

SCHOOL BOARD notes

NJSBA Offers Funding Panel Cost-Saving Ideas

Public education is a labor-intensive operation, with an estimated 75 percent of its costs directly related to collective bargaining. Health benefits, in particular, represent a significant driver of school operating costs, NJSBA's director of governmental relations told the joint legislative committee on school funding reform Tuesday.

Controlling those costs is difficult, if not impossible, for school districts that use the State Health Benefits Program (SHBP).

"The Legislature can promote savings by implementing reforms that would permit greater flexibility to negotiate within the SHBP," said Michael Vrancik.

Flexibility Needed Regulations of the SHBP, the largest health insurance carrier *continued on page 2*



PHOTO BY ROSA CIRIANNI

NJSBA Director of Governmental Relations Mike Vrancik (right) discusses school funding issues with Sen. Gerald Cardinale, R-Bergen, prior to the Sept. 5 committee hearing.

State to Implement Student Tracking System—an NJSBA Goal

A statewide student database and tracking system—a major NJSBA advocacy goal—is a step closer to reality.

Late last month, Commissioner of Education Lucille E. Davy announced that the state Department of Education has engaged a consultant to implement the system, which will track where students live, the districts where they attend school, and their academic performance.

The program, NJSMART (New Jersey Standards Measurement and Recourse for

Teaching), resulted in part from a 2000 NJSBA study on student mobility. That report found that students who change schools frequently can suffer academically and socially.

Achievement Gap "To close the achievement gap, New Jersey must institute a system to track the academic history of all students," states an NJSBA position paper submitted to the gubernatorial candidates in 2005. "The system would *continued on page 7*

CAPITOL



WATCH

Lawmakers Mull Regionalization

Merging New Jersey's local school districts, or their critical functions, into 21 county-based systems is among concepts under discussion by joint legislative panels on property tax reform.

On Aug. 30, Sen. Bob Smith (D-Middlesex), co-chairman of the consolidation/shared services committee, said he would like to see the state create 21 countywide school systems, similar to ones in Florida, Maryland and Virginia. Additionally, he noted support for the concept of consolidating functions, such as purchasing, human resources, administration and, possibly, transportation, at the county level.

Turmoil, Disruption Ernest Reock, professor emeritus at Rutgers, the State University, told the panel that New Jersey could save \$65 million in administrative costs and \$365 million overall by merging elementary-school districts with secondary-school systems.

"It appears that there are potential cost savings that could be made through consolidation, especially in administrative costs," Reock told the panel. "Whether they are large enough to justify the turmoil and the disruption involved is open to serious question."

NJSBA: Voluntary Regionalization NJSBA supports school district consolidation when the communities involved agree to the plan and when it produces educational benefits. The Association does not believe that the Legislature should mandate school district mergers because, in many cases, regionalization could cost more.

continued on page 2

Certificated Board Members



NJSBA Field Service Representative Joanne Borin (right) congratulates Morris County Certificated Board Members (left to right): Fred West of Rockaway Township, Lisa Ellis of Madison, and Susan McCusker of Mountain Lakes. (Not pictured: Michael Bertram of Denville, Anthony Scarpino of Hanover, and Thomas Greulich of Morris Hills Regional).

Capitol Watch

continued

County Profile On Aug. 25, Michael Griffith, education finance consultant to the National Conference of State Legislatures, told the school funding reform committee that consolidating school districts by itself would not produce real savings, although closing individual school buildings and reducing staff could reduce costs.

He noted that New Jersey's current municipal-based school district structure is common among states in the Northeast, including New York and Pennsylvania, and parts of the mid-West. The county-based districts found in many areas of the south reflect the government structure in those states.

For consolidation to occur in New Jersey, Griffith said the state would have to identify suitable districts and mandate mergers. A similar process is now taking place in Arkansas.

The government consolidation/shared services and school funding committees are two of four joint panels formed over the summer to develop solutions to New Jersey's property tax problem. Other panels are reviewing benefits reform and whether the state should conduct a constitutional convention to address property tax reform. The committees are expected to develop proposals for adoption by the Legislature by the end of the year.

NJSBA Offers Funding

continued

among public school districts, prohibit negotiations over the most basic cost-containment measures that are available through private carrier in areas such as deductible and co-pay levels, employee contributions to premium and incentives for non-enrollment, Vrancik noted.

The result has been a decline in SHBP membership among school boards, the state program once served a wide majority of New Jersey's school districts, today, less than 40 percent of districts secure coverage through the state plan.

For districts that find no choice but to remain in SHBP, legislative or regulatory action to loosen its rules would provide financial benefit. The effort would also make the plan more competitive with private carriers.

Millions Saved "Reducing the impact of uncontrollable and unpredictable increases in health insurance premiums would go a long way in addressing the cost of school operations and the concurrent effect on local taxpayers," said Vrancik.

He noted one district that saved \$2 million in one year by offering wavers of coverage—something not allowed under SHBP. Another district reduced its salary base by 1 percent by offering a managed-care program as its basic plan.

Shared Services Vrancik also told law-

makers that New Jersey has yet to realize its full potential to save money through shared services in transportation, special education, administration and recreation. He noted NJSBA's support for incentive programs to help communities to identify shared services.

While shared services hold the potential for wide-scale cost savings, the financial impact of forced consolidation is not guaranteed, he explained.

Deal Breaker "Many communities have considered expanding educational and extra curricular offerings by merging with their neighbors," he explained. "But the deal breaker has always been property taxes. When one town discovers that the merger would result in an increase in their property taxes, the measure fails to win approval.

"If the legislature is serious about encouraging consolidation of school districts, it needs to address this financial obstacle," Vrancik noted.

NJSBA was invited to testify before the school funding reform panel, and present recommendations on how school districts could save money.

The panel is one of four set up by the Legislature to study issues and come up with viable solutions for reducing the property tax burden on residents.

To view NJSBA's testimony presented to the school funding reform committee, visit www.njsba.org.



Notice: NJSBA Board of Directors Meeting

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 7:30 p.m. Friday, Sept. 15, 2006 at the Robert Wood Johnson Center for Health and Wellness, 3100 Quakerbridge Road (Exit 65A, Interstate 295) in

Mercerville, N.J.

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 May 18, 2006 meeting, recognition of former officers and members of the Board of Directors, the Conflict of Interest Statement and Board of Directors' Code of Conduct Certification, Legislative and Resolutions subcommittee appointments, Board of Directors' outstanding dues for districts, High School Reform Initiative, facilities update, Jerkins *amicus* request, and officer and executive director reports.

For further information, contact Linda Rottloff at (609) 278-5284.

Featuring...



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**Workshop
&
Exhibition**

October 25-27
Atlantic City
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MORE Content for Superintendents and Business Administrators

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NEW Exhibition Format

*...And Much More.
Details Inside!*

Making Connections

Keynote Speakers



Dr. Phillip Boyle

President, Leading & Governing
Associates, Inc.
*Boards and Administrators: Con-
necting to Public Values*



Dr. Pedro A. Noguera

Professor, Author
and Activist
*Making Connections to
Student Achievement*

Visit www.njsba.org/workshop

The New and Improved Workshop

You Asked, We Delivered



NEW Programming Choices

- Two Board Member Academy courses, *Communicating Effectively* and *Engaging the Public*, will be held on Tuesday afternoon. This is your opportunity to enhance the Workshop experience and earn credits toward the CBL certification. There is an additional registration fee for these courses.
- An *Action Lab* session has been added to every day of the conference, so you'll get more of the hands-on learning opportunities you crave.
- A *General Session* featuring a nationally renowned speaker has been added to Thursday's schedule.
- New *Clinic Sessions* on Friday give you the opportunity to meet face-to-face with NJSBA and NJASA staff members on a variety of issues. Get answers to your most pressing questions on board-superintendent relations, labor relations, policy, school finance, school law, and more.
- Friday's *Closing General Session* will feature the launch of New Jersey's Readiness Curriculum, a cooperative program among NJSBA, NJASA, and the Department of Education that focuses on consensus building and improving district governance. Also included are door prize drawings and an awards ceremony for Master Board Members, Board Certification and School Communications Competition winners.

CONVENIENT Program Scheduling

- You asked for more choices on Wednesday afternoon. Now, you'll have the opportunity to attend the *PR Mini Workshops*, a bonus session of *Action Labs*, the *State Legislative Update* or the *Critical Issue Session*.
- For your convenience, all *Group Sessions* and *Action Labs* will run concurrently and will be 1½ hours in length.



Whether you attended last year or haven't been to Atlantic City in some time, this is one Workshop you won't want to miss. We listened to our members' feedback on every area of Workshop operations and developed an exciting new format that offers something for everyone.

NEW Exhibition Format

- Stop by "Association Central," the totally redesigned booth space for NJS-BA, NJASA and NJASBO, featuring your Association staff and officers. The new Association area is located next to the CAL Café – so you can visit your Association staff and relax, all in one convenient spot.
- The Park Area and Cyber Café will be grouped together in Flex Hall, providing you with two relaxation areas on the exhibit floor.
- Treasure Chest Drawings have been moved to the Park Area to relieve congestion. Three drawings will take place on Wednesday and four on Thursday. As an added bonus, student groups will perform before and after every drawing (except the last one each day).
- For your convenience, the exhibit floor will be open from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. on Wednesday and Thursday.

MORE Content for Superintendents and Business Administrators

- Tuesday's schedule will feature *Superintendent Mentor Training*, a continuing education course for chief school administrators.
- More Workshop programming has been dedicated to administrator needs than ever before.

All
New,
All for
You

FREE Lunch on Wednesday

- Yes Virginia, there is such a thing as a free lunch! Sponsored by Workshop exhibitors, a box lunch will be provided for all attendees at the rear of Exhibit Hall B on Wednesday.

2006 ANNUAL WORKSHOP REGISTRATION FORM



OCTOBER 25-27, 2006

All registrations must be prepaid. Registrations will not be processed without payment. Purchase orders will not be accepted as payment. **BADGES WILL ONLY BE MAILED TO THOSE WHO HAVE PREPAID PRIOR TO SEPTEMBER 26, 2006.**

REGISTRATION QUALIFICATIONS

Only board members and district staff are permitted to be included in a group registration. Attorneys must register as individuals. Member rates are extended to all New Jersey school board members and staff of districts in good standing. Spouses of board members, administrators or district staff will receive a complimentary registration. **Registration fee covers admission to all Workshop activities except the Urban Boards Luncheon (register below), the School Law Forum (call 609-278-5254), and the Women's Leadership Breakfast (call 609-599-2900).**

ANY CHANGES AND/OR CANCELLATIONS MUST BE SENT TO US IN WRITING. Mail to NJSBA, Attn: Heidi Bullock at the address below, or fax to 609-695-2934, or e-mail to hbullock@njsba.org.

School District _____ County _____

Contact Person _____ Telephone # _____

Affiliation Name/Address (if not with a school district) _____

TYPE OF REGISTRATION	APR 3-SEP 1		SEP 2-OCT 14		OCT 15 & ON SITE	
<input type="checkbox"/> Group Registration (open to N.J. school districts only) Covers the board, chief school administrator, school business official, district staff; maximum 11 people. Attorneys may not be included.	Members Only \$1,100		Members Only \$1,200		Members Only \$1,500	
<input type="checkbox"/> Individual Registration	Member \$175	Non-Member \$350	Member \$200	Non-Member \$400	Member \$225	Non-Member \$425

District Registrants Name(s) of District Member(s)	E-mail Address	Spouse's Full Name (If attending)	Urban Lunch # of tickets @ \$65/person
Chief School Administrator			
School Business Official			
Board Member			
Board Member			
Board Member			
Board Member			
Board Member			
Board Member			
Board Member			
Board Member			
Board Member			
District Staff & Title			
Non-group registrant (please include title)			
Total Amount Enclosed \$			
Important! All registrations must be prepaid. Registrations will not be processed without prepayment			

To order a wheelchair, call The UPS Store, located in the AC Convention Center 609-449-2480.

Cancellation Fees: Jun 1-Sep 1 = \$50, Sep 2- 26 = \$100
Requests for refunds cannot be accepted after September 26, 2006.

MAKE CHECK PAYABLE TO NJSBA AND MAIL TO:
New Jersey School Boards Association, Business Services/Workshop, P.O. Box 909, Trenton, New Jersey 08605-0909

CONFERENCE NOTES

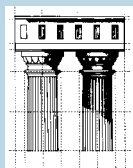


Present Day Gangs: Best Practices and Solutions for Law Enforcement (first session in a three-part series), sponsored by the New Jersey State League of Municipalities and co-sponsored by NJSBA, will be held from 8:30 a.m. to 1 p.m. Wednesday, Sept. 13 at the National Guard Armory, Eggert Crossing Road, Lawrenceville.

The program will detail the existing gang presence and growing gang activity throughout the state. Attendees will learn about successful gang prevention programs run by municipal police departments and law enforcement agencies, municipal ordinances dealing with gangs, and regional task forces.

Registration is \$25 per person, and begins at 8:30 a.m. Refreshments will be served.

In addition to NJSBA, co-sponsors of the event include the New Jersey State Association of Chiefs of Police, New Jersey State Parole Board, New Jersey State Police and the New Jersey Education Association. To register or to obtain additional information, contact the League of Municipalities at (609) 695-34811.



Last Chance for Orientation

If you were elected or appointed to your board in the past 12 months, your last chance to attend a weekend orientation conference will be Sept. 15-17. All board members must attend NJSBA training conferences to fulfill their obligation under the state's School Ethics Act.

You'll get a year's worth of experience in a few short days, through the large and small group sessions, clinics and interaction with staff and experienced board members.

To register, ask your business administrator to call Charlene Hendrix at (609) 278-5232.

For more information, contact Mark Bonjavanni at (888) 886-5722, ext. 5207.

Business Administrators: Salary Guide Alert

School districts still negotiating with their teachers unions following the expiration of three-year contracts *cannot* promote staff to another step on the salary guide until a new agreement is in place, according to a 1996 state Supreme Court ruling.

The court decision, and subsequent case law, requires the following until a new agreement has been ratified:

- Teaching staff members may not be advanced a step in their expired salary guides or be paid their increments.
- Teaching staff members may not be moved to an advanced column on the guide (e.g., bachelor's degree+30, master's degree, or master's+30).
- Teaching staff members may not be given increased longevity amounts for which

they would otherwise be eligible.

- Support staff members covered by the same collective bargaining agreement as teachers may also not receive increments, horizontal advancement, or increases in longevity, until a new agreement is reached.

Staff members must be paid the same salary as of June 30, when their contracts expired.

This holding only applies to expired *three-year* contracts. It does not apply to support staff members who have a negotiated agreement separate from teachers.

For more information, contact your board attorney, their professional negotiator, or NJSBA Labor Relations staff at (888) 886-5722, ext. 5219. 🍏

Student Tracking System

continued

enable educators to address the obstacles facing children who change residence repeatedly.”

“Both Governor Corzine and the Legislature have indicated that a statewide student database to support the tracking of student academic outcomes is a crucial need as well as a top priority for New Jersey,” Davy said in an Aug. 29 memo to superintendents.

NJSBA applauded the announcement.

“NJSMART will close a major information gap about many of our students,” commented NJSBA Executive Director Edwina M. Lee. “School districts will be able to use the data to diagnose the types of assistance students need to meet academic goals and to chart a course of improvement. With NJSMART, those plans can go forward with students when they move to a new community.”

Efficient Reporting For state and local school districts, NJSMART will facilitate increasingly complex reporting requirements under the federal No Child Left Behind Act, Davy noted. The system will also facilitate the flow of information from the state education department to school districts.

Next Steps The education department will issue a list of student information items that school districts must submit by the end of the year. In turn, the state will use that information, including student names and addresses, to create student identification numbers that districts will be required to manage.

The state education department will sponsor information sessions Sept. 28 and 29 and Oct. 2 and 3 to explain the NJSMART program. Locations and times have not yet been determined. In the meantime, school officials can obtain more information from Public Consulting Group, the vendor that is implementing the system, at (800) 254-0295. 🍏



This week's School Board Notes includes a special six-page pull-out about Workshop 2006. For an in-depth look at the new and exciting programs and events scheduled for Workshop 2006, visit www.njsba.org/workshop.

Salary Guide Alert —Page 7—

C A L E N D A R



Sept. 13

Camden County SBA Educational Leadership Dinner, Thommy G's, Audubon, 6:30 p.m.

Sept. 14

Bergen County SBA Presidents Meeting, the Assembly, Englewood Cliffs, 6 p.m.

Essex County SBA Educational Leadership Dinner, Il Tulipano, Cedar Grove, 6 p.m.

Sept. 15

✓ Audit Committee Meeting, Holiday Inn Conference Center, NJ Turnpike Exit 8, East Windsor, 5:30 p.m.


✓ Board of Directors Holiday Inn Conference Center, NJ Turnpike Exit 8, East Windsor, 6 p.m.

Sept. 15-17

✓ New Board Member Orientation Conference, Princeton Marriott Hotel and Conference Center (formerly Doral Forrester), Princeton.

For more information about county school boards association activities, visit www.njsba.org and click on the name of the appropriate county association.



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