



Legislative Committee meets with Regents



On November 4, NYS Board of Regents Vice Chancellor T. Andrew Brown and Regent Wade Norwood met with the MCSBA Legislative Committee to discuss issues of common concern which included:

- Regent Norwood expressed concern for public education’s survival long term, noting the pandemic presents an opportunity for positive change, a view that Vice Chancellor Brown also shares. Increased teacher creativity and proficiency with instructional technology were cited as examples.
- Both Regents stressed that continuing teaching and learning in the pandemic was a priority for SED.
- Both Regents acknowledged that financing public schools will be increasingly challenging and increased funding may in part depend on outcomes from the current election cycle.
- Regent Norwood discussed a 3-pronged challenge: the public health crisis, the economic crisis caused by the pandemic, and the social injustice crisis.
- Vice Chancellor Brown noted that the Regents want to rethink public education to meet what will be the “new normal” following the pandemic.
- Regent Norwood noted that children must be taught to follow their passion, be creative and adaptable, as well as be problem solvers. He also encouraged a focus on lessons from history.



TOP: Co-Chairs Matthew Metras (WI) and Valerie Baum (Pit) with Vice Chancellor T. Andrew Brown and Regent Wade Norwood.
MIDDLE: Regents Brown and Norwood.
BOTTOM: Committee members.

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

December 2020 – January 2021 INDEX

| | |
|--|---|
| Legislative Committee meets with Regents | 1 |
| From our president | 2 |
| From our executive director | 3 |
| Conquering the digital divide | 4 |
| Labor relations in catastrophic times | 5 |
| Fall clerk seminar | 6 |
| Remembering Aggie Seneway | 7 |
| GVASCD focus on equity | 8 |

From our president: Shaping the Future

What a year - 2020 has certainly been a year to remember - although some would argue it is a year to forget. In part, we were introduced to an unfamiliar vocabulary that became common vernacular: pandemic, quarantine, isolation, social-distancing, masking, antibody testing, and COVID testing. Parents and boards had to learn the meaning and impacts of asynchronous and synchronous learning.

As I write this column, COVID fatigue and restrictive zoning are prevalent terms expressed in the news and in our communities. Truth be told, my favorite color is orange; however, the recent announcement of colored zoning restrictions has tarnished my view of the “ROY”GBIV color spectrum.

No doubt, this has been a year of uncertainty; yet it has been a year of reinvention. Solutions previously considered to be outside the realm of possibility became possible by unwavering leadership and proactive problem solving. Whether we like it or not, COVID-19 has forced our country to look introspectively at how we live, how we work and where we place our priorities. This has happened in all industries, communities, and families.

The same has happened in the world of education. We’ve had to shift our priorities and reinvent the traditional educational landscape. New models of instruction, classroom layouts, reformation of buildings, modifications to athletic fields, changes in transportation, and adjustments to our board rooms are all examples of the reinvention of education during COVID-19. Our educational mindset has evolved yet our focus never faltered from our number one priority – serving our students. Our districts deserve accolades for their perseverance despite the insurmountable challenges the pandemic presented.

While we have endured a year of great change, that change has created opportunities for us to become stronger leaders. We remained steadfast in supporting our districts during school closures in March, ensuring our students and staff had the supports necessary to finish the 2020 school year. We were involved in the oversight of plans to safely reopen schools in September under the everchanging guidance from the Governor’s office. As we close 2020, we are attuned to the fiscal planning required to address the bleak financial forecast facing our individual districts.

As we look forward to our post-COVID forecast for 2021, we may ask ourselves what we are willing to leave in our pre-COVID past and what to take to our post-COVID future. How will this past year shape education? I would ask that we all reflect on the essential learnings of 2020, evaluate what to leave behind, and assess which creative solutions generated in this pandemic will improve the post-COVID educational landscape. Then let’s take that information to Albany, to NYSED, and to our lawmakers and help forge the way ahead.

My sincere gratitude to each one of you for your flexibility, adaptability and fortitude to serve in your roles as leaders during this historic year. Wishing all of you a healthy and safe end to 2020 and bright ROYGBIV 2021!



Amy Thomas

Amy Jo Thomas

From our executive director: Celebrating What You've Done During This Extraordinary Year

Dear Members,

I don't make New Year resolutions. January is already a tough month for me, so having to deal with the feelings of inadequacy brought on from the abject failure to reach any personal improvement goal, would be too much for me to bear. But, I did have big plans for 2020. The decennial Census was already in progress and we were members of the Complete Count committee. There were new candidates for upcoming elections to meet and educate, and there were all of the interesting dynamics to keep track of for a presidential election. On a personal note, my husband and I found out that we would be blessed with our 4th grandchild, come fall. 2020, was shaping up to be an exciting year! But, of course, that excitement turned to a deep consternation about the future of many things, in March.



Sherry Johnson

So much has been already said about this year and I don't want to repeat that here. I want to, instead, remind you of what you were able to accomplish through your leadership during this extraordinary time and under such challenging conditions.

Leaders know that change is inevitable and that a crisis can define or diminish great leadership. I told many of you that this is the year where you would make no one happy, so it would be extraordinarily important for all of you to remain as cohesive a team as possible, in order to lead with what you believe would be the best path forward for your students, your staff and your community. And lead you did.

Your focus never faltered as you made the almost overnight transition to full remote learning, to redefining how instruction would be implemented, to how students would access breakfast and lunch and how to redeploy staff to support families as they tried to fathom the unfathomable.

As the year progressed, you remained committed to increasing technology capacity, reallocating resources, responding to sometimes conflicting guidance from the state and federal governments and reassuring everyone that public education would remain strong, regardless of the Governor's threat to cut budgets.

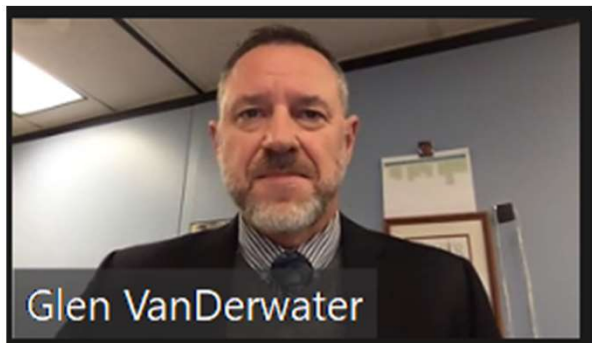
And now, as the year ends, you have become the examples of what can be done through great leadership, as schools offer one of the safest environments for students and staffs. There is, unfortunately, no Emmy for that.

However, I did want to celebrate all 195 of you (board members and superintendents), and had been thinking about a way to do that when my email reminded me that today, December 1, is ROC the Day. So, I have made two personal donations in your honor. The first is to Causewave Partners who work directly with our ACT for Education steering committee and have done amazing work on behalf of all of your districts. The other is to Junior Achievement of Rochester which offers so much to the students in our entire region. JA also has a seat at the ACT table and is an important partner in the work that we do.

I know that as tough as this year has been, you have remained resolute in your mission on behalf of the children you serve every day and that whatever challenges 2021 may have in store, you are ready to meet them with the same courageous leadership that you have shown this year. You all truly ROC!

We, at MCSBA, wish you the very best that the holidays have to offer. Please stay safe and we look forward to reconnecting with you next year!

Sherry Johnson



Conquering the Digital Divide
 Glen VanDerwater and Tim Johnsen
 Monroe County School Boards Association
 November 18, 2020



On October 18, members of the Information Exchange Committee met in a Zoom room to learn how our county’s large urban district has been working to eliminate the digital divide separating its students. **Glen VanDerwater**, Chief Technology Officer, Rochester City School District; and **Tim Johnsen**, Director of Learning Management Systems, Instructional Technology Department, Rochester City School District, reviewed steps already underway as well as plans for the future. Among their comments were the following:

- * 37% of RCSD students have either no internet access or access only through a cell phone device. In some tracks only 20-40% of the homes have access to 10Mbps of faster broadband.
- * To address the digital divide, needs include professional development, hardware, student internet access, and digital content.

- * RCSD developed an extensive professional development opportunity for staff called Ready, Set, Go. The expectation was that staff would complete a series of our courses to receive a dedicated 1:1 chrome book cart for classroom use prior to the pandemic. 73% of the staff had completed at least two of the courses so the staff was better positioned for a transition to remote learning when the pandemic hit.
- * When the pandemic hit, the district went fully remote and massive hardware issues were addressed in new ways.
- * Connectivity is essential for student use of digital formats. RCSD utilized connections with businesses, broadband providers and philanthropic donors to provide students with access.
- * The district set up a variety of supports and communication systems to meet needs of parents and staff during the pandemic.
- * During the pandemic, Google Classroom was the format used for students in grade 3-12. Seesaw was the remote format used for grades PK-2.
- * To assist with student monitoring in remote settings, RCSD used cloud based filtering for devices both on and off network. Mi-Fi devices were connected to additional layer of filtering that covered anything connected to the device. Gagggle, a web filtered was used to review student activity 24/7/365. School staff receive alerts regarding at-risk students or students in serious situations and software has proven to be effective in assisting students.

ABOVE: Presenters Glen VanDerwater and Tim Johnsen, with Information Committee Co-Chairs Tammy Gurowski (Web) and Kerri Keyes (GC).

RIGHT: The 22 participants from 12 districts in the November 18 Zoom meeting.





Monroe County School Boards Association Labor Relations Committee Meeting **Labor Relations in Catastrophic Times**

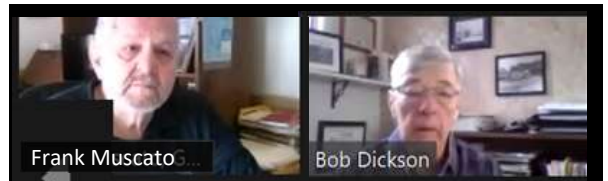


ABOVE: Attorney presenters Donald Budmen and Allison Marley.
BELOW: Labor Relations Committee Co-Chairs.

On November 18, members of the Labor Relations committee met via Zoom to receive an overview of labor issues created by the pandemic, especially issues of staff reduction, from Donald E. Budmen Esq. and Allison L. Marley Esq., both of Ferrara Forienza PC.

Among their comments were the following:

- * Roughly 80% of district costs are staff related so staff reductions are a real possibility should state cuts come without relief from the federal government.
- * Districts must lay off the least senior certificated employee in the tenure area impacted.
- * Teacher tenure determinations are defined by categories in Part 30 of the Regents Rules. Job titles may be defined by a district but tenure must fall into one of the 6 preset categories in the Part 30 rules.
- * All teacher assistants fall into a single tenure area under Part 30 rules, no subdivisions exist for differing job titles.
- * Administrators are not bound by Part 30 rules; tenure areas are set by school districts/BOCES. They may be defined narrowly or broadly but must be consistently applied.
- * In situations where staff have identical time of service, date of appointment by the board can be used as a tiebreaker. Tenure credit can be given in only one area.
- * Boards of education must take formal actions to abolish a position and place the employees affected on a preferred eligibility list for 7 years. Collective bargaining agreements may require notice, but no statutory notice is required or abolishment of positions.



* Seniority for classified civil service employees is calculated by continuous service from their permanent appointment to the position. The order of layoffs for employees in a competitive class is non-permanent, probationary according to their seniority.

* The law does not allow for furloughs but can allow for temporary separations with a memorandum of agreement with the district.

ABOVE: Presenters Donald Budmen, Esq. and Allison Marley, Esq. with Labor Relations Committee Co-Chairs Frank Muscato and Bob Dickson.

LEFT: Some of the 35 participants in the November 18 Zoom meeting of the Labor Relations Committee.

Fall Clerks Seminar

On November 19, the district clerks from 19 MCSBA districts and 13 other districts in our region attended MCSBA's Fall Clerks Seminar to receive a legal update and learn about changes to the records retention schedule.

Heather Cole, Esq., of Ferrara Fiorenza PC provided an update concerning issues in such areas as absentee ballots, residency for homeless students, COVID-19-related leave, administrator probationary terms, non-instructional employee due process, Title IX issues, accommodations for victims of domestic violence, election issues, Child Victims Act, Education Law Section 2-d, SRO Agreements, and reminders about OML and FOIL.

Jeff Cimmerer, Chief Information Officer for Pittsford CSD, reviewed records retention schedule change to LGS-1.

During the traditional Circle Time that draws each clerk seminar to a close, participants networked about presenters' topics and other issues they're facing this school year.

Thanks to the Planning Committee:

Kristen Adler (ER), Cynthia Cushman (Web), Connie Nenni (Hol), Rhonda Schaefer (HFL), Mary Torcello (CC), and Sarah Williams (Mt. Morris).



BELOW: Some of the 32 clerk participants at the November 19 seminar.



Remembering Aggie Seneway

Remembering Aggie Seneway, Ed.D. Agnes (Aggie) Seneway passed away peacefully in her sleep on November 12, 2020 after a long battle with cancer.

Aggie was a member of the Hilton Board 2002-2017, including service as the group's President. She served as MCSBA's 2011-2012 President after serving as co-chair of its Labor Relations and Legislative Committees.



Aggie retired from the Hilton District where she served 30 years in a number of positions, as a teacher, assistant HS principal, Director of Pupil Personnel Services, and Chairperson of Committee on Special Education and Committee on Preschool Special Education. She was selected as the 1997 Hilton CSD Teacher of the Year. In 2003, she joined the SUNY Brockport faculty, preparing the next generation of educational leaders. She earned her Ed.D. from the University of Rochester in 2017.

Aggie also had a long record of community service and leadership. She was an officer in the Hilton CSD Teachers' Association and Greater Rochester Pupil Personnel Services Directors, as well as a member of the Board of Directors of the Park Ridge Hospital Mental Health Center, the ParkRidge Youth Outreach Board, the Southeast Ecumenical Ministry Board of Directors, and Foodlink, among others. She was the Recipient of GVASCD's Service to Education Award in 2010.

TOP: Aggie is seen with GVASCD Co-President Jo Anne Antonacci (B2) in May 2010 as well as with Dr. Lesli Myers-Small (Roc), then superintendent of Brockport.

BOTTOM: Aggie with Treasurer John Abbott (B2) at the May 2011 annual meeting where she was elected Association President.



*Best wishes
for the coming year*

from your MCSBA officers & staff:

*Amy Jo Thomas
Gary Bracken
Kathy Dillon
John Abbott*

*Sherry Johnson
Beckie Schultz
Mary Talbot*



GVASCD Focus on Equity

This past fall: Leading for Equity

On October 19, Genesee Valley ASCD, as part of its focus on creating equity in our schools, presented "Leading for Equity" led by Tasha Potter via Zoom. Ms. Potter is Director of Equity, Family and Community Engagement for the Greece Central School District. She is also a partner in BTP Accountability Partners. She has earned a BS in Psychology, MA in Liberal Studies, and a Certificate of Advanced Study in Education Leadership. She is currently working towards a Doctorate in Education Executive Leadership.



Participants in the October GVASCD program -

- Learned the importance of Equity in the educational system
- Examined the National Challenges of Equity
- Unpacked National Data which exposes educational inequities
- Considered issues involved with Leading for Equity
- Heard from a panel of students
- Developed action steps towards an Equity plan for their districts.

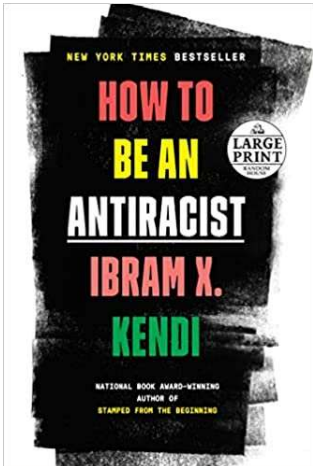
Read a recap here: [Leading for Equity, GVASCD Fall Headliner](#)

Coming this spring: Equity and Diversity

To follow up on the October presentation, GVASCD is offering a book study using

How to be an Antiracist by Ibram X. Kendi

Led by Tasha Potter, BTP Accountability Partners, LLC.



Tuesday, April 6th 2021 at 5-6:30pm

AND

Tuesday, April 20th 2021 at 5-6:30pm

Online Event

[Learn More or Register Today](#)

at [How to be an Antiracist Synchronous Book Study \(gvascd.org\)](#)

The graphics below were part of the October 19 *Leading for Equity* session.

