



NYS issues this legislative session

The news from Albany is bleak. NYS coffers appear to be approaching empty, but leaders are holding on to state reserve funds and as yet have made no move to help local governments control their spending.

The Governor's proposed cuts

Governor Paterson has proposed cutting state aid to schools by \$1.1 billion (5%). He is calling the overall reduction to aids a "Gap Elimination Adjustment." The GEA reduces aid by \$1.4 billion statewide, but is partially offset by reimbursement aids under current formulas. Last year, federal stimulus funding offset the state's shortfall, but the remaining stimulus funding is insufficient to do that again.

The governor also included \$750 million of Race to the Top money in his budget. These dollars, IF they materialize, cannot be used for regular budget expenses. The governor also seeks a wealth adjustment to state reimbursement for Summer School Age Special Education (currently set at 70% of costs for all districts). He is including a new unfunded mandate for Preschool Special Education. Increases in county costs for preschool special education would be limited to 2%, with school districts paying for any growth above 2%. He also eliminates funding for Teacher Centers.

For more detail about the Governor's education budget, visit:
<http://publications.budget.state.ny.us/eBudget1011/fy1011littlebook/Education.html>

Mandate relief that helps but doesn't go far enough

The budget proposal includes legislation to reform the system of mandates that overburdens districts and to provide relief from some existing mandates. These initiatives include:

- * **Four-Year Moratorium on Unfunded Statutory Mandates;**
- * **SED Regulatory Reform**, which would apply the same requirements regarding mandates to the SED that applies to other State agencies;
- * **Wicks Law elimination**, which could generate savings to school districts, and indirectly to the State, which provides reimbursement through building aid;
- * **Reduce Paperwork** by streamlining report requirements and eliminating reports that are outdated or no longer serve a purpose, and by allowing districts to file reports electronically unless restricted by the Commissioner;
- * **Reform Procurement Practices** to give districts greater flexibility to purchase from existing contracts held by other government entities and to purchase based on "best value;"
- * **Repeal of Mandates already covered by federal law** in areas such as ensuring that students with disabilities receive appropriate space for education in the least restrictive environment.

Other gnarly bits

•**Maintain the Contract for Excellence Program.** C4E provisions for the 2010-11 school year would be consistent with the 2009-10 provisions. All districts now in the program would be required to continue, with a reduced financial liability, unless all their buildings are now reported as "In Good Standing." They would be required to maintain funding for existing C4E programs less the percentage reduction in the Gap Elimination Adjustment.

•**Allow Access to Employee Benefit Accrued Liability Reserve Funds.** A school district would be permitted to withdraw excess funds in an employee benefits accrued liability reserve fund to maintain educational programming during the 2010-11 school year, the amount withdrawn not exceeding the GEA for that district.

* **School District Charter School Payments.** Due to the freeze in Foundation Aid for the 2010-11 school year, the per pupil charter school payments made by districts to charter schools will be maintained at current levels.

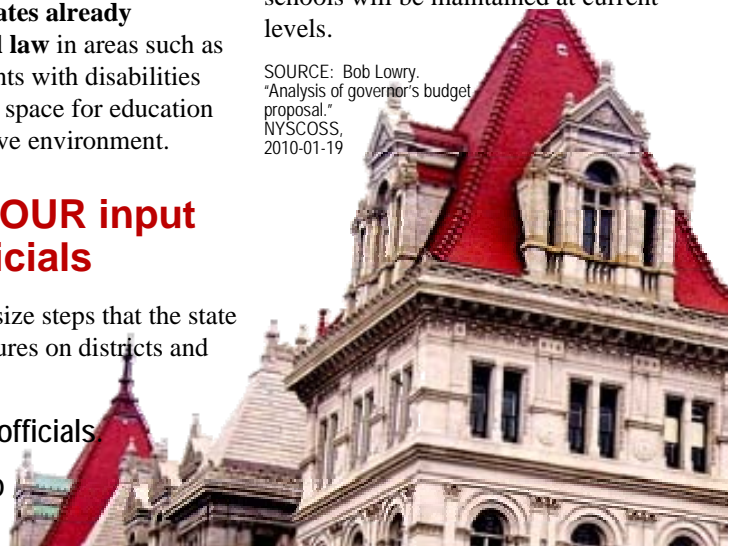
SOURCE: Bob Lowry.
"Analysis of governor's budget proposal."
NYSCOSS.
2010-01-19

This year, more than ever, we need YOUR input as we present our case to Albany officials

MCSBA will meet with state officials in coming weeks to emphasize steps that the state can take during this legislative session to alleviate financial pressures on districts and help them to control costs.

On February 6, attend our annual breakfast with Albany officials.

On March 22-23, participate in our annual spring bus trip to Albany.



NEWS SCOPE



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Upcoming learning opportunities

- Sat., 2/6, 9:00 am (Holiday Inn Airport) – MCSBA Legislative Breakfast
- Wed., 2/10, noon (Holiday Inn Airport) – Information Exchange Committee round table discussion of social media
- Wed., 2/24, noon (Holiday Inn Airport) – Labor Relations Committee discussion of salary costs as related to productivity
- Wed., 3/10, noon (Holiday Inn Airport) – Information Exchange Committee look at value-added, non-mandated programs

Merryl Tisch to speak at 2010 MCSBA Annual Meeting



Merryl Tisch, Chancellor of the NYS Board of Regents, will be the featured speaker at the May 26 MCSBA Annual Meeting. She has served as a Regent since 1996, and as Chancellor since April 2009. She brings to her role her many years of experience in the fields of education, community service, and philanthropy.

The 2010 annual meeting comes at the end of MCSBA's first 40 years of service to the leaders of our educational community.

PLAN NOW TO ATTEND!

From our president: We need to be advocates for public education.



Kathy Dillon

How many of us, when we were new board members, thought our job was to attend board meetings, be visible at school events, and provide the best education for our

students at a cost our tax payers could afford? While that is still very important, it has become crucial for board members to become strong advocates for public education.

Public Education is being attacked at all levels. At the federal level our latest challenges are the requirements for the Race to the Top money. We need to send a message that our state should determine what is best for education, not the Federal government.

At the state level we are constantly being told how to run our schools by a legislature that can't balance a budget.

The comptroller's audits criticized school districts for their reserve funds and now we are being told to use them to assist with the current fiscal crisis. Our reserves are being treated as one shot without any planning for the future. Legislators continue to refuse to revise the major driver of labor costs in public schools—the Triborough Amendment. Nor will they address our concerns with mandate relief. They are not addressing the issues that could realize significant savings. They seem to think they can ride it out until the economy improves. This is unacceptable.

Our challenge at the local level is the proposal for mayoral control of the city school district. Our legislators are actually proposing to take away the

ability of Rochester's citizens to elect school leaders. Research shows that mayoral control of urban schools has no real effect on dropout rates or test scores.

At all levels Public Education is under attack. We need to be strong advocates to maintain the quality education that our schools provide in Monroe County. As board members we need to think beyond our own districts and unite to provide a strong voice for public education.

Our legislative breakfast will occur on February 6, and our Albany trip on March 22-23. NYSSBA has its State Legislative issues Conference on March 14-15. If you can't participate in any of these opportunities, write your lawmakers to express your concerns. We have the opportunity to make a change and we need to do it now!

Kathy Dillon

NYSAWA looks at financial and labor issues.

Public schools are facing extraordinary financial challenges and among these challenges is dealing with employee groups. These issues were discussed at the January meeting of the Finger Lakes Chapter of the NYS Association of Women Administrators (NYSAWA). Superintendent Jeff Crane (WI) reviewed the governor's proposed cuts in education aid and recommended using the governor's figures to develop 2010-2011 budgets. He noted that while the state comptroller has criticized district reserve funds, he is now stating that such funds could help preserve programs. Crane also asked his listeners to preserve arts programs wherever possible.

Attorney Ron Mendrick (HFL) discussed labor issues facing districts. He suggested that during negotiations, district leaders publicize their bargaining position early in the process to avoid union accusations of district unfairness. He also suggested that districts right now determine which programs add most value to the education of most students to help in making needed cuts.



ABOVE: Superintendents Theresa Pulos (Clyde-Savannah) and Dawn Santiago-Marullo (Victor) with presenting attorney Ron Mendrick (HFL).



LEFT: Finger Lakes Chapter President Barbara Goldammer (Web) led the NYSAWA meeting; and Superintendent Jeff Crane (WI) explained how proposed budget cuts will affect schools.

From our executive director: *Making things more complicated is not a good problem solving technique.*



Jody Siegle

Is the pace of change making your head spin? Our nation is preoccupied with change, both bringing it about and preventing it. For many, frustration with the status quo has made change itself a goal and the underlying

reason for many important decisions being made about education.

When the topic is change, how can we frame the conversation with our communities and our legislators so that they will commit to finding real solutions instead of substituting glib unproven assumptions for meaningful content?

A few years ago people were alarmed when school districts were expected to commit to compliance with NCLB's yet unwritten regulations. But what was shocking then has now become commonplace, as the state and federal

government repeatedly demand districts confirm compliance with new programs even before the new plans are developed. Just say yes is the government's attitude; the details will be provided later.

We have very important messages to give our legislators, both state and national, about how to help public schools become more effective and successful. We can list specific changes (see <http://www.mcsba.org/legislat.html>) but to maximize improvement, it is not only laws that need changing; it is also how the laws are now being written. Lawmakers need to understand that making things more complicated is not a problem solving technique.

Repeatedly when we see new programs instituted to help schools improve, invariably they are accompanied by ever more complex compliance regulations, both in organizing requirements and accountability procedures.

This accountability only goes one-way; nothing lawmakers face matches the detailed prescriptive requirements and reporting obligations they regularly impose on public schools.

So whenever we find ourselves in conversations about change in education – discussing the state budget, engaging the Regents in discussions about educational priorities, developing plans to use Race to the Top grants, or talking with our Congress people about the reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act - we need to make very clear what changes would be meaningful. Otherwise the cumulative effect of so many different government leaders – state, federal, elected, appointed, executive, legislative - each pursuing different education agendas, will only further complicate the process of improving our schools.

Jody Siegle

Systems approach to middle school guidance

The systems approach to middle school guidance that was developed by the Honeoye Falls-Lima district was described by a team of district administrators to the Information Exchange Committee in January. Among the comments were the following:

- * The HFL systems approach involves strategic planning, and development of ongoing achievable, measurable goals.
- * The school board set priorities, provided employee training, and directed resources to support the change.
- * The systemic strategies selected to guide the reform were Response To Intervention (RTI) and Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS).
- * The systemic approach was applied at the same time that the guidance team went from two to three counselors, with each one assigned to a single class for the three years that class attends the school, to allow closer work with fewer students and teachers, and more effective resolutions to issues.
- * Positive results include fewer discipline referrals, less bullying, more positive school climate, and improved testing results.



TOP ROW : The HFL team who described their systems approach to middle level guidance included **Dr. Michelle Kavanaugh**, Superintendent, and **Philip Burrows**, Deputy Superintendent and Director of Pupil Services, standing. Seated are **Shawn Williams**, Middle School Principal; and Middle School Guidance Counselors **Erin Hawkins**, **Sue Wiegand**, and **Donna Fraser**.

ABOVE: Listening to the HFL presentation are Margy Richards (ER), Sue Allen (EI), Chris Inzinga (Web), Kellie Scott-Reed (Fpt), and Camille Rutan (Pen).

To learn more contact superintendent Dr. Michelle Kavanaugh at (585) 624-7010 or Michelle_kavanaugh@hflcsd.org.

Labor issues in tough economic times



ABOVE: Presenters **Howard Maffucci** (ER) and **Ron Mendrick** (HFL), standing; and **Mike DeLaus** (B1).

RIGHT: **Don Nadolinski** (Gre), **Gayle O'Toole** (Gre), **Tom Gallagher** (WC), **Steve Barbeau** (RH), Co-Chair **Allen Williams** (Roc), and **Barbara McKinley** (Pen).



ABOVE: **Lisa Smith** (Web), **Jeanine Cushman** (Web), **Carmen Gumina** (Web), and **Irene Narotsky** (Pit)

Superintendent **Dr. Howard Maffucci** (ER) and school attorney **Ronald J. Mendrick** (HFL) offered suggestions with the Labor Relations Committee in January on how boards might deal with current financial and labor issues. Among their suggestions were: calculate the effect of any wage increase on the budget and the need for budget cuts, evaluate current programs to help ensure that any needed cuts do the least damage, and educate the community about the process and the district offer in negotiations.



B2's CTE and Habitat for Humanity pair up to create Strong Neighborhoods

By Grace Griffiee, BOCES 2 Communication Specialist

Strong neighborhoods are built from the ground up resulting in hope, stability and a better quality of life for the families involved. The carpentry, plumbing, heating and air conditioning, and industrial/residential electricity classes at the Career and Technical Education Center are now a part of that reality and will be well into the future. Thanks to a new partnership with Flower City Habitat for Humanity (FCHH), the house that CTE students build every year in class will help a family in need obtain decent, affordable shelter.

Career and Technical Education classes have been building modular homes for about 30 years, but over the past couple of years, auctioning the homes has been tough due to the poor economy. Students always have two homes under construction. First-year students start a home and second year students finish it. The home that is due to be completed this year is a bit larger than what FCHH normally builds, but they are purchasing it anyway and will move it to the JOSANA neighborhood, part of Rochester's "Crescent of Poverty" and located west of PAETEC Park and north of Interstate 490 West. The JOSANA Neighborhood Renewal Project presents an opportunity to transform a profoundly troubled area into a safe and vibrant neighborhood. Since FCHH began building there in fall 2007, they have completed about a dozen homes, and are in the process of building three more.



ABOVE: Andy Sulkowski puts up sheetrock in the Habitat for Humanity house.

The home that students began building this year is smaller, more economical and will fit universally on city lots. In addition to the new plan, students will be incorporating green building technologies. For example, they will be switching to a PEX domestic water system that reduces piping and increases thermal efficiency of the hot water system, and more sustainable framing that uses less lumber and allows for more insulation. While the students are working on the house in the winter, it will be heated with geothermal heat, which they will re-engineer and reinstall each year. FCHH is providing all of the materials for the construction of the

home, and upon completion will take ownership and transport the home to its permanent location. The organization receives no government funding and runs completely on donated funds and materials.

LEFT: CTE student Joelle Burgado works to complete a block for electrical work.

The CTE home will cost half of what a home normally does, so the money saved will be used to build other homes. Once the home is transported to its permanent location, finish work (painting, installing flooring, and hooking up utilities) will begin. When previous homes were auctioned, it was well after the school year was over and students never had the opportunity to see them on site, finished and occupied. Now students are being encouraged to fulfill their volunteer hours for Participation in Government class by working alongside volunteers to complete the home.

Not only do students who volunteer have the opportunity to work with people from all walks of life, but they can get to know the homeowner as well. "Habitat for Humanity is not a giveaway program," said CTE Carpentry Teacher Karl Church who has worked with FCHH as a building supervisor for more than two years. "Homeowners must complete 450 hours of sweat equity building the homes of others as well as their own, take classes as part of their transition from renters to homeowners, and pay on a zero interest 20-year mortgage."



To learn more about the partnership between the BOCES 2 Career and Technical Education Center (CTE) and the Rochester Habitat for Humanity, contact Joseph Salemi, CTE Executive Principal at jsalemi@monroe2boces.

Rochester students of Chinese language and culture study in China

A group of Rochester City School District students who are students of Chinese language and culture have spent at least one summer in China to continue their studies and tour portions of that country.

Their Chinese experience included:

- ▶ Mandarin language classes f3-4 hours each day;
- ▶ Application of their Mandarin among Mandarin speakers, including Chinese students and others;
- ▶ Afternoon culture classes (art, calligraphy, traditional dance, martial arts);
- ▶ Field trips to historic sites, such as the Great Wall and the Forbidden City;
- ▶ Meetings with business leaders, journalists, and diplomats to learn about issues, and career opportunities.



Pictures of Rochester City School District students, their adult counselors, Chinese acquaintances, and scenery were provided by participating students.

As follow-up to their summer experience, China Scholars study Chinese language and culture throughout the school year back home.

This challenging program for competitively selected urban high school students is paid for by Americans Promoting Study Abroad (APSA). APSA is a nonprofit organization created by a group of Americans who live and work in China. Their mission is to provide fully-funded opportunities to study abroad for American urban high school students who might not otherwise have such an opportunity.

Five Rochester students and five District of Columbia students participated in its successful pilot program in Beijing, China during the summer of 2008, and some of them returned for a second summer in 2009 along with five additional Rochester students as well as students from Atlanta and Boston. With assistance from the Embassy of China and the Beijing Municipal Education Commission, the students lived and attended classes at Beijing high schools that are affiliated with Beijing colleges. One 2008 participant from Rochester was hired to teach English starting in the fall of 2009. The 2009 program was funded in part through a grant from the US State Department National Security Language Initiative for Youth (NSLI-Y).



To learn more, contact Americans Promoting Study Abroad at 1015 15th Street, N.W., Suite 1000, Washington, DC 20005; or David E. Báez, Director of Foreign Languages, Rochester City School District, at david.baez@rcsdk12.org or 585-262-8289

New Technology Paints Comprehensive Portrait of Children

Children's Institute is a national charitable organization based in Rochester that works to improve the lives of children by strengthening their social and emotional health.

Through research and evaluation, the organization develops and promotes effective prevention and early intervention programs, materials, and best practices for children, families, schools, and communities.

Children's Institute is affiliated with the University of Rochester and has served the community for over 50 years.

SophiTEC is a software development firm, providing consultation services as well as outsourcing services in the domains of Client/Server databases, Expert Systems, Software Architecture, and Real Time Process Control applications.



Using the web-based data collection and management system known as COMET, Universal PreK teacher Joette (Joie) Carboneau of The Community Place of Greater Rochester, Inc., tracks the abilities and progress of the 17 students in her class and uses this information to develop strategies to help each student succeed.

Every school district routinely collects large volumes of data about children and youth. The big challenge is collating all that information and getting it into the hands of those who can make effective decisions that benefit children. Now personnel can store and access data more quickly and effectively using COMET, a system developed by Children's Institute and its IT partner, SophiTEC.

By linking new and existing data sources from a variety of providers, COMET is one reliable, secure, and affordable information hub that facilitates solutions and validates funding decisions. Any screening or assessment instrument, questionnaire, survey, or form can be put onto COMET. A child's name, date of birth, and gender need only be entered once, saving time and ensuring accuracy when completing multiple instruments. When children change grade levels and schools, COMET ensures that all of their data follow them, providing continuity of information. Teachers and parents receive easy-to-understand pre- and post-evaluations of the child. Eventually, COMET will suggest actions and interventions based on a child's data and will provide short- and long-term monitoring of

their effectiveness. Also, administrators can access global reports by school, grade, program, intervention, or any grouping of interest. COMET works in real time for the same cost as using paper instruments.

As of January 2010, COMET contains over 44,000 student profiles and is used by 220 sites, including school districts in New York, Connecticut, and North Carolina, as well as not-for-profits like the YMCA and United Way of Greater Rochester, tutoring programs, and early care and education programs. To install COMET, all that's needed is internet access with a recent computer and a professional-grade communication line.

"It's our unwavering belief that COMET will revolutionize education and the way parents, teachers, principals, and policy makers will use data and information to help children succeed," explained Dirk Hightower, Executive Director of Children's Institute.

To learn more, visit www.childrensinstitute.net or contact Dr. Dirk Hightower at (585) 295-1000 or dhightower@childrensinstitute.net.

STEPS Academy attracts middle schoolers to STEM



In 2006, Project Lead The Way and Society of Manufacturing Engineers Education Foundation formed a partnership to provide a summer program designed to interest females and under-represented populations into math, science, technology, and engineering programs in middle and high school. The Gateway Academy uses the same software and equipment as the PLTW middle school course. The summer Gateway Academy involves PLTW curricula presented by PLTW-trained instructors using a flexible format taking the form of a summer day camp.

Participating 6th and 7th grade students work on such items as rockets, gliders, eco jewelry design, robots, manufacturing, alternative energy, tower construction, bridge design, and 'eggstronaut' catapults. STEP Academies are held in many states each summer.

In 2009, the local Academy was hosted by Greece CSD and consisted of 2 week-long sessions serving a total of 40 students for 5 mornings each. The camp theme was aerodynamics and the students set off rockets. Students participating in the first session toured the RIT School of Engineering where college students organized activities; those involved in the second week toured the county airport. Cory Doty was the teacher leading the camp. To learn more, contact him at cory.doty@greece.k12.ny.us.



ABOVE & RIGHT: STEPS participants building rockets, adding parachutes, and launching them during the 2009 Academy.



LEFT & BELOW: STEPS participants competing to see who could construct the tallest stable tower.



STEPS Academies nationwide

States where STEPS Academies are offered are shown in grey.



In 2009, 3082 Students Served
 60% Males
 40% Females
Ethnic Breakdown
 60% - Caucasian
 27% - African American
 7% - Hispanic
 5% - Asian/Pacific Islander
 1% - Native American