

# NEWS SCOPE



MONROE COUNTY  
SCHOOL BOARDS  
ASSOCIATION  
www.mcsba.org

December 2009

## Board role in fiscal oversight reviewed.



A variety of school district leaders—20 new school board members and 5 superintendents from 15 school districts in 5 counties gathered on November 7 for 6 hours of instruction about school board responsibility for financial oversight. New school board members are required to attend a SED-approved program such as this one within a year of taking office. MCSBA and the Monroe County Association of School Business Officials work together to present this learning opportunity annually.

Board members receive input on their oversight responsibilities, ways to prevent misuse of resources, budget planning, reserve funds, information in financial reports, and auditor functions.



ABOVE LEFT: Board members Bob Beckwith (Fpt), Kellie Scott-Reed (Fpt), and David Lane (GC).



ABOVE RIGHT: Dawn Santiago-Marullo (Victor), Dr. Daniel Murray (WC administrator soon to be York Superintendent), and Dr. Mark Davey (GC), three of the five superintendents who attended the session.



LEFT: Presenters (Top Row)—Ed Lincoln (RH President), and Dr. Clark Godshall (District Superintendent, Orleans-Niagara BOCES); (Middle Row)—Ray Wager, CPA, and Vernon Connors, Budget Director (Roc). (Bottom Row)—Dave Green, Business Administrator (ER), and Mark Sansouci, Assistant Superintendent for Business (Pen).

BELOW: Board member Kelly Glover (GC) and Superintendent Dr. Mark Davey (GC).



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MONROE COUNTY SCHOOL BOARDS ASSOCIATION  
220 Idlewood Road, Rochester, NY 14618  
(585) 328-1972 www.mcsba.org

President – Kathy Dillon, Churchville-Chili CSD

Vice President –Dr. Richard Rasmussen,  
Honeoye Falls-Lima CSD

Past President – Rome Celli, Brighton CSD

Treasurer – John Abbott, Monroe 2 – Orleans BOCES

Executive Director - Jody Siegle  
Jody\_Siegle@boces.monroe.edu

Editor - Judy Wadsworth  
Judy\_Wadsworth@boces.monroe.edu

## Upcoming learning opportunities

Monday, December 7, 6:50 am meet at Bushnell's Basin Park & Ride – Bus Trip to Albany to meet with key staff people

Wednesday, December 9, Noon (Holiday Inn Airport) – Information Exchange Committee discussion of Quality customer service for families and community

Wednesday, December 16, Noon (Holiday Inn Airport) – Labor Relations Committee Update on regional negotiations initiative

Wednesday, January 6, Noon (Holiday Inn Airport) – Information Exchange Committee discussion of A Systems Approach to Middle Level Guidance

Wednesday, January 27, Noon (Holiday Inn Airport) – Labor Relations Committee discussion of Labor Relations During Difficult Economic Times

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### New MCSBA legislative position papers approved

At their December 2 meeting, members of the MCSBA Executive Committee (Board of Education Presidents and Superintendents) approved position statements on comptroller audits of school districts and teacher quality. These positions are found on pages 6 and 7.

## From our president: MCSBA continues work, awaits state budget decisions.



Kathy Dillon

November was a busy month for MSCBA. Some members continued the development of Association position papers on Teacher Quality and Comptroller's Audits.

We trained new BOE members on fiscal responsibility and we continue to participate in opportunities that allow us to be continuous learners, such as learning about shared services with BOCES and state and federal mandates that control the actions and options of local school boards.

Our Public Relations committee discussed opportunities to be proactive with positive messages for public education.

Although we are busy with our normal activities, we are waiting for the other shoe to drop. The continuing financial crisis in New York State and the inability of our elected officials to effect any change leaves us paralyzed. We are on the precipice of a perfect storm—our state facing significant fiscal challenges, continuing school district audits from the comptroller, and now OMIG audits that are placing school districts in peril. The short term solution the Governor proposes for school districts, spending our reserves, only makes our situation that much worse!

We must remain vigilant in advocacy for public education. Our trip to Albany on December 7th is one opportunity to have our voices heard! More than 30 MCSBA members have registered to participate in this critical effort to convey to state leaders how current proposals will negatively affect public schools as well as to recommend positive steps that could support our schools while not adding to the state's financial burden.

Thanks for all you do to continue to support public education!

*Kathy Dillon*

# Rochester programs featured on *NewsHour*



Pictures from *Learning Matters* website showing students involved in Work Experience Program, in Expeditionary Learning, and in the Strong Start kindergarten program.

*The NewsHour with Jim Lehrer*, airing on PBS stations across the country, on November 3 featured several programs of the Rochester City School District.

The story shines a national spotlight on Rochester reform initiatives as part of a series on the impact of federal stimulus dollars on students across the country.

The segment on Rochester featured:

- \* The Strong Start kindergarten program at James P.B. Duffy School No. 12;
- \* The district's Work Experience Program and a WEP student involved in a house-building project at the School of Applied Technology at Edison High School; and
- \* The expansion of Expeditionary Learning at World of Inquiry School No. 58 and Dr. Walter Cooper Academy School No. 10.

## From our executive director: *National Security*



Jody Siegle

With many entities fighting to retain their portion of government funding in this time of reduced revenues, education needs all the allies it can muster. A new report from an unusual source makes a compelling

argument for more and better preschool and early childhood developmental programs if needy children are to thrive in school.

The report, "Ready, Willing, and Unable to Serve," signed by dozens of retired generals, admirals and civilian military leaders, provocatively challenges our nation's priorities for nurturing the coming generation. The study reveals the alarming fact that 73% of teens are ineligible for military service because they failed to graduate from high school, have a criminal record, or have physical fitness issues, especially obesity.

Calling the poor condition of our nation's young people a significant threat to national security, the generals stress how support or neglect in pre-school years determines much about children's subsequent success in school and society. They cite research

confirming that social service supports for impoverished young families, particularly single teen mothers, and strong preschool programs significantly improved children's futures. Better health, high school graduation, and staying out of trouble were the results of giving attention to needy children and their families at critical developmental stages. Conversely, the cost of ignoring these needs is a weaker nation.

There is precedent for the military identifying problems with America's young people and pushing for major changes to improve the future. During the Depression widespread malnutrition permanently diminished the health of a generation of American children. One consequence of these deficiencies was that later during WW II, large numbers of young men failed their draft physicals. So in 1943 the school lunch program was established to ensure that future generations would be more fit. National security was the motivation for the school lunch program.

This study reaffirms what we all know, that strengthening the quality of a child's early life improves what happens when that child begins school.

Seeing that every child has a good beginning is a matter of national security.

*Jody Siegle*

The segment, "Holding the Line", was produced by Jane Renaud & John Tulenko of Learning Matters, and aired on the November 3, 2009 edition of *NewsHour with Jim Lehrer*.

Learning Matters, an independent, non-profit production company focused on education, produces reports for *The NewsHour with Jim Lehrer* as well as documentaries for PBS.

An article on the *NewsHour* segment featuring Rochester is accessible at Learning Matters website:

<http://learningmatters.tv/blog/on-the-newsHour/30-million-for-rochester/3237>

Audio and video tapes of the *NewsHour* segment were accessible at [http://www.pbs.org/newshour/bb/education/july-dec09/stimulus\\_11-03.html](http://www.pbs.org/newshour/bb/education/july-dec09/stimulus_11-03.html) when this article was written. If it's no longer there, a downloaded copy of the audio tape is available from the MCSBA office.

# Board presidents & NYSSBA staff discuss audit reports



At their November meeting, board presidents from MCSBA districts focused much of their discussion on NYS Comptroller audits of school districts, the apparent politicization of Comptroller audit reports, and ways that districts have dealt with these reports.

David Little, NYSSBA's Director of Governmental Relations, shared some historical perspective on the current wave of state audits; and Chuck Perreaud, President of the West Irondequoit Board of Education, shared his district's response to the audit report it received.

Also in attendance was Michael Bieber, NYSSBA's Member Relations Manager, who invited members to contact him with any questions or concerns.

BELOW: Chuck Perreaud (WI) explaining the process used by West Irondequoit leaders to respond to criticism from the NYS Comptroller office; Bob Dickson (B1) is shown listening to the discussion.



Monroe County School Boards Association

TOP ROW: Kim Snyder (WC), MCSBA President Kathy Dillon (CC), Michael Bieber (NYSSBA), Patrick Tydings (Gre), and Steve Zilora (Pen).

LEFT: David Little (NYSSBA) talking with Steve Zilora (Pen) and Bob Dickson (B1), who is barely visible at the right. In the background are Kathy Dillon (CC) and Sherry Johnson (CC).

## Public Communications Advisory Committee sets goals for year

The MCSBA Public Communications Advisory Committee (PCAC) met recently to identify activities that would help to better inform the community about the work of our public schools. Among the identified strategies are:

- \* Collecting comparative data from other districts in and outside of Monroe County that could be used to support our themes;
- \* Distributing a PSA on inter-district cooperative bidding and determining how it is used by member districts;
- \* Developing a new series of PSAs on "Monroe County has A+ schools."

BELOW: Shown at their first meeting of the school year, held in mid November, are Lee Steinfeldt (EI), Mark Ball (B2), Becky Daniels (Spe), Jody Siegle (MCSBA), MCSBA President Kathy Dillon (CC), PCAC Co-Chair Tom Gallagher (WC), PCAC Co-Chair Sherry Johnson (CC), and Ann Carmody (Web). Not pictured are Rome Celli (Bri), Tim Henry (ER), and Judy Wadsworth (MCSBA).



# Student body image & self esteem affect learning – what can schools do?



Issues of body esteem and self image are endemic among middle school girls and increasingly prevalent for boys. Almost half of both boys and girls by age 13 wish they were thinner and by their junior year in high school, 80% of girls report having been on a diet to lose weight. Body image is closely linked to self-esteem, and body dissatisfaction can contribute to depression and suicide as well as to dangerous weight control and social behaviors, any or all of which can lead to poorer performance in school. A 2005 study found that 46% of teen girls and 26% of teen boys were dissatisfied with their bodies, including those who are of average weight. Parents and families have the greatest power to create self-image, but school personnel share some responsibility.

Schools can create a school climate that contributes to positive self image. Middle schoolers need guidance to feel

confident, to understand the source and impact of peer criticism, to understand that no one is perfect but all are valuable, and to accept differences. Medical experts recommend that districts offer professional development for school personnel that includes:

- Promoting personal wellness practices and body esteem (e.g., stop dieting talk and unhealthy dieting practices);
- Improving curriculum, especially in analyzing marketing and advertising with their unrealistic media images;
- Promoting wellness and validation of diversity;
- Developing programs for faculty mentoring and role modeling;
- Partnering with families;
- Serving healthy foods; and
- Identifying markers to know when students need help.

The Eating Disorders Recovery Center of Western New

York provides education regarding factors that lead to body dissatisfaction in teens and creates dialogue among parents and school personnel on how they can support one another in promoting body esteem in middle school students.

To learn more, visit <http://www.nyeatingdisorders.org>, or contact Mary Tantillo. Ph.D., R.N., C.S. (Associate Professor of Clinical Nursing at the U of R School of Nursing, Clinical Associate Professor of Psychiatry at the U of R School of Medicine, and Director of the Western NY Comprehensive Care Center for Eating Disorders) at [tantillo@rochester.rr.com](mailto:tantillo@rochester.rr.com).

# Healthier school food and exercise create healthier students more ready to learn.

by Wade S. Norwood  
Director of Community Engagement, Finger Lakes Health Systems Agency (Norwood is also a Member of the NYS Board of Regents.)



Global health experts have issued a warning

to everyone who has a stake in children's health: for the first time ever, a generation of children could die younger than its parents due to the obesity epidemic and associated health risks — such as type 2 diabetes, high cholesterol and high blood pressure. Locally, the Healthi Kids Coalition is heeding this warning, and are asking school districts, administrators, teachers, parents, students and the community to work with us. Healthi Kids, an initiative of Finger Lakes Health Systems Agency with funding from the

Greater Rochester Health Foundation, is a coalition advocating for policy and practice changes to make children healthier and more active. The Healthi Kids agenda includes simple changes that schools can make, such as better school food, more physical activity throughout the school day, and after-hours access to school play space.

The Healthi Kids Coalition supports the development and execution of district-wide nutritional and wellness standards. In one recent example, the Rochester City School District took a giant step toward improving school food when it contracted with ARAMARK to provide school meals with more whole grains, fresh or frozen vegetables, fresh fruits, lean meats, and reduced fat cheeses. Healthi Kids commends those districts who are strive to provide the best quality and offer a variety of nutritional food choices to their students.

Healthi Kids also encourages K-12 students to receive a minimum of 45-minutes of moderate to intense physical activity in school every day. This activity could come from walking instead of taking the bus, engaging students in daily recess, active participation in physical education classes, and increased access to playgrounds and play space.

Making these policy and practice changes happen requires action by parents, schools, municipalities and the whole community. As health experts have warned, our children's futures depend on it. Hundreds have already signed up to become part of this grassroots movement. You can become part of this critical effort, too. To find out more, please visit us online at [www.healthikids.org](http://www.healthikids.org).





# Comptroller Audits of Public Schools

**The Monroe County School Boards Association understands the value of audits. Audits are helpful and constructive when they are conducted in accordance with the law. Audits have affirmed the integrity of the stewardship provided by local school districts.**

**The Comptroller's Office should use state funds to conduct audits only within its defined authority, and should adhere to objective, independent and professional conduct when reporting its findings. A pattern of Comptroller audit findings is emerging which the MCSBA finds disturbing.**

<p><b>LAW:</b> The Office of the State Comptroller should restrict its audits to the areas defined by law.</p>	<p>Many governmental groups monitor and require reports from school districts, including the State Education Department, the State Legislature, the Attorney General, the Comptroller, and the United States Department of Education.</p> <p>No one agency monitors these numerous requirements for effectiveness and duplication.</p> <p>The Office of the State Comptroller should not initiate audits in non-financial areas on the assumption that no other governance group has oversight.</p>
<p><b>EXPENSE:</b> School districts are now audited in multiple ways every year at considerable expense to taxpayers.</p>	<p>All Board of Education members are required by law to complete fiscal oversight training, unlike any other elected officials.</p> <p>All Boards of Education must establish an Audit Committee to advise the Board of Education about fiscal matters.</p> <p>All Boards of Education must employ Internal Auditors to provide annual risk assessments.</p> <p>All Boards of Education must employ Internal Claims Auditors who certify all claims on warrants and report directly to their Boards.</p> <p>All districts must have an annual financial review by an External Auditor that is comprised of three separate audits: General Financial, Extra-Class, and Federal Compliance.</p> <p>The Comptroller is charged with the financial auditing of all school districts by 2010.</p> <p>Extraneous Comptroller Audits are expensive to taxpayers without producing significant information.</p>
<p><b>REPORTS:</b> The first round of Comptroller audits is being completed, and very few incidents of fiscal misconduct have been discovered.</p>	<p>Audits often recommend additional policies or procedures but have found very few actual instances of misconduct or fraud.</p> <p>Criticism in audits often reveals legitimate differences of opinion over interpretations of State Education laws, the recommendations of the Governmental Accounting Standards Board (GASB) and the Generally Accepted Accounting Practices (GAAP), leaving district officials with ambiguous guidance.</p> <p>Audit reports should not include subjective judgmental language, nor should they base conclusions on previously unknown and/or unrecognized criteria.</p> <p>Audit reports should not use arbitrary criteria to critique school district management decisions.</p>

**Just as public school districts are directed by law to focus attention on areas identified through risk assessments, public school audits by the NYS Comptroller should be limited to instances where risk assessment identifies actual need.**

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2010



# Measuring & Maintaining Teacher Quality

Evidence points to the importance of highly effective teachers in assuring that students receive a quality education. Determining how to measure and maintain teacher quality has always been problematic. The Monroe County School Boards Association supports efforts to better prepare teaching candidates, to more effectively evaluate teachers before and after they are granted tenure, and to streamline the mandated professional employee discipline process to more efficiently remove teachers from classrooms as needed.

<p><b>Better prepare teaching candidates.</b></p>	<p>The characteristics of highly effective teachers should be used to guide hiring, supporting, and evaluating teachers.</p> <p>Teacher training institutions should be encouraged to provide teacher candidates with the skills needed to excel in the classroom.</p> <p>Master teachers involved in student teacher placements should meet certain standards and demonstrate desirable teaching skills.</p> <p>Every effort should be made to place candidate teachers with master teachers only.</p>
<p><b>Better support and evaluate teachers before and after they are granted tenure.</b></p>	<p>Evaluation models based solely on results of standardized student test scores, are not valid and cannot measure how well a teacher is preparing students with skills. Student test scores must be evaluated in the context of each student’s progress over time.</p> <p>Teacher evaluations should be directly related to district goals for professional development that match locally determined goals, state initiatives, and federal guidelines.</p> <p>Teacher evaluations must recognize and factor in the characteristics of the student cohort served. It is essential that measures of teacher quality do not penalize teachers for working with the neediest students.</p> <p>Any system of peer review for teachers should be locally developed, but never mandated. Ongoing professional development needs to be valued and strengthened.</p>
<p><b>Streamline the mandated discipline process.</b></p>	<p>Where teacher improvement plans prove unsuccessful, districts require a more reasonable system for disciplining and removing underperforming teachers.</p> <p>Streamline the state-mandated §3020-a process:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>* Establish an impartial system for training and selecting hearing officers, and ensure that there are adequate numbers of qualified hearing officers in every region of the state.</li> <li>* Authorize—in cases of felony conviction—the dismissal of tenured personnel without the §3020-a process.</li> <li>* Cap the length of time that teachers or administrators may be suspended with pay while §3020-a proceedings are pending.</li> <li>* Require that teachers facing §3020-a disciplinary action disclose the nature of their defense prior to the hearing.</li> </ul>