



MCSBA Executive Committee approves 2020-2021 goals



At their first meeting of the school year, held on October 4, members of the Executive Committee approved the following goals:

- Manage COVID – Work collaboratively to manage the re-opening of schools successfully and be fluid and responsive with support for members' needs for professional development in the pandemic.
- Focus on Advocacy – Develop new relationships with legislators after the November elections and continue to support district efforts with advocacy.
- Relationships – Continue to strengthen professional development for board members and leadership; have members support each other through the COVID crisis and other issues; encourage member boards to develop succession plans for leadership.

Members also thanked Past President Kathleen Dillon for her 2019-2020 leadership since the Association annual meeting in May and spring Executive Committee meeting in April were cancelled due to the pandemic.



News Scope

MONROE COUNTY SCHOOL BOARDS ASSOCIATION
220 Idlewood Road, Rochester, NY 14618
(585) 328-1972 www.mcsba.org



President – Amy Jo Thomas, Pittsford CSD
Vice President – Gary Bracken, Spencerport CSD
Past President – Kathleen Dillon, Monroe 2 – Orleans BOCES, Churchville-Chili CSD
Treasurer – John Abbott, Monroe 2 – Orleans BOCES
Executive Director - Sherry Johnson, Sherry_Johnson@boces.monroe.edu
Program Director – Beckie Schultz, Beckie_Schultz@boces.monroe.edu

November 2020 INDEX

MCSBA Executive Committee meets	1
From our executive director	2
From our president	3
School finance conference	4
Legislative Committee Report	5
Labor Relations Committee Report	6
Information Exchange Committee Report	7
Ganondagan video tapes illustrate Native culture	7
ACT for Education hosts community roundtables	8
Lead poisoning still a threat to our children	8

From our executive director: *Leading towards equity*

Dear Members,

Aristotle was quoted as saying; “He who cannot be a good follower, cannot be a good leader.” My interpretation of this quote by the ancient Greek teacher and philosopher is that he expected good leaders to have walked where others have walked before or, if not, strived to understand their journey.

As school leaders, we have all been students. But, we have not all been students who have struggled, or been marginalized, discriminated against or left out. How do we lead on behalf of these students if we have never experienced their journey? We consistently talk about equity in education, but do we know what it really takes to lead conversation to concrete actions?

Beginning on October 23, the United Way has offered the community a 21-day racial equity challenge. Our districts have offered this to their staffs to participate in as individuals and we, at MCSBA, have joined on as well. Each weekday there are different challenges sent via email that we can choose from. Some take all of 2 or 3 minutes to read or view. Others can be longer.

I have felt that the challenges have been both enlightening and engaging. I would encourage all of you to sign up to do this. The challenge ends on November 20. The link to sign on is: <https://www.uwrochester.org/>

We must begin to better understand what needs to be changed, what needs to be improved on, and what needs to be created, in order that all students under our leadership have the same opportunities to grow, learn, succeed and reach their full potential without the barriers that can block their paths.

It is time to take our ideas, our frameworks and our goals and develop actionable policy and processes, and to design our curricula to meet the needs of all students. It will take advocacy at the board table and advocacy to get the resources to implement these actions. Many of you have begun that work. We are here to support you every step of the way.

Since the start of the 2014 school year, as a total population, our public schools have enrolled more minority students than white students. That enrollment will continue to grow as our country becomes more diverse. We must support and provide quality public education for every child, in order that each one is able to successfully participate in our economy, our defense and, therefore; our democracy.

It has been said that a leader without followers is someone who walks alone, but you have been elected to lead on behalf of all of the children in your districts. Walking alone is not an option.



Sherry Johnson

Sherry Johnson

From our president: **A Technological Turn**

Over the previous three decades, we have seen technology become an integral part of our educational landscape, as well as everyday life. Going from cell phones the size of a brick and supersized personal computers that consumed a desktop to the current proliferation of smart phones and laptops with nearly unlimited computing power, technology has enabled the connection of our world on an unprecedented level.

Unfortunately, that connection has come at a price. Long before COVID-19 thrust us into an online learning world, boards of education and mental health professionals recognized the adverse impact social media and technology can have on the interactions of our youth and our society. Concerns about the reliance on social media to connect, cyberbullying, and the amount of time students spend staring at a screen and the effects both can have on sleep and students' mental health are widely researched.



Amy Thomas

As a mom of four teens/young adults, I can attest to the increased use of technology in my own home over the past several years. I would often discourage the use of these devices and on-line gaming as a means to encourage more conversation and face time within our household, and have endured the resulting eye-rolling. As an upside, I learned that the ultimate punishment for making poor decisions was a temporary ban on use of their personal devices. Needless to say, I was not winning any popularity contests with my kids, especially if the elimination of their device occurred at 8:00 p.m. – aka “peak posting time.”

Technology does have its place and can be very useful. In addition to our students' immediate and necessary immersion in a remote learning model this spring, BOE members have also relied on technology to support district business. We were introduced to Zoom to conduct BOE meetings, MCSBA committee meetings, legislative meetings, and Meet the Candidates Night – albeit experiencing a number of technical glitches along the way. Many candidates running for BOE seats used social media to bolster their election campaigns. Living in an era of technology, BOEs learned the genuine merits of internet accessibility during a time of crisis.

We have also witnessed an uptick in the universal use of social media platforms as a means of personal expression, often times, in a negative way. Postings about COVID-19, persistent social injustices, and opposing political views often degrade into personal attacks which have escalated societal anxieties. Similar to our students, school districts and BOEs are dealing with the added daily stress of monitoring and responding to false accusations and extremely negative criticisms posted by stakeholders and the general public on the internet. The use of Neighborhood Apps, Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter to publicly share information and opinions regarding our individual districts has heightened our awareness of the potential damage caused by virtual acrimony.

But, it is not our job as board of education members to solve the issues that surround the use/misuse of technology, nor can we temporarily ban the public from ranting on social media outlets. However, we can embody and model civility and respect for our communities and the students we represent through our words and actions whether in-person or online.

When confronted by fictional and/or malicious stakeholder remarks, I'm often reminded of a quote from Brené Brown, American professor, lecturer, and author: “A lot of cheap seats in the arena are filled with people who never venture onto the floor. They just hurl mean-spirited criticisms and putdowns from a safe distance. The problem is, when we stop caring what people think and stop feeling hurt by cruelty, we lose our ability to connect. But when we're defined by what people think, we lose the courage to be vulnerable. Therefore, we need to be selective about the feedback we let into our lives.”

As we continue to navigate the 2020-2021 school year on our laptops, let's be sure to take pause prior to sending an angry email response or giving play to a negative posting about our schools. Take a moment to look for a positive use of technology and change the narrative. And let us all look forward to a post-COVID future making a more purposeful effort to restore person-to-person connections with our students, families, and communities. #letsconnect

Amy Jo Thomas



School board members explore fiscal roles

On October 17, newly elected school board members gathered at the day-long SED-approved MCSBA/MCASBO finance conference to learn about their fiduciary responsibilities to their districts and communities.

The presentations included the following:

- * Role of Boards of Education and Administration in Financial Planning and Oversight – by Mark Kokanovich, Board of Education President (Bri);
- * Budget Planning – by Andrew Whitmore, Assistant Superintendent for School Finance & Operations (RH);
- * Fund Balance & Reserves – by Brian Freeman, Assistant Superintendent for Business (Web);
- * What Financial Reports Tell – by Dr. Bruce Capron, Assistant Superintendent for Business & Operations (HFL);
- * Checks & Balances to Prevent Misuse of Resources – by Louis Alaimo, Assistant Superintendent for Administration (Bri);
- * Auditor Functions (Claims, Internal, & External) – by Raymond F. Wager, CPA.



This conference is presented annually by MCSBA in partnership with the Monroe County Association of School Business Officials (MCASBO).

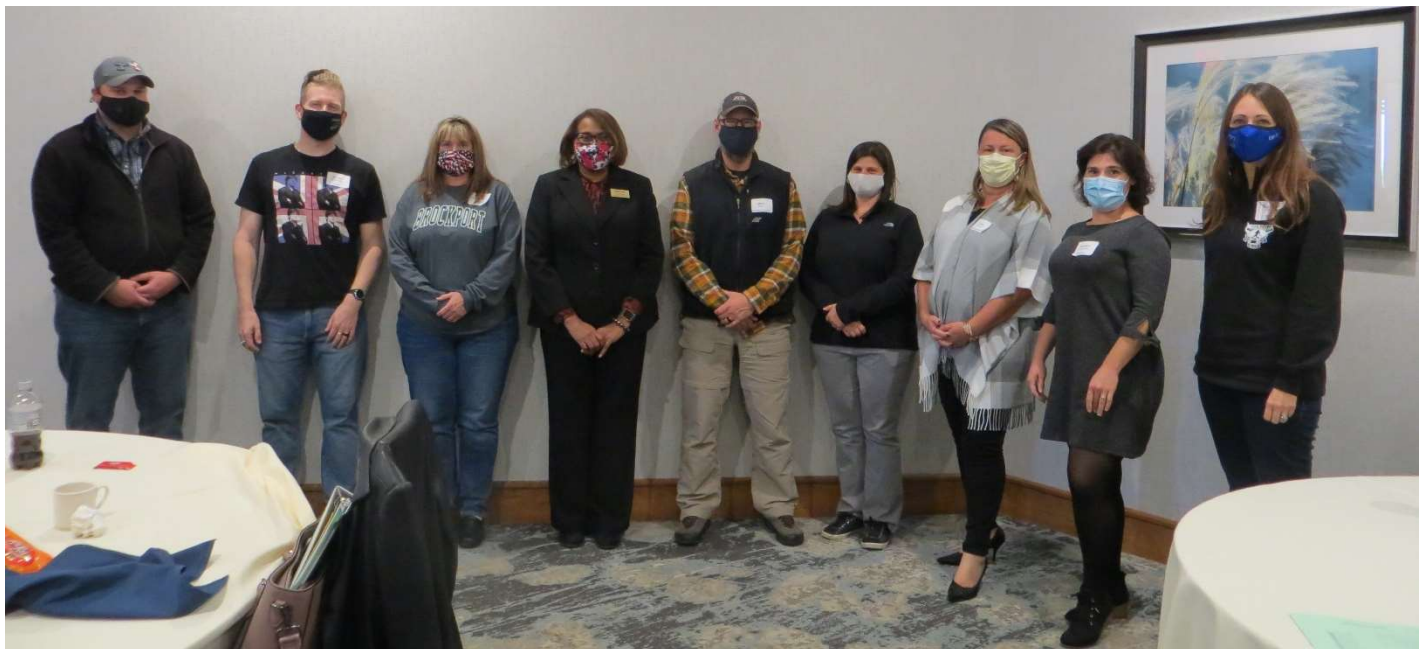
LEFT: Presenters

TOP: MCSBA President Amy Thomas (Pit), Mark Kokanovich (Bri).

MIDDLE: Andrew Whitmore (RH), Brian Freeman (Web).

BOTTOM: Louis Alaimo (Bri), Bruce Capron (HFL), Ray Wager, CPA.

BELOW (left to right): Board member participants – Bryan Hardenbrook (Ken), Ryan McDonald (Gre), Kathy Bondi-Vattimo (Geneseo), Robin Scott (Pit), Kevin Klein (HFL), Jill Ricci (EI), Lisa Latten (B1), Susan Gasparino (Bri), and Rachel Fiskens (Ken).



Legislative Committee identifies priorities and issues to discuss with Regents

During their October 7 meeting, Legislative Committee members finalized 2020-2021 legislative priorities and prepared questions in anticipation of a meeting by the committee with Interim Chancellor T. Andrew Brown and Regent Wade Norwood in November.



Legislative Committee Co-Chairs Valerie Baum (Pit) and Matt Metras (WI) confer before October 7 committee meeting.

Legislative Priorities Finalized

Members in attendance reiterated that MCSBA’s Legislative priorities would center on the following:

- Funding at both the State and Federal level for public education;
- Relief for COVID -19 Costs – Extending FEMA reimbursements, costs for additional substitutes, PPE and cleaning supplies;
- Relationship building with new legislators after the November elections to educate them about public education needs and financial burdens especially those anticipated for the 2021-22 school year;
- Mandate Relief– continuing to educate local and state leaders about impact of mandates;
- Exploration of ways to mitigate the Digital Divide.

Position Paper Up-Dates

Members approved the following position papers that had minor edits by office staff to update them:

- * Bus Drivers Needed!,
- * The Role of Regents & SED for Public Education,
- * Keeping our Schools Safe, and
- * Impact of Staff Shortages on School Districts.

Sub-committees are being activated to edit the Mandate and School Choice position papers.

Topics to Discuss with Regents

Members would like the Regents to speak to the following questions, as well as update them about their current work:

- What can SED do to help districts with work force availability issues, especially for substitutes and lessening requirements for staff from other states?
- How will SED work to fill vacancy at the agency especially with current and future expected funding constraints?

How are positions at the agency funded?

- Can the Regents speak to their vision on re-imagining schools- what does it look like to them?
- Can there be more flexibility and guidance regarding on-line learning for such things as a regional on-line High School or sharing of on-line classes across districts, while keeping the learning tied to public education.
- What is the Board of Regent’s current thoughts on state testing this spring?
- Will additional guidance be coming forward on work force based learning and lab requirements especially those associated with science?



Legislative Committee members during their October 7 meeting.

2020-2021 Labor Relations Committee gears up



LEFT: Presenters Bruce Capron and Bill Harvey of HFL and Labor Relations Committee members on September 30.

On September 30, the Labor Relations Committee met for the first time this school year at which time its members approved committee goals unchanged from last year, reviewed possible program topics for remaining committee meetings, and participated in a discussion of scenario based emergency drills that was led by Dr. Bruce Capron, Assistant Superintendent for Business and Operations, and Bill Harvey, Director of Transportation and Security, both from Honeoye Falls-Lima CSD.

The presenters reviewed the SED requirements and timing for school safety drills, noting their purpose is to empower staff and students to protect themselves and others during emergencies. They discussed SHELL responses for different types of emergencies, noting some of the modifications made to these drills to enhance safety, and stressing the critical importance of communications. HFL has used lock down drills as teaching opportunities for students with age-appropriate lessons and opportunities for students to dialogue with teachers on what to do in the drill. They reviewed district plans for children who are non-ambulatory and/or have specific needs. They listed emergency situations districts were more likely to encounter but are less commonly drilled, such as weather, utility and bus related events. They discussed the need to debrief after drills and highlighted the need to keep emergency plans up-dated, using feedback from the drills. They also recommended threat assessment to prevent emergencies where possible.

Unemployment benefits: *Untangling issues created by the pandemic*

During their October 21 meeting Labor Relations Committee members learned about changes to unemployment benefits due to the Federal Cares Act, NYS Extended Benefits Program, and the Pandemic Unemployment Assistance Program. Leading the discussion were Franklin Nardone, Assistant Superintendent for Business Services (CC), and Brian Riley, Labor Relations Specialist (B2). Among their comments were the following:

- Some districts experienced a drastic increase in fraudulent and ineligible unemployment claims. Jeremy Bell from the FBI Rochester field office was identified as the local contact for investigations of fraudulent claims.
- There are deadlines for protesting fraudulent claims. Questions about fraudulent claims should be sent to Natalie Coleman, Director of the Glendale Telephone Claims Center (Natalie.coleman@labor.ny.gov) for assistance.
- The DOL has ruled that substitute teachers are eligible for benefits from the time schools shutdown in March until the end of the school year.



ABOVE: LR Committee Co-chair Bob Dickson (B1), Frank Nardone (CC), LR Committee Co-chair Frank Muscato, and Bryan Riley (B2).

The committee also received the schedule of topics for the remainder of 2020-2021, based on input from the September meeting:

- 11/18 - Labor issues in catastrophic times
- 1/20 - Work force availability
- 2/24 - Negotiations & COVID
- 3/24 - RASHP II update
- 4/28 - Observation and evaluation for staff teaching online.

Re-opening schools with mental health & equity in mind

On October 14, Information Exchange Committee members learned how Rush-Henrietta planned for re-opening its schools with mental health and equity in mind from the district's Director of Wellness and Equity, Diane Wynne. She noted that Rush-Henrietta approached the task by raising awareness about mental health and equity needs and the impact on these areas by COVID-19, developing strategies to address those needs, and building the capacity of staff members to address the needs. Among her comments were the following:

- The district used surveys to determine stakeholder's needs and to develop activities to meet those needs.
- They developed a re-opening plan for building leaders with scaffolded support based on NYS mandates and other considerations.
- To emphasize the critical role of staff in supporting each other and students, professional development was modified to give staff more sense of control to lower anxiety.
- The district developed a multi-teared system of support diagram to articulate the supports they were providing for all students and, when needs required, targeted or more intensive intervention.
- Equity is a district priority that guides all decisions. The district prepared a document on equity re-opening considerations for administrators with links to resources.
- It is important to move out of one's comfort zone to look at things in new ways to better serve students.



ABOVE Co-Chairs Tammy Gurowski (Web) and Kerri Keyes (GC) with presenter Diane Wynne (RH).









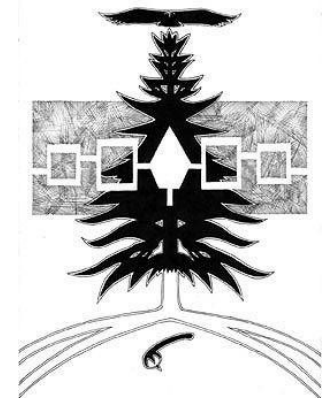
Dianne Wynne leading discussion.

Ganondagan offers online lessons on Native American culture

During the pandemic, when students are often not even in the classroom, field trips to cultural sites are non-existent. To help students better understand the history and culture of Native Americans in our area, the Seneca Art and Culture Center at Ganondagan in Victor has created a number of YouTube videos that can be shown to a group or watched individually by students. The series features Bill Crouse (of the Seneca Nation) bringing The Peacemaker's Journey to life in the oral tradition, with his live drawings, among other topics.

Find the series on Ganondagan's YouTube channel at <https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCoLxS8-0iique6yhmcyrGzOg>.

 14:56	 8:34	 14:08
Peacemakers Journey Part 1	Attotaro - Peacemakers Journey Part 2	Ha:yëwënta' - Peacemakers Journey Part 3
 14:32	 4:01	 13:46
Ha:yëwënta' Continued & Jigöhsasë' - Peacemakers...	How to Make Iroquois White Corn Porridge	The Five Nations Accept the Message of Peace...





Public Schools in ACTION

Roundtable Discussion with Local Leaders in Education

ACT for Education hosts community roundtables

To help our greater Rochester community have a better understanding of the work that school districts are doing to reopen schools safely and keep them open, the ACT for Education Steering Committee has put together a series of bi-weekly roundtables that the community can view and participate in. To date, three roundtables have taken place on the topics of school funding, safe school health practices and remote learning. These can be accessed at <https://actforeducation.org/live>. Three more are scheduled that will address athletics and extra-curricular activities, facilities, and social and emotional learning. The dates for these are on 11/12, 12/3 and 12/17, respectively.

The ACT for Education steering committee includes superintendents, board members, communication specialists, business, and community partners. Their mission is to help community members learn about the great things that are happening in our public schools every day.

RIGHT-Seen during the "Safe School Health Practices" roundtable held on Thursday, October 15 are –

TOP: Hilton Superintendent Casey Kosiorek and Pittsford Superintendent Mike Pero.

BOTTOM: Monroe2-Orleans BOCES Superintendent Jo Anne Antonacci and Monroe County Department of Health Commissioner Dr. Mike Mendoza.



Lead poisoning still a threat to our children

COVID-19 has affected our community in many ways and has created new obstacles for keeping families safe from lead poisoning. A combination of factors like children spending more time indoors in potentially unsafe housing, a recent surge of 'do-it-yourself' home renovations potentially exposing families to toxic paint and lead dust, and a diversion of resources away from other public health issues to COVID-19 put more local young children at risk. Monroe County has a [long history](#) of keeping children safe from lead, but we need to be aware of this threat and maintain the health of vulnerable children. Seen below are three videos that can be shared with teachers and parents to help get out the message. Learn more at <https://theleadcoalition.org/protect-the-child/>.



<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qfGw4zTg44g&feature=youtu.be>



<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ceY95nkbXEQ&feature=youtu.be>



<https://vimeo.com/468176063?ref=em-share>