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SCHOOL BOARD notes

BUDGET WATCH

Revenue Forecast: Grim New Jersey Treasurer Bradley Abelow announced last week that state income and corporate tax revenues are running half a billion dollars behind projections. For the Legislature and administration, the news means that they will have to find a way to close a new gap before finalizing the 2006-07 state budget. According to Abelow, Governor Corzine is firm: No additional tax increases.

Corzine's proposed $30.9-billion budget, unveiled in March, already includes a one-cent sales tax increase, fee increases, short-term revenue raisers, as well as spending cuts—all designed to close a $4 billion to $5 billion shortfall. But these maneuvers will not be enough in the face of an additional $500-million gap. Abelow said he will provide a revenue update, along with strategies to close the shortfall, during a May 22 appearance before the Senate Budget and Appropriations Committee.

Under the administration's proposed 2006-07 budget, pre-K through grade 12 public education is the only major area that did not experience actual cuts from current-year levels. Nonetheless, the proposed budget would represent the fifth consecutive year of flat funding for most school districts.

Abbott Aid Before Court The state Supreme Court heard arguments last week concerning 2006-07 state funding for the 31 Abbott school districts. Except for a $40-million increase for staffing and operating new schools, the administration's proposed budget would essentially keep aid to Abbott districts flat.

Statewide, proposed Abbott district budgets had called for an additional $500 million from the state. (Budgets in 24 districts request additional state money; seven Abbott district budgets assume flat funding.)

Abbott aid levels are mandated by the state Supreme Court under a series of decisions in *Abbott v. Burke*. Therefore, the state must receive court permission to provide lower amounts of funding than that prescribed by the courts.

Arguing before the high court last week, New Jersey Attorney General Zulima Farber said that the governor's proposed funding levels are necessary because of the state's "dire" financial circumstances. She contended that the school districts could make cuts in areas such as administration and transportation. The attorney general also criticized the size of some districts' requested aid increases.

Twenty-four of the Abbott districts are fighting the administration's plan. The Education Law Center and legal counsel for the districts contend that the administration's proposed budget would force cuts in programs and staffing; threaten progress made possible by the *Abbott* decisions; and prevent them from seeking supplemental funding to pay for services required by the court.

[As we went to press, the court issued a ruling generally in favor of the state's arguments.]

Governor Proclaims May 14-20 'Special Education Week'

Governor Jon S. Corzine last week issued a proclamation declaring May 14-20 as "Special Education Week in New Jersey."

Special Education Week in New Jersey recognizes the achievements of the state's 235,000 students with special needs and the commitment of their parents and teachers. The New Jersey School Boards Association and ASAH...*serving the private special education community since 1974* have sponsored Special Education Week since 1985. The theme for Special Education Week 2006 is "Reaching Beyond Boundaries."

"The public school districts and the private schools of New Jersey make a major contribution to the public welfare by preparing thousands of exceptional persons to participate as citizens of this state and as members of society," reads Governor Corzine's proclamation. "I call upon all citizens to recognize the achievements of New Jersey's special education students and the outstanding contributions made by educators, school board members, schools and agencies for the handicapped and parents toward quality education for the exceptional citizens of our state."

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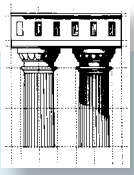

New Forumula for Leadership Conference

Being aware of the constraints on your time and your district's budget, the Leadership Conference—the keystone of the NJSBA Board Member Academy's Certified Board Leader (CBL) tier—has a new, shorter format for 2006, and a reduced cost.

The Leadership Conference will be held Friday evening, June 16, through Saturday evening, June 17, at the Princeton Marriott Hotel and Conference Center at Forrestal. This course combines theory and essential board management skills. By attending this program, you will be able to–

- Explain the board leader's role and describe when leaders are at their best.
- Focus the board on its mission.
- Demonstrate how to manage the meeting.
- Improve your board's internal communications.
- Work on problems, not personalities.
- Represent the board to the public and the press.
- Move your district from good to great.

The four Board Member Academy credits you earn may be applied to the CBM, MBM and/or the CBL.

The registration fee is $375 for a single, $295 for a double, and $220 for a commuter. Registration includes materials, room, breakfast, lunch and two dinners, and gratuities (breakfast and room are excluded for commuters).

To register, have your business administrator call Charlene Hendrix toll free at 1-888-886-5722, extension 5232. For information, contact Walt Meyer at 1-888-886-5722, ext. 5236, or by e-mail at wmeyer@njsba.org.

Superintendent Contract Training Slated for May 20

Is your board in the process of hiring a new superintendent? Negotiating a contract with one you want to hire? Or looking to negotiate an extension to your current superintendent's contract?

To prepare school board members for the next round of superintendent contract negotiations, NJSBA is offering a "hot topic" conference, *Negotiating Your Superintendent's Contract: Keeping it Transparent*, on Saturday, May 20, at the Crowne Plaza Hotel (formerly the Holiday Inn), in Monroe Township.

The conference, which follows the Delegate Assembly, will start at 11:30 a.m. with a buffet lunch. The training session will run from 12:30 to 3 p.m.

The registration fee is $75 for NJSBA members and $150 for non-members. Board members will earn 1 Board Member Academy credit towards the CBM or MBM. To register, contact the NJSBA Inservice Education Department toll free at 1-888-886-5722, extension 5232.

Survey Reveals Positive Urban School Climate

A majority of urban students say they feel safe at school, enjoy learning, and are hopeful about their future, according to a recent survey performed by the National School Boards Association's Council of Urban Boards of Education (CUBE).

The report, "Where We Learn," surveyed nearly 32,000 students attending 15 urban school districts in 13 states. It identifies areas of concern, but also reveals promising results. For instance, 68.3% of students said they enjoy learning, and 79.9% plan to continue their education beyond high school.

Students were surveyed in the areas of school safety, bullying, relationships with teachers, parental involvement and racial self-concept. The results show positive school climates, but also areas of concern.

- 62.7% of students feel safe in their school; however, 60% say many fights occur in their school.
- 77.2% say they are not bullied during

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Special Education Week
continued

"Governor Corzine's interest and support illustrate how highly our state values the accomplishments of its special education students," said Patti J. Pawling, NJSBA president.

A program to usher in Special Education Week will take place on May 12 in Somerset. The event will include an awards ceremony for the ten schools recognized for creative special education programming through the fifth annual Innovations in Special Education program. (See *School Board Notes*, April 21.)

Special Education Week in New Jersey 2006 is made possible through the contributions of Bank of America Insurance Group, PSE&G, and the Tarpey Group.

NJ Survey to Assess HS Requirements

A growing nationwide movement is focusing on more relevant and rigorous training for high school students. Against this backdrop, the state Department of Education last week issued a *mandatory* survey to determine if changes are needed in New Jersey.

The High School Graduation Requirement Survey will be available May 15 at *http://education.state.nj.us/gradsurvey/*. All school districts that operate high schools must complete the form by June 15, according to Acting Commissioner of Education Lucille E. Davy.

First Time "This marks the first time we have examined in-depth graduation requirements across the state," stated Davy in a memo to superintendents and principals. "The results will provide valuable information for future high school reform initiatives."

For further information, contact Linda L. Morse, acting director of the Office of Academic and Professional Standards, at gradreq@doe.state.nj.us.

Former NJ Board Member Takes Helm at NSBA

E. Jane Gallucci

E. Jane Gallucci, a local school board member in Florida—and a former New Jersey board member—was elected the 59th president of the National School Boards Association (NSBA) at the association's annual conference in Chicago last month. Gallucci has been a member of NSBA's board of directors since 2001 and served as president-elect last year.

A former president of the Florida School Boards Association, Gallucci has served on Florida's Pinellas County school board for 10 years. She was a member of the Rockaway Borough Board of Education in Morris County, New Jersey, from 1979 to 1983.

"I want to leverage the presidency of NSBA for all school board members," Gallucci said. "I want us to collectively stand up against all the odds, whether it's the lack of funding, the bureaucracy, or the critics who claim to know more than we do."

Gallucci has created a new NSBA initiative, Snapshots of Success. The effort addresses the successes of public education. For information visit *www.njsba.org*

Board of Directors to Meet

In accordance with the Open Public Meetings Act, notice is hereby provided of a meeting of the Board of Directors of the New Jersey School Boards Association. The meeting will be held at the Crowne Plaza Hotel (formerly Holiday Inn), 390 Forsgate Drive, Exit 8A, New Jersey Turnpike in Jamesburg, New Jersey, on Friday, May 19, 2006 at 7:30 p.m.

The meeting is open to the public.

The agenda, to the extent known at this time, will include discussion and/or action on: minutes of the March 17, 2006 meeting; Bylaws amendments for November 2006 Delegate Assembly; 2006-07 Association budget; Positions and Policies on Education File Codes 3100, *Timelines for School Budget Process*, and 9112, *Timing of School Elections*; a presentation on high school reform initiative; presentation of Board Certification Awards; and an advocacy/communications update.

For further information, contact Mary Alice Durham at (609) 278-5206.

NJSBA Posts Pandemic Readiness Policy

NJSBA has added an item to its *Critical Policy Reference Manual* on preparations for a possible pandemic flu or avian flu outbreak. Policy #5141 "Health" is available on-line at www.njsba.org (password protected) with a new clause recommending:

O. *Preparation for the potential disruption of a pandemic flu outbreak, such as avian flu, by filling out a school preparedness checklist available from* www.pandemicflu.gov *or NJSBA, with periodic reports to the school board on steps the district has already taken, as well as additional steps that need to be taken, to prepare for a flu pandemic.*

The website, www.pandemicflu.gov, is maintained by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. The school preparedness checklist can be accessed by clicking the "School Planning" tab at the top of the page. (The checklist applies to any schools within the K-12 range, for example, K-6 or K-8.)

As new information becomes available, the federal government will update the checklist.

Request for Proposals: Special Education Study

The New Jersey School Boards Association, a governmental entity established by N.J.S.A. 18A:6-45 et seq., is seeking proposals from private consultants and research organizations to conduct a study of the types and quality of special education services currently in place in New Jersey and the costs of providing those services.

The study would address local school district policies and practices; systems for delivering special education programs and services; and the actual cost of special education to local school districts resulting from state and federal statute and regulation.

Based on its findings, the study would make recommendations to promote cost-efficient and effective special education services through changes in state and federal statute and regulation, local school district policies, and the training, preparation and certification of teachers.

The project would conclude by June 15, 2007 with delivery of a completed report to the New Jersey School Boards Association.

Interested parties must first contact Frank Belluscio, NJSBA director of communications, at (609) 278-5205 or by email at fbelluscio@njsba.org to receive the formal Request for Proposals. NJSBA must receive completed, signed proposals no later than 5 p.m. (EST), June 5, 2006.

The New Jersey School Boards Association expressly reserves the right to reject any or all proposals. Consultants shall comply with the "Law Against Discrimination," P.L. 1975, Chapter 127, as amended.

89 Schools Recognized for Achievement

Randy Grimm, senior vice president of Washington Mutual, and Lucille Davy, acting commissioner of education, announce 89 public schools recognized as "2005 Just for the Kids - New Jersey Benchmark Schools" on April 28 in Jamesburg.

The 89 schools were honored for attaining high rates of student achievement on the state's assessment tests.

The Business Coalition for Educational Excellence (BCEE) at the New Jersey Chamber of Commerce sponsors Just for the Kids – New Jersey, in cooperation with the state Department of Education. The program analyzes student achievement data; presents the information in an easy-to-understand format; and identifies schools' potential for improvement.

To view a list of the 89 recognized schools, visit *www.BCEE.org* and click "Press Releases."

the school day, but half of the students see others being bullied at least once a month.

- 60% of elementary students believe teachers are fair to everyone in the school; however, the number drops to 30% among high-school students.

To view the report, visit *www.nsba.org.*

For more information on county school boards association activities, log on to *www.njsba.org* and click on the appropriate county association.

NJ Looks at HS Reform
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CALENDAR

May 17-19

- NJASA/NJSBA Spring Conference, Atlantic City

May 19

- NJSBA Board of Directors, Crowne Plaza Hotel, Monroe Twp., 7:30 p.m.
- NJSBA Audit Committee, Crowne Plaza Hotel, Monroe Twp., approx. 9:30 p.m.

May 20

Delegate Assembly, Crowne Plaza Hotel, Monroe Twp., 9:30 a.m.

Superintendent Contract Negotiations, Crowne Plaza, Monroe Twp., 11:30 a.m.

May 22

Passaic 3 R's for New Board Members & Presidents Meeting, Passaic Co. Technical Institute, Wayne, 5:30 p.m.

May 23

- Special Education Committee, NJSBA headquarters, Trenton, 6:30 p.m.

Middlesex Spring Dinner, Pierre's, South Brunswick, 6:00 p.m.

May 24

Morris Spring Dinner, Hilton Garden Inn, Rockaway, 6:00 p.m.

Salem 3 R's Program for New Board Members & Presidents Meeting, Salem Co. Technical School, Woodstown, 6:00 p.m.

NJSBAIG meeting, Forsgate Country Club, Jamesburg, 6:30 p.m.

Somerset Spring Dinner, Double Tree Hotel, 6:30 p.m.

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