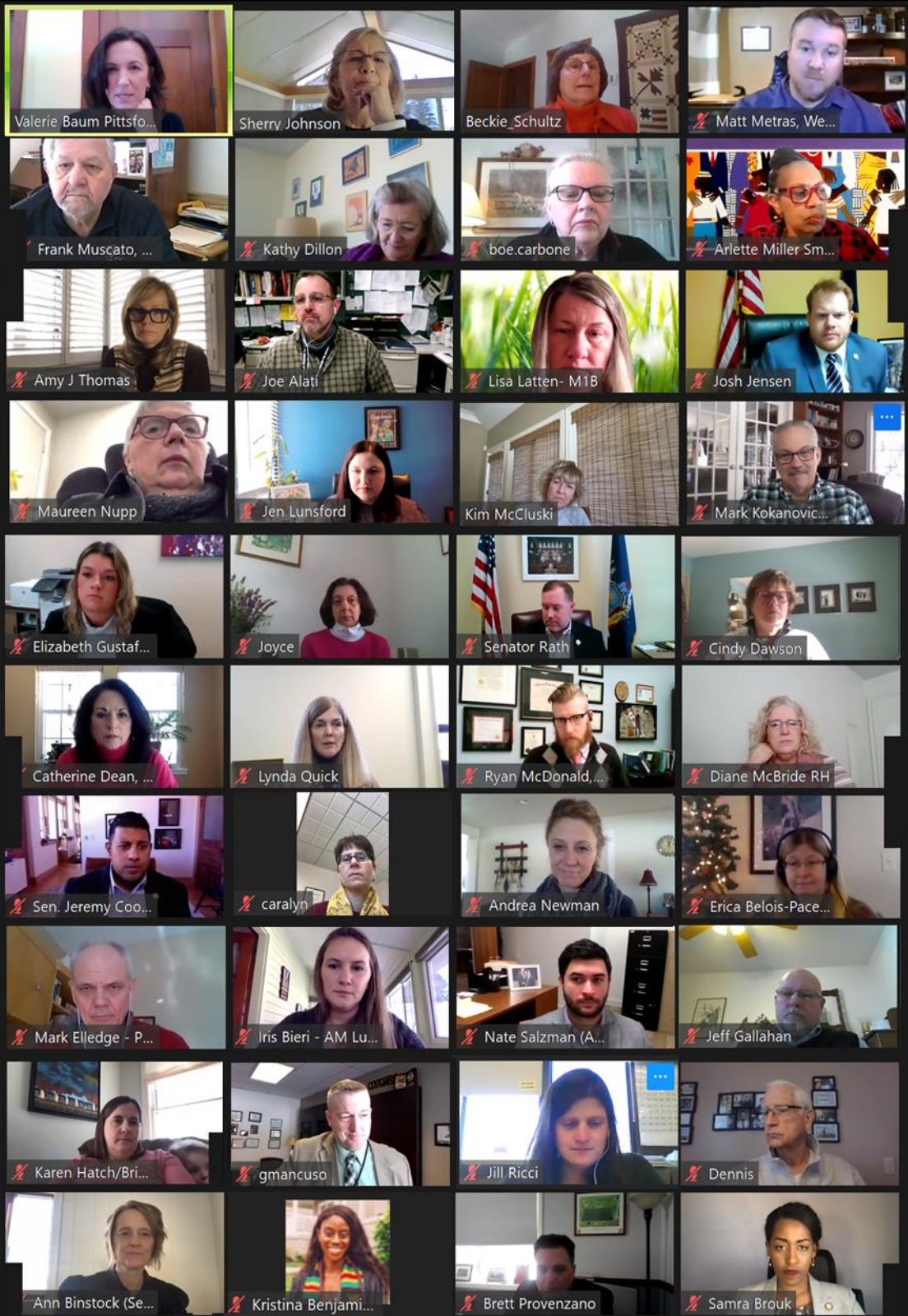


## MCSBA Legislative Committee meets with new lawmakers

More  
on page 4





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](mailto:Sherry_Johnson@boces.monroe.edu)  
Program Director – Beckie Schultz, [Beckie\\_Schultz@boces.monroe.edu](mailto:Beckie_Schultz@boces.monroe.edu)

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## From our president: Positivity



Amy Thomas

In January, I made a conscious decision to focus my 2021 NewScope columns on positivity and optimism for the remaining months of the 2020/21 school year. This past year was a year wrought with uncertainty, many “firsts,” and far more questions than answers to the new inexplicable pandemic reality.

But despite this unusual time in history, I am encouraged by the leadership, advocacy, and camaraderie of the MCSBA membership in 2020/21. Our districts have unique needs, and yet, when faced with similar questions, a unanimous resolve has arisen to respectfully seek answers. Our collective voices and shared best practices have proven to be a valuable asset to our respective districts.

We have addressed and helped create solutions to an abundance of concerns with stakeholder groups relative to new learning models; diversity, equity, and inclusion initiatives; curricular changes; sports, music/fine arts, and extracurricular clubs; and COVID testing, mental health, vaccine distribution and metrics to fully re-open schools. What a list, but you name it, and our BOE’s have seen it and actively responded to it in 2020/21!

Additionally, while the tenor and delivery of stakeholder messaging to BOE members has been discouraging on occasion, BOE members have not wavered in exhibiting diplomacy and decorum. I recently had a conversation with my 15-year-old son after he attended a Zoom BOE meeting and witnessed contentious public comments. He asked, “How do you find it fulfilling to serve on the Board of Education when people treat you disrespectfully?”

Our conversation continued and I reassured him that I view my role as a BOE member as serving ~5,600 of my other children in Pittsford. With civility being an essential learning element for students, we all work tirelessly to model that behavior even when faced with opposition. It is our job as elected officials to listen and be responsive to all stakeholder concerns – even if we don’t have all of the answers or we have to agree to disagree. So thank you for consistently wearing your “Board Hats” and showcasing what positive discourse can look like.

Entering the month of March, we can be encouraged by our return to more in-person meetings, the promising data that suggests positive vaccine efficacy, and a continued low rate of communal infection and a drop in hospitalization rates. Simultaneously, I am optimistic and encouraged that our continued advocacy efforts with our Federal, State and Local officials will assist with identifying the metrics required to fully re-open our schools safely - showing our communities that our number one focus is doing what is best for kids.

Nearing the one-year mark of Covid-19 and subsequent school closures, we are all experiencing some form of Covid fatigue. But instead of focusing on the negatives associated with the past 12 months, I am staying focused on the positives and the many opportunities that all of us have stepped up to embrace.

As Shiv Khara, motivational speaker and author once penned, “Your positive action combined with positive thinking results in success.” Thank you all for being the positive thinkers and doers for our kids and communities, and leading the way forward.

*Amy Jo Thomas*



# From our executive director: Higher Standard



**Sherry Johnson**

Dear Members,

Does leadership demand a higher standard of behavior? Should we hold our elected and appointed leaders more accountable for their actions and their speech? Do we expect all leaders to provide a check on those who don't meet those standards or who violate some measure of those expectations? These are all questions that I have asked myself, of late.

As your executive director, I believe that my behavior, including what I say, directly reflects on our Association and you, as members. Whether it should or shouldn't is the question I pose, but I have no doubt that those outside of our association would call into question anything that they would consider beyond the parameters of acceptable behavior, should I act or speak in a way that doesn't reflect those perceived ideals.

That isn't the reason I act as I do, but rather because it is my sincere belief that as someone who represents all of you at other tables, and as a passionate advocate for the role that public education plays in our democracy, my integrity, and its connection to yours, matters.

Our association membership reflects our greater community in every aspect. You come from urban, suburban and rural communities; high, medium and low wealth districts; democratic and republican strongholds; and represent a variety of ages, races, ethnicities, religions and persuasions. When you write our position papers, they are vetted through all of these lenses to make sure that they represent the collaboration of those voices to our representatives. And, when I speak, I understand that I must measure my own voice, so that I speak for all of you and not with any personal agenda or opinion.

At your tables, you work through professional development opportunities to become the best of yourselves as leaders, because you understand that your actions and your voices are on behalf of our most precious resource, our children.

But, are the tenets of leadership – honesty, integrity, inspiration, communication, commitment and humor – still valued? Is the speech of a leader more important than honesty, as long as it reaches the desired end? Is the blame game the new strategy for leaders to inspire others? Is it now a heroic measure for a leader to act with integrity, because the backlash for doing so could threaten their livelihood or their family's safety?

As I ponder these questions, I want you to know that I continue to be committed to leading this association with the certainty of purpose that I represent the best of leaders and I will ask myself every day if I am holding myself to the standards that all of you aspire to on behalf of your communities and their children.

*Sherry Johnson*

## Remembering Bill Dadey

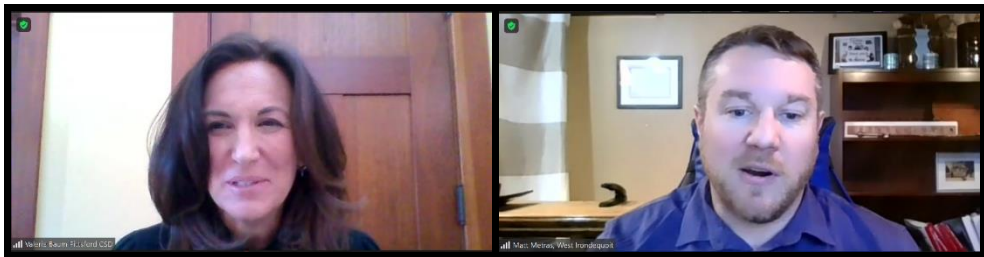
Dr. William J. Dadey, 1977-2003 Gates Chili Superintendent and active MCSBA member, died on February 7. Bill served on MCSBA's Executive Committee during his tenure as superintendent. In addition, he served terms on the Steering Committee and attended many standing committee meetings. He was a graduate of Syracuse University, where he earned his degrees, including his PhD.

Bill received many awards throughout his career, including NYS Superintendent of the Year in 1994. Syracuse University also honored him with the Letter Winner of Distinction Award in 1998. He was a true champion for public education and the promise that it offers.

After retirement, he volunteered at Monroe Community Hospital for many years. A Celebration of Life will be announced at a later date. For those wishing, contributions in Bill's name may be made to his granddaughter, MaKenna's, memorial fund. Please visit [www.kennasfight.com](http://www.kennasfight.com).



# Meeting our new NYS lawmakers



ABOVE: Legislative Committee Co-Chairs Valerie Baum (Pit) and Matt Metras (WI).

On February 4, members of the Legislative Committee met via Zoom with newly elected members of the NYS Legislature—to introduce them to MCSBA and to share with them the Association’s top legislative priorities.

Copies of MCSBA’s Legislative Priorities and position statements were shared with the lawmakers before the session. Included in the priorities were the following -

## 1. Funding:

- Total dollars for schools
- Use of federal dollars to replace state financial support
- Loss of local control and flexibility
- Shifting of special education costs

## 2. Budget Votes:

- Advance notice of date
- Format (absentee, in-person or hybrid)
- School board candidate signatures
- Support from Board of Elections

## 3. Mandates:

- Need for reductions since tax cap was implemented
- Duplicity in Reporting (ESSA Data)
- Opportunity to provide impact on proposed legislation.

Each Legislator was given two minutes to speak. Then Co-Chairs Valerie Baum (Pit) and Matt Metras (WI) introduced the Association’s legislative priorities and gave each legislator time to respond to them. Members directed comments to legislators through the chat function.

Lawmakers expressed support for MCSBA positions and for public education in general – especially regarding state funding of education and unfunded mandates.

Sherry Johnson followed the discussion with a request for the legislature to provide better definition of the format and timing of the upcoming budget vote. She highlighted the need for lead-time for meeting legal deadlines and gathering materials for absentee balloting and petition signatures if that is required.

In addition to the 7 new lawmakers, the February 4 meeting included 42 MCSBA members. Most of those in attendance are pictured on page 1.

FROM THE TOP: Our newly elected NYS lawmakers attending the February 4 session with Legislative Committee members:

- Samra Brouk, S 55
- Jeremy Cooney, S 56
- Edward Rath, S 61
- Jeffrey Gallahan, A 131
- Joshua Jensen, A 134
- Jennifer Lunsford, A 135
- Demond Meeks, A 137



# Zoom sessions with veteran lawmakers begin

In addition to meeting with new lawmakers representing our schools districts in Albany, MCSBA members are meeting with veteran state lawmakers. Each of these sessions involves board members and administrators from school districts served by the individual lawmakers. Two of these sessions occurred in February and those who participated are pictured here. Meetings with four other continuing state lawmakers, as well as with new Assemblywoman Sarah Clarke, are scheduled to occur in March.

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.



ABOVE: Those attending the February 11 meeting with Assemblyman Stephen Hawley via Zoom were – TOP: Sherry Johnson (MCSBA), Beckie Schultz (MCSBA), and Frank Muscato (GC); MIDDLE: Dennis Laba (B2), Kathy Dillon (B2, CC), and Lori Orolgio (CC); BOTTOM: Brian Bartalo (Hol), and the Hon. Stephen Hawley (NYS Assembly). Chris Dailey (GC) joined the session late and is not pictured.



ABOVE: Those attending the February 25 meeting with Senate Minority Leader Robert Ortt (top left) included Andrea Newman (Hol), Brian Bartalo (Hol), Sherry Johnson (MCSBA), and Beckie Schultz (MCSBA). Also present but not seen was Josh Veronica, Senator Ortt's aide.

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 is important for districts in planning upcoming votes. Issues such as changing legal deadlines, absentee voting, and ballot supplies need to be resolved soon. Board candidates are concerned about the required number of signatures on nomination petitions since voter turnout was so high last year, during a pandemic which could make signature collection dangerous. (NYS Senator Samra Brouk is co-sponsoring legislation to roll the required numbers back to 2019 values.)



# Negotiations and COVID-19



During the February 24 meeting of the Labor Relations Committee, Lynda M. VanCoske, Esq., Labor Relations Administrator for Monroe 2-Orleans BOCES, led a discussion of the effects of COVID-19 on negotiations with teachers. She reviewed some recently settled contracts, then discussed anticipated contract issues, such as:

- \* Salary, including remote pay and tracking of hours as well as expansion of teacher work hours;
- \* Benefits, including sick days, personal days, stipends, safety, and tools for remote learning;
- \* Retirement incentive; and
- \* Summer semester, including pay, benefits, hours, meals, and environmental conditions such as air conditioning.

RIGHT: Presenter Lynda VanCoske, Esq. with some of the 33 participants in the February 24 meeting of the Labor Relations Committee.



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## Developing Relationships: Through Engaging, Culturally Responsive SEL Practices

With the worldwide impact of Covid-19 and the growing racial justice movement, relationships with students are more important than ever. Whether you are seeking to develop a culturally responsive connection with students or increase engagement, this interactive training will provide participants with an expansion to their relationship development toolbox, for both virtual and in-person settings.

This is presented by The Children's Institute, and is scheduled for March 18, 3:30pm-5:30pm

Visit [Frontline Education \(mylearningplan.com\)](https://mylearningplan.com) for more details and to register for this training.

# Impact of COVID on Students Preparing for College



Leading a discussion during the February 24 Information Exchange Committee meeting of the effects of the pandemic on students planning for college were:

- \* Marcia Bartalo, School Counseling Department Chair, FLEC Co-Advisor Student Council Co-Advisor, Brockport CSD;
- \* Mary Banaszak Coordinator of School Counseling K-12, School Counselor A-CI, Victor High School, Victor CSD;
- \* Mark Muenzer, Senior Associate Director of Undergraduate Admissions, Rochester Institute of Technology; and
- \* Megan Sarkis, Assistant Director of Admissions, SUNY Brockport.

Among their comments were the following:

Counselors have found new ways to communicate with seniors with more parent involvement using electronics.

High school counselors have noted less in-person time with students for consultation and SEL crisis management.

Area high schools partnered with college admissions and financial aid offices to provide pre-recorded video presentations about the application process and financial aid application process.

College admissions offices are providing virtual college visits and tours, and virtual college fairs, etc.

Advising underclassmen and women has not been changed by the pandemic.

Steps that high school students must take to apply to college have not changed but the way that applications are reviewed has.

Colleges are depending more on grade point averages than on SAT and ACT tests.

BELOW: some of the 28 participants attending the February 24 meeting of the Information Exchange Committee.





# RMSC Programs Help Educators During the Pandemic

During Spring and Summer 2020, the RMSC education and marketing team worked to provide new, educational videos and activities that teachers could use with students at home during the pandemic. Knowing that school districts were working within tight budgets for the 2020-2021

school year, the RMSC education team adapted a number of popular field trips to a virtual format. This series of virtual STEM activities and demonstrations was designed to align with the New York State Science Learning Standards, and is offered at a lower price than actual field trips to RMSC. A full list of virtual field trip offerings can be found on the [RMSC Educator Program Search](#) page by filtering by "Location: Virtual." Some of the available videos and virtual field trips are listed here to indicate their variety.

## VIDEOS

Science Storytime, g. PreK-4

Online Astronomy Courses (variety serving ages 6-14 years old, and Virtual Planetarium Shows)

Curiosity Bites (science experiments with instructions for children)

Live Science: Online! (adaptations of popular Live Science Shows produced for in-person RMSC field trips)

## VIRTUAL FIELD TRIPS

History & Culture: Rochester Changemakers, g 4-12 (Regional women who changed the world);

The Haudenosaunee, g 4-8 (Culture of the Haudenosaunee, or Iroquois); Virtual Haudenosaunee school days, g 4

Biology: Beaver Ecology, g 3-7; Insects, g PreK-2

Physics & Chemistry: Journey of sound, g PreK-1; Energy, g 1-12; Solids, liquids and gases, g K-12

Earth Sciences: Stormy Science, g K-3; Climate and Changing Ecosystems, g 5-10

Astronomy: What tells us that there was a big bang?, g 9-2; How to predict eclipses, g 9-12;

Day and night on our planet, g 1-5; Gravity, scale, and motion, g 6-8.

These virtual programs have received positive feedback from educators locally and nationally. Since this past October, 65 programs have been offered to approximately 1,200 students by the museum and planetarium. Schools in Gates Chili, Penfield, Pittsford, and Rochester in Monroe County, as well as public and charter schools in our region have participated in these programs.

**TOP CENTER:** Allison Shultes, Director of Education, and a Docent Volunteer streaming a virtual field trip from an exhibit on RMSC's second floor.

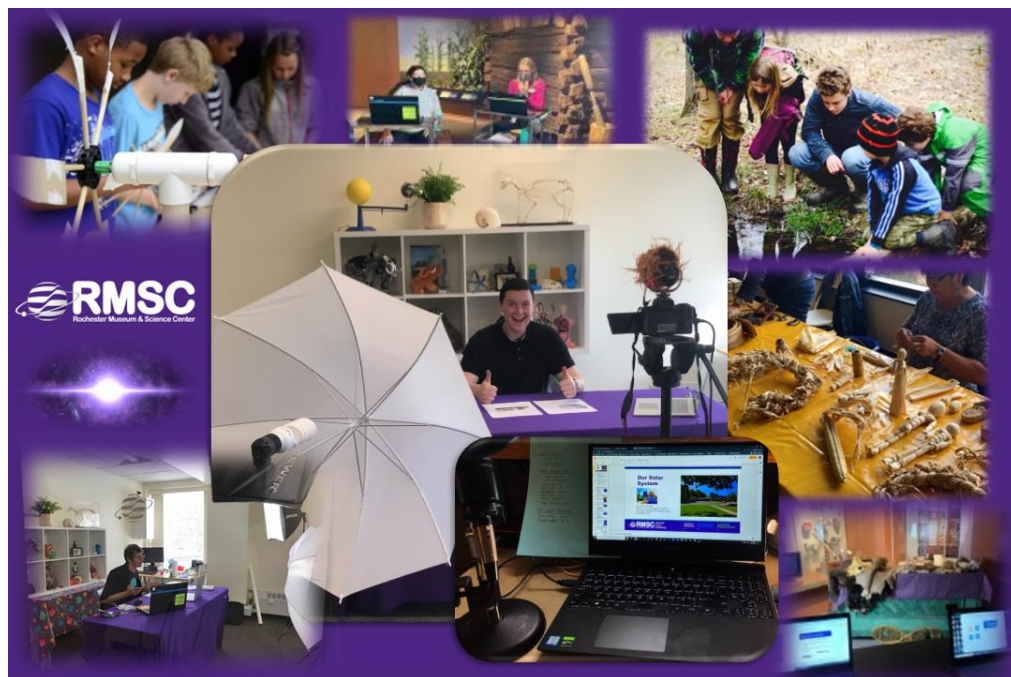
**CENTER:** Eron Damercy, School & Teacher Programs Coordinator, leading the first virtual field trip of the 2020-2021 school year.

**CENTER RIGHT:** Popular Haudenosaunee Days program went virtual, led by Haudenosaunee artisans, for hundreds of area students.

**BOTTOM LEFT:** Tim Crawley, Manager of Outreach & Theater Programs, leading a virtual field trip in RMSC's remote teaching studio.

**BOTTOM CENTER:** A Planetarium program getting ready to launch.

**BOTTOM RIGHT:** The set up for a virtual field trip about Haudenosaunee culture.



To learn more about these programs, visit RMSC Visual Classroom at [RMSC Virtual Classroom - Rochester Museum & Science Center](#) and/or <https://rmsc.org/educators/search>. Many of these resources are free to any classroom teacher or caregivers who need digital materials to engage their students during remote learning.

Additional information is available from

- Allison Shultes, Director of Education | [ashultes@rmsc.org](mailto:ashultes@rmsc.org)
- Eron Damercy, School & Teacher Programs Coordinator | [edamercy@rmsc.org](mailto:edamercy@rmsc.org)
- Tim Cawley, Outreach & Theater Programs Manager | [tcawley@rmsc.org](mailto:tcawley@rmsc.org)

To book a virtual field trip contact: Member & Visitor Services (585) 697-19442