

Meeting our Lawmakers



Among the participants were –
(Center): Legislative Committee Co-Chairs Vincent Antonicelli (ER) and Matthew Metras (WI);
(Clockwise from Upper Left):
Jo Anne Antonacci (B2) and Congressman Joe Morelle;
Regent Wade Norwood, Assemblywoman Sarah Clark, and Cynthia Elliott (Roc);
MCSBA President Gary Bracken (Spe) with Executive Director Sherry Johnson;
Assemblyman Josh Jensen with Therese Flannery (Hil);
Jennifer Birdsong-Ng (Web), Assemblywoman Jen Lunsford, and Kelli Eberle (HFL);
Beatriz LeBron (Roc), Rochester Mayor (and former MCSBA member) Malik Evans, and Assemblyman Harry Bronson;
Executive Director Sherry Johnson with Past President Amy Thomas (Pit).

See pages 5-10
for more information
and pictures.



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From our Executive Director: A Look Back



Sherry Johnson

Dear Members,

In 1990, I read a book titled, All I Really Need to Know I Learned in Kindergarten. This book, by Robert Fulghum, provided, as he put it, “uncommon thoughts on common things.” Recently, I have thought about this book enough to buy his latest edition, since my original sits in a box somewhere in our attic.

In these uncertain times, with so much division and dissent, it seems that revisiting some of Fulghum’s insights are a good reminder of those lessons from long ago that should still apply to our grown-up world. I am not providing a book report, for if you have an interest, the book is still in print and easy to acquire.

We may not have learned everything we need to know in kindergarten, but it was where we began to see the world beyond our own and began to realize that the universe does not revolve around us. I can only remember a few moments of that year now, but I can still picture my teacher, Mrs. Larabee, reading to us as we sat on the floor scattered about her big oak rocking chair. I truly believe that kindergarten teachers are special human beings.

As you continue your work at the board table, whether it be mid-year evaluations, budget discussions, curriculum review, or other matters, I hope that these examples will inspire you to see the world from your five-year-old eyes and perhaps to treat one another and those who come before you with these in mind.

Robert Fulghum’s lessons from kindergarten:

- Share
- Play fair
- Don’t hit people
- Put things back where you found them
- Clean up your own mess
- Don’t take things that aren’t yours
- Say you’re sorry when you hurt somebody
- Wash your hands before you eat
- Flush
- Warm cookies and milk are good for you
- Take a nap every afternoon
- Watch out for traffic, hold hands and stick together
- Wonder
- Look
- Live a balanced life.

Stay safe and thank you for all you continue to do!

Sherry Johnson

From our President: Welcome our next Executive Director



Gary Bracken

Greetings from the ice fort that is my – and everyone’s in the state of New York – house right now. For those who don’t really know me, I am not even a little fan of winter, snow, or temperatures below 60 degrees. So this is a tough time of year for me. I know, it’s western New York, so I should stop whining!

It is an important time for our Association. Last week we held our annual Legislative Breakfast which was a great success. More on that elsewhere in this edition. We are fortunate that so many of us were able to attend since we have had to cancel our annual March trip to Albany.

Later this year, there is another important event set to happen. As you know, our intrepid Executive Director Sherry Johnson is retiring at the end of June. With that decision announced last summer, one of the Association’s goals for the year was established: hire a new executive director who can lead us into the future, ensuring that our service to our members continues to provide exceptional value while advocating for public education.

As a side note, directly after learning Sherry was retiring, the officers determined there was no official process to follow. That is something we will address going forward.

So we approached this much like boards do when considering a new superintendent. We considered a full search including forming a committee, publicizing to attract candidates, and going through all of the meetings and activities that are part of that process.

But we also considered whether or not we had an internal candidate who was highly qualified, and already had extensive knowledge and experience with the workings of the association. Long story short, we quickly identified that there was in fact such a person who we believed would be the best choice to be our next executive director.

After some meetings with this candidate, consultation with our two BOCES superintendents, and briefing to and approval of the Executive Committee on December 1, 2021, I am extremely happy I can now announce that Amy Thomas will be our next Executive Director effective July 1, 2022.

Most, if not all of you know Amy, our current Past President and current President of the Pittsford Board of Education. But I’d like to give you a little of her background. Following graduation from SUNY Geneseo, Amy started her career as a 6th grade teacher in the Rochester City School District, and also taught kindergarten in California. While living with her family in São Paulo, Brazil, she taught as a substitute at the American School, was Co-President of the PTSA, and served on a superintendent search committee.

In her spare time, she also taught ESL to groups of women, was a board member of the American Society of São Paulo, and also organized an annual angel party for 300 orphaned children. I get tired just writing about all of that! But that is the Amy many of us know—someone who works tirelessly on causes she believes in, and she absolutely believes in supporting public education and the kids of Monroe County.

Amy has served on the Pittsford PTSA, was Co-Chair at the Calkins Road Middle School PTSA, and has been on the Pittsford School Board since 2013. She has served that board as Vice President 2016-17, and as President ever since. As many of you know, she has also been a highly-engaged member of the Association including her stints as committee Co-Chair, Vice President, and President.

And because she does not believe in the concept of free time, she also has had experience in local charitable organizations including the Golisano Children's Hospital gala and the Ronald McDonald House Charities.

From the standpoint of "fit," I believe most would agree that Amy has the personality and approach that will be indispensable in our Association's relationships with our members and their districts, our legislators, community partners, and our superintendent’s association, and will be an outstanding representative to other associations and organizations we interact with.

Please join me in congratulating Amy and welcoming her to her new role!

Gary Bracken



Amy Thomas

Advocacy via Zoom



Members meet with Congressman Morelle

During a Zoom call in January with Congressman Joe Morelle, Members discussed the chaos caused by TikTok themes and resultant interruptions to the school day, as well as potential remedies.

Members meet with NYS delegation

The MCSBA Legislative Committee hosted two meetings with legislators, in December, during which our Albany delegation expressed bipartisan support for education. On December 8, the committee met with Senator Samra Brouk and Edward Rath, as well as Assembly Members Josh Jensen and Demond Meeks. On December 14, the committee met with 10 members of our Albany delegation:



From the NYS Senate - Jeremy Cooney, Patrick Gallivan, and Robert Ortt, plus Legislative Director Carmella Mantello for Senator Pam Helming;

From the Assembly – Harry Bronson, Marjorie Byrnes, Sarah Clark, Jeff Gallahan, Stephen Hawley, and Jen Lunsford.

Seen in the captured Zoom screens are many of the participants in these sessions.



Issues discussed during Zoom sessions with state lawmakers

Would you support any changes to the tax cap?

Will you support expense-based aids as in the past and look to raise the aidable salary for BOCES to increase access and opportunity for our students?

What can we do to garner the tools to recruit/retain a diverse bus driver pool?

What solutions can you recommend to help districts recruit and retain staff as they compete with the food and trucking industries?

In-Person Advocacy February 5



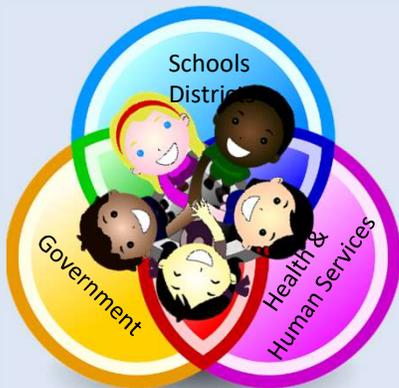
ABOVE: Legislative Breakfast organizers included Amy West (HFL), Amy Thomas (Pit), and Mary Talbot; Nancy Pickering helping Beatriz LeBron (Roc) to sign in; Legislative Committee Co-Chairs Vincent Antonicelli (ER) and Matthew Metras (WI); and Executive Director Sherry Johnson.

On February 5, about 120 MCSBA members and officials from local, state, and federal governments met to discuss issues important to public education. Led by Legislative Committee Co-Chairs Vincent Antonicelli (ER) and Matthew Metras (WI), school board members and administrators met with federal, state, and local elected and appointed officials whose decisions affect schools. In opening comments, Executive Director Sherry Johnson identified Association priorities, praised members for coping with issues caused by the pandemic, and thanked them for providing their voices on behalf of those who have yet to find theirs.

MCSBA members then met at 16 tables with invited officials in two sessions so each participant was able to converse with at least two representatives. Elected officials were also invited to make comments to the whole group. During his comments, Congressman Joe Morelle presented Executive Director Sherry Johnson with a plaque commemorating her work in the community.

Pictures of some of these interactions appear on pages 6 – 10.

Our Priorities



Continue full funding commitments to Foundation Aid and Expense based aids



Continue to support our efforts to deal with the shortages of bus drivers and work with us to recruit and retain faculty and staff



Provide direct support for mental health access and services



Provide meaningful flexibility to the tax cap by allowing exceptions for costs that exceed 2% and provide for a simple majority override of the tax cap



Increase the BOCES aid formula for Career and Technical Education programs (CTE) and special services aid



Provide school districts the metrics needed to move into a “post pandemic” learning environment



Steve Dawe (B2) Photo

In-Person Advocacy February 5: With Federal & Local Officials



LEFT & BELOW:
Members meeting with Congressman Joe Morelle.



BELOW: Members meeting with Altia Robinson of US Senator Kirsten Gillibrand's office and Chris Zeltmann of US Senator Chuck Schumer's office.



ABOVE: Members meeting with Jeff McCann of Monroe County Executive Adam Bello's office.

RIGHT: Members meeting with Rochester Mayor Malik Evans.



In-Person Advocacy February 5: With Regent Norwood & NYS Senators



LEFT & BELOW: Members meeting with NYS Regent Wade Norwood.



MIDDLE ROW LEFT: Members meeting with NYS Senator Samra Brouk via Zoom as well as staff members Emily Goldsmith and Maria Fisher who attended in person.

MIDDLE ROW RIGHT: Members meeting with Matthew Moll of NYS Senator Jeremy Cooney's office.

BOTTOM ROW LEFT: Members meeting with Phyllis Wickerham of Senator Patrick Gallivan's office.

BOTTOM ROW RIGHT: Members meeting with Andrew Dugan of Senator Robert Ort's office.



In-Person Advocacy February 5: With Assembly Members



LEFT: Members meeting with Assemblyman Harry Bronson.



RIGHT: Members meeting with Assemblywoman Jen Lunsford.



LEFT: Members meeting with Chad Zambito of Assemblyman Steve Hawley's office.

RIGHT: Members meeting with Assemblywoman Sarah Clark.



LEFT/BELOW: Members meeting with Assemblyman Josh Jensen.



RIGHT/ABOVE: Members meeting with Nate Salzman of Assemblyman Demond Meek's office.

In-Person Advocacy February 5: Hearing from Officials & One Another



ABOVE: Congressman Joe Morelle, Assemblyman Harry Bronson, Assemblyman Josh Jensen, and Assemblywoman Jen Lunsford addressing participants at the Legislative Breakfast.



RIGHT: Legislative Co-Chairs Vincent Antonicelli (ER) and Matthew Metras (WI) listening as MCSBA President Gary Bracken (Spe) thanks those who attended the session with lawmakers.

FAR RIGHT: Assemblyman Joe Morelle presents a commemorative Congressional plaque to Executive Director Sherry Johnson in recognition of her contributions to a regional effort to better coordinate educational, health, mental health, and social services to children and families. The effort, called the Systems Integration Project, is co-chaired by Congressman Morelle and Regent Wade Norwood.



BELOW: Members discussing issues at tables with lawmakers.



In-Person Advocacy February 5: Gathering Informally



Thanks to all our members and guest officials who attended our February 5 session, especially because **our March trip to Albany has been cancelled** since there is doubt that government offices will be open at that time.

Photos on pages 5-10 by Steve Dawe (B2) are labeled; other pictures are by Nancy Pickering, Mary Talbot, and Judy Wadsworth.

Changes to state workplace anti-harassment law

Sara Visingard, Esq., Partner, Harris Beach, provided an “Update Regarding State Division of Human Rights Proceedings Involving Students and Staff” to more than 30 participants at the January 12 meeting of the Information Exchange Committee. Highlights from her presentation include:

- The threshold for establishing harassment has been lowered.
- The statute of limitations for sexual harassment claims filed with the State Division of Human Rights has increased from one year to three years.
- Employees do not need to complain internally before bringing claims.
- Discrimination based on religious attire, facial hair, and traits associated with race are prohibited.
- Change in law allows students and families to bring suit and, if they can prove harassment, be awarded monetary damages.
- A tremendous backlog has been created by the State Division of Human Right’s change in practice regarding probable cause standards.
- School boards should have policies in place to fend off complaints, keep such policies up-to-date and followed, conduct prompt and thorough investigations, and document findings and prescribed actions.



Presenter Sara Visingard, Esq. (center), with IE Co-Chairs Kerri Keyes (GC) and Tammy Gurowski (Web).



Some of those attending the January 12 Information Exchange Committee meeting

Evaluating Superintendents & School Boards

Those attending the January 19 Labor Relations Committee meeting heard a presentation on evaluations of superintendents and school boards by Michael Horning, Ed.D., Executive Vice President, PLS 3rd Learning, and co-creator of SuperEval (who joined the group via Zoom); and Bob Hartz, Vice President of Strategic Partnerships, SuperEval (who attended in person). The presentation included the following:

- * A majority of superintendents use the reflective narrative and supporting evidence tools within SuperEval. As with other assessments (e.g., APPR), it is difficult to see 'leadership' in one moment. The evaluation should capture good leadership in action, and is a tool to capture seminal events that happen over time.

- * One critical aspect is defining expectations and how to show work around those expectations. The SuperEval process leads to conversation and reflection between the superintendent and the BOE, and involves looking at previous reviews and setting up a comparison over time. SuperEval also shows differences between the superintendent's and Boards' ratings.

- * As suggested by NYSSBA and other organizations, a mid-year review should be informal and a conversation. There is no scoring based on rubrics at mid-year. Goal modifications may occur mid-year.

For Board of Education Evaluations, SuperEval follows the NYSSBA model of 25 professional practices of highly effective school boards and allows each BOE member to assess "the work of the Board". Each BOE member reflects on these 25 practices and may add a reflective narrative and/or upload documents. The purpose is to drive the conversation around the strengths and weaknesses of the Board. This can also lead to annual Board goals. The Board should strive for continuous improvement. The BOE is able to model accountability to the community when it conducts a self-evaluation. It is also important for the Board to agree on the strengths of their BOE and the goals going forward from the self-evaluation.

Comment from the audience: It is important to have a skilled facilitator guide the Board through the self-evaluation process. Sherry Johnson and MCSBA are great resources.

SuperEval is BOCES aid-able through the Monroe 1 RIC. SuperEval partners include: NYSCOSS, NYSSBA, ASBO, Erie County Association of School Boards, Reform Educational Financing Inequities Today, NY (REFIT), Rural Schools Association on New York, and Western New York Educational Service Council.



LR Co-Chair Barbara Babiarz (Pen), on-screen presenter Michael L. Horning, Jr., LR Co-Chair Frank Muscato (GC), and presenter Bob Hartz.



Some of the participants at the January 19 Labor Relations Committee meeting