

## Massachusetts Association of School Committees

### Looking ahead to FY25

*As we close our calendar year, it is time to look ahead to our next fiscal year; though fiscal year 2025 won't begin until July of next year, Governor Healey will file her proposed budget next month.*

MASC would call to the attention of members the following four items in planning for next year.

#### **ESSER is ending.**

As school committee members are aware, all ESSER funding remaining must be committed by September of 2024. Thus districts have only the first quarter of FY25 to complete the commitment of any remaining ESSER III dollars.

Department of Elementary and Secondary Education CFO Bill Bell, in his monthly reports to the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education, has consistently noted that districts are on track to complete their spending as federally required.

Districts have made a variety of arrangements for readjustment to the end of this revenue line, from the use of Student Opportunity Act-fueled revenue increases, to moving spending to general fund revenue, to concluding one time purchases. This

coming year's budget planning and public deliberation process is an excellent opportunity for districts to ensure their communities are aware of any changes the district will experience as a result of the ending of this revenue line.

#### **State revenue projections are moderate.**

As noted with concern at the December 4 Consensus Revenue Hearing, the tax collections for fiscal year 2024, which is now close to the halfway point, are \$350M below the benchmarks set by the state for this year's budget. There are concerns that the robust growth seen in revenue in recent years is slowing, which will allow for smaller growth in the state budget for fiscal year 2025.

#### **Inflation for most foundation budget categories is projected to be low.**

Inflation for foundation budget categories aside from employee benefits and fixed charges is calculated from the implicit price deflator for state and local governments, which is a measurement of spending by state level and local level government entities. That rate is just over 1%, as set by the Student Opportunity Act.

While the Legislature could choose to set the rate otherwise, as things stand, the increase of the foundation budget, which underlies the calculation of state chapter 70 aid, is projected to be lower than in recent years.

#### **The foundation budget is due to be considered again.**

The Student Opportunity Act states that there shall be a foundation budget review commission "not less than every 10 years." 2024 will mark five years from the last revision. As districts construct budgets for FY25, committee members might begin to consider the impact of SOA on district budgets, and what is necessary to raise in the next revision.

### DELEGATE ASSEMBLY 2023: REPORT ON ACTIONS TAKEN

MASC's 78th annual meeting was held at the start of the annual conference in Hyannis, Wednesday, November 8. A total of 108 delegates representing school districts across the state were registered and participated in the deliberations.

The meeting was led by MASC President Stacey Rizzo (Revere). The Association's Financial Report was presented by Vice President Jason Fraser (Plympton and Silver Lake Reg.). MASC Executive Director Glenn Koocher and Acting General Counsel Patrick Francomano, Esq. served as Parliamentarian and Legal Counsel for the event.

Approved for Life Membership were: Don Erickson (Bay Path Vocational Technical), Jack Foley (Worcester), and Kim Savery (Plymouth).

Elected to the 2024 MASC Board of Directors were: as President-Elect, Jason Fraser (Plympton and Silver Lake Reg.); as Vice President, Denise Hurst (Springfield); as Secretary-Treasurer, Beverley Griffin-Dunne (Peabody and Essex Tech.).

# LOOKING BACK AT CONFERENCE 2023



Educational and racial equity strategist **Dr. Darnisa Amante-Jackson** led of the Thursday General Session with a compelling quote from noted author/civil rights activist James Baldwin: “Not everything that is faced can be changed, but nothing can be changed until it is faced.” She followed with a challenge to the audience: “Set an intention today. Do you want to face it (equity)? Do you want to take this work outside this room? Do you want to bullhorn the message? Or whisper it? Equity isn’t just about race: it’s not change people fear; they fear loss. People feel attacked by equity.” This fear, she explained, can be summarized in the SCARF threat: **S**tatus (fear of loss of); **C**ertainty (fear of inability to predict/manage the future); **A**utonomy (loss of sense of control over events); **R**elatedness (sense of safety/attachment to others); **F**airness (Need to have time to manage change, and accept that failure is okay).

Increasingly, people are worried about being seen as unimportant, or “canceled.” The best practice in education is creating a sense of belonging for all. “We are in a fight for the liberation of all students. When students feel invested in: seen/heard/centered in the curriculum, they rise to the rigor. Belonging is a multi-year project. Belonging doesn’t show up in MCAS results. Belonging is for the all of us, not the few of us.

Amante-Jackson’s presentation was followed by a panel discussion led by MA Education Secretary **Patrick Tutwiler** along with Brookline Superintendent **Linus Guillory** and Chelmsford School Committee member **Donna Newcomb**, who responded to a series of questions that built on Amante-Jackson’s remarks and challenges: What did they think they knew about DEI and what have learned about themselves in the process of training? How should school leaders collaborate to build a shared purpose moving toward DEI goals? What about their current diversity plan would they do differently knowing what they know now? Newcomb concluded, noting, “school committees aren’t a separate entity: our mission must establish a culture that embraces DEI.”



Former MASC Division II Chair **Marc Terry Esq.** (left), a member of the Ashland School Committee who is currently serving as President of the NSBA Council of School Attorneys, introduced Friday lunch speaker **Francisco Negron, Esq.**, founder and CEO of K12 Counsel, LLC, which provides guidance to school districts on national school law advocacy and policy. Negron presented a comprehensive review of the national school law landscape, including insightful analysis of selected Supreme and Circuit court cases that have, or may have, impact on public education process and direction. The cases touch on recent challenges to IDEA; diversity policies; employee transfer policies; employee religious accommodation, and the implications—and pitfalls—of social media for school districts. Negron shared insights into the court decisions and opinions presented by the justices, and suggested future challenges and practical takeaways. He generously allowed MASC to post his instructive, detailed presentation on the website: [www.masc.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/11/Friday-session-Supreme-Court.pdf](http://www.masc.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/11/Friday-session-Supreme-Court.pdf)



At the Friday Life Member/Leadership Banquet, the Board and attendees gave a standing ovation to **incoming President Mildred Lefebvre** of Holyoke (far right) following her inspired remarks recounting her journey to that moment. Thanking **2023 President Stacey Rizzo** of Revere (near right) Lefebvre noted “we both represent cities with diverse populations, lots of issues and many challenges. You led with a fierce determination to support students, families and educators. I intend to follow your example. Lefebvre recalled her circuitous path to the MASC Presidency: “I never thought I would be in this role. My mother is Cuban; my father, Puerto Rican. My perception was that MA school leaders didn’t look like me—they didn’t come from my culture or background. But my family always instilled in me the value of hard work, ethics, and the importance of giving voice and fight for what you believe in. Those values empowered me to become an advocate for myself and my family, and as a school committee member I have tried to be a voice for those who fear their voices didn’t matter or were dismissed. I want our students who look like me to know that they can be empowered to reach their goals, no matter how impossible that might seem. This one-time high school dropout is now the President of MASC. We can be there at the top. Si podemos.”

Lefebvre also thanked the legion of family, friends, and colleagues who have encouraged and supported her, and been role models as she went back to school for nursing, becoming a first-generation college graduate and advocate for her community and families who faced the same struggles she did. “Together, as well look to the challenges facing us in the year ahead, it will be a priority of mine to get our disadvantaged, low-income districts such as Holyoke, Lawrence and Southbridge out of state receivership. We cannot have bureaucrats dozens of miles away making judgments for people who can make good decisions for themselves. Who better knows their community needs than those who have been elected?”

**MASS President Barbara Malkas**, Superintendent, North Adams, welcomed attendees to the conference at the Wednesday Keynote dinner. Her remarks reflected on the stresses currently facing school leaders, as superintendents and school committees confront increasingly volatile, politically driven issues and sensibilities that threaten effective collaborative district leadership. Misinformation, she noted, can be corrected, but disinformation, “the purposeful and intentional provision of a false narrative to create hostility and anxiety just to win points has gained momentum.” Malkas further noted the frequent turnover of school leaders, burning out under the stress of discord, but she remains hopeful: “most school committee members and superintendents want to serve their communities and districts in the best way possible. When students remain the focus of your decision-making, rather than issues of the adults or politically motivated diversions, only then can school leaders collaborate to do the work necessary to achieve success.”



## Conference 2023



Members of COSCAP (Council of School Committee Administrative Personnel) held their annual day-long professional development program on Thursday during the conference. Sessions focused on goal-setting/prioritizing/work-life balance; Listserv FAQs/best practices; and Google Deep Dive.



**Justin Reich**, associate professor of digital media at MIT and director of its Teaching Systems Lab, spoke at the Friday General Session to a concern that has been headlining education reports over the past year: the impact of Artificial Intelligence (AI) on teaching and learning. Why, he asked, should we care about AI in schools and what does it mean for school leaders and policymakers? Key to remember, according to Reich: experts in the field don't fully understand AI. We don't quite know how this thing works, but we do know computers aren't human. They don't generate text like humans. They can be programmed to mimic human language, but they don't understand words and sentences. Given a sequence of words, AI can predict what the next word should be, over and over, until a sentence/paragraph/more is produced. We need to care because this new technology will alter the working world as we know it and we need to prepare students for this new reality, and we need to help teachers use these new tools to teach. Students will also need to learn how to navigate a landscape that is flooded with machine-generated text and videos and develop the skills to separate what is real and what is junk. Reich also addressed the concern about students using AI to bypass real understanding and learning. Reich reminded attendees that students have been doing that forever: "remember Cliff and Monarch Notes? Calculators? Google? Encyclopedias? We need to plan for how disciplines are changing in the face of new technologies; how to best incorporate AI into teaching practices; and how to deal with an internet flooded with AI junk.

## DELEGATE ASSEMBLY 2023 continued from page 1

Mildred Lefebvre (Holyoke) who is the 2023 President-Elect becomes President on January 1, 2024.

Current President Stacey Rizzo (Revere) becomes Immediate Past President at the same time.

Following are the actions taken on the eight proposed resolutions, as well as on the proposed amendment to the MASC By-Laws. The full texts of the resolutions and proposed amendment are printed in the 2023 Delegate Manual and posted on the MASC website.

In the interest of expediting discussion and allowing more time for resolutions of a more controversial nature, a special procedural action was adopted that allowed delegates to vote on resolutions considered non-controversial as a group. Each resolution was presented and delegates identified those that they wished "held" for further discussion. Those resolutions not held, would be voted and approved as a single slate.

This year, all but one of the resolutions (Resolution 2: Regarding Investigations and Recommendations for Transportation Bidding Procedures) were held for further discussion.

### **RESOLUTION 2 passed, as presented, without debate, on a voice vote.**

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Following are the actions taken on the seven remaining resolutions that the delegates held for in-depth discussion.

### **RESOLUTION 1: FULL, STABLE FUNDING FOR METCO**

*(Sponsored by the Arlington School Committee)*

BE IT RESOLVED that the Massachusetts Association of School Committees calls upon the Governor and the Legislature to create a stable funding structure to support METCO and its partner districts that fully funds the support provided by METCO, and the cost of providing services delivered by METCO's partner districts.

The resolution passed, as presented, on a vote of 92-3, with no abstentions.

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### **RESOLUTION 3: REGIONAL TRANSPORTATION**

*(Sponsored by the Hampden-Wilbraham Regional School Committee)*

BE IT RESOLVED that in such case where a pupil resides greater than one and one-half mile from the school of attendance, measured by a commonly traveled route, and the commonwealth reimbursement does not fully cover the amounts expended for such transportation, the regional school district may allow pupils to opt out of such transportation or may charge a fee that in aggregate may not exceed the differential between the amounts expended for furnishing transportation and the commonwealth reimbursement.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the MASC encourage the Legislature to modify M.G.L. Title XII c. 71, § 16C, with the aforementioned proposed language (or alternative and re-move the period) to provide regional districts the ability if so desired to charge a transportation fee that in aggregate can-not exceed the differential between the and that the Commonwealth reimbursement and the regional school district transportation expense for any pupil that resides greater than one and one-half mile from the school of attendance measured by a commonly traveled route. Pupils may opt out of

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transportation and not be subject to a transportation fee. Following much discussion, the resolution failed to pass on a vote of 53 (opposed) to 27 (in favor). There were 12 abstentions.

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**RESOLUTION 4: DIVERSITY, EQUITY, AND INCLUSION**

*(Submitted by Division X; amended by the Resolutions Committee)*

BE IT RESOLVED that MASC recommends that all districts adopt the position of DEI coordinator to work towards an anti-racist school system.

After much vigorous discussion and several failed amendments, the assembly voted to table the resolution on a vote of 47 (in favor) and 34 (opposed).

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**RESOLUTION 5: MA SCHOOL BUILDING AUTHORITY**

*(Submitted by the Wachusett Regional School Committee)*

BE IT RESOLVED that the Massachusetts Association of School Committees calls upon the Massachusetts Legislature to amend MGL ch.70B, section 7 by removing the \$1,200,000,00 cap; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Massachusetts Association of School Committees calls upon the Massachusetts School Building Authority to reinstate the Accelerated Repair program for 2024 applications; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Massachusetts Association of School Committees calls upon the Massachusetts Legislature to allow public preschools to be included in the Accelerated Repair Program and Core Program.

After much discussion, including debate of a proposed amendment from Worcester that failed to pass, the resolution passed as presented although the language was updated to reflect the increase of the cap from \$800,000,000 to \$1,200,000,000.

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**RESOLUTION 6: SCHOOL BUS STOP ARM SURVEILLANCE ACT AND ENFORCEMENT AND PENALTIES**

*(Submitted by the Peabody and Marlboro School Committees)*

BE IT RESOLVED that the Massachusetts Association of School Committees calls on the Massachusetts Legislature to enact legislation to pass into law the ability for cities and towns to install on all school buses live digital video detection monitoring systems for the purpose of enforcing violations against the owner of a motor vehicle whose vehicle failed to stop for a school bus when required to do so by law.

AND BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Massachusetts Association of School Committees calls on the Massachusetts Legislature to enact legislation raising the fine for passing a stopped school bus to a significant schedule of fines as penalty whether witnessed by a police officer or recorded by a digital video detection monitoring system.

After considerable debate, a motion was made to table the resolution.

The resolution was tabled on a voice vote.

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**RESOLUTION 7: RELATED TO MCAS**

*(Submitted by the Framingham School Committee)*

BE IT RESOLVED:

- that MASC urges Massachusetts to develop a wider, more consensus-built strategy for an evaluation system with meaningful input from legitimate stakeholders.
- that MASC urges the state Legislature to launch a comprehensive evaluation to investigate the extent of biases pertaining to MCAS testing and make these results public.
- that MASC urges Massachusetts to enact a moratorium on MCAS testing effective immediately.
- that MASC urges Massachusetts to develop an alternative to the high-stakes MCAS tests.

A motion was made to table this resolution.

The resolution was tabled on a voice vote.

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**RESOLUTION 8: SAFE STORAGE OF FIREARMS**

*(Submitted by the Framingham School Committee)*

BE IT RESOLVED that MASC recommends all districts to urge their Superintendent and staff to create an appropriate communication to parents and guardians that explains the importance of secure firearm storage to protect children and teens from unauthorized access to unsecured firearms, and their legal obligations consistent with Massachusetts safe storage law.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that MASC urges other communities to work with their local law enforcement agencies, health agencies and non-profit organizations to collaborate and increase efforts to inform District parents and guardians of their obligations regarding secure storage of firearms in their homes and vehicles. Following discussion, a motion was made to table the resolution.

The resolution was tabled on a voice vote.

# Policy Newsletter

In MASC's ongoing review of existing policies, we have found that the policies regarding technology are in need of additions and updates. Many of these changes reflect the expanded use of technology both inside and outside the classroom. Several better align policies with their appropriate coding. As part of the review process, we consulted legal counsel so as to ensure the policies were in line with recent legal decisions and direction.

Please see specifics for each policy below. As always, should you have questions, please get in touch with your field director or other MASC staff.

## **BHE: USE OF ELECTRONIC MESSAGING BY SCHOOL COMMITTEE MEMBERS**

This policy has been updated to reflect best practice that all committee members have and use district email addresses, which are required to be archived as public records. We have also eliminated archaic language, and updated the cross reference.

## **EHAA: DISTRICT SECURITY RELATING TO TECHNOLOGY (new policy)**

This new policy provides a foundation for administrative procedure and practice so as to ensure information which is stored and accessed on district technology is appropriately protected.

## **EHB: DATA AND RECORDS RETENTION (new policy)**

This new policy addresses a gap in recommended policy regarding retention of records, including electronic communication by public officials.

## **GBEE: PERSONNEL USE OF TECHNOLOGY (new policy)**

This new policy outlines the responsibilities of district personnel in their use of technology; it is expected that this will provide a foundation for further administrative procedure.

## **IJND: ACCESS TO DIGITAL RESOURCES**

This redrafted policy moves much of the language to more appropriate locations within section of IJN-coded policies.

## **IJNDB: (renamed) USE OF TECHNOLOGY IN INSTRUCTION**

This redrafted policy moves much of the language to more appropriate locations within IJ, and refocuses the policy on instruction.

## **IJNCD: (renamed) ACCEPTABLE USE OF DIGITAL RESOURCES**

This redrafted policy provides the appropriate location for language from the above policies that is still necessary, while removing outdated language.

## **JICJ: STUDENT USE OF TECHNOLOGY IN SCHOOL (new policy)**

This new policy outlines the vision and responsibilities of student use of technology; it is expected that this will be the foundation of further administrative procedure.

## **KCD: COMMUNITY USE OF DIGITAL RESOURCES (new policy)**

This new policy recognizes that digital resources, most notably public wifi, are now a common public resource of school, outlining appropriate considerations.

## **KDCB: DISTRICT WEBSITE AND SOCIAL MEDIA (new policy)**

This new policy recognizes that districts and schools commonly have both websites and social media pages, and outlines best practice, including public comments on such sites.

# Dates to Remember

The MASC 2024 pocket calendar is at the printer and will be mailed to members early next week. For new members looking to schedule their **Charting the Course training, 2024 dates/locations are listed below.**

January 20: Hopkinton  
March 9: Chicopee  
May 4: Hanover (South Shore Voc. Tech.)  
May 18: Gardner  
June 8: Harwich (Cape Cod Voc. Tech.)  
June 22: Burlington  
September 21: Plymouth South High School  
October 5: Adams

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**May 6: MASC Day on the Hill, Boston**

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### PROPOSAL TO AMEND THE MASC BY-LAWS *(Submitted by the MASC Legislative Committee)*

IT WAS PROPOSED THAT the following paragraph be added after the final sentence of By-Laws Article IX, Section 1.

Resolutions will expire at the conclusion of the Delegate Assembly three years after their adoption. The MASC Legislative Committee shall provide a list of expiring resolutions to the membership no later than March 1st of the year in which they expire. Readoption of an expiring resolution can be accomplished under the method proscribed in ARTICLE IX, section 1.

The amendment to the By-Laws, Article IX, Section 1, was approved as proposed.

