

Joint Conference Update: New Items; New Information

FRIDAY LUNCH ELECTION FOCUS

Newly announced Friday lunch guest speaker Maurice (Mo) Cunningham, a political science professor at UMass-Boston and much sought-after by the media political commentator, will share his insights on upcoming elections issues. Topics he will address include the impact of Trump/Clinton election on the next Congress; the debate on the ballot questions; and “dark money” revelations and implications for the future. Luncheon seating is filling up quickly, so make sure you are registered and don’t miss this important “five-days-before the election” discussion of issues.



FRIDAY-SATURDAY SPECIAL

For members whose schedules don’t make full conference attendance possible, MASC is offering a special reduced Friday-Saturday registration rate of \$195.00. Friday consists of a full day of programming, with more than 25 sessions and featured programs to choose from. This year’s Saturday program includes a full complement of sessions that focus on students and the conference themes of social-emotional learning and the challenges of students in poverty. In addition to the publicized sessions

listed in the brochure you recently received (and on the MASC website and conference app), two additional sessions are also being considered: the recent homework debate; and a session presented by an educator and students on practicing mindfulness in the classroom.

The sessions will be followed by our popular **STUDENT VOICES** lunch, which this year will feature a panel of students who will discuss the many challenges on the at-risk spectrum from poverty to addiction to homelessness and how this is impacting their educational lives and opportunities.

School Committee members are encouraged to have their local **students and families attend any of the Saturday sessions with them at no charge**, although we ask that they be registered so that badges and materials will be available for them. There is a \$25 fee to attend lunch. Register online at www.masc.org

DELEGATE MANUAL

The MASC 2016 *Delegate Manual* was recently mailed to all MASC members and includes the Association’s annual report, committee and division reports, nominations for the Board of Directors and Life Members and the four resolutions that will be considered at the Delegate Assembly on Wednesday, November 2. For the full text of the resolutions, go to the MASC website at: <http://www.masc.org>

MASC Partners in Coalition on Social- Emotional Learning

In response to the ever-louder call in Massachusetts and across the country for schools to place greater emphasis on social and emotional learning—teaching students skills such as self-management, teamwork, persistence, empathy and responsible decision making—MASC has partnered with other MA educational organizations to form a newly launched coalition of school leaders that is focused on these issues.

The partnership called: exSEL: Excellence through Social-Emotional Learning (exselmass.org) is a first of its kind collaboration among statewide associations of MA elementary and secondary school principals, superintendents, school committees, and educational collaboratives, representing more than 5,000 school and district leaders.

The work has been guided in part by a report released earlier this year by the Rennie Center for Education Research and Policy which outlines both the need for greater emphasis on SEL and the benefits of doing so. The report highlights effective practices in a number of MA communities including Gardner, Reading and Fall River.

The work of the Coalition will also focus on the need to ensure that the most at-risk students receive the full range of services they need and recognizes that this requires a structured, coordinated approach between schools and community resources—particularly health and human service providers. As such, the Coalition has called upon Governor

Annual Report of the Regional Schools Committee

Note from the editor: The *Delegate Manual* which was recently mailed to all MASC members included an incorrect version of the annual report of the Regional Schools Committee. My apologies to Regional Chair Ellen Holmes (Ashburnham-Westminster School Committee) and the members of the Committee. The up-to-date report is reproduced below.

This year the Committee focused on the following issues: Refiled Legislation (Stabilization, Regional School Bonus Aid, Regions as Fiscal Agent, Voc Ed Studies, and Special Education Stabilization Accounts), the hearings, debate and final report of the Foundation Budget Commission, Regional School Committee member responsibilities regarding warrants and Regional School Transportation funding. The latter rose to our attention with Governor Baker's filing of *An Act to Modernize Municipal Finance and Government*. Contained in this legislation was the additional insertion of the clause, "subject to appropriation"; this time

in the original covenant of Chapter 71, Section 16C. Unfortunately, this section passed, and the intentions of the original authors were ignored. On a more positive note, Senator Anne Gobi and Representative Kimberly Ferguson serve as the Chairs of the Regional Schools Caucus, and bring a vast amount of experience to their roles. Together, they have sponsored several pieces of legislation crucial to regional school district governance which have successfully moved through the Legislature. Representative Ferguson was also an active member of the Foundation Budget Commission, and made sure to share up to date

information with us.

Another area of concern for regions was the impact of the shift from "Low Income" to "Economically Disadvantaged". While the change was touted as having no negative impacts on districts, the actuality was very different. While the financial situation of families in our regions did not change, suddenly some students' circumstance fell out of the newly established "Economically Disadvantaged".

Together with groups such as MassBudget, the Committee worked with the Legislature's Joint

[continued on page 3](#)

MA NEWS

TURNOVER HIGH AMONG MA SCHOOL SUPERINTENDENTS

Massachusetts superintendents are increasingly pinch hitters, not franchise players, a MetroWest Daily News study of turnover among Bay State school CEOs has found.

Since 2005, Massachusetts superintendents left their districts at a rate of 55 to 65 per year and, according to MA Association of School Superintendents (MASS) Executive Director Tom Scott, that trend doesn't seem to be ending at all.

The average tenure of a superintendent is five years, Scott said. Difficulty finding qualified superintendents has led to a rise in interim appointments and widespread hiring of superintendent search firms to help find candidates. This fall, MASS has 29 novice superintendents (not including interims, or superintendents who were previously in another district) enrolled in their New Superintendent Induction Program. In addition, nearly 20 additional districts will be conducting searches or engaging interims for the upcoming year.

The reasons for the high turnover

are many and varied, but among the ones most frequently cited are: bad relationships/expectations with the school committee; poor management skills with staff; increased time demands for dealing with issues not education-related, including disgruntled parents and community members; political curriculum issues in addition to an ever-widening swath of local, state and federal mandates; salary demands; and, burnout.

SOMERVILLE AWARDED \$10 MILLION FOR INNOVATIVE SCHOOL PROJECT

Somerville Public Schools working with Sprout & Co., a local nonprofit, has been awarded a \$10 million grant in a national competition that sought proposals on innovative solutions to transforming high schools. Hundreds of entries from around the country were submitted for consideration.

Somerville's winning proposal was for a year-round high school where students would pursue long-term projects in areas of interest to them. There would be no grade levels or a set sequence of courses in math, science and English. Instead, students would learn in theme-based

symposiums, internships and hands-on projects that could range from biomechanics to computational art.

The new high school, which is expected to open in the next year or two, according to Somerville Superintendent Mary Skipper, will be called Powderhouse Studios and could serve as a national model for other school systems looking to redesign their high schools. It will enroll about 200 students beginning in the 8th grade in what is now a currently unused school building. Teams of students will be assigned a project manager, a curriculum developer and a social worker.

The idea for the school took root several years ago and has the strong support of Somerville Mayor/School Committee Chair Joe Curtatone, who thought it could be an ideal setting for students who didn't fit the traditional high school. The new school will not take resources away from Somerville High School he stressed.

Somerville's proposal was one of 10 winning bids in the Super School Project, sponsored by XQ, an education nonprofit in Oakland, CA which is giving \$10 million to each recipient.

MA Receives Grant to Help Students from Low-Income Families Take Advanced Placement Tests

The U.S. Department of Education has awarded Massachusetts \$808,991 in Advanced Placement (AP) grants as part of its efforts to boost college- and career-readiness for historically underserved students. MA is one of 41 states and Washington, D.C.,

that received a total of \$28.4 million to help defray the costs of taking advanced placement tests for students from low-income families.

The grants are used to help pay for students from low-income families taking approved advanced

placement tests administered by the College Board, the International Baccalaureate Organization and Cambridge International Examinations. By subsidizing test fees, the program encourages all students to

[continued on page 4](#)

Annual Report of the Regional School Committee

[continued from page 2](#)

Education Committee and the Regional Schools Caucus to provide the necessary data on its negative impact on Chapter 70 and MSBA, as well as federal programs such as Title I and E-rate. This advocacy will continue in the new academic year.

Our February meeting was our annual conference call with Chris Lynch, Jay Sullivan and Roger Hatch of DESE regarding the release of the Governor's

budget. Our discussions are candid and open, and we appreciate the opportunity to have this opportunity immediately following the budget release. Additionally, we were fortunate to work with Melissa King and Michelle Griffin of DESE on workshop programming such as using the online tools to understand the Chapter 70 notebook and the status of collaboratives in the Commonwealth in regards to general educational transportation. We wish

to extend our best wishes upon the retirement of Chris Lynch for her care and commitment to regions and the students and communities we serve.

The success of this Committee would not be possible without the active engagement of its members. Personal interaction is essential to our advocacy, and you should know how committed they are to these efforts. Please feel free to speak with any of us if there are issues of concern or you wish to help!

Respectfully submitted
B. Ellen Holmes, Chair

Ashburnham Westminster Regional

MASS Coalition

[continued from page 1](#)

Baker's administration and other state and local officials to encourage and establish greater collaboration between DESE, school districts and key state agencies (Departments of Mental Health, Social Services, Youth Services, Public Health, and Children & Families) to establish a safety net system of early identification, prevention, intervention and treatment.

In order to help raise public awareness about SEL and promote reforms, designed to address students social and emotional needs, the Coalition has recently launched a website that provides background, resources, tools advocacy toolkits, and discussion forums related to investing in social/emotional learning. The Coalition has also proposed a list of recommendations based on the belief that SEL is a critical foundation for academic success. Among these recommendations are:

1. Emphasize social-emotional learning as a top priority in the state's public education agenda, highlighting the importance of social-emotional skills and competencies as essential to our students' academic, personal, and career success.

2. Promote social-emotional learning as a critical issue in workforce development, working closely with employers to identify and promote the skills that employees need in order to be competitive for the jobs of the future and successful in the workplace.

3. Enact legislation to establish inter-agency teams and other measures to promote greater collaboration and coordination between schools and the State agencies that provide vital health and social services to children, families, and schools, particularly the Department of Mental Health, Department of Public Health, Department of Youth Services, and the Department of Children & Families.

4. Allocate new state funding streams to enable school and district

leaders to invest in appropriate, targeted social-emotional learning resources, particularly staff development and training.

5. Fully fund and enforce existing laws and regulations related to mental health services for students, including the 2008 Act Relative to Children's Mental Health, and related legislation.

MASC encourages members to visit the website <http://www.exselmass.org/recommendations/> and join the discussions about how school leaders and community members can advocate to support this important initiative. SEL is also a primary theme of the upcoming MASC/MASS Joint Conference in Hyannis, and many of the sessions will be devoted to challenges, strategies and successes around developing students who are prepared to achieve: academically, socially and emotionally.

For more information about the conference, www.masc.org and download the brand new conference app!

Since you asked. . . .

Questions recently raised with MASC by members and/or school committee secretaries

Compiled by MASC Field Director Michael Gilbert

ELECTRONIC SIGNING OF WARRANTS?

Question: A member of our warrant subcommittee has asked the district to look into the possibility of remotely signing warrants using electronic signatures. Is this technically and/or legally possible?

Response: We have had conflicting legal opinions on this point, so we are researching the answer at this time. Additionally, at least until the Municipal Modernization law becomes effective in November, there may be Open Meeting Law issues that come into play. Under MGL 110G, known as MUETA (Massachusetts Uniform Electronic Transactions Act), the Supervisor of Public Records and/or the Secretary of State have jurisdiction over the interpretation of MUETA for municipal transactions and, absent guidance from an authorized source, we are advising that School Committees not use electronic signatures for warrants at this time. We have asked the Supervisor of Public Records for advice on this issue and will provide further information when we receive a response and get guidance from MASC's General Counsel.

RE-VOTING A PREVIOUSLY FAILED MOTION?

Question: Is there anything against a committee re-voting a previously failed motion at a later meeting?

Response: There is no legal reason for the Committee not to bring a failed motion back at another meeting. Under Roberts' Rules of Order the only time there is an issue with revoting a motion is when the motion is brought back up at the same meeting at which it originally occurred without reconsideration having been moved. If this were the case it

would require that a member who voted on the prevailing side be the individual to bring the motion up for another vote.

The scenario presented in the original motion was on the "advice and consent" appointment of an administrator and the motion failed and thus the person was not appointed. It is not unusual for a superintendent to return with the same personnel recommendation after it has been rejected. In this case there would be no legal problem bringing the failed motion back. However, if the original motion had passed and the Committee wished to rescind that vote there may be complications related to contract law that could come into play and you would want to consult with legal counsel before proceeding with such an action. A key principle of a motion to rescind is that you may not rescind the unrescindable. In other words, if you have approved a contract, made a personnel appointment to someone who now has a right to their job, or otherwise legally bound your district to an action, you may not rescind what you did. MASC has also previously advised members that the legal requirement to reorganize annually and elect officers is rescindable.

CHANGING AN ALREADY POSTED CALENDAR DATE

Question: Does anyone know the protocol for changing a high school graduation date that has already been posted in an approved calendar? I have been told it would take 2 votes at 2 meetings to officially change the date. Is that true? Or is it only one?

Response: Unless your own rules/policy say something different it could be accomplished in a single motion – Move to amend the 2016-17 calendar by changing the graduation date from JuneXX to JuneYY. Many School Committees

have policies or operating protocols that require an action be on the agenda for discussion purposes at a meeting prior to being placed on the agenda for a vote. However, if sufficient support on the Committee existed, the Committee could, by a two-thirds vote, waive its own rules and bring the motion to the table at a single meeting. Cautionary advice: Graduation date changes can generate a certain level of community angst and as such School Committee members need to think about community reaction to such a change without opportunity for public input. However, because the school calendar is a matter of policy, this is, in our opinion, a decision for the school committee if it wishes to take it up.

Grants

continued from page 3

take advanced placement tests and obtain college credit for high school courses, reducing the time and cost required to complete a postsecondary degree.

Levels of funding per state were determined on the basis of state estimates of the numbers of tests that would be taken by students from low-income families. From 2015 to 2016, preliminary results show that the number of tests covered by the program increased from 831,913 to 862,204, an improvement of nearly 4 percent.

Based on the anticipated number of tests to be taken, the grants under the Advanced Placement Test Fee Program are expected to be sufficient to pay all but \$15 of the cost of each advanced placement test taken by low-income students. States may opt to require students to pay a portion of the costs.

exSEL
EXCELLENCE THROUGH
SOCIAL, EMOTIONAL, LEARNING.

Twitter Chat

Wednesday, October 5, 8-9 pm ET
With John D'Auria
President, Teachers21

#exsel

LEGAL Bulletin

RE: SCHOOL COMMITTEES AUTHORITY TO TAKE POSITIONS ON BALLOT QUESTIONS

Stephen J. Finnegan Esq.

This Bulletin is not intended as a substitute for a complete review of the various advisories found below. In the seminal case on this issue Anderson v. City of Boston, 376 Mass.178, 199 [1978] the Supreme Judicial Court noted that the “plaintiffs conceded that the mayor and persons in relevant policy-making positions in city government are free to act and to speak out in support of the classification amendment, “which was a ballot question to be decided by the voters in November of 1978. The Office of Campaign & Political Finance (OCPF) has interpreted Anderson to allow a governmental body” to endorse, or vote as a body to endorse, a ballot question, and may issue statements supporting or opposing a ballot question.” *OCPF-1B-92-02 page 3B*. If such a vote is scheduled the notice of the school committee meeting should only reference the title of the ballot questions and indicate that the text may be found on its website or would be available at the meeting upon request. Also, according to OCPF a governmental body may hold an informational forum concerning the committee’s position on a ballot question and distribute an analysis to persons requesting such information and may make a reasonable number of copies for persons attending the meeting. If the governmental body distributes a notice of a forum or schedules a vote of the committee, the notice may not discuss the substance of the ballot question or contain an argument for or against the question. OCPF *supra*. at page 4.

In Anderson at 196, the SJC found that the “Commonwealth has an interest in assuring that a dissenting minority of taxpayers is not compelled to finance the expression on an election issue with which they disagree.” OCPF, in response to the above referenced quote has stated that the Supreme Judicial Court indicated that public resources may generally not be used for political purposes. *OCPF -1B-91-01 page 2*, has defined “governmental resources” to include anything that is paid for by taxpayers, e.g., personnel, paper, stationary, and other supplies; offices, meeting rooms and other facilities; copiers, computers, telephones, fax machines; automobiles and other equipment purchased or maintained by the government and a bulk mailing permit.

School committee members and relevant school officials should become familiar with, at least, the following Interpretive Bulletins OCPF-IB-92-02, Activities of Public Officials in Support of or Opposition to Ballot Questions and OCPF-IB-91-01 The Use of Governmental Resources for Political Purposes as found on the website of the Commonwealth of Mass. Office of Campaign & Political Finance. Both of these bulletins have recently been revised by OCPF. Also, the Massachusetts Conflict of Interest Law, M.G.L.c.268 A, restricts public employees’ use of governmental resources, and this statute is enforced by the Ethics Commission. A school committee, pursuant to the Ethics Advisory may vote to take a position on a ballot question, and issue an official statement reporting that position. The school committee may also use any means by which such actions are usually reported including on websites and local access cable television to distribute factual information about their position. Please visit the Massachusetts Ethics Commission website particularly Advisory 11-1 Public Employee Political Activity for further information. **Most importantly, I strongly recommend that prior to engaging in the above referenced matters, which include many traps for the unwary, you seek the advice of your local counsel.**

Lifetime Achievement and All-State School Committee Award Winners Announced

On Friday, November 4 at the annual joint conference Life Member/Leadership Awards banquet, the following MASC members will be recognized for their contributions to the Association and to their students and school communities.

LIFETIME ACHIEVEMENT

Judith Fenwick, Falmouth
Carolyn Greene, Mt. Greylock Regional
Victor Knust Graichen, Tri-County Reg. Voc. Tech.
John Kahn, South Middlesex Reg. Voc. Tech.
Paul Jennings, Greater Fall River Reg. Voc. Tech.
Barbara Grondine, Greater Lawrence Reg. Voc. Tech.
Susan McSweeney, Whitman-Hanson Regional
Beverley Lord, Foxborough
Rita Ribeiro, Greater New Bedford Reg. Voc. Tech.
Michael Bower, Framingham
David Katseff, Dighton-Rehoboth Reg.
Ann-marie Martin, King Philip Regional
Wayne McAllister, Southeastern Reg. Voc. Tech. (in memoriam)

ALL-STATE SCHOOL COMMITTEE

Division I: **Melissa Teixeira**, Essex Reg. Voc. Tech./Gloucester
Division II: **Margaret Driscoll**, Melrose
Division III: **Laurie Han**, Easton
Division IV: **Peter Stevens**, Fitchburg
Division V: **Theodore Locke**, Southwick-Tolland-Granville Reg.
Division VI: **Kathleen Hall**, Lee
Division VII: **Chris Joyce**, Barnstable
Division VIII: **Frederick Toomey**, Greater New Bedford Reg. Voc. Tech.
Division IX: **Patricia Capano**, Lynn
Minority Caucus: **Mildred Lefebvre**, Holyoke

SAVE THE DATE

TUESDAY, SEPTEMBER 27
Askwith Forum Debate
"More Charter Schools: The MA Vote and the National Debate"
5:30 – 7:00pm

Harvard University, Longfellow Hall (open to the public)

SATURDAY, OCTOBER 1
MASC Minority
Caucus meeting 9:30am
Assabet Valley Voc. Tech., Marlboro

WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 5
MASC Divisions IV and IX
"Resolutions Clinic" 6:00pm
Memorial School, Fitchburg

TUESDAY, OCTOBER 18
MASC Division III meeting
"Resolutions Clinic" 6:00pm
Boston Taven,
West Bridgewater

WEDNESDAY- SATURDAY
NOVEMBER 2-5
MASC/MASS JOINT
CONFERENCE
Hyannis, **REGISTER NOW**

MASC

Boston, MA 02109
One McKinley Square

Massachusetts Association of School Committees