed, tuition-free, accountable to public authorities, and accessible to all students.

So let's give public education the attention it deserves. Let us begin by talking about the importance of public education and sharing the ideas about key steps we can take.

Mike Suffoletto

From our executive director: **INTEGRITY**

What does it mean to have integrity and is integrity still important to us today? Should our leaders possess integrity as role models or do we no longer value that quality of character? These are questions that I ponder when I look out at our country today.



Sherry Johnson

There are no shortages of quotes on integrity, indeed there are pages that echo the words of famous people regarding the importance of living a life of integrity. The most common definition of integrity is “the quality of being honest and having strong moral principles”. Other definitions include the words virtue, decency, fairness, trustworthiness and sincerity.

Abraham Lincoln was quoted as saying “If you want to test a man’s character give him power.” In the list of the top 10 qualities of great leaders that sits above my desk, honesty is number one. If we follow the logic then, what our 16th President was saying is that if you want to really know if a man is honest and with strong moral principles, place him in a position where those qualities would be put on display for all when critical decisions need to be made. “Honest Abe” was certainly tested at a crucial moment in our history and he is now considered to be one of our greatest presidents.

Our nation has always held itself to a higher standard: to be the moral compass for the world. Grassroots leaders like locally elected Board of Education members still aspire to that standard and communities watch to make sure it is being met.

I attended the National School Board Association Advocacy Institute where I met hundreds of other board of education members who were just as passionate about the cause of public education as our members are. They came to prepare how best to advocate in an honest and respectful manner.

When they went to Capitol Hill to put that on display for our representatives, none were available. They were behind closed doors trying to keep our government from heading to another shutdown. Board members met with legislative staff instead in hallways, alcoves and cramped reception areas, but they persisted on behalf of the children they represented and, they were sincere and fair, decent and kind.

C.S. Lewis wrote, “Integrity is doing the right thing even when no one is watching.” I was proud to be a part of the group I was with in Washington and I am proud to support a membership that still believes nothing is more powerful than the actions of someone who leads with integrity.

Sherry Johnson

Issues discussed at the NSBA Advocacy Institute Conference

The National School Boards Association identifies major issues to promote with lawmakers, then hosts an annual Advocacy Institute Conference to prepare participants to discuss these issues with their representatives. Among the positions identified by NSBA in 2018 for the 115th Congress (2nd Session) are:

- * Support for reauthorization of the Carl D. Perkins Career and Technical Education Act (CTE);
- * Support for revising the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) to refocus from compliance-driven processes to collaboration in support of learning outcomes;
- * Support for finalizing FY 2018 appropriations to focus on assisting all children with disabilities, improving academic achievement of the disadvantaged; preparing, training, and recruiting high-quality educators; and providing academic enrichment grants;
- * Opposition to any legislation that diverts public funds from K-12 education through vouchers or tax credits;
- * Support for restoring the pathway to citizenship for DACA students;
- * Support for policies to ensure student data privacy while promoting effective data use;
- * Opposition to the FCC decision to eliminate the agency’s net neutrality regulations.

The complete list of NSBA priorities is accessible at <https://www.nsba.org/advocacy/federal-legislative-priorities/legislative-priorities-115th-congress>.



The New York State School Boards Association published a list of federal priorities that agrees with the NSBA list but adds issues of Medicaid and healthcare reform affecting schools.

The complete list of NYSSBA federal priorities is accessible at http://www.nyssba.org/clientuploads/nyssba_pdf/federal-issue-talking-points-01312018.pdf.

Dealing with anxiety

On February 14, Amy Scheel-Jones, Chief of Planning for the Monroe County Office of Mental Health, led a discussion of anxiety and possible interventions. Among her comments were the following:

- There are three components of anxiety—Cognitive, Physiological, and Behavioral—and anxiety can trigger a stress response in any one of the areas, which can become cyclic across all three areas. Paths to intervention occur across all three components of anxiety.
- Anxiety can occur with or without a traumatic experience. Anxiety and the fear associated with it are real and need to be believed to move forward.
- There are often clues when stress moves to the problematic range. These are usually picked up by knowing the child well across multiple settings, not just school. Anxiety is harder to overcome in adolescence.
- Parents, staff and students need support to provide productive help, especially in a school setting. Avoidance is a typical response to anxiety. To overcome it students need targeted, individualized feedback.
- Methods of intervention in all three components of anxiety were discussed. Setbacks are to be expected. It is important to stick to the intervention plan even when setbacks occur.
- Interventions are complex and may require medication, although medication is typically not helpful when anxiety is peaked.



ABOVE: Presenter Amy Scheel-Jones with Information Exchange Committee Co-Chair Tammy Gurowski (Web).

BELOW: Co-Chair Gurowski introducing presenter Scheel-Jones.



Negotiations in stressful economic times

At their February 28 meeting, members of the Labor Relations Committee heard Karlee Bolaños Esq. from Harris Beach discuss contract negotiations in times of structural deficit and strategies for impasse. Her presentation covered the following topics:

- * Overview of the Taylor Law, the Triborough Amendment, and Statutory Phases of Bargaining;
- * Collective Bargaining Issues for Negotiations with Structural Deficits;
- * Tips & Strategies for Negotiations with Structural Deficits;
- * Dealing with Impasse Considerations.

BELOW: Participants listening to Ms. Bolaños.



LEFT: Presenter Karlee Bolaños with Labor Relations Co-Chairs Tom Abbott (Hil) and Irene Narotsky (Pit).

She recommended that school boards:

- * Think carefully about board members participating on the negotiating team.
- * Adhere to confidentiality regulations regarding executive sessions.
- * Support district negotiators.
- * Prepare at least 6 months to a year before negotiations.
- * Understand the truly comparable districts.
- * Remember the shrinking government revenues resulting in budget gaps.
- * Be open to compromise and creative solutions.

MCEC members meet with D&C editorial board

Members of the Monroe County Education Coalition Steering Committee met with the *Democrat and Chronicle* Editorial Board on January 23, 2018 to discuss issues important to public education. Among the topics discussed were public education as an economic driver, MCEC's advocacy priorities, and challenges for public education.

MCEC representatives noted that Monroe County Public Schools:

- Are the 2nd largest employer in the county with over 22,000 full time employees;
- Serve over 106,000 students; 95% of public school students attend our district schools;
- Are governed by locally elected officials, all volunteers with the exception of RCSD;
- Develop budgets that are transparent and have the only budgets that tax payers can directly vote on;
- Collaborate with each other and with towns, villages, the city of Rochester and the county to save money in the areas of health insurance, equipment, fuel, utilities and supplies;
- Return 88% of revenue generated back into the community to support local business.

They highlighted the many honors and awards received by our county's public schools, and listed the many multi-district and college-district programs that benefit our community, as well as educational opportunities that promote diversity as well as college and career readiness.

Representing the MCEC Steering Committee were Scott Steinberg, President of the Monroe County Federation of Teachers; Jori Cincotta, Genesee Valley PTA; and Dr. Deborah Leh, President of the Monroe County Council of School Superintendents.

MCEC is a partnership of the major stakeholders in public education in Monroe County. Since 1995, MCEC has collaborated to provide the best public education possible. To learn more about MCEC, go to <https://www.monroe.edu/domain/154>.



For the D&C Editorial Board: Challenges facing public education

MCEC is working on these challenges:

Funding-

- * Advocating for full funding of Foundation Aid.
- * Advocating to unfreeze aid for full day kindergarten (currently full day kindergarten students are aided as half day students for schools who adopted full day K after 2008).
- * Opposing a 2% cap on expense based aids for 2019-2020.
- * Opposing the 60% super majority vote for overriding the tax levy cap.

APPR-

Advocating for removing from state law the current Annual Professional Performance Review regulations; one of the most expensive mandates required of school districts.

Mandate relief-

Advocating for full funding of any new mandates, funding for unfunded and underfunded mandates and to allow local control by school boards for efficient and effective management over their programs and budgets.

Other challenges facing public schools:

Economically disadvantaged in 19 suburban districts (includes Holley and Kendall) = 32%, in RCSD = 91%;

Homelessness affects every school district;

English Language Learners requirements have substantially increased as have students who require supports for a multitude of languages for which there are few interpreters;

Special Education costs continue to increase as schools work to provide the appropriate instruction and supports;

School districts are working to provide needed placement and support for an influx of students from places like Puerto Rico;

Every school district is working to help resolve the opioid crisis;

Mental health needs have increased across all of our school districts and require supports like suicide prevention efforts.



MCSBA 'alumni' meet

On February 22, former MCSBA members and leaders gathered for the inaugural meeting of the MCSBA Affiliate Network. The network allows participants to stay informed, stay connected, and to continue to advocate for public education.

LEFT: Among those attending this session were former MCSBA members Barbara Cutrano (Hil), Jody Siegle (Bri), Dr. Howard Maffucci (ER), Julia VanOrman (Gre), Margaret Burns (WI), Sherry Johnson (MCSBA executive director), Frank Muscato (GC), and Dr. Mort Stein (Bri).



Dual Credit Geospatial Technology program

Geospatial technology is a high growth field (according to the U.S. Department of Labor) and utilizes Geographic Information Systems (smart phones and mapping), remote sensing (think drones, aircraft, and satellite images), and GPS (smart phone connection and more).

Monroe Community College began offering summer geospatial workshops for high school teachers in 2015 with the support of a National Science Foundation Advanced Technological Education Grant. Since then, 18 local high school teachers have participated in the workshops. To be eligible to teach the dual enrollment course in geospatial technology high school teachers must also successfully complete a semester course at MCC.

In the 2017-18 school year, MCC is offering a total of five dual enrollment courses in Introduction to Geospatial Information Systems: in Rochester, Rush Henrietta, and Webster schools.

Several students who took the dual enrollment course in high school have now enrolled in MCC's recently approved A.S. degree in Geography (concentration geospatial technology) and/or the Geospatial Certificate program.

To learn more, contact Jonathan D. Little, Assistant Professor of Geography, Chemistry and Geosciences, MCC, at 585-292-2396 or <http://www.nygeographicalalliance.org/node/36>.



The pictures above show students enrolled in the Digital Earth class offered at Rush-Henrietta Senior High School for dual enrollment credit with Monroe Community College.

In the top pictures students are seen during their field trip to Letchworth Park to collect GPS data of invasive plants and old growth trees which they mapped after their return to the classroom. Students used handheld Garmin GPS units to collect data points. These were imported to a program called *ArcMap* which was used to create the maps of the Letchworth data and the other maps the students created.

The students seen in the bottom row are holding posters that were printed to illustrate another mapping project of the digital mapping course.

