



***On October 29,
your MCSBA staff
(with professional help)
moved the
Association office
to its new location
at
333 Metro Park,
Suite C-102.***

***Stay tuned
for opportunities
to visit our new
office.***



**333 Metro Park, Suite C-102
Just off Brighton-Henrietta TLR**



Change also coming to *News Scope* publishing schedule

Beginning in 2022, we are moving to an every-other-month publication of our newsletter.

News Scope

MONROE COUNTY SCHOOL BOARDS ASSOCIATION

NEW: 333 Metro Park, Suite C-102, Rochester, NY 14623

(585) 328-1972 www.mcsba.org

President – Gary Bracken, Spencerport CSD

Vice President – Amy West, Honeoye Falls-Lima CSD

Past President – Amy Jo Thomas, Pittsford 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



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Program director Beckie Schultz to retire



Beckie Schultz has announced her retirement at the end of December. She began serving as MCSBA's Program Director in July 2015 to organize the Association's general membership and committee meeting programs.

Prior to becoming Program Director, Beckie served for 18 years as a member of the West Irondequoit Board of Education (1997-2015), and was active in MCSBA's advocacy efforts and committees.

She plans to spend more time with her family after retirement.

MCSBA members attend NYSSBA leadership training

On September 21, several MCSBA members were among the 50 participants who attended the NYSSBA Board Officers Academy held in Rochester. Presentations included:

- * Roles and Responsibilities of Board Officers,
- * Improving School Board Effectiveness,
- * DEI (Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion) Education: Foundations and Introduction,
- * DEI in Education: The Board's role.



ABOVE: Panelists who led the discussion of "DEI in Education: The Board's role" included Larry Davis of Brighton, Nicole LaFave of Ithaca, and Diane McBride of Rush-Henrietta. These experienced board presidents shared their experiences leading school boards seeking to become more diverse, equitable, and inclusive.

RIGHT: Other MCSBA members participating included Cynthia Elliott (Roc) and Pat Storm (EI).



From our president: Opportunities to Excel



Gary Bracken

During my 23+ year military career, I was faced with many difficult situations, some of which are similar to things you as board members are now facing—unexpected operational outcomes, demands from senior officers, and assignments that were less than ideal. But with time, my shipmates and I began to call these situations “opportunities to excel.” Somewhat tongue in cheek, we knew we could not dodge these events; we had to face them head on, adapt as needed, and solve.

Somewhat similarly, we as board members, and as an association, are now faced with our own opportunities to excel, as are the people who make our schools operate and excel—our administrators, teachers, and staff. But, the very fabric of public education is under fire from a loud minority and also from the circumstances of the pandemic.

Our schools, while in person full time, do not feel like they did prior to March 2020. I was in our high school recently and it was obvious that our teachers and staff are feeling real stressors beyond the norm and many of our kids are having an equally difficult time.

While we can’t “solve world hunger” as board members and make everything better, we can take positive action. The staff of our schools, our parents, and our communities truly want to know that you are aware of what is happening and that you care and want to help.

So what does that look like? First, be visible and open to conversations when approached. And even though you can’t fix everything for them or tell them you will “take care of it,” you can be approachable and willing to listen; it matters a lot. And certainly that will mean you will have the negative side of things presented to you. But rise above and be the voice of reason as the majority of our staff, parents and communities want to get past the pandemic and realize it really does take all of us coming together.

One approach, depending on how you operate in your district and in partnership with your superintendent, is to spend time as you are able in the schools and operational buildings, including with your transportation and facilities teams. Again, this is an opportunity to have our folks get to know you as a person and not someone who just sits around a board table and makes decisions that have an effect on them without knowing them.

Also, give your administrators some breathing room. Our districts are not going to solve the pandemic. That is up to public health professionals and the researchers who are fighting to rise above their own opportunities to excel. Some people, including kids, will get sick. Some kids won’t be perfect in how they wear their masks. Some of our staff will not 100% of the time remind kids to pull their masks up over their nose. But we need to lower the tension over the expectations to allow our kids and our teams to be themselves as much as possible.

We can, also in partnership with our superintendents, help bring back a more positive feeling inside our own worlds of public education. We need to acknowledge that a lot of our staff and kids are struggling with their own personal issues around the pandemic and not be too quick to judge. We need to, as I learned throughout my career, not sweat the small stuff, but focus on real issues and challenges.

All of our districts are doing amazing work to keep our kids in school and do their part to get past this – and I hate to use this word – unprecedented situation. So take a moment to pat your administrators on the back, go say hi to some of the amazing people doing the work of our districts, and yes, give yourself and your fellow board members a pat on the back.

I truly believe in the concept of assuming noble intent – it is why we all serve to help our future generation succeed. Don’t worry about the small stuff, the daily “hiccups” that may occur, and support your administration. And celebrate overcoming your own opportunities to excel and give one another and others a break if things don’t work out perfectly.

One of my favorite quotes on team work came from Ben Franklin, who reportedly said that “we must, indeed, all hang together or, most assuredly, we shall all hang separately.” So let’s hang together with our superintendents, our administrators, our teachers, support staff, and the vast majority of our community who want to see all our kids succeed. Take the opportunity to let them know that you have their backs and understand their struggles.

As always, thank you for what you are doing to help shape and guide the next generation of our great nation. We are indeed all in this together!

Gary Bracken

From our executive director: **MOVING ON**



Sherry Johnson

Dear Members,

As I sit in my office to write this, we are just a few days from moving to our new location. Our offices are almost barren except for the blue bins that will take the Association belongings to our new place. It is an odd feeling to look around a space that you have called home away from home for so long and hear the echo of your voice as it bounces off naked walls.

Since 2008, MCSBA has been at our current location inside the Brookside Elementary school of the Brighton CSD. We have had wonderful neighbors and have watched countless children in the YMCA Kindergarten Wrap program at play. We were able to invite kids in to trick or treat or to see holiday decorations and give them a small token that we would craft together for them. It was a perfect combination of supporting all of you and also interacting with the children you are responsible for educating.

However, all of our schools now have full day kindergarten, which is truly vital and the Brookside school has been sold to another organization, so we need to move on. We want to thank both the Brighton Board of Education and the Brighton administration for providing us with such bright and spacious spaces to do our work and the extraordinarily friendly and dedicated staff who have kept us clean and safe. We will miss those we have met along the way in the other departments that also have offices here.

At the same time, we are excited to get into our new building and settle in. We worked hard to get the best space we could find to meet our needs and be fiscally prudent with Association dollars. I want to thank our officers for their guidance as I walked through the logistics of this. There is a lot involved in moving an entire association and we could not have done this without their insight and support.

We will be offering a series of open houses during this year for members who are interested in visiting. In the meantime, our doors are always open and you should feel free to come by anytime you are in the neighborhood. We would love to see you!

In addition, as always, we are here to support you in any way that we are able. Thank you for all that you do!

Sherry Johnson





School Finance Conference

On October 16, during MCSBA's 19th annual (17th annual as an SED-approved provider) conference on oversight of district finances, new school board members learned about the following:

Role of Boards of Education & Administration in Financial Planning and Oversight, presented by Mark Kokanovich (B1), former MCSBA President;

Budget Planning, presented by Andrew Whitmore (RH), Assistant Superintendent for School Finance & Operations;

Fund Balance & Reserves, presented by Brian Freeman (Web), Assistant Superintendent for Business;

What Financial Reports Tell, presented by Dr. Bruce Capron (HFL), Assistant Superintendent for Business & Operations;

Checks and Balances to Prevent Misuse of Resources, presented by Dr. Bruce Capron (HFL), Assistant Superintendent for Business & Operations;

Auditor Functions (Claims, Internal, and External), presented by Thomas Zuber, CPA, Mengel, Metzger & Barr & Company, LLP.



ABOVE: Top Row- MCSBA Executive Director welcoming participants; Presenters Mark Kokanovich and Andrew Whitmore; Bottom Row- Presenters Brian Freeman, Dr. Bruce Capron, and Thomas Zuber.

Participants in the daylong seminar received certificates of completion that are registered with the NYSED. MCSBA has been offering an annual school finance conference since 2003, before such a seminar was required by the NYSED in 2005. Even before that, since 1992 the Association provided a handbook on school finance to newly elected board members.



Some of the 18 participants attending the October 16 seminar. They represented Attica and York, as well as 11 MCSBA member districts.

2021-2022 Information Exchange Committee: Preventing Child Abuse



During the October 13 meeting of the Information Exchange Committee, Stefanie Szwejbka, Manager of Community Education for the Bivona Child Advocacy Center, outlined signs of sexual abuse, grooming and offender dynamics, policies and procedures for abuse prevention, staff training needs, and services available from Bivona and its 23 partner agencies, including Monroe 2 – Orleans BOCES.

She encouraged Board members to consider the following:

- HR/ Employee screening- include questions involving real abuse scenarios;
- Code of Conduct & Policy-include clear reporting structure with a culture fostering reporting;
- Ensuring Safe Environments- especially locker rooms, bathrooms, secluded corners, and lighting;
- Training-audit what procedures, repeat training frequently, and reinforce that adults are responsible for the safety of children.

LEFT: Bivona's Stephanie Szwejbka and IE Co-Chair Kerri Keyes (GC).

BELOW: Members attending the October IE discussion of child abuse prevention.



Legislative Committee prioritizes issues

During the October meeting of the MCSBA Legislative Committee, members reviewed the list of legislative issues generated during the September meeting and prioritized them, identifying the following priorities:

- Funding
- Testing Requirements for Unvaccinated Staff and Students
- Quarantined Students
- Bus Driver Shortages/ CDL requirements
- Overall Staff Shortages
- Support for State Review for Capital
- No Unemployment for Failure to Comply with Mandates.

Labor Relations Committee: Opportunities & Challenges of “Free” Money

Leading an exploration of the consequences of recent federal funding to public schools during the October 20 Labor Relations Committee meeting were John Abbott (EI), Deputy Superintendent; Bob Crocetti (EI), Assistant Superintendent for Human Resources; Jamie Lissow (Spe), Assistant Superintendent for Human Resources; and Rick Wood (Spe), Assistant Superintendent for Business. Their input included the following:

The Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) money was not new money because Governor Cuomo used it to replace funding cuts in the NYS budget.

The Coronavirus Response and Relief Supplemental Appropriations Act (CRRSA) and American Rescue (ARP) Plan funding provided new money received as special aid funding. There is flexibility in how CRRSA and ARP money can be spent, but it can't be used to lower school taxes. CRRSA and ARP funding is driven by the Title I formula but represents millions of dollars of funding for all MCSBA-member districts. Each district received a different amount of funding depending on Title I students they serve.

The stimulus funding impacted staffing to achieve districts goals. In Spencerport funding was spent to implement a multi-tiered system of support K-5 with Teachers on Special Assignment (TOSA) whose classroom positions were backfilled with probationary teachers for the next three years. Eight content focused coaches have been deployed at the middle and high school levels. In East Irondequoit, additional staff positions have been created to provide resources for closing learning gaps and keeping class sizes down, reinstating some positions that were cut in anticipation of a 20% NYS funding reduction. The needs of students, especially mental health needs resulting from the pandemic, are still being identified and could require further adjustments.



ABOVE: LR Co-Chair Barb Babiarz (Pen) is seen in the center with presenters Bob Crocetti (EI), John Abbott (EI), Jamie Lissow (Spe), and Rick Wood (Spe).



Labor Relations Committee participants.



presents:

[Register Today!](#)

Building the Culturally Responsive Classroom

November 10, 2021

4:30 – 6:00 P.M.

Virtual via Zoom

This workshop will focus on the skills and strategies needed to build learning environments responsive to all students. Presenters will share specific examples of changes they've made to build and sustain responsive classrooms in both an elementary and secondary setting. Topics to be covered will include:

1. The power of relationships to leverage instruction and learning and backgrounds;
2. When students want to talk: Navigating difficult conversations around cultural identities and beliefs;
3. What would you do???? Scenarios of actual situations from classrooms;
4. Strategies and specific protocols that can be utilized at all levels.

To learn more, contact Marguerite Dimgba, marguerite.dimgba@greececsd.org,
Director, Greece Professional Learning Center & Genesee Valley ASCD Board Member

Two Community Resources for Schools

Our schools are increasingly asked to deal with non-education issues that affect a student's ability to function and learn. Fortunately, there are resources in our community to help schools meet these obligations. Two are featured here—

Counseling expert: Tips for supporting students harmed by COVID

K-12 schools across the country are struggling with behavioral and mental health issues among returning students, involving disruptive behavior and violence in many cases. These issues are a result of stress and losses placed on children during the pandemic, according to school counseling expert [Bonnie Rubenstein](#), EdD, professor at the UR Warner School of Education. Many families have struggled with chaos, loss of jobs, financial challenges, illness, and death.

Dr. Rubenstein offers the following tips for educators to support students as they transition back to in-person learning:

- * **Establish a routine.** Structure helps students feel safe and secure. Knowing what to expect is comforting.
- * **Create a safe space.** A safe and supportive school environment is a must for students and educators alike.
- * **Focus on well-being.** Implement wellness training for staff, e.g., include mindfulness activities, breathing exercises, meditation and relaxation exercises, self-regulation activities and physical activity.
- * **Provide opportunities for healing and repair.** Implement a school-wide approach of trauma-informed learning, focusing on restorative practices and relationship building through peace circles, peer support groups, peer mediation, and group counseling.
- * **Encourage student voice and agency.** Provide opportunities for students to have agency and voice. Student input into discussion about what is happening will go a long way in improving school culture and climate.
- * **Model good coping behaviors—be honest, encouraging and calm.** Demonstrate a positive attitude with students. Stay calm—children and adolescents pick up on the underlying fear of adults.
- * **Listen to children's concerns.** Be a good listener when students express their fears and issues of grief and loss. Provide targeted interventions for students experiencing symptoms of anxiety and depression.
- * **Increase family support.** Implement family-school-community collaborations and partnerships.

Dr. Rubenstein previously served as director of counseling for the Rochester City School District for more than two decades. She now focuses her research on the impact of grief and loss on students and families, and college and career readiness. She is available for interviews to discuss strategies to help students as they transition back to schools. To learn more, go to <https://www.warner.rochester.edu/facultystaff/who/rubenstein> or refer to the Warner School press release [HERE](#).

Publications from -



The Coalition to Prevent Lead Poisoning (CPLP) in October celebrated its 20th anniversary as a local initiative to educate the public about the dangers of lead poisoning, to seek legislation to protect children from lead poisoning, and to work with home owners and landlords to eliminate causes of lead poisoning. It works with pediatricians to ensure that infants and toddlers are tested for lead exposure.

CPLP has a stockpile of lead prevention materials ready to use:

- Lead prevention brochures (in Arabic, Chinese, Dari, English, Farsi, Karen, Nepali, Somali, and Swahili)
- Lead paint safety guides (English)
- Healthy home guides (English)
- Posters (English)

If you'd like any of the following items, please email Tiffany Paine at tpaine@causewave.org.

More lead safety resources found here: <https://theleadcoalition.org/>, or for educator resources, go to [Resources - Coalition to Prevent Lead Poisoning \(theleadcoalition.org\)](#)