

Becky Fles, *President, MSAD 11*  
James Grant, *President-Elect, Brunswick*  
Maureen King, *Vice President, RSU 21*  
Dale A. Douglass, *Executive Director, [ddouglass@msmaweb.com](mailto:ddouglass@msmaweb.com)*  
Elaine M. Tomaszewski, *Acting Deputy Executive Director, [etomaszewski@msmaweb.com](mailto:etomaszewski@msmaweb.com)*  
Victoria A. Wallack, *Director of Communications & Government Relations, [vwallack@msmaweb.com](mailto:vwallack@msmaweb.com)*

# UPDATE...

March 2017

## Majority on Education Committee keep system administration in budget

The Education Committee has voted 8-3 against the governor's plan to eliminate the allocation for system administration as part of the K-12 portion of the state budget, with similar divided votes on what constitutes the state share of funding education.

The 8-3 vote on system administration included all three Senators on the Education Committee – Chairman Sen. Brian Langley, R-Hancock, Sen. Rebecca Millett, D-Cumberland, and Sen. Joyce Maker, R-Washington, and House Democrats.

The budget review began with unanimity around the need for the state to support 55 percent of the cost of education, but quickly divided along party lines among House members on the committee.

At issue is what constitutes state share.

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## Rep. Martin calls for statewide GPA comparisons

Rep. John Martin, a longtime member of the Appropriations Committee, is calling on lawmakers to put pressure on the Department of Education to produce a statewide spreadsheet that shows winners and losers of state aid, cautioning some legislators will be "running for cover" when the numbers come out.

"What people care about is 'what are we getting?' Now we're going to tell them 'you're getting less money than you're now getting'. I'm not going home with that."

Martin, D-Eagle Lake, was referring to the statewide spreadsheet that is typically put together by the DOE almost immediately after individual school districts are informed about how much state aid they will be getting. Individual numbers went out to districts in mid-February, but the department has said it has too much work right now to do the statewide sheet.

"Legislators will live or die by the spreadsheet," Martin said.

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## Hasson named DOE Commissioner

Former school superintendent, Dr. Robert Hasson, received unanimous support from the Education Committee to be the next education commissioner following a nomination hearing where he outlined his priorities for the Department of Education and Maine's public schools.

His title became official on March 30 with a unanimous vote of the Senate.



Commissioner Robert Hasson with policy advisor, Aaron Chadbourne

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## Tomaszewski resigns position



Elaine Tomaszewski, MSMA's Acting Deputy Executive Director has announced her resignation from employment at MSMA effective May 1, 2017. Elaine joined the MSMA Executive Team in February 2013, as Associate Executive Director and in November 2015 was appointed to serve as the Acting Deputy Executive Director. In that capacity, she has also served as the Acting Executive

Director for the Maine School Superintendents Association (MSSA).

She has been very active on behalf of MSBA and MSSA in a variety of capacities including being one of the lead testers at the Maine Legislature. She also had primary responsibility for the MSMA Annual Fall Conference as well as the Annual MSSA Conference and Winter Convocation.

Prior to joining the MSMA staff, Elaine served as superintendent of schools in the Wells-Ogunquit CSD, Freeport School Department, MSAD 62, and Union 7 (Saco/Dayton).

Dale Douglass, Executive Director of MSMA, on behalf of the governing boards of MSBA and MSSA, expressed appreciation for her four plus years of service and wished her success in her future endeavors.

## Charter School funding grows amid questions

State aid going out to charter schools is going up by \$4.6 million next year, or just under 25 percent, fueled by projected enrollment increases. Unlike regular public schools, charter schools get to use estimated enrollment as part of their subsidy calculation.

Testimony by the Maine School Superintendents Association raised concerns about two of those projected enrollment hikes during a hearing on the bill regarding the effectiveness and success of Maine charter schools.

Two recent cases illustrated their concerns. They include:

On Dec. 6, the Maine Charter School Commission announced it had unanimously approved the expansion of the Cornville Elementary Charter School to include a high school at a separate location and pre-kindergarten program. The expansion did not go through the review process required to start a charter school outlined in state law, but rather was done by amending Cornville's original charter.

A day later the Department of Education released statewide test scores in English and math, showing Cornville Elementary was in the bottom 10 districts in the state in terms of the percent of students at or above grade level. Cornville was 30.7 percent in English and just under 18 percent in Math.

On Jan. 3, the Maine Charter School Commission released a 90-day review of the Snow Pond Arts Academy charter school that showed the academy was relying totally on virtual learning for its non-arts related classes versus the blended learning required in its contract. It also showed that special education services weren't being provided due to the resignation of staff; and, the school was running a deficit.

Despite those issues, Snow Pond is projecting an enrollment increase of 100 students next school year, generating a state General Purpose Aid subsidy of \$1,967,461 or roughly \$900,000 more than it is getting today.

### Charter School State Subsidy

	2018	2017	Increase
Acadia Academy	\$1,564,125	\$1,139,443	\$424,682
Baxter Academy	\$3,976,180	\$3,392,619	\$583,561
Cornville Regional	\$2,429,564	\$1,370,671	\$1,058,893
Fiddlehead	\$1,440,604	\$1,254,932	\$185,672
Harpwell	\$2,790,246	\$2,310,544	\$479,702
MEANS	\$1,847,781	\$1,597,063	\$250,718
Maine Connections	\$3,772,948	\$3,657,373	\$115,575
Maine Virtual	\$3,656,835	\$3,046,235	\$610,600
Snow Pond	\$1,967,461	\$1,034,196	\$933,265
TOTALS:	\$23,445,744	\$18,803,076	\$4,642,668



MSBA Pres. Becky Fles and Vice President Maureen King at NSBA Delegate Assembly.

### Hasson named

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Hasson said he will have a “laser like focus” on improving student achievement at all grade levels, and wants the DOE to become a resource for schools rather than a regulatory agency with a “gotcha” mentality on whether reports have been filled out correctly.

He also spoke about changing administrative hierarchy in schools and bringing student and teacher voices to the forefront. He used as an example the teacher-led Reiche school in Portland.

“I have to be careful with this since I am management,” Hasson said, but he supports a “much flatter organization...rather than the sit and get” model. That will be his approach to running the DOE as well, he said, where “we don’t talk even if the person is in the next pod or the next cubicle.”

He also outlined some broad goals for Maine public education:

- Focusing on students who are disadvantaged
- Improving schools with the lowest performance in English and math
- Expanding Career and Technical Education, doubling current enrollment
- Improving teacher salaries

Aaron Chadbourne, a senior policy advisor to Gov. LePage, nominated Hasson at the nomination hearing.

“Bob Hasson is fervent about acting in the best interest of students,” Chadbourne said. “The governor has authorized him to not only think outside of the box, but disregard the box entirely.”

Hasson, who has been serving as acting commissioner since November of 2016, is a former teacher, principal and served as superintendent of MSAD 51 (Cumberland/North Yarmouth) from 1993 to 2013 and as the Deputy Executive Director of the Maine School Management Association from 2013 to 2015 where he was the Executive Director of the Maine School Superintendents Association. Hasson holds a BS in Elementary Education from Saint Joseph’s College, a M.Ed. in Special Education from Fitchburg State University and a Doctorate in Education from Boston College.

# School Leadership

## Part 1: Bringing the Standards to Life

### Reflections and conversations for school board members and administrative teams

Engaging in conversation about a set of standards can provide insight into the role of effective school board members. Standards provide information that can lead to a deeper understanding of the role of board members. However, it is through the thoughtful reflection and conversation with fellow board members and administrative teams that the standards can come to life for a district and become an essential set of common understandings that guide the work of the district.

The Iowa Association of School Boards (IASB) developed the Iowa Standards for Effective School Boards to meet the needs of Iowa school boards engaging in this work. These standards and corresponding reflection questions can serve as an example as other states engage in similar work. The work of developing the standards began with a study of research on effective school boards, review of standards statements from other states, Iowa law and board practices according to Lisa Bartusek, IASB executive director.

A set of draft standards was taken to membership and through a vetting process by leadership groups, focus groups with board members and superintendents, along with a statewide survey of board members and superintendents, extensive feedback from the field was used to finalize the standards. The reflection questions were then aligned to the key points under each standard and are offered here as a starting place for important conversations that can help to unite boards and administrative teams around the support of student success.

#### STANDARDS FOR EFFECTIVE SCHOOL BOARDS

In pursuit of world-class education that results in high achievement for all Iowa students, effective school boards commit to these standards and competencies:

##### #1 Operate as a visionary governance team in partnership with the superintendent.

**Vision and Planning** – Develops a shared vision and plans for student achievement that reflects common values and core beliefs of the school community.

- To what degree has the vision of the district been developed as a shared set of important concepts that reflect the values and beliefs of district stakeholders?
- What additional steps might be taken to more fully include key stakeholders in the development and implementation of the district vision and strategic planning efforts?

**Operating Practices** – Uses productive practices for its own operations and development.

- What practices has the board implemented to support productive operations?
- What additional practices might be put in place to lead to increased productiveness of board operations?
- What practices are currently in place that distract from the productiveness of board operations?
- How might the board replace those practices with more productive practices?
- What practices has the board implemented to support member development?
- How would you characterize the engagement of the board in member development?
- What additional practices might be put in place to lead to the most effective and most inclusive member development?

**Decision-Making** – Ensures board decisions are based on data and deliberation.

- What does the board see as the value of the use of data and deliberation in decision-making?
- What does the board see as the challenge of the use of data and deliberation in decision-making?
- To what degree are board decisions currently based on data?
- What steps might be taken to more fully incorporate the use of data in decision-making?

**Board/Superintendent Relations** – Cultivates a strong relationship and partnership with the superintendent, based on clear expectations and accountability.

- To what extent is there clarity of expectation and accountability in the Board-superintendent partnership?
- What steps might support additional clarity and accountability in the partnership?
- What actions support the development of a strong relationship and partnership?
- What actions detract from the development of a strong relationship and partnership?

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**Bringing the Standards to Life**

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**#2 Provide effective leadership for quality instruction and high, equitable student learning.**

**Clear Expectations** – Sets and communicates high expectations for student learning with clear goals and a focus on strengthening instruction.

- To what extent are the current goals clear and focused on student learning and instruction?
- What revisions might be needed to more fully focus on student learning and instruction?

**Conditions for Success** – Supports conditions for success through board actions and decisions.

- How does the board define “conditions for success”?
- What actions and decisions does the board currently engage in to support conditions for success?
- What additional actions might be considered to more fully support conditions for success?

**Accountability** – Holds the system accountable to reach student learning goals.

- What measures are in place to track student learning goals?
- How is the data collected and reported?
- What actions does the board take to hold the system accountable for reaching student learning goals?
- What actions does the board take to address system needs when student learning goals are not met?

**Collective Commitment** – Builds the collective commitment of community and staff to achieve the student learning goals.

- How is collective commitment of the community and staff defined?
- How is collective commitment of the community and staff measured?
- What actions does the board take to increase collective commitment of the community and staff?
- How are the results of the actions evaluated for effectiveness?

**Team Learning** – Learns together as a whole team to inform decision-making around the student learning goals.

- What learning opportunities are offered to the board to support the work of decision-making around student learning goals?
- To what extent does the board actively engage in the learning opportunities?
- What additional learning opportunities would be helpful in supporting the collective learning of the board?

*Part 2 of this article will be published in the April 2017 issue of the Update.*

*-American School Board Journal, 4/2017, by Denise Schares*

**Majority on Education Committee**

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State Rep. Trey Stewart, R-Presque Isle, presented a plan that included the state’s payments of the unfunded liability for teacher retirement costs worth just under \$173 million and \$12 million for operating costs in the Department of Education as part of the state’s contribution to K-12. That coupled with the governor’s proposal to no longer recognize system administration as part of education costs, brought state share to around 55 percent.

Sen. Millett countered with a plan that rejected all policy changes in the governor’s biennial budget; restored system administration; and, essentially calls on the state to fund 55 percent of the cost of education as defined by the Essential Programs and Services funding formula. The unfunded liability is not part of EPS. Her plan was the one adopted as the majority report.

The Education Committee’s recommendations were presented on March 29 to the Appropriations Committee, which is charged with crafting a final budget plan for the full Legislature’s consideration. There is no estimate at this time on when the budget will be voted out of that committee.

**Questions on Question 2**

A key factor on how much school districts will be receiving and when is what the Legislature decides to do with Question 2, which voters approved in November. It was designed to raise an estimated \$160 million for public education through a 3 percent income-tax surcharge to bring the state share to 55 percent – a mandate passed by voters in another referendum more than a decade ago.

The administration and Republican legislators have made it clear their goal is to get rid of that surcharge, which effectively taxes income above \$200,000 at 10.15 percent. Opponents of the tax say it will give Maine the second highest rate in the country and discourage businesses and high-earning professionals from moving to or staying in Maine.

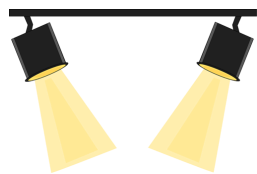
While the biennial budget deliberations are going on in the Appropriations Committee, the debates on the surcharge are going on in the Taxation Committee, which has not yet made a recommendation.

That committee has heard numerous bills designed to deal with Question 2, from raising the money by taxing marijuana sales to outright repeal of the language. In the middle a compromise is expected that will use some combination of sales tax expansions or increases.

Both Democrats and Republicans have acknowledged that voters through Question 2 reaffirmed their support for 55 percent state share.

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## Employee Spotlight

### Meet Vicki Wallack



Vicki Wallack is MSMA's Director of Communications and Government Relations, a job that builds on her years as a newspaper journalist and taps into her love of politics.

Her job includes writing bulletins and more in-depth issue pieces for the associations, covering the Legislature and the Department of Education, providing communication training and advice to school boards and superintendents, researching proposed legislation and advocating

on behalf of public schools.

"I've learned an incredible amount about education law and how schools operate and have gained tremendous respect for the school boards and superintendents who run them. I also have that same respect for the people at MSMA who are dedicated to excellence in their work," Vicki said.

MSMA Executive Director Dale Douglass recalled that when he employed Vicki as MSMA's first Director of Communications in October 2008, he reported that "we have just hired the best education reporter that I have ever met in my entire career in education." He still maintains that opinion today. He goes on to describe Ms. Wallack as "the consummate journalist". "She has extraordinary skill in explaining complex issues in everyday terms, a real challenge with subjects such as Maine school funding formula, school consolidation, charter schools, or student assessment and professional evaluation."

Vicki came to MSMA after being the owner/operator of Maine Statehouse News covering the Maine statehouse including the Maine Department of Education. MSN provided copy to a dozen newspapers in Maine. Before that she was an editor and publisher of daily and weekly newspapers in Greater Boston and Portsmouth, N.H. Vicki holds a bachelor's degree in journalism from Ohio State University and has completed graduate work in Political Science and International Politics.

She lives in an old farm house with her dog, Watson, in Mount Vernon, and also owns the Old Post Office Café in that town – a lakeside restaurant that her late husband helped turn into a locally beloved gathering spot. She does the books, not the cooking, and is grateful for a terrific staff who turn out delicious food.

### Majority on Education Committee

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What is being debated is what constitutes 55 percent.

The Maine Municipal Association, which put the original 55 percent referendum on the ballot, has been consistent that it is 55 percent of Essential Programs and Services. The governor's budget attempts to change that definition by including \$173 million in unfunded liability for teacher retirement and making numerous policy changes in the budget to redefine EPS. One of the most significant is removing system administration from EPS, which artificially reduces the cost of education by \$40 million.

### Timetable

While districts are eager to get final GPA numbers so they can present realistic budgets to voters, there is no indication the state budget will be finalized soon. Defining the cost of education is contentious and figuring out a tax or revenue package to replace the 3 percent surcharge approved in Question 2 has generated marathon hearing sessions.

MSMA sent out a bulletin earlier this month that suggests a warrant article districts can use to give them voter permission to spend state aid that comes in after their local budgets have been passed. To see that guidance, click [here](#).

### Rep. Martin

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"So when the department chooses to do that sheet, you'll be running for cover."

More than half the districts in the state are losing money under the governor's proposed budget. In Aroostook County where Martin lives there are considerable loses. Caribou (RSU 39) is losing just under \$800,000; Fort Kent (MSAD 27) \$585,000; and, Presque Isle (MSAD 1) \$222,000.

The Maine School Superintendents Association (MSSA) and Maine School Boards Association (MSBA) have both called on the DOE to produce the spreadsheet, in written requests and in their budget testimony.

MSSA President Steven Bailey applauded Rep. Martin's candor.

"The spreadsheets have always been critical in the legislative debate about the budget because they point out where there are winners and losers. That information prompts a discussion about whether there is sufficient funding going out to schools. In this year's case, it also sheds light on how policy decisions proposed in the budget are hurting certain districts," Bailey said.

MSBA President Becky Fles said it is the Department of Education's responsibility to make sure everyone understands how the governor's budget proposal affects schools across the state.

"This is state funding and how that money is dispersed should be made clear to everyone since this will be decided by the full Legislature. Some call this spreadsheet politics. We think of it as full disclosure," Fles said.



**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, Dale Douglass. [ddouglass@msmaweb.com](mailto:ddouglass@msmaweb.com)**