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# UPDATE...

## MSBA Resolutions



The Maine School Boards Association Delegate Assembly will meet at Fall Conference on Thursday, Oct. 23, at 2:20 p.m., and consider the following resolutions:

### Special Resolution

#### 4.36 Support for Common Core

With progress underway to fully implement the Common Core standards in English Language Arts and math, the Maine School Boards Association supports moving forward with those standards and opposes efforts to slow down or block their implementation. Maine was already ahead of many states with its support of rigorous standards under the system of Learning Results. Implementing the Common Core is a logical progression in our commitment to better prepare students for higher education and work after high school.

#### Rationale

Much of the effort to block the Common Core here in Maine and across the nation is based on unfounded fears. Some opponents claim the standards are part of a plot to nationalize education. Others fear the Common Core will lead to high-stakes tests that will be used unfairly to evaluate teachers and students. The truth is Maine has had high standards for some time, and the Common Core simply raises the bar to ensure all students have the skills and knowledge necessary to succeed upon graduation. How we use those standards is up to us, but we shouldn't stall efforts to improve curriculum or hold educators and students more accountable.

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## Countdown begins for 41st Annual MSMA Fall Conference

School board members and superintendents will descend on the Augusta Civic Center next Thursday and Friday, Oct. 23 and 24, for MSMA's Fall Conference, where in addition to 50 professional development clinics, school leaders will have a chance to meet, talk and share ideas.

To help you plan in advance which clinics to attend, the conference schedule is now online at [www.msmaweb.com](http://www.msmaweb.com), or check out the new MSMA application to download the conference schedule onto your smart phones and tablets. (Look at your registration packet for instructions.)

Just a reminder that the first keynote of the conference, Ken Kay of EdLeader21, will speak Thursday morning, starting at 9 a.m., on how school leaders can envision and bring about positive change in their districts.

And, there will be a reception starting at 4:30 p.m. on Thursday, with the Josh Hatfield Jazz Trio, great door prizes donated by conference exhibitors and refreshments. Due to the big turnout last year, the reception is being held in the more spacious Fort Western Room. Plan on attending.

## Vote unanimous to move second virtual forward

The proposed Maine Virtual Academy, affiliated with the national K-12 corporation, is one step closer to opening for business in Maine after the Charter School Commission on Oct. 15 voted unanimously to move the proposal to the public hearing phase.

That hearing is scheduled for Oct. 27 at Central Maine Community College in Auburn, following a public interview with the applicants. The hearing, where testimony from the public can be given, will run from 11:45 a.m. to 1 p.m.

The full commission will vote Nov. 13 on whether to grant Maine Virtual Academy a charter to open in September of 2015. That decision requires a two-thirds majority or five

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**Proposed Resolutions**

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**Special Resolution****4.37 Local Control of Student Transfers**

The Maine School Boards Association believes the decision to grant or deny a student transfer request should be made locally by the two superintendents involved and not be subject to an override at the state level. We support legislation that says if two superintendents agree, a student transfer is approved. If they don't, it is denied, and the state should not become involved. This would build on legislation approved in 2013 that says a student can only be transferred to a district that tuitions its students to a town academy, if the two superintendents agree, with no appeal available at the state level.

**Rationale**

Requests for student transfers are made for many reasons, with the underlying principle that the transfer should be in the student's best interest. Superintendents approve more than 90 percent of the requests that cross their desks. The state in recent years injected itself in the process and began overriding that small percentage of denials. People sitting in Augusta do not understand what's happening in individual schools districts or the rationale behind approval or denial of a transfer request. The state's involvement has been heavy handed and interferes with local control of our school districts.

**Special Resolution****4.38 Charter School Funding**

The Maine School Boards Association supports changing the way charter schools are funded so no one district is penalized simply because of its proximity to a charter school. Instead of requiring the home district to forward funding for each student that enrolls in a charter school, legislation has been proposed that would have the state pay the entire per-pupil cost. The local share of that per-pupil cost would essentially be spread over all districts in the state. MSBA supports this cost-sharing, while continuing to advocate for increased state funding to help cover the cost of charter schools.

**Rationale**

Public schools will be sending more than \$5 million in state and local funds to charter schools in the coming year – a price tag that will continue grow as more charter schools are approved. That money represents the state and local per-pupil costs as determined by the Essential Programs and Services school funding formula. The current funding process puts an unfair burden on districts that have charters schools in close proximity. This proposal would have the state pay not only its portion, but the local share as well. All districts in the state, in essence, would help pick up the local share, easing the burden on individual districts.

**NSBA lobbies for flexibility on school lunch regulations**

The National School Boards Association (NSBA) has issued a [press release](#) calling for flexibility and relief from the U.S. Congress and the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) to address the unintended consequences of onerous requirements for federal school meal programs in the Healthy, Hunger-Free Kids Act.

“As we celebrate National School Lunch Week, we must address the visible realities of complying with school nutrition requirements,” said NSBA Executive Director Thomas J. Gentzel. “Our poll shows that school leaders are in favor of good nutrition for children but concerned with the unintended consequences of the current federal regulations. Trays of uneaten cafeteria food thrown in the trash, hungry kids, and struggling school food-service programs are the practical realities many school districts and students face.”

NSBA's recent survey of school leaders shows that since that law went into effect in 2010, 83.7 percent of school districts saw an increase in plate waste, 81.8 percent had an increase in cost, and 76.5 percent saw a decrease in participation by students.

To address the issues, 75 percent of school leaders encourage an increase in federal funding for school districts to comply with the new standards and 60.3 percent support additional flexibility for school districts to improve their ability to provide good nutrition without harm to instruction, personnel, and other school district operations.

NSBA's poll reveals the alarming choices faced by school districts in response to these challenges. Increasing the price of unsubsidized meals, dipping into reserves and other school district funds, delaying investments in equipment, facilities, and other necessities, and reducing staff and hours, are just a few of the alternatives school districts have had to do.

Maine School Management Association, as reported in last month's edition of Update, participated in a round-table discussion in September with staff from Senator Angus King's Augusta office and food service directors from around the state to talk about the need for flexibility. U.S. Department of Agriculture Deputy Under Secretary Janey Thornton participated in the meeting, which was organized by King's Senior Policy Advisor, Marge Kilkelly, a food service director herself in the 1980s in Boothbay.

Sen. King's office is looking at several avenues for relief, including: delaying further restrictions on a la carte lines; allowing a taste option for students instead of taking the full serving of fruits and vegetables; looking at ways to help rural schools pay for higher food costs; and, creating a School Nutrition Advisory Committee to consult with the USDA.

## MSMA Political Forums



Maine School Management Association sponsored legislative forums in nine different regions across the state in September bringing together school board members, superintendents and legislative candidates to talk about key issues facing public education prior to Election Day.

The forums brought candidates into our schools – three CTE centers, a middle school, high schools and a Community College – and generated lively discussion. The topics discussed included properly funding public education; local control of educational policy; slowing the growth of charter schools and changing the way they are funded so no one district is hard hit by the loss of local funds; and, making sure all students, regardless of their ZIP code, have access to quality teachers and curricula.



Maine School Management Association sponsored the forums for the first time this year to give potential legislators background on the positions held by the Maine School Boards Association and Maine School Superintendents Association, which are under the MSMA umbrella. All candidates who attended received the MSMA “Education Priorities for the 127 Legislature” package and those who could not attend were mailed a copy.

To see a slide show of the forums, which were held in Aroostook County, Washington County, Hancock County, the Penquis Region, Western Maine, the Mid-Coast, Kennebec Valley, Cumberland County and York County, click on this link:

[Forum Slides](#)



**Vote unanimous**  
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members of the seven-member commission. When Maine Virtual Academy was last up for a vote in March of this year, it failed to get two-thirds support.

If Maine Virtual Academy is approved, it will be the second virtual charter school in Maine. Maine’s first virtual charter, Connections Academy, opened in September, pulling 281 students from 86 school districts. State and local funding for charter schools comes from the home district and is estimated at \$8,000 to \$9,000 per student.

Both Connections Academy and Maine Virtual Academy would target the same audience of students in grades 7 through 12.

The commission also voted unanimously against moving two other charter school applications forward – Acadia Academy, proposed by the Margaret Murphy Center for Children, a special purpose school in Lewiston, and Inspire ME Academy, a grades 4-6 school proposed in the Sanford area.

Both proposed schools were told they can re-apply in the next round of reviews in 2015.



## More forum photos...



If you have questions about any articles in this newsletter or suggestions for improving this publication, let us know.

You can contact me, MSBA Executive Director, Connie Brown. [cbrown@msmaweb.com](mailto:cbrown@msmaweb.com)