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# UPDATE...

Nov/Dec 2018

## School report cards coming out soon

The Department of Education will release to the public in early January what's commonly known as report card data on how Maine schools are doing on a number of academic measurements.

The report contains indicators outlined in the federal Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA), but the state had some latitude around indicators of school quality and student success. There will be no assigned letter grade to a school.

Maine's report cards will include the following data:

- Chronic Absenteeism (K-12)
- Academic achievement in math and English (3-8, 3<sup>rd</sup> year in HS)
- Progress in English language proficiency for English learners (K-12)
- Graduation Rate/Academic Progress (3-8 only)

Academic Progress in grades 3-8 compares student state assessment scores in math and English from one year to the next.

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## President's Message



Kim Bedard

Thank you for your service to students and for your time. At the MSMA Fall Conference I enjoyed hearing from many of you on ideas for how we can better support each other. For those not able to attend Fall Conference, we'll be sending out a survey to capture your ideas as well. In support of networking, we need to be sure we have your contact information. (Since you received this MSBA Update, please ask your fellow school board members if they also received it.)

Other people who need your contact information are your local legislators. They need to know you are available to them when it comes to educational matters. Thank them for their service.

School board members have an educational background and/or a passion for working to provide quality education for all students. Although I come from a family of teachers and administrators, as a mechanical engineer, I like numbers and I hope to share more numbers with you. With 279 boards in

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## Education Leaders



Members of the MSBA Board of Directors and MSSA Executive Committee got together for a group picture at the MSMA Annual Fall Conference

## Resolutions adopted with robust debate

The slate of resolutions considered by the Delegate Assembly generated robust discussions and feedback from local boards, many of which had taken their own votes on the proposals to inform their delegate's vote.

Out of the initial proposals, six passed.

The only resolution that failed outright was around proficiency-based diplomas, with 23 in favor, 59 opposed and 3 abstentions.

Two others got more than 50%, but not with the necessary two-thirds vote to adopt a resolution. The first was around raising starting teacher pay to \$40,000, with 35 votes in favor, 29 opposed

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## School leaders can change public perceptions



Jamie Vollmer with Supt. Roger Shaw

Jamie Vollmer, a successful business man who turned into a strong advocate for public education, opened the Fall Conference by telling school leaders they have the power to change misperceptions about schools by telling the truth.

“They say public schools are failing. This is a lie,” he said.

The truth is the job of public education has changed since it was first envisioned by Thomas Jefferson as a system to educate the students with most promise. Today, schools are charged to educate all students and they come with greater needs, distractions and fractured attention spans.

“It’s the toughest group of kids in history to educate,” he said, and we need them to be educated because we need them in a changed work environment that requires more skills.

“We’ve never needed public education more. Your school district has never taught more courses,” yet criticism of public schools nationwide is growing, he said.

The solution is for school boards and superintendents to speak out about what is really going on and the challenges schools face. Those challenges include not enough time for all learners since students learn at different speeds.

Right now we’re “selecting and sorting” who is going to make it, because learning time is held constant, he said. Yet there are students who learn more slowly, and that needs to be addressed.

To win support for public schools to do what it takes to educate all learners, Vollmer said school leaders have to change negative attitudes about public education. He had five tips:

- Stop bad-mouthing one another in our schools in public. It gets around.
- Shift your attention from the negative to the positive.
- Share something positive with friends, neighbors and acquaintances.
- Keep it up and ask yourself: “How many positive things did I say about my district this week?”
- Start now.

“The magical thing is there is moral imperative to educate every child to his or her potential” because we need them in the workforce, Vollmer said. “We need them educated. We need their creative potential.”

## Schools challenged to address workforce shortage

School Board members and superintendents were challenged to take the lead on creating an education plan for Maine students that addresses the state’s workforce shortage and creates an unprecedented partnership between public schools and the business community.

Outgoing Education Committee Chairman Sen. Brian Langley, who owns a successful restaurant, and Educate Maine’s Executive Director Ed Cervone shared the stage on the second day of Fall Conference and told a packed hall they needed to act now to give students skills that businesses need.

“Let’s build an education plan from the ground up. School Boards can take the lead,” Langley said. “Now there’s an imperative because of the workforce shortage.”

Cervone, whose organization supports a well-educated workforce and better cooperation between the business community and public schools, said the future of Maine depends on all of its students being educated and trained to fill jobs and help businesses grow.

“Eight or 10 years ago the room was filled with people looking for jobs that didn’t exist. Now we have a bunch of employers who can’t find employees. We need tradespeople and we need PhDs in bioengineering,” he said. “I haven’t seen a more important time for education. You are on the front line.”

Langley called on school boards to create and support good data-driven policy to prepare students for the workforce in collaboration with the business community and other organizations like Educate Maine.

“It really needs to start here and be built here,” he said.



Ed Cervone with Sen. Brian Langley

## Portland Empowered receives statewide honor

The Maine School Boards Association Distinguished Service Award was given to Portland Empowered and its director Emily Thielmann for outstanding work in helping families engage in their children's education and for championing the role of parent and student voices in improving educational outcomes.

Portland Empowered was nominated by the Portland School Board and the award was presented by MSBA President Maureen King on Thursday, Oct. 25, at the Maine School Management Association's Annual Conference. There to receive the award on behalf of Portland Empowered were Elizabeth Ferreira and Pious Ali.

Portland Empowered is part of the Youth and Community Engagement program within the Cutler Institute for Health and Social Policy at USM's Muskie School. The group's goal is to increase leadership opportunities and knock down barriers for students and parents when it comes to deciding matters such as curriculum. Its aim is to make learning more student-centered.

Portland Empowered is the lead community partner with Portland Public Schools and its work was the impetus for the School Board to create a new School and Family Partnership Policy. This policy change has helped the district better engage all families, including those whose first language is not English. One example is the creation of the district's Parent University where parents and caregivers can learn from experts and each other. Through free classes and events that are fun and interactive, Parent U focuses on topics important to families, and sessions have attracted up to 200 people.

Portland Empowered also nurtures young leaders through its Youth Engagement Partners Program, engaging students from the city's three public high schools. It serves as a training ground for students to be leaders in student government and other organizations.



MSBA President Maureen King presents the award to Elizabeth Ferreira and Pious Ali.

## School boards honor New Balance

New Balance Corporation in Norridgewock was honored with a Maine School Boards Association Business Friend of Education Award for its work in the MSAD 54 School District and across Somerset County to keep kids healthy by keeping them moving.

MSBA President Maureen King presented the award to Katherine Foy Bartley, the company's charitable programs specialist. The company was nominated for the award by the MSAD 54 School Committee.

Over the last 11 years, New Balance has supported the Move More Kids Program with over \$2 million in equipment and infrastructure. Their efforts directly impact thousands of students across the county each year.

Their gifts have covered physical education equipment like mountain bikes; spinning bikes; cardio equipment; snowshoes; cross country skis; a 25-foot portable climbing wall and more. They have encouraged safe outdoor activity through such programs as the walking school bus and bike programs and have revived the county's school district wellness committees. They also have supported more than 10 playgrounds in the county.

## Healthy Communities honored

Healthy Communities of the Capital Area – a coalition of local people who work to improve the health and quality of life in Kennebec and Somerset Counties – has been honored with the Maine School Boards Association Business Friend of Education Award.

MSBA President Maureen King presented the award to Healthy Communities Executive Director Joanne Joy. The organization was nominated by the MSAD 11 School Committee.

The organization's focus is public health at the local, district and state level, and a key issue is dealing with opiate abuse. MSAD 11 has hosted several public forums that have included parents, teachers, students and law enforcement officials. These forums focus on the urgent need to address opiate use and other unhealthy behaviors, including alcohol, tobacco and marijuana use among students.

Because of the involvement of Healthy Communities, coalitions are being formed to address other health issues including addiction and depression.

**School report cards**

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Questions have been raised in the field about the definition of Chronic Absenteeism that may need better explanation to the public and parents. A student is considered absent if they miss 50 percent of their scheduled school day. A student is considered chronically absent if they miss 10 percent or more of school days in a year.

Chronic Absenteeism includes both excused and unexcused absences.

Excused Absences that will be included in the Chronic Absenteeism rate include:

- Things like family vacations, student sick days and doctor's appointments. See Chapter 20-A, §5001-A, 4. for a full list.
- Sporting events, if a student is out of school for 50 percent of their scheduled school day.

There is more leeway in areas where a student is not at school, but is receiving instruction. An example would be a student with a chronic illness who gets instruction through a tutor.

While mention of school report cards raises concerns about the letter-grade system used earlier in the decade by the outgoing state administration – there will be no letter grades given. Those Title I schools experiencing the most significant challenges meeting expectations will be given support by the DOE that includes school coaches; access to professional development; and, access to \$3.5 million in turnaround funds.

**President's Message**

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Maine, we have 1,772 board members. This number represents tremendous advocates for our students in our schools.

The number of boards has changed over the years with 39 "divorces" of districts since consolidation. While local control is important here in Maine, we also don't want to pay for something that already has been done and done well – so I love to see communities sharing and working together, and we are.

I love that this newsletter shares facts that help us be better board members. This year I hope we can help each other – in sharing best practices, sharing lessons learned, and finding balance. I want to help people network, if only by connecting people with a person on another board. In the meantime I am grateful to know that thousands of hardworking Mainers like you volunteer their time in order to help students succeed.

**Resolutions adopted**

and 2 abstaining. The second called for lengthening the instructional school year to 180 days. It received 42 votes in favor, 24 opposed and 6 abstaining.

The two proposals initially had been combined, but were split to get a more accurate read on sentiment. Those that spoke against them pointed out school boards already could adopt policy around starting teacher pay and length of the school year for their districts. The major concern was cost.

The adopted resolutions read:

**CDS Move to Public Schools (Section 4-22)**

The Maine School Boards Association supports the eventual move of programs for 3-to-5-year-olds into public schools, but only if it is well planned and continually, fully funded by the state as a separate line item independent from the EPS funding formula. We call on the 129<sup>th</sup> Legislature to convene a task force to inform that plan. Public school staff must be involved, as well as current staff of Child Development Services, DOE leadership, and other appropriate stakeholders. State funding must be adequate to hire staff and provide appropriate services to all eligible children to avoid the kind of shortages documented under the current system. One of the task force's goals will be to develop a detailed funding plan. The goal must be to take the current program and improve it where necessary so our youngest students receive the services and interventions they need to be successful as they move through the public school system. (Passed 69-16-1)

**Special Education Reform (Section 4-23)**

The Maine School Boards Association believes the special education system created by Congress more than 40 years ago needs to be reviewed and amended on the federal and state level to assure all student needs are being met. A task force created as a result of an MSBA resolution in 2016 has made reasonable proposals for change at the state level. Legislation should be introduced in the first session of the 129<sup>th</sup> Legislature to implement those changes. This resolution also directs the MSBA officers to urge Maine's congressional delegation to support reforms recommended by the National School Boards Association when the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) is brought up for reauthorization and to fully fund the promised federal share of costs. (Passed 74-7-1)

**Funding to support rebuilding infrastructure of local schools (Section 4-24)**

The Maine School Boards Association supports action by the Legislature that would provide \$30 million from the state's Rainy Day fund to begin the process of rebuilding the infrastructure of our local public schools. This money would support small maintenance and construction projects with a fund separate from the major construction fund. Funding for small projects has been cut in recent years and it is estimated there are \$1 billion in deferred maintenance and facility improvements in Maine schools – a situation that will continue to affect the quality of education if not addressed. (Passed 56-5-2)

**School Attendance at Age 5 (Section 4-25)**

The Maine School Boards Association understands how critical early education is to the success of students and believes Maine's current compulsory attendance age of 7 is too high and out-of-step with the rest of the country. MSBA supports a recommended age of 5, which is the typical age of kindergartners in the state, and compulsory attendance at age 6 and will advocate for a law change in the first session of the next Legislature. (Passed 58-6-1)

**School Safety (Section 2.A.2.j)**

To support a public school's responsibility to keep children safe, the Maine School Boards Association advocates the following comprehensive approach: Ongoing risk assessments not only for active shooter attacks but other disruptors that could put students or staff at risk; Increased focus on social and emotional support; Training on early warning signs around student perpetrators of violence and programs like "Say Something", which encourage

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## Local boards inform MSBA Delegate Assembly



It was very apparent at the 2018 MSBA Delegate Assembly at the Fall Conference that many, many local school boards had crafted time in their October meeting agendas to read through and discuss the MSBA 2018 Proposed Resolutions. Delegates came prepared to present the views and opinions of their local boards and they did. Rich and informed discussions were had as each resolution was reviewed and then voted upon. The process provides an opportunity of democracy within the Delegate Assembly to have the opinions and points of view raised from each of the nine regions of MSBA, and from all local boards who elected Delegates to the Assembly. I want to applaud the importance that local boards place on this process and the value the elected Delegates place on representing their local boards and regions.

Steven Bailey  
MSMA/MSBA Executive Director

### **Resolutions adopted**

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students to go to an adult with their concerns about a potentially violent peer; Increased funding in the Revolving School Renovation Fund that includes school safety projects as priorities; and, Support for state and federal funding for School Resource Officers where appropriate. We also support tasking the Department's Facilities Office to advise, collect and disseminate best practices on keeping children safe. (Passed 83-2-1)

### **Gun-Free Schools (Section 2.A.2.k)**

The Maine School Boards Association supports the current state ban on guns, loaded or unloaded, on school property and opposes any legislative attempts to amend that prohibition. The ban is both symbolic and practical. It affirms ours and the nation's belief that schools should be safe havens and does not invite intended or unintended tragedy by allowing loaded guns on school grounds. Suggestions that schools can somehow monitor whether guns in cars are safely locked and unloaded are unworkable. (68-12-5)

## Worker shortage national concern

Maine is not alone in recognizing the urgency of making sure our students are workforce ready when they leave our schools.

The problem is getting attention nationwide and was the subject of a recent article in NSBA's American School Board Journal.

From labor department statistics showing that there are more job openings than people looking for work, to baby boomers retiring in record numbers, to indicators that the workforce participation rate for young Americans (ages 16-24) will continue to decline, a potential crisis awaits, experts say.

In 40 years of working on national employment and training issues, "the level of angst, the level of concern by employers looking for young people with the skills that fit, that they can hire, has gone from important to urgent," says Kenneth Smith, President and CEO of Jobs for America's Graduates, Inc., a national youth employment program.

To help address this issue, NSBA is engaging the business community in a dialogue about workforce readiness through the recently formed Commission to Close the Skills Gap.

Members include trade associations representing major industries, the Washington, D.C.-based Business Roundtable, the U.S. Chamber of Commerce Foundation, and the Society for Human Resource Management.

The commission's goal is to raise awareness among school board members of this pressing workforce issue, provide local boards with expert advice on what they can do to address workforce needs, and help build "deeper and more impactful relationships between the public education community, the school board community, and the business community," says Thomas J. Gentzel, NSBA's executive director and CEO.

As policymakers for school districts, "school boards can really move the needle" on this issue, Gentzel says. He notes that several state school boards associations, including Tennessee and New Jersey, already have initiatives underway with their business communities, "so they have a lot to offer and share on building this kind of working relationship."

A 2017 report by the Business Roundtable notes three types of skills gaps in today's workforce, "often acting in combination":

- A lack of individuals with fundamental "employability skills," such as the ability to communicate effectively, collaborate in teams, participate in complex problem solving, use basic math, and read technical manuals.
- A lack of workers with the specialized skills needed to fill many trade positions.
- A lack of applicants with the science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM) skills needed for many of today's jobs.

*-Excerpt from the October 2018 issue of NSBA's American School Board Journal*



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

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