MCSBA updates its Affiliate Network

On March 18, former MCSBA members, now part of the MCSBA Affiliate Network, gathered via Zoom to receive an update on current issues facing our schools as well as to re-connect with one another.

MCSBA President Amy Thomas (Pit) reviewed what our districts accomplished as they coped with the pandemic this past year – food for families in need, creative high school graduations, increased electronic connectivity, absentee balloting for 2020 budget and board elections, development of hybrid instruction models, PD in technology for staff, development of certified COVID-19 labs, home visits, solutions to shortages in bus drivers and substitute teachers, and adjustments to no sports, then yes sports. She noted that parent groups are now pressuring for full reopening schools and finding fault with districts for not fully reopening, that boards are waiting for guidance about reopening, and that boards and superintendents are concerned about mental health issues of students, staff, and families.

MCSBA Treasurer John Abbott (B2, EI) outlined state and federal financial support for the coming year.

MCSBA Executive Director Sherry Johnson described partnerships with other community groups in dealing with the pandemic and other issues:
- ✓ Equity in Education – Digital, Racial, Access
- ✓ State Budget and Federal Stimulus Funds
- ✓ School Reopening Plans
- ✓ School Budget Votes and Board Elections Issues.

The Affiliate Network (AN) gathers twice a year to receive updates on issues facing our member districts. AN Steering committee members include Chuck Allan, Margaret Burns, Rome Celli, Lisa Ireland, Mark Kokanovich, MCSBA President Amy Thomas, MCSBA Vice President Gary Bracken, MCSBA Treasurer John Abbott, MCSBA Past President Kathy Dillon, and Executive Director Sherry Johnson, Ex-Officio.

Pictured in the top row are Emcee Rome Celli with presenters Amy Thomas, John Abbott, and Sherry Johnson.

News Scope

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From our president:
Becoming a BOE Member 101

Amy Thomas

Does anyone actually comprehend the world of a publicly-elected official when they win a Board of Education election for the first time? Recently, MCSBA held its annual BOE Prospective Candidates Seminar, which brought me back to 2013 when I attended the seminar with my BOE blinders on and walked away feeling like a deer in the headlights.

I vividly recall having a conversation with my family after the seminar, sharing the information from the presentation - *Becoming a BOE Member 101* – and I asked their thoughts on embarking on this journey with me. But as with any new life adventure, we didn't know what we didn't know entering the life of BOE service.

So this month I thought it would be apropos to pose some of the questions from that presentation that we all can reflect on through the lens of a BOE veteran:

- Have I been an apprentice – regardless of my experience or tenure on the BOE, have I been an active listener, observer, and have I asked questions?
- Have I represented all constituent groups in my tenure?
- How have I handled the pressure received from various constituencies when confronted with contentious decisions?
- Have I committed to wearing my "BOE Hat" at all times?
- Have I placed the student foremost in my mind when making decisions?
- Have my personal biases ever interfered with decision-making?
- Have I worked collaboratively with my BOE team and Superintendent?
- Have I respected and maintained confidentiality throughout my tenure?
- How thick is your skin and do you still have a sense of humor?

I have no doubt that the current climate causes most of you to focus on that final bullet point regularly. Like many of you, I entered BOE service with the intent to give back to the future of our community by serving our students and we may not always understand the response we see from some in our communities.

Whether you are a new or veteran BOE member, this year serves as a testimonial of your steadfast belief in public education by serving your students, staff, and families during what is certain to be a pivotal and historic time in education.

Hillary Clinton is quoted as saying, "If you believe you can make a difference, not just in politics, in public service, in advocacy around all these important issues, then you have to be prepared to accept that you are not going to get 100 percent approval." That is certainly true as of late.

But I am in awe of and applaud the persistence and commitment of each of you who have continued to serve with integrity, patience, and understanding. Amidst a year of uncertainty, you consistently rise to the challenge of remaining student centered and true to reasons we serve as elected officials. Keep up the great work!

Amy Jo Thomas

Sherry Johnson

They say that April showers bring May flowers, but in our area, those showers are more likely to be of the snow variety. Given that, spring blooms provide me a fair amount of inspiration because of the sheer effort they seem to exert in order to overcome the current environment that we call home.

We are also emerging from an incredible year on so many fronts and watching the crocus and daffodils begin to pop up outside my window reminded me of the effort that you put forth this year in order to help your students make it through and how you continue to work to help them grow and blossom.

In that light, I wanted to update you on the progress toward implementation of the Systems Integration Project and how that progress will provide opportunities for our districts to begin to participate in more concrete ways.

The Systems Integration Project (SIP), created a vision for the health, social services and education sectors that would invite these organizations to work in a shared services model instead of the siloes that currently exist for our students, their families and our community members to navigate. This project originated from a study that determined that we, as a county, were "resource rich" but "results poor" and that if we could work together, better, that all of our members would have increased access to choices that could improve life outcomes for themselves and their loved ones. When fully implemented, this system would also provide a positive return on investment for the larger community as organizations are able improve the inefficiency of some functions and increase the overall general well-being of participants.

This would be achieved through an information hub that would allow organizations to have a 360 degree view of a person and align services through "warm handoffs" to make navigation simpler and accessibility greater. This information hub would have a legally compliant framework that would protect privacy and data, and individual users would dictate who, when and for how long their information would be shared.

The SIP has been working with prototypes and pilots to test this theory of change, to develop algorithms to measure success and to engage the community in continuous feedback to make sure that the project is moving in the right direction and that trust is being built along the way. Full implementation is slated for 2024.

So, what is the role for MCSBA members? In projects like these across the country, public education isn't a natural partner in their system design. The two co-chairs of the SIP; Congressman Morelle and Regent Norwood (also the CEO of Common Ground Health), made a conscious decision at the beginning of the project to include education. Our SED Commissioner, represented by our two BOCES DSs are at the table with me, as are other education sector representatives. There are several administrators and staff in your districts that sit on workgroups dedicated to specific portions of the project. This will be a first, and hopefully, a model for the country with the inclusion of education.

It will, however, need your blessing as we move forward. As families begin to access the system, how your district will participate will be up to you as leaders, to determine. A simple current example is how the community school model is set up to provide services to students and families in a more collaborative and accessible way. While not the same structure, the system would work with schools as a "spoke" of a wheel to the hub of shared information that would allow districts to gain a more holistic view of a student, their environment and, as a result, develop a more comprehensive system of supports for that student. This is a person-centered system that is designed by keeping the user as the primary focus. As school leaders, you are all well practiced in those efforts and will be an important voice in making sure that this new system stays true to that vision. Stay tuned!

Sherry Johnson

SYSTEMS INTEGRATION
A community project at United Way

MCSBA Potential Board Candidate Seminar

Twenty-three potential school board candidates, all but two of them from MCSBA districts, met via Zoom to learn -

♦ *What Candidates Should Know About Board Membership* from Dr. Susan Gasparino (Bri), and Board President Mark Kokanovich (Bri);

♦ *How Your District's Superintendent Can Help You* from Dr. Thomas Putnam (Pen);

♦ *How to Handle the Legal Requirements for School Board Candidates* from Joseph Shields, Esq., Partner, Ferrara Fierenza, PC;

♦ *Campaign Considerations* from Sherry Johnson (MCSBA) and Beckie Schultz (MCSBA).

Participants were welcomed by MCSBA leaders – President Amy Thomas (Pit) and Past PresidentKathy Dillon (B2, CC),

LEFT: Program (by row, top to bottom):
Amy Thomas and Kathy Dillon; Dr. Susan Gasparino and Mark Kokanovich; Joe Shields, Esq. and Dr. Tom Putnam; Sherry Johnson and Beckie Schultz.

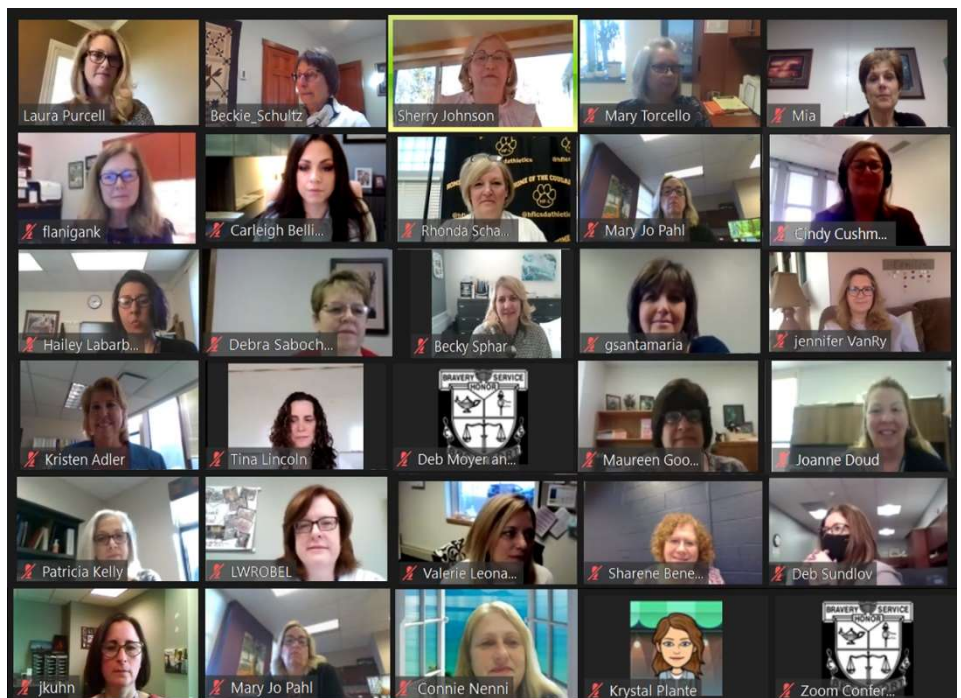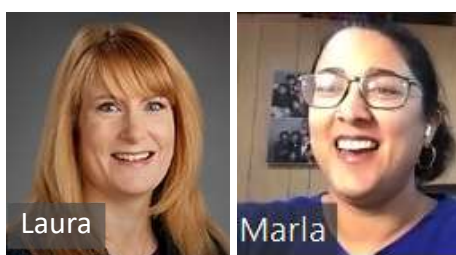# MCSBA Spring Conference for District Clerks

On March 25, district clerks – 22 from Monroe County districts plus 14 from surrounding districts – attended MCSBA's Spring District Clerks Conference. Participants received a legal update from Laura Purcell, Esq., Harris Beach PLLC, that included changes to absentee and military ballots as well as issues with public comment. They also heard from Maria Pelletier of Inward Office about Mindful Eating. In addition, clerks shared common issues about preparing potential school board candidates and managing respectful Board of Education meetings, especially during public comment periods.

The conference was well received by those in attendance.

Thanks to the Planning Committee that included Kristen Adler, Cynthia Cushman, Connie Nenni, Rhonda Schaefer, Mary Torcello, and Sarah Williams.

RIGHT: Many of those who attended the Clerks Conference that was held via Zoom.

BELOW: Presenters Laura Purcell Esq. and Maria Pelletier.

Sessions with NYS lawmakers continue

MCSBA members are meeting with state lawmakers via zoom as the 2021 NYS legislative session is underway. Each of these sessions involves board members and administrators from school districts served by the individual lawmakers.

Topics being discussed during these meetings are similar to those raised during the sessions with new lawmakers: state aid and mandate relief chief among them.

Other issues include:
* Returning power to the Legislature to move the state forward;
* Supplanting Foundation Aid with federal money;
* Not combining expense based aids and fully reimbursing star;
* Helping schools bring all students back to in-person learning;
* Supplying sufficient vaccines to make schools safe;
* Providing guidance regarding budget votes and school elections.

Action on the last item was important for districts in planning upcoming votes so that legal deadlines could be met, supplies for ballots could be secured and format and locations for the vote could be designated. Thanks to local help from Senator Samara Brouk, legislation was adopted that required potential board of education candidates to get 25 signatures or 2% of the 2019 vote to get on the ballot, a more reasonable total given that the pandemic would still impact voters in 2021 and that the 2020 vote was so high due to the presidential election.

ABOVE: The March 5 meeting with Assemblywoman Sarah Clark.

BELOW: The March 5 session with NYS Assemblywoman Marjorie Byrnes.

LEFT: March 1 meeting with Assemblyman Harry Bronson.

BELOW LEFT: The March 2 meeting with NYS Senator Pamela Helming.

BELOW RIGHT: The March 12 session with NYS Senator Patrick Gallivan.

RASHP II Update

During the March 24 meeting of the Labor Relations Committee, Scott Covell, Assistant Superintendent for Management Services (B1), and Charles McLauchlin, area Vice President, Gallagher Benefit Services, Inc., provided an update on the Rochester Area School Health Plan II (RASHP II).

The update included plan offerings, enrollment, rates and trends, recent initiatives, and the impact of the pandemic. Among their comments were the following:

RASHP II includes 17 school districts and 2 BOCES, involving 15,000 contracts and 40,000 lives.

RASHP II garnered savings of more than $27 million with no benefit changes to plan members by renegotiating the contract with Excellus.

In response to the pandemic, recent changes to benefits and coverage include:
• No cost for COVID-19 testing
• No cost for medically necessary office, urgent care or ER visits for COVID-19
• No cost for telehealth services regardless of purpose
• No cost for diagnosis or treatment of COVID-19.

ABOVE: Presenter Charles McLauchlin; Co-Chairs Frank Muscato (GC) and Bob Dickson (B1); and Presenter Scott Covell (B1).

BELOW: Co-Chair Bob Dickson (B1) chairs the committee meeting while Sherry Johnson (MCSBA) ensures that the video equipment is sharing via Zoom and recording the event.
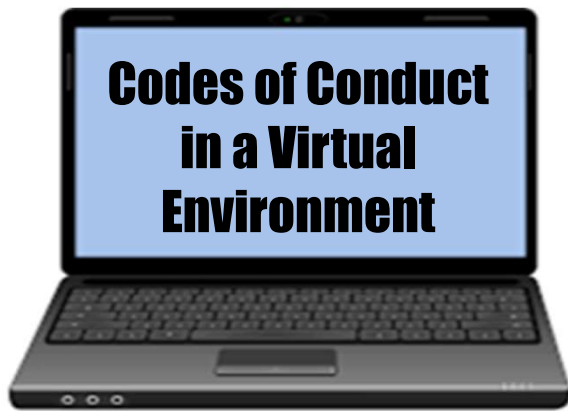

Remembering Joanne Altland

Former MCSBA President Joanne Altland died on March 10, 2021 at age 74. She was a long-time member of the West Irondequoit School Board, and served a term as that group's president. She was an active member of MCSBA during all that time, participating in meetings with lawmakers locally and in Albany, and leading the Association's Legislative Committee. She served as 1989-1990 MCSBA President, during which time she helped to initiate the Media Advisory Council and the Sunrise Coalition. The Media Advisory Council consisted of school board members, administrators and MCSBA staff who identified issues needing media attention, then met with the media to discuss coverage of these issues. The Sunrise Coalition consisted of the officers, staff and legislative committee chairs of the Four County School Boards Association and MCSBA. The group met regularly to identify common issues and to develop coordinated campaigns to support them. The effort was commended by many state legislators. President Altland and Executive Director John Woods met with SED officials in Albany to discuss ways to involve school districts in the development of regulations and policies. This meeting led to the formation of the Commissioner's advisory board of school board members from across the state which lasted for more than a decade.

Joanne worked as a librarian at Xerox and at Planned Parenthood, and did medical transcription work for doctors. Much of her life was spent volunteering. She was a translator for braille, a Girl Scout Leader, and helper at the Victor Food Cupboard.

Family and friends will gather later this year to celebrate Joanne's life. Contributions in her memory may be made to the Alzheimer's Association Rochester & Finger Lakes Region Chapter (435 E Henrietta Rd, Rochester, NY 14620).

Codes of Conduct in a Virtual Environment

During the March 10 Information Exchange Committee meeting, Dr. James Colt, Director of Safety and Security, Monroe One BOCES, led a discussion of helpful adjustments to district codes of conduct. Among his comments were the following:

Districts should provide information regarding behavioral concerns in a virtual environment as well as expectations for behavior in a remote setting.

Discipline during the pandemic should consider students' social emotional behavior and mental health needs. Students' lives are impacted by the pandemic in unique ways and an upsurge of behavior health issues in both school and home settings have resulted. Discipline should focus on teaching appropriate behaviors rather than be punishment based.

Codes of Conduct should look at discipline through a trauma-informed and restorative lens, allowing flexible and productive ways to address inappropriate behavior. Schools need to consider a range of strategies that promote a positive school climate, address misconduct, and foster student safety remotely.

Codes of Conduct need to consider practical issues with remote learning, such as distractions, internet accessibility, access to quiet space, comfort with online learning, technology shared with family members, dress code, eating, etc.

In three areas of current district policies, slight modifications could better set expectations for students and parents in a virtual setting: Acceptable use policies, Bullying and Harassment policies, and Academic Integrity policies.

Districts should state that all students receiving remote instruction are subject to current district policies, including acceptable use policy (e.g., bans on comments that could be considered discriminatory, offensive, obscene, threatening, or harassing). District policies should include Cyber Bullying Prevention and Intervention. Changes to the Code of Conduct are not mandated for virtual learning.

ABOVE: Some of the 30 participants in the Information Exchange Committee meeting led by MCSBA President Amy Thomas (Pit) and presenter Dr. James Colt (B1) seen in top row.

WXXI Go Public. Youth Media Projects

NPR Student Podcast Challenge: Teachers are invited to put together a 3-12 min. podcast with their 5th-12th grade class or extracurricular group. Winning podcasts will be featured on Morning Edition or All Things Considered. Learn more at Connect to Rules, Education Guides and Deadlines.

Rochester Teen Film Festival: WXXI Public Media and the Little Theatre sponsor the **Rochester Teen Film Festival,** a collaborative, juried media competition for youth (13-18 years old) in the Rochester area. The screening and awards ceremony will be held on August 5, 2021. Deadline for submissions June, 21, 2021. Learn more at Rochester Teen Film Festival | WXXI.

WXXI Support for Classroom, Remote, & Hybrid Learning

WXXI provides a flexible set of learning resources to support a mix of remote, hybrid, and in-classroom learning at no cost to school districts or families for anytime, anywhere learning. These services have helped our teachers and students during the pandemic, and are being adapted to assist schools as they re-open.

* Online Resources (educational classroom-ready digital video resources and activities)
- PBS LearningMedia, an extensive collection of classroom-ready digital resources (https://pbslearningmedia.org)
- Professional development services through RCSD and multi-district trainings as listed via the WXXI Education e-newsletter, website and social media
- Monthly E-Newsletters and Social Media (https://www.wxxi.org/education/wxxi-education-monthly-newsletter) describing programming, on-demand video with connections to learning activities and professional development.

* Culturally Relevant Resources for Education:

Multilingual resources on-air, online with activities
https://www.wxxi.org/education/multilingual-public-media-resources

Culture & Heritage Sites: Curated monthly for upcoming programs, on-demand video, connected learning resources, events and resources

- o   Asian-American/Pacific Islander Heritage Collection
- o   Hispanic Heritage Collection
- o   Women's Suffrage and Rights & Women's History & Heritage
- o   Native American Heritage and Culture
- o   Black Heritage and Culture
- o   Finding Your Roots: genealogy for people of color including resources for schools to assist students in conducting family history – https://www.wxxi.org/roots
- o   School Resources to Assist Teachers and Students in Family History Studies https://www.wxxi.org/roots/story/educational-resources

* Career Exploration Videos & Databases: Classrooms and families access career exploration and profiles of local workers and learn about their career pathways in **WXXI's American Graduate: Getting To Work,** part of a national learning campaign to help students plan for their future and see possibilities for interesting in-demand careers. Students can use services on the site like Career Coach to explore jobs, salaries, current openings in our region and 5-year predictions of the career path. See more at: https://wxxi.org/grad. Students in g. 3-8 can begin to look at the world of work through an innovative YouTube series produced by WXXI, **I Can Be What?!** (https://www.youtube.com/icanbewhat and/or https://wxxi.org/icanbewhat)

* Learn At Home: *Let's Learn* on WXXI-TV, *WXXI World* offerings for 6-12th graders with connected activities, and quality educational offerings for young children on WXXI-TV and WXXI *Kids 24/7*, which can also be streamed, were made available. Monthly calendars of daily no- cost activities for young families are accessible at https://www.wxxi.org/education/aboutLAH.

* Current Events & Primary Document Service for Understanding Our Past and Present
- Daily News Story with Lesson and Activities **from PBS Newshour**
- Above the Noise: Cutting Through the Hype: Help Teens Engage in Issues They Care About
- Journalism In Action: A new resource for middle and high school students designed to teach important media literacy skills and the use of primary sources from the Library of Congress. Students dive into 10 key moments in history using interactive tools to explore how journalists covered these events.

To learn more, contact Marion French, VP Education & Interactive Services, WXXI at mfrench@wxxi.org; and/or visit https://wxxi.org/education for supplies resources, guides, training, and event announcements.