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UPDATE..

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Counter budget offers increase school funding

Counter proposals to the governor's budget for K-12 education have been put on the table, with Democrats supporting \$120 million in additional GPA next year and \$200 million the following year. Senate Republicans have countered with \$100 million starting next school year.

In contrast, Gov. LePage's budget gives schools \$10 million less next year, despite a \$17 million increase in special education and a \$7 million hike in the retirement costs school districts must pay for working teachers – both of which are determined at the state level.

What to do about Question 2 is a still a major sticking point among all parties.

Question 2 put a 3 percent tax on income greater than \$200,000 and earmarked it to help the state meet its obligation to pay 55 percent of the cost of education. It passed at the ballot box in November by a narrow margin — 50.4 percent to 49.6 percent.

Democrats based their proposal to raise funding for public education over the biennium on projections the tax would raise \$120 million this year and \$200 million next.

Republicans have vowed not to let that tax remain, saying it would make it harder to attract businesses and higher-paid professionals to the state and penalize people who are here, including those who run their small businesses through their personal incomes taxes.

That divide is a major hurdle in getting bipartisan support for the biennial budget, with Republicans challenged to find replacement revenue if they want to repeal Question 2.

"If you have another proposal, I'm really eager to hear it", said Appropriations Committee member, Sen. Cathleen Breen, D-Cumberland, at an Appropriations Committee work session on Tuesday. "What we heard is they (voters) wanted the state to pick up more of what it costs to educate kids."

That proposal was officially put on the table Wednesday by Senate President Michael Thibodeau, who told the Portland Press Herald (click [here](#) to see story) his party was offering \$100 million each year of the biennium. MSMA had reported

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Supt. Steve Bailey named MSMA Executive Director



AOS 93 Superintendent Steve Bailey, a former teacher, principal and Maine Superintendent of the Year, has been selected to be the new executive director of Maine School Management Association, the service organization for both the Maine School Boards Association and the Maine School Superintendents Association.

Bailey, who has been superintendent of Damariscotta-based AOS 93 since

2011, said in his new position he will continue to work for students through the school boards and superintendents he will represent.

"Schools and school systems serve students. School Boards and superintendents exist to create quality, equitable learning opportunities for all children. MSMA exists to support those school leaders in that important work," Bailey said.

"Our schools need to be vibrant places of learning, exploration and demonstration of competence. Seeing students develop into independent, inquisitive, collaborative and responsible individuals is a goal we all must share and nurture," he said.

Bailey will officially begin his new responsibilities at MSMA in mid-July. Former Executive Director Dale Douglass, who came out of retirement to lead the organization for the past year, will help with the transition.

Bailey, a resident of West Bath, began his education career as a teacher in Veazie at the Jon Graham School and ultimately became that school's principal. He also served as principal in Exeter, N.H., and then in South Portland, where he was honored as a National Distinguished Principal. He served as curriculum director and then assistant superintendent in South Portland, before moving to AOS 93. He was named Superintendent of the Year in 2015.

He has worked with school boards in school unions, municipalities and alternative organization structures (AOSs), including the 29 board members in AOS 93.

MSBA President Becky Fles, chairman of the MSMA's Policy

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MAINE SCHOOL BOARDS ASSOCIATION

Voluntary statewide teacher contract proposed

A bill proposing a statewide teacher contract has been amended into a pilot program, with 38 districts invited to participate based on criteria developed by the Department of Education.

L.D. 864, sponsored on behalf of the DOE by Rep. Matthew Pouliot, R-Augusta, received a divided vote in the Education Committee that broke along party lines. It has not yet moved to the full Legislature for a vote.

The 38 districts (click [here](#) to see list and map) invited to participate, which run from Aroostook to Oxford Counties, were identified based on the following criteria:

- Percentage of economically disadvantaged exceeds state average
- Labor Market Area regional adjustment, designed to reflect cost of living in a given area, is less than 1
- Percent state share of GPA is greater than 60 percent

Other school districts can volunteer to join the pilot.

The Maine Education Association (MEA) strongly opposed a statewide contract in a public hearing in May and the bill, even amended into a pilot, faces strong opposition in the Legislature.

The amendment makes participation voluntary and names as the bargaining agents the state and the organization representing the majority of public education employees in the state i.e. the MEA. The negotiation is only for standard salaries and benefits, and the proposal “does not prohibit the negotiation of salary and benefits in addition to what is negotiated between the state and the bargaining agent.”

The latter raised questions on the Education Committee about how that would help teacher salary equity in the state, if local districts could simply add to what the state negotiates as a base. Equity has been raised as a reason to have a statewide contract in order to encourage more experienced teachers to work in the most rural and economically disadvantaged areas of Maine.

Additional amendment language offered by Rep. Pouliot made it clear the bill applies to teachers and not administrators; that existing contracts stay in place until they expire unless the bargaining unit and district agree to move to the statewide plan; and, the employer remains the School Administrative Unit, not the state.

Counter budget offers

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an offer of \$94 million in the second year of the biennium prior to Thibodeau’s announcement.

Rep. Brian Hubbell, D-Bar Harbor, presented the Democratic plan on behalf of his caucus on Tuesday.

It increases state share of the cost of public education by \$120 million in school year 2017-2018, effectively lowering the required local mill rate to an estimated 7.2. The current rate is 8.3. The proposal restores 75 percent of system administration funding, which was cut entirely in the governor’s budget, and increases funding for economically disadvantaged children by

more than \$27 million. It incorporates the governor’s proposal to no longer subtract Title I funding from a district’s allocation – a move which also sends more money to districts with higher poverty rates.

The Democrat’s proposal, which is still a work in progress, also would incorporate the governor’s plan to eliminate the declining enrollment adjustment, which currently redistributes about \$18 million in General Purpose Aid to those districts experiencing enrollment declines.

Rep. Hubbell said he included that cut and only restored 75 percent for system administration so the money could be shifted over to pay for economically disadvantaged while keeping the mill rate low.

The Republican plan lacked such specificity.

Sen. Roger Katz, R-Kennebec, spoke at Tuesday’s meeting in general terms about Republican support for 55 percent.

“Both parties want to fund 55 percent of the cost of education in Maine. Voters have told us they want us to do that,” he said. “It really comes down to how we define that.”

The biggest difference between Republicans and Democrats on what constitutes 55 percent is inclusion of the unfunded liability for teacher retirement and the cost of retiree health and life insurance. Together they total close to \$173 million, with the unfunded liability making up the lion’s share.

Supt. Steve Bailey

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Committee, said Bailey brings with him the kind of leadership skills the organization needs.

“There’s something about Steve – a quiet steadiness,” she said. “He has experience, wisdom and integrity and is a very open communicator.”

Because of his work with school boards, Fles said he clearly understands the role of boards and what the organization needs to do to support them.

“He is able to articulate that strong school boards make strong schools and a strong association. He gets it and will be able to create meaningful board training for our members,” she said.

Superintendent Roger Shaw, chairman of the Action Committee, said that in addition to Bailey’s extensive background in education the quality that sets him apart as a leader is his personality.

“He is articulate and well-spoken and has a feistiness to him when he’s talking about important issues, but he also can calm people down. He totally disarms you with his smile,” Shaw said.

Bailey has served as MSSA president for the past year, and in that role has appeared before the Legislature on key bills and been interviewed by numerous media outlets, particularly on the governor’s proposed budget. Shaw said that advocacy work will continue when Bailey takes over as MSMA’s executive director.

“There’s been a negative message out there about public education and school leaders for the last six to eight years,” Shaw said.

“There’s been an effort to shut school boards and superintendents out of the discussion. As an organization we have to refocus on the vital role of school leadership, and Steve has the skills to do that.”

School Leadership

Part 3: Bringing the Standards to Life

Reflections and conversations for school board members and administrative teams

Parts 1 and 2 of this article were published in the March and April 2017 issues of the Update

#5 Sustain and enhance district resources through planning and fiduciary oversight.

Risk Oversight – Ensures sufficient risk management is in place to protect district resources.

- What policies, processes, and procedures are currently in place to monitor and evaluate risk management and protect the district resources?
- What is the involvement of the board in monitoring and evaluating risk management processes and protecting the district resources?
- What additional supports might be considered to educate and engage the board in monitoring and evaluating risk management processes and protecting the district resources?

Facilities – Ensures school facilities enhance and enrich student and staff learning.

- How would the board characterize the status of the school facilities?
- What does the board see as the connection between facilities and learning?
- What steps are currently being undertaken to ensure school facilities enhance and enrich student and staff learning?
- What additional steps might be considered?

#6 Advocate for public education and the needs of students.

Championing Local Governance & Public Education – Clearly articulates and advocates for the value of public education and the important role of local school governance.

- In what ways does the board engage in advocating for public education and local school governance?
- What additional steps might be considered to further engage the board in advocating for public education and local school governance?
- What supports might be helpful in educating and encouraging the board to consider more actively advocating for public education and local school governance?

Legislative Advocacy – Develops and strengthens on-going relationships with policymakers around improving student achievement and the needs of public education.

- What is the current level of engagement of the board in legislative advocacy?
- What additional steps might be considered to more fully engage the board in legislative advocacy?
- How does the board stay current on issues around legislative advocacy?
- What additional supports might be considered to educate and encourage the board around legislative advocacy?

Community Engagement – Fosters engagement and collaboration with all stakeholders to ensure high and equitable student learning.

- In what ways does the board currently engage with stakeholders to ensure high and equitable student learning?
- To what extent is this work a priority of the board?
- What additional steps might be considered to more fully engage and collaborate with district stakeholders?

Final Reflection:

What has been most helpful in encouraging honest and open conversation?

What has been most challenging as you have engaged in these conversations?

What additional conversations might be considered to most fully understand and implement the responsibilities of the board?

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

[Denise Schares](#) is an assistant professor at the University of Northern Iowa.

Governor pushes choice, vouchers and spending cuts

Gov. Paul LePage continued his push for school choice, vouchers and funding cuts for traditional public schools in an addendum to his proposed biennial budget, resurrecting proposals that failed to win majority support from the Education Committee.

Included in that package, reviewed May 26 by the Appropriations Committee, are school vouchers for students needing special education, lifting the charter school cap and using General Purpose Aid for local schools to pay for the Department of Education – all major policy initiatives.

Those proposals and others are in what's known as a change package to the governor's budget. Change packages are typically used to correct errors or reflect updated financial information that affects the \$6.8 billion state biennial budget – a version of which needs to be approved by July 1 to pay for the continuation of state supported services.

One of the major sticking points around that budget is whether the state will use a voter approved tax on higher-income earners to pay for 55 percent of the cost of education, as defined by the Essential Programs and Services funding formula. The governor wants to redefine that definition of 55 percent and pay less. Full funding would cost an additional \$186 million.

The governor's change package would reduce what's needed to reach 55 percent by counting the state funds currently going to support the Department of Education and the state's payment of the unfunded liability for the teacher retirement plan.

Gov. LePage is also using the budget process to implement policy initiatives he has pushed before including:

- ◆ Lifting the cap on new charter schools, which is 10 through 2021, by allowing an additional school each year beyond the cap between now and the 2021-2022 school year.

The Maine School Boards Association and Maine School Superintendents Association opposed this proposal when it was presented as legislation earlier this year, citing the economic drain of charter schools and the lack of accountability on results. The nine charter schools now in operation draw down \$23 million in General Purpose Aid, and two were ranked in the bottom 10 percent of all public schools based on statewide assessment scores.

- ◆ Creating school choice vouchers known as Education Savings Accounts for students with special needs.

This proposal, when it was presented in bill form, also was opposed by MSBA and MSSA, which raised concerns that the

bill would not only take money away from existing programs, but appears to leave in limbo who is responsible for the child's education plan.

- ◆ Requiring high schools pay the cost of remedial education for their graduates, if remedial courses are required at the University of Maine System, the Community College System and the Maine Maritime Academy.

This proposal was defeated as part of a reform package offered by Gov. LePage in 2013. MSBA and MSSA opposed it then on the basis it would take away funding from schools that need it the most, further reducing their ability to support students struggling to achieve. Statewide tests continue to show a strong correlation between lower test scores and economic disadvantage.

- ◆ Creating school choice by establishing open enrollment for secondary students to any other public high schools in the state.

The governor proposed a similar bill in 2012 that was amended to allow the school boards of two or more school administrative units to adopt mutual policies allowing the transfer of students, with parental approval, among the participating units. That is current law.

2017 County Teachers of the Year announced

- Androscoggin: Nesrene Griffin, Governor James Longley School
- Aroostook: Leslie Marquis, Fort Kent Community School
- Cumberland: Brooke Teller, Casco Bay High School
- Franklin: Allison Warman, Rangeley Lakes School
- Hancock: Marielle Edgecomb, The Peninsula School
- Kennebec: Lisette Bordes, Messalonskee High School
- Knox: Iris Eichenlaub, Camden Hills Regional High School
- Lincoln: Christopher Coleman, Great Salt Bay Community School
- Oxford: Janet Harriman, Sacopee Valley High School
- Penobscot: Kasia Giallombardo, Nokomis High School
- Piscataquis: Kaitlin Young, SeDoMoCha Elementary School
- Sagadahoc: John Dever, Mt. Ararat High School
- Somerset: Eric Brown, Lawrence High School
- Waldo: Christi Goosman, Searsport District High School
- Washington: Rhonda Stevens, Beatrice Rafferty School
- York: Jen England, Noble High School

The State Teacher of the Year will be named in October.



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

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