

MASC/MASS leadership invested in education for all

Invoking the conference theme of educating all students, **MASC President Beverly Hugo** (Framingham), **MASS President Eric Conti** (Burlington) and **MASC President-Elect Devin Sheehan** (Holyoke) framed their remarks to the nearly 900 conference attendees to reinforce this mission in all the commonwealth's communities.

In his Wednesday evening keynote address, Conti acknowledged that the state's number one ranking for student achievement is owing to the work of many committed leaders whose names never make the national news. "What I notice is that while there are many politicians leading school districts in other states, there are educators leading in Massachusetts." Backing this up, Conti cited the state's new Commissioner of Education Jeffrey Riley, a veteran classroom teacher and administrator, and commended everyone in the room for their commitment to improving the lives of children and families, even in the face of increasingly strained resources.

To address these challenges, MASS is focusing on three primary areas this year, Conti reported: promoting implementation of the Foundation Budget Review Commission recommendations; expanding computer science pathways; and improving the stability of district leadership—all within the context of sustaining social/emotional learning.

While acknowledging that parts of the foundation formula conversation are extremely complex, Conti said,

"I also think the premise is simple: the state should keep its promise. As our funding gaps widen, so do our achievement gaps." But the argument for updating Foundation spending can't just come from the districts most in need of funding. "We all need to be as invested in advocating for state support for underfunded communities as we are in advocating for the continued state and local support of our own students. Our budgets are a statement of our values and we need to fight to put meaning back into what has become a meaningless foundation formula."

Expanding computer science pathways is about more than producing computer scientists, Conti noted. To be successful in a rapidly changing world of work and economics, all graduates will need a solid understanding of computer science to be literate/contributing citizens in 2018 and beyond. In addition, it is an area of study ideally suited to personalized learning which is proving to have enormous success in raising student engagement.

Conti concluded noting the importance of the partnership between MASC and MASS as critical to establishing positive communication and relationship between school leaders and administrators. "A revolving superintendency is not in the best interest of any community. And without a model of positive national discourse, it is up to us as local leaders to demonstrate civility in our respective communities and to celebrate the incredible, innovative, joyful and creative things happening in our schools."



MASS President Eric Conti thanks school leaders for their work.



MASC President Beverly Hugo passes the gavel to incoming President Devin Sheehan

MASC President Beverly Hugo, hosting the Friday Life Member banquet, noted that elected officials at the local level bear the greatest of social and political burdens: "we're at the ground level, dealing directly with our constituents. We hear their concerns every day. We wrestle with the challenges of balancing budgets, creating opportunities for all children, especially those most struggling and fragile. We aim to serve as role models, expressing our values in our work, and all of it in the glare of the public eye."

"When I watch my colleagues lead the fight to end discrimination; to preserve the inter-generational compact that links the social and economic well-being of students with that of their parents and grandparents; and lead the fight for full and fair funding for schools, I am proud to be in their company. When I see school committee members setting an example that other leaders should follow in serving the poor, insuring the health of children, fostering the social and emotional well-being of students, and welcoming the stranger to our communities, I know that we are pursuing the most important mission of all. It is all of us—a collaboration of committed people who put children first in these

Congressman Neal receives MASC's Tip O'Neill award



Pictured left to right: Ryan Kelly, Longmeadow School Committee (SC); Chris Collins, Springfield SC; Kerry Martins, Special Education Director, Springfield; Jake Oliveira, Ludlow SC/MASC President Emeritus; Pat Correia, MASC Field Director/former Springfield SC; Daniel Warwick, Superintendent, Springfield; Congressman Neal; Beverly Hugo, Framingham SC/MASC President; Stefania Raschilla, TITEL, Springfield; Michelle Heim-Balch, Springfield Public Schools; Rosemary Sandlin, MASC President Emeritus/former Agawam SC; LaTonia Naylor, Springfield SC; Denise Hurst, Springfield SC; Devin Sheehan, Springfield SC/MASC President-Elect

On November 9 at the start of the General Session, MASC presented the 2018 Thomas P. "Tip" O'Neill award to Congressman Richard Neal of Springfield. The 30-year Congressman who is currently the ranking member on the Ways & Means Committee, served on the Springfield School Committee in his capacity as Mayor. For over three decades, he has protected the social services safety net, funding for public education, programs for vocational and technical education, and the intergenerational compact. Tip O'Neill, was not only the former Speaker of the US House of Representatives, but was also involved in the creation of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, The Perkins Vocational Act, the Civil Rights Act, as well as Medicare and Medicaid and the expansion of Social Security. He began his career as a member of the Cambridge School Committee and was later one of the founders of MASC.

Brackett focuses on role of emotions in teaching and learning

How are you feeling today? Thursday guest speaker Marc Brackett raised that question to the General Session audience to underscore how crucial emotions are to the teaching and learning process. In a recent survey of more than 22,000 high school students from across the country Brackett, the founding director of the Yale Center for Emotional Intelligence, found that the words students used most often to describe their feelings were negative: *tired, bored and stressed*. A similar survey of educators revealed them as *frustrated, overwhelmed and stressed*. Further research found that much of this stress was related to the climate and culture in the respondents' schools. Under these circumstances Brackett points out, teaching and learning is not going to be at its most effective or productive.

The good news is that strengthening social-emotional skills can reduce the harm that hard-to-handle feelings can have on learning. Brackett acknowledges that while many students will never have lives free of hardship and troubling events, we can help them have lives full of healthy relationships, compassion and a sense of purpose by teaching them to work with their emotions. Teaching such skills while building emotionally safe learning environments helps educators and students spend more time feeling the way survey respondents reported they wanted to feel: *valued, supported, connected, inspired and excited*.

For more information about Brackett and his RULER approach (recognizing, understanding, labeling, expressing and regulating emotion), go to: ei.yale.edu/ruler



Education for all

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socially turbulent times. We have made a commitment to be part of the solution rather than just a principled critic of our adversaries."

Incoming President Devin Sheehan, wrapping up the Friday dinner, observed that one thing that ties all committee members together is that they come together with a sense of purpose. School committee members have been "on the forefront of fighting for civil rights for all our students, to ensure that the voices are heard of the people who have not yet found their voice. We have fought together the inequities of charter school expansion, the lack of an

adequate, equitable funding formula and for the rights of all students, no matter the color of their skin, the person they love, the zip code they come from or the gender they identify with. We do the right thing without having to boast in public or in front of a microphone. It is more important to fight when nobody is looking than only when the cameras are on.

"We have a commitment to advocate for the safety of all students. We are an organization that believes in gun control and that every student should be able to go to school every day without the fear that they may not go home. But we also know that gun control is not just limiting guns, assault rifles and large magazine ammunition. We all know that the only truly successful form of gun control is

more support services for mental health and students in crisis and communities need to come together to end the tragedies that have occurred too often in our schools.

"We are here to protect our students and to ensure that they get the education they deserve, not live in fear, not be hungry, receive the healthcare they need and teach them that our public schools will never turn them away. We as policy makers and educators will fight against a government that tries to punish us for helping someone achieve their American Dream and I hope when our students leave our high schools and move forward in their lives, that we have inspired in them to seek the same for the students in the next generation."

JOINT CONFERENCE 2018 IN PICTURES



Additional photo information

Photo captions appear on page 8. Many additional conference photos are available for viewing and purchase online at

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If you have any questions, call photographer Chris Kiesel (a member of the Woburn School Committee) at 781-938-3838



Report on Resolutions 2018

The following is a report on actions taken on the resolutions that were considered by the Delegate Assembly at the annual meeting in Hyannis on Friday, November 9. There were 99 districts represented at the Assembly.

Resolution 1: Rejecting the Arming of Educators *(Submitted by the MASC Board of Directors)*

BE IT RESOLVED that the Massachusetts Association of School Committees rejects the notion of providing firearms to any educators.

The resolution was approved on a unanimous voice vote.

Resolution 2: Small and Rural Districts *(Submitted by the MASC Board of Directors)*

BE IT RESOLVED that MASC call for the creation of a working group to advise the legislature on the best public policy solutions to support small and rural school districts; and further

That this working group propose modifications to the Foundation Budget and other elements of the Chapter 70 financial assistance program; designate specific instances where excessive regulation interfere with the ability of school leaders to direct the academic improvement of children; identify and advise on eligibility for state and federal programs to support public education; and find strategies to ameliorate the impact of forces that jeopardize the growth, stability and success of these school districts; and further

That MASC oppose legislation or unlegislated regulations that would attempt to undermine the right of any city, town or regional district to have imposed upon it a mandate to restructure, expand, regionalize, or dissolve its school district without its consent.

A motion was made to divide the resolution into two parts, with Part 2A to consist of the above paragraphs one and two reading as follows:

BE IT RESOLVED *that MASC call for the creation of a working group to advise the legislature on the best public policy solutions to support small and rural school districts; and further*

That this working group propose modifications to the Foundation Budget and other elements of the Chapter 70 financial assistance program; designate specific instances where excessive regulation interfere with the ability of school leaders to direct the academic improvement of children; identify and advise on eligibility for state and federal programs to support public education; and find strategies to ameliorate the impact of forces that jeopardize the growth, stability and success of these school districts

and Part 2B to consist of the concluding paragraph:

BE IT RESOLVED *that MASC oppose legislation or unlegislated regulations that would attempt to undermine the right of any city, town or regional district to have imposed upon it a mandate to restructure, expand, regionalize, or dissolve its school district without its consent.*

The motion to divide the resolution into two parts (2A and 2B) was approved by a show of hands.

A motion was made to adopt the reconfigured Part 2A.

The motion to adopt Part 2A was approved by a show of hands.

A motion was made to adopt the reconfigured Part 2B.

The motion to adopt Part 2B was approved by a show of hands.

Resolution 3: Elimination of the Federal Department of Education *(Submitted by the MASC Board of Directors)*

BE IT RESOLVED that: the Massachusetts Association of School Committees works with the federal delegation to reject any notion of combining the U.S. Department of Education with other government departments.

A motion was made for a technical correction to add the words "Rejecting the" to the title of the resolution so as to read:

Resolution 3: *Rejecting the* elimination of the Federal Department of Education

The motion to add the new language was adopted on a voice vote.

The resolution, as amended, was adopted on a voice vote.

Resolution 4: Regional School Transportation *(Submitted by the MASC Board of Directors)*

For clarity, the complete text of the resolution as originally submitted appears below.

WHEREAS: Among the transportation cost concerns for **regional** school districts is the lack of competition for bus contracts for regular day ("yellow bus") services, as well as the steadily mounting cost for special education transportation; and

WHEREAS: M.G.L. c. 71, § 7C prohibits certain uses of **regional** transportation authorities to provide school district transportation services; and

WHEREAS: Elimination of M.G.L. c. 71, § 7C would free the **regional** school districts and Regional Transportation Authorities to collaborate on plans to provide safe and efficient transportation alternatives that lessen the financial impact on the both the districts and the Commonwealth; and

WHEREAS: The lack of bidders on school transportation contracts requires a deeper analysis by the appropriate state officials;

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that: To promote greater competition for bus service contracts, the Legislature should eliminate M.G.L. c. 71, § 7C, and authorize a deeper analysis

continued on next page

of the lack of bidders on school transportation contracts. An amendment was proposed to remove the word “regional” from the language of the resolution (*see the four instances above in bold-face italics*).

The amendment failed to pass on a voice vote.

An amendment was proposed to include the following language (italics) at the end of the resolution such that the final paragraph would read:

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that: To promote greater competition for bus service contracts, the Legislature should eliminate M.G.L. c. 71, § 7C, and authorize a deeper analysis of the lack of bidders on school transportation contracts *and that reimbursements will be provided to communities greater than 20 square miles in area.*

The amendment failed to pass on a voice vote.

A motion was made to refer the resolution back to the original sponsor for further work.

The motion to refer the resolution back to the sponsor was approved on a vote of 62-37.

Resolution 5: Reporting and Accountability Standards
(Submitted by the MASC Board of Directors)

BE IT RESOLVED that: the Massachusetts Association of School Committees works with the legislature and Board of Elementary and Secondary Education to ensure that all students or persons in schools that receive public funds under the authority of the MA Department of Elementary and Secondary Education or a local public school district are held to the same standards and requirements in the Commonwealth of Massachusetts.

The resolution passed, as written, with one abstention.

Resolution 6: Reproductive Health Education
(Submitted by the MASC Board of Directors)

BE IT RESOLVED that: the Massachusetts Association of School Committees supports evidence-based reproductive health curricula. Further, we call upon the U.S Department of Education and the Executive Branch to stop their support of abstinence-only education.

A motion was to divide the resolution into two parts, with Part 6A to consist of the first sentence of the paragraph above reading as follows:

BE IT RESOLVED that: the Massachusetts Association of School Committees supports evidence-based reproductive health curricula.

and Part 6B to consist of the second sentence of the paragraph above:

We call upon the U.S Department of Education and the Executive Branch to stop their support of abstinence-only education.

The motion to divide the resolution into two parts (6A and 6B) was approved by a show of hands, with one abstention.

A motion was made to adopt the reconfigured Part 6A.

The motion to adopt Part 6A was approved by a show of hands.

A motion was made to adopt the reconfigured Part 6B.

The motion to adopt Part 6B was approved by a show of hands.

Resolution 7: Gender Identity Inclusive Athletic Participation Policy
(Submitted by the Framingham School Committee)

BE IT RESOLVED that: MASC help file legislation which would have the effect of protecting LGBTQ students from discrimination, harassment and bullying by that schools should treat students based on their gender identify, protecting their privacy, providing access to **gender-neutral** restrooms, locker rooms and private stall showers, using their **preferred** pronouns, embedding sensitivity training in professional development and providing uniform accommodations.

A motion was made to amend the language of the resolution by removing the phrase “gender-neutral” in the above paragraph.

The motion to remove the phrase passed on a voice vote.

A motion was made to amend the language of the resolution by removing the word “preferred” in the above paragraph.

The motion to remove the word “preferred” failed on a voice vote.

A motion was made to add the following language at the end of the resolution so as to read:

BE IT RESOLVED that: MASC help file legislation which would have the effect of protecting LGBTQ students from discrimination, harassment and bullying by that schools should treat students based on their gender identify, protecting their privacy, providing access to restrooms, locker rooms and private stall showers, using their preferred pronouns, embedding sensitivity training in professional development and providing uniform accommodations *and to support accountability standards be put in place by MIAA to ensure that the standards of protection are adhered to.*

The motion to amend the resolution by adding the above italicized language was adopted on a voice vote.

A motion was made to amend the final paragraph to read as follows (revised language in bold face italics):

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that: MASC help file legislation which would have the effect of protecting LGBTQ students from discrimination, harassment and bullying by that schools should treat students based on their gender identify, by protecting their privacy, providing access to restrooms, **instituting reasonable accommodations to provide** locker rooms and pri-

vate stall showers, using their preferred pronouns, embedding sensitivity training in professional development and providing **necessary** uniform accommodations.

The motion to amend the language of the resolution as indicated in the paragraph above failed on a voice vote.

The motion to pass the resolution, as otherwise amended, passed on a voice vote with two abstentions.

Resolution 8: Sports Wagering
(Submitted by the MASC Board of Directors)

BE IT RESOLVED that: the Massachusetts Association of School Committees requests that, should the General Court enact legislation to legalize wagering on sporting events, the General Court, shall commit a portion of the revenues generated from sports wagering to public education.

The resolution passed, as presented, on a vote of 52-44.

Resolution 9: Access to Information for Parents and Students Who Are Clients of Special Education
(Submitted by the MASC Board of Directors)

BE IT RESOLVED that: MASC urges the legislature to amend state law to require that parents and students be provided with a copy via email or mail of all the assessments that are performed for students in the families' preferred language, at least five days prior to any meeting at which parents and students will review a proposed Individual Education Plan (IEP).

A friendly amendment was proposed to add the word "school" to the above language to read as follows:
at least five **school** days prior to any meeting at which parents and students will review a proposed Individual Education Plan (IEP).

The friendly amendment was accepted by the sponsor.

An amendment was proposed to replace the word "school" with the word "business" to read as follows:

at least five **business** days prior to any meeting at which parents and students will review a proposed Individual Education Plan (IEP).

The amendment, as proposed, was passed on a voice vote.

An amendment to replace the language of the resolution in whole was proposed. The proposed language follows:

BE IT RESOLVED that: MASC urges the legislature to amend state regulation 603 CMR 28.04(2)(c) to require that:
(a) *parents, guardians, educational surrogate parents, court-appointed resources and students receive completed reports meeting the requirements of 603 CMR et al. and related federal regulations, as well as the assessments and evaluations, and all supporting documentation; and*
(b) *documents will be received at a minimum of five business days prior to any meeting at which parents, guardians, edu-*

ational surrogate parents, court-appointed resources and students will determine eligibility and/or propose an Individual Educational Plan (IEP); and

(c) documents will be made available in the preferred and/or native language of the parents, guardians, educational surrogate parents, and students; and

(d) all documents listed in (a) will be provided to the parents, guardians, educational surrogate parents, court-appointed resources and student and not require that such be requested; and

(e) the items specified above will be provided to the parent in hard copy and/or electronically free of charge.

The motion to substitute the above language for the original language of the resolution failed to pass on a vote of 57-28, with 1 abstention.

The resolution, as otherwise amended, was adopted on a voice vote.

PROPOSAL TO AMEND THE MASC BY-LAWS

The Board of Directors of the Association has recommended to members that the by-laws of the Association be amended as follows:

The following change to Article IX—Meetings of the Association, Subsection 1. Annual Meeting

The annual meeting of the Association, to be known as the Delegate Assembly, shall be held at such hour on such business day, not earlier than September 20 nor later than November 30, in each year and at such place within Massachusetts as the Board of Directors shall determine. Resolutions and other purposes for which an annual meeting is to be held additional to those proscribed by law, by the agreement of the association, and by these by-laws may be specified by the Board of Directors and by written application made to the Secretary-Treasurer **not later than July 1** in any year by at least five active members located in at least two Divisions. Resolutions submitted by a single school committee may be presented to the Delegate Assembly upon approval by the Board of Directors, on the recommendation of the Resolutions Committee. If an annual meeting is not held within the dates specified above, a special meeting may be held upon call by the Board of Directors with all the force and effect of an annual meeting.

The Board asks to amend the by-law by changing the July 1 date (noted in the text in bold face) to no later than June 1.

The request to amend the by-law as indicated above was approved on a voice vote.

A motion was made to reconsider Resolution 4.

The motion to reconsider was not approved by the Assembly.

Commissioner looks ahead to redressing the oversights of education reform

At the Conference Keynote Dinner on November 7, Education Commissioner Jeffrey Riley opened with a reference to the current state of education in the Commonwealth 25 years after the landmark reform legislation, acknowledging that “very bright people are still capable of making mistakes—of not getting it right the first time.” Humble about the challenges he has taken on in his first year as Commissioner, Riley was nevertheless adamant about the unacceptable gaps and oversights that must be addressed. While there is much good that has resulted from the work of the past two decades, he said, far too many children have been left behind; we “need to put down our partisan swords, come back under the tent, and make some plans for the next twenty-five years. It is not good enough to be number one in the country for some students—we need to be number one for ALL our kids.”

The Commissioner stressed the importance of personal relationships in education where “kids are always watching.” He emphasized the broken nature of the school funding formula that fails to account for the staggering costs of health care, transportation and the need for increased social services and mental health supports in schools for students and families in economic distress.

In the past, Riley noted, education commissioners have not taken on an advocacy role.

“I am not going to be one of those commissioners.”

Concluding his remarks with the moving short story “Three Letters from Teddy” by Elizabeth Silance Ballard, Riley re-emphasized the importance of seeing the potential in every child and establishing connections one student at a time, most especially with those who may seem hardest to reach.



Commissioner Riley

Leadership Lunch: Equity Lawsuit Update

The potential promises—and pitfalls—of a new education equity lawsuit were put forward at the Friday Lunch by three leading attorneys who have seen the rocky road that iterations of education reform initiatives have traversed: MASC General Counsel **Stephen Finnegan**; MASC Past President **Patrick Francomano** (an attorney in his other life); and **Patrice McCarthy**, General Counsel to the Connecticut Association of Boards of Education who was closely involved in that state’s recently concluded education lawsuit.

Finnegan provided the audience a bit of history and some backstory of the *McDuffy* case that resulted in the 1993 Education Reform legislation (including the reviled funding formula) as well as the subsequent *Hancock* case. Finnegan noted that although the *Hancock* advocates lost their bid before the state’s SJC “the final ruling left the door open for future legislative action” and it is this opening that proponents of a new education equity lawsuit are working their case on.

Attorney Patrick Francomano, a 24-year school committee member, a past president of MASC, and a member of the Foundation Budget Review Commission whose 2015 report found

education in the Commonwealth is currently underfunded by roughly \$2 billion, noted that three years later, the legislature has failed to take action on the FBRC recommendations, including



Patrice McCarthy and Patrick Francomano

the challenging costs of health insurance, ELL remediation, special education, and low income students. While acknowledging that there is no single solution: “one size does not fit all, and each community has its unique set of circumstances,” Francomano excoriated the politically charged legislative process that has tied up meaningful action on a revised funding plan.” Nonetheless he cautioned against accepting compromises that, for a few extra dollars, may compel districts in exchange to rescind fiscal and/or directional oversight to outside parties. “And don’t let them tell you it’s ‘new money.’ It’s

not “new” money: it’s money that we should have gotten in the first place.”

CABE General Counsel Patrice McCarthy described the 13-year “journey” of that state’s education funding lawsuit, *CCJEF v. Reil*, from its inception in 2005 to its conclusion in early 2018. Be careful what you wish for, she advised. In 2016, the Superior Court found that education funding levels were adequate but that education policies, distribution and oversight was flawed. On appeal, in a 4-3 decision, the CT Supreme Court found that while they state’s educational offerings are at least minimally adequate, they found no violation of equal protection rights under the state’s constitution, and while there may be “an imperfect public education system in this state that is straining to serve students of diverse needs . . . it is not the function of the courts to treated education policy or to attempt by judicial fiat to eliminate all of the societal deficiencies that continue to frustrate the state’s educational efforts.” In short, she said, the state has a responsibility to insure that a minimally adequate education is offered, but not a constitutional obligation to insure that all students can take advantage of the opportunity.

Jim Braude and colleagues offer mid-term post-mortem

In opening the Friday General Session keynote speaker/panel moderator **Jim Braude** admitted that the remarks he had prepared on Tuesday evening were already badly outdated given not only some of the contested mid-term election outcomes, but the subsequent events that seemed to be unfolding hourly in the nation's capital. Braude listed off the significant happenings of the recent weeks—culminating in the resignation the day before of Attorney General Sessions—followed by a few conclusions that he admitted the political weathervane could also render moot: above all that the Senate will continue to confirm nominated judges, impacting the country for decades.

Jennifer Nassour, reflecting on her experience as the former Chair of the MA Republican party, noted the large number of women who ran for office in 2018. "They

decided it was their turn, and they weren't waiting." She spoke of the biases that still impact women in the political arena, commenting that no one asks her husband who is taking care of the kids when he is at an evening meeting.

Andrea Cabral, former Executive Secretary for Public Safety in the Commonwealth, said she was "astounded by the fragility of this democracy," commenting that all systems should be regularly tested and ours has not been so tested. Trump "told us who he was from the very beginning, and, as time went on, it has become less about him and more about us and what we will tolerate. . . [Trump] is the lit end of a cigarette that the GOP has been smoking for 30 years." Government isn't bad, she concluded. Remember, "it's OUR government," she remarked to applause.



Braude, Nassour, Cabral

Captions (see photos on page 3)

1. Applause at general session
 2. Supt.Menzo on building capacity through teamwork
 3. Demonstrating a student-built drone
 4. Saturday Student Voices panel
 5. Cheryl Frazier, Randolph SC
 6. Former MASC Executive Director Paul Gorden
 7. Jimmy Tingle explains it all for you
 8. Distinguished award recipient Sally Cragin and Mr. Wuffles
 9. Announcing the Bingo winners
 10. Delegate registration
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