

SCHOOL BOARD notes

Controlling Special Ed Costs

New Jersey could save costs by implementing changes to special-education services, yet still retain quality programming, an NJSBA representative told lawmakers on Tuesday.

Cathy Moncrief, president of the Lindenwold Board of Education and a member of NJSBA's Board of Directors, testified before the Joint Legislative Committee on Public School Funding Reform on ways to help local school districts reduce special education costs.

NJSBA is currently conducting a comprehensive study of special education costs and practices, Moncrief noted. The study, which will be completed in June 2007, will identify cost drivers, effective programs, the actual cost of special education, and changes needed in law and regulation.

With the study still in progress, Mon-

crief shared observations and suggestions based on NJSBA policy and the experiences of local school boards.

Extraordinary Costs Particularly onerous to school districts are “extraordinary costs” that usually involve state- and fed-
continued on page 6



Cathy Moncrief (right) discusses testimony with Barbara Horl, NJSBA lobbyist.

Base Closing-type Mergers Proposed

A special state commission—similar to the federal panel that determines military base closings—would recommend a list of municipalities and other governmental units that should consolidate to reduce property taxes, according to a new proposal that has bi-partisan support.

The measure, Senate Joint Resolution 47, would create a nine-member commission appointed by the governor, the state Legislature and the chief justice of the state Supreme Court. The panel would

create standards to determine which municipalities should be consolidated to save taxpayer's money. Within two years of its creation, the commission would provide a list of mergers to the governor and Legislature, which would either approve or reject the list in its entirety.

School Impact If the governor and Legislature approve the municipal consolidations, the commissioner of education would meet “with the superintendents and other
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CAPITOL



WATCH

Where NJSBA Stands What can the Legislature do to encourage shared services and voluntary school district consolidation? That was the subject of a letter from NJSBA Executive Director Edwina M. Lee and Dr. Barry J. Galasso, executive director of the New Jersey Association of School Administrators, to the Joint Legislative on Government Consolidation and Shared Services. To view the letter, go to www.njsba.org/government-consolidation.pdf.

Setting the Record Straight A Sept. 25 article by the Gannett Statehouse bureau confirmed that federal statistics do *not* show a vast difference between New Jersey's administrative costs and those of Maryland, which operates county-based school systems. Some lawmakers have supported the county-based structure as a property tax relief method. To view the article, visit NJSBA's “Daily Clips” at www.njsba.org/PI/daily-clips.htm and scroll down to the *Asbury Park Press* listings for Sept. 25.

Resources for Boards Visit NJSBA's Special Session Resources page for information, including NJSBA President Kevin E. Ciak's recent *New York Times* Op-Ed, as well as tools to advocate the interests of public school students. Go to www.njsba.org/govrel/specialsession.



Presenting the 2006 Communications Competition Winners

NJSBA is pleased to announce the winners of its 2006 Annual School Communications Competition. The program recognizes exceptional publications and public relations programs in local school districts

Recipients of Awards of Excellence will be recognized during the Workshop 2006 Closing General Session from 11:15 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. on Friday, Oct. 27. A selection of winning entries will also be posted at www.njsba.org.

This year's judge is Amy Fisher, former Northeast Region vice president of the National School Public Relations Association and former director of community relations for the East Brunswick schools.

Annual Report

Passaic County Technical Institute
Piscataway School District

Audio-Visual Media

Salem County Vocational Technical,
Academy Programs Recruitment Video
Salem County Vocational Technical,

CTHS Programs Recruitment Video
Hamilton Twp. (Mercer), *Above and Beyond*
Middlesex Regional Educational Services
Commission, *MRESC-Cooperative, Cost
Efficient, Quality Services*

Finance Publications

Flemington-Raritan Regional, *2006-2007
Budget Campaign*

Calendars/Information Guides/Handbooks

Tinton Falls, *Tips For Success*
Salem County Vocational Technical,
CTHS Catalog of Courses
Hopewell Valley Regional, *2005-2006
Calendar Handbook*
Union City, *Keys to the Board of Educa-
tion of Union City*

Magazines

Glen Ridge, *Forest Leaves*

Newsletter/Tabloid

Marlboro Twp., *School Notes Newsletter*
Passaic County Technical Institute, *The
Technician*

Hopewell Valley Regional, *The Valley View*
South Brunswick, *Spotlight on Schools*

Public Relations Projects

Mount Laurel, *Middle School Summit*
Piscataway, *Piscataway Pride Day*

Special Purpose Publication

Tinton Falls, *Curriculum Brochures*
Passaic County Technical Institute, *Stu-
dent Awards/Circle of Success & Student
of the Month*
Hopewell Valley Regional, *Internet Safety
Brochure*
Sussex County Educational Services
Commission, *SCS Specialties*

Web Sites

Totowa, www.totowa.k12.nj.us
Hopewell Valley Regional, www.hvrsc.k12.nj.us
West Windsor-Plainsboro Regional, www.west-windsor-plainsboro.k12.nj.us

The final category, **Exhibits at Work-
shop**, will be judged on October 25.

New SCC Leader Cautious on Funding

The New Jersey Schools Construction Corp. will need a contingency plan if lawmakers do not come up with more funds for school building projects within the next six months, the agency's new CEO, Scott Wiener, said last week.

Wiener had been serving as transitional CEO of the Schools Construction Corp. since March, while the state conducted a nationwide search for a new chief. His appointment as permanent head of the agency became official on Sept. 27.

Better Planning In July, the SCC selected 59 projects that would be completed with the \$1.4 billion that remains from \$6 billion originally set aside for Abbott district school construction by the state's 2000 school facilities act.

However, the SCC needs to know how much additional state funding it will receive so that it can determine which projects will have to be postponed even further, Wiener told the agency's board of directors. The information would also prevent the start of projects for which the agency does not currently have sufficient money to complete.

While contracts have been awarded for 11 of the 59 schools, escalating construction costs have left a \$500-million shortfall in funding for the 48 remaining projects.

Additional Funds In late September, a gubernatorial task force, chaired by Wiener, recommended that the state invest an additional \$2.5 billion in new funding for Abbott districts, and \$750

million for non-Abbott districts, as well as new criteria for awarding state funds. A spokesman for Gov. Corzine said he is committed to working on new funding legislation.

The state's Education Facilities Construction Act of 2000 authorized \$6 billion to fund all school building costs in the Abbott districts, and another \$2.6 billion for up-front grants to fund a minimum of 40 percent of the eligible school construction in other districts.

The New Jersey Supreme Court, in a series of rulings in *Abbott v. Burke* during the 1990s, held that the state government must fully fund needed school construction in 31 Abbott school districts, which are among the state's poorest. 🍏

BARGAIN WITH CONFIDENCE



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Click your way to expert advice with **The Negotiations Advisor Online.**

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New Jersey's Rothman Co-Sponsors NCLB Improvement

U.S. Rep. Steve Rothman, D-Bergen, is co-sponsoring HR 5709, the *No Child Left Behind Improvements Act of 2006*, which mirrors 40 recommendations made by the National School Boards Association (NSBA).

HR 5709 addresses flexibility in testing and reporting, as well as sanctions for non-public schools that receive federal Title 1 funds. Rep. Don Young, a Republican from Alaska and a former teacher, introduced the proposal this summer.

Flexibility in Testing Under the proposal, states would have more flexibility in using

alternate assessments for students who are not proficient in English and could administer tests to them more than once within a school year. The legislation would also allow schools to use the higher scores when calculating and reporting the performance of subgroups.

In addition, the bill would allow states to withhold Title 1 support to non-public schools under two criteria: If their Title 1 students meet Adequate Yearly Progress goals; and if they perform at lower levels than their peers in area public schools for three or more years.

Rothman said he supported NCLB's initial goals. However, he cited problems with the law's current "one size fits all" approach to implementation.

Not Accurate or Fair NJSBA and NSBA have voiced concerns about NCLB provisions that do not recognize the complex factors that influence student performance. Many local school boards continue to raise questions about the current accountability framework, which does not accurately or fairly assess student, school, or school district performance.

New Jersey's Federal Relations Network delegates have been meeting with the state's congressional representatives to discuss co-sponsorship of HR 5709.

For more information about the proposal or to become a Federal Relations Network delegate, contact the NJSBA Governmental Relations Department toll free at (888) 886-5722. 🍏

CONFERENCE NOTES



Grant Writing USA will present seminars in partnership with the Mercer County Police Academy, Oct. 19-20 in Windsor, and with Mar-Vel International, Oct. 26-27 in Pennsauken.

The workshop is suitable for beginning and experienced grant writers who want to increase their fundraising competitiveness and broaden their fundraising base.

Tuition is \$395 and includes all materials, including workbook and a resource CD. Seating is limited and advance online reservations are required.

For more information visit <http://GrantWritingUSA.com>.

JCP&L is sponsoring free seminars on Energy Efficiency for K-12 School Districts.

The programs will take place Monday, Oct. 16 at its Red Bank facility, 331 Newman Springs Road, and on Tuesday, Oct. 17 at JCP&L in Morristown, 300 Madison Ave.

Richard Milward, an economist with 15 years of experience in energy efficiency and applied technologies, will discuss how to budget, conduct energy audits and retrofit systems.

Registration is due by Oct. 11. For further information, call (973) 401-8735.

Gallup: Public Questions NCLB

Seven out of 10 people with knowledge about the federal No Child Left Behind Act believe that it is not making a difference in their local schools, according to the 38th Annual Phi Delta Kappa and Gallup Poll about the Public's Attitudes Toward the Public Schools.

Released in late August, the poll also shows that 60 percent of respondents believe that local school boards, rather

than state and federal governments, should have the greatest influence over what is taught in schools.

While 37 percent said NCLB has made no difference in the performance of their community schools, 21 percent said the law has actually hurt schools, and only 26 percent said it has helped.

To view more of the poll findings, visit www.pdkintl.org. 🍏

Voters OK \$125 million in School Construction

Voters in nine of 17 school districts approved more than \$125 million in school-construction spending on Sept. 27.

So far in 2006, voters have approved 23 of 37 school-construction proposals that total a quarter billion dollars. The 62-percent success rate for 2006 school-construction proposals is slightly higher than the 58 percent rate of 2005—but still well behind averages of the previous five years, during which

voters approved nearly three-quarters of all proposals. A major factor in those elections was the state construction grant program for non-Abbott districts, which offset the amount of financing needed to be funded through local property taxes.

The previous bond elections this year were held in January, March and April. The last remaining bond election for 2006 will be held on Dec. 12. 🍏



Notice: NJSBA 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 Courtyard Marriott of South Brunswick, 420 Forsgate Drive, Exit 8A, New Jersey Turnpike, in Cranbury, New Jersey, on Friday, October 13, 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 September 15, 2006 meeting; approval of the Executive Director's contract; recognition of former Officers; approval of 2007-08 NJSBA holidays; Governance and Operations Policy File Codes 4131.3 and 1004, Tuition Reimbursement and Membership on Joint Committees and Education-Related Organizations, respectively; 2005-06 Association Audit report; officer reports, and a Construction Review Committee report.

In addition, there will be a presentation on NJSBA Policy Services.

The Board of Directors will enter into closed session to discuss the Executive Director's contract.

The annual Board of Directors retreat will be held on Saturday, October 14 at the Courtyard Marriott, at 8:00 a.m. Board of Directors members will discuss high school reform and other current issues and their roles and responsibilities as a critical part of NJSBA's governance.

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

Base Closing-type Mergers

continued

educational leaders of the school districts servicing the pairs or groups of affected municipalities to determine if the consolidation of those school districts is necessary or desirable.”

Municipal mergers, however, could make consolidation of school districts necessary under existing law. Statute prevents two or more school districts from providing regular education services at the same grade levels within a single municipality.

Agenda Item SJR 47 is sponsored by Sen. Joseph Kyrrillos (R-Monmouth) and Sen. Stephen Sweeney (D-Gloucester). Kyrrillos is a member of the Joint Legislative Committee on Government Consolidation and Shared Services, one of four “special session” panels charged with recommending legislation to reduce property taxes by Nov. 15.

The joint committee on consolidation was expected to address SJR 47 and its assembly counterpart, AJR 69 (O’Toole, Beck), at its October 4 meeting.

Looking Ahead Upcoming joint committee meetings include –

Public School Funding Reform, 5:30 p.m. Tuesday, Oct. 10, Ballroom and Theater at Collingswood. Members of the public are invited to testify before the committee regarding public school funding.

Government Consolidation and Shared Services, 10 a.m. Wednesday, Oct. 11, Committee Room 11, 4th Floor, Statehouse Annex, Trenton.

Constitutional Reform and Citizens Property Tax Constitutional Convention, 9:30 a.m. Thursday, Oct. 5. Committee Room 11, 4th Floor, Statehouse Annex, Trenton. The committee is scheduled to hear testimony from invited speakers regarding property tax and spending caps as mechanisms for relief.

Public Employee Benefits Reform, no meetings planned. 🍎



Action Labs, Groups Sessions to Suit Your Learning Style

Do you like to learn in a large formal setting listening to knowledgeable speakers? Or do you prefer to be part of a small group participating in hands-on activities?

Workshop 2006 will offer options to meet your style. This year, both Group Sessions and Action Labs will be one and a half hours in length and will take place concurrently. You will have a wide range of choices during every time block, Wednesday through Friday.

Action lab attendance will be limited to 24 to 48 participants to allow for a highly interactive learning experience. Admission will be by ticket only, on a first-come, first-admitted basis. Ticket distribution and seating will begin 20 minutes prior to the start of each session. Board members earn .5 Board Member Academy credits for each action lab attended.

Action lab topics will include: policy writing; improving interpersonal communication; understanding the role of the board president; building a better board member; building successful bond and budget referenda; leadership; the superintendent search process; finance and budgeting; professional development and retention; grassroots organizing; effective lobbying strategies; grant writing; ethics; and analyzing salary guides.

On Friday: The action lab line-up will include four of our most popular sessions from previous years.

Group sessions will take place in a lecture hall setting. Using a variety of media, speakers will devote two-thirds of the session to their presentations, with the remainder set aside for your questions. Board members earn .5 Board Member Academy credits for each group session attended.

This year's group session topics include: marketing your school district; online resources for administrators; data-driven decision making; sharing superintendents and business administrators; high school reform; educational technology; NJQSAC; regionalization; improving math and science education; negotiating the superintendent's contract; special education/inclusion; wireless networks; and school safety.

On Friday: Robert Goodman, New Jersey's 2005-06 Teacher of the Year, will present a Group Session on improving math and science achievement.

Check out the complete line-up in your *Preview Guide* or go to www.njsba.org/workshop and click on the “Educational Sessions” tab.

Controlling Special Ed Costs
continued

erally required out-of-district placement. A 2002 law required the state to fund extraordinary special-education costs that exceed \$40,000 per student.

“The new law was funded for one year only. A great tool for tax relief remains unfulfilled,” said Moncrief, a long-term member of NJSBA’s Special Education Committee.

“Students in highly specialized programs most certainly deserve an appropriate education,” she said. “Yet, it can

present an enormous burden.”

DYFS Placements Moncrief provided numerous areas that state lawmakers should explore for possible cost savings. They include providing direct state funding for DYFS and court-ordered placements; reducing litigation costs; making private school placement less costly for school districts; and controlling costs of related services, such as occupational and speech therapy.

To read Moncrief’s full testimony, visit www.njsba.org.



Oct. 11

Union County SBA, Union County ESC, 6 p.m.

Camden County SBA, Villa Barone, Collingswood, 6:30 p.m.

Oct. 13

Board of Directors Meeting, Courtyard Marriott, Cranbury, 6:30 p.m.

Oct. 14

Board of Directors Retreat, Courtyard Marriott, Cranbury, 8 a.m.

NJSBA Launches Special Ed Study

NJSBA is engaged in a comprehensive study of special education costs and practices. The study will provide information on cost drivers, will identify total special education costs to local school districts, will recognize exemplary special education programs, and will recommend changes in regulation and statute.

The first step of the project is a statewide survey issued last week to all school district superintendents. Copies of the survey cover letter were sent to school board presidents.

For more information, or to obtain a copy of the survey, contact Frank Belluscio at fbelluscio@njsba.org.

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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