

# SCHOOL BOARD notes

## ALERT: Special Session Bills Won't Save Money, Will Hurt Kids

Dear NJSBA Member:

The time to act is now. Senate and Assembly votes on the special session bills may begin as early as next week. Let us assure you that, on most issues, the Legislature plans to move full steam ahead, with no intention of taking a break during the pre-holiday period.

The next two weeks, therefore, present the final opportunity for school board members and other education advocates to voice their opposition to many of the proposals.

Action will start on Thursday, Dec. 7, when the Joint Legislative Committee on Consolidation and Shared Services considers a bill (A-4/S-42) that would strip school boards of authority in finance, human resources and governance. Action by the joint committee would send the bill to the Senate and Assembly for final votes.

**Critical Message** It's time to get a critical message to lawmakers:

- This bill will do nothing to rein in property taxes.
- It might result in cost increases.
- It will hurt education.

**Political County Superintendents** NJSBA will testify at the Dec. 7 meeting. But legislators – all of whom may soon be voting on the bill – need to hear from you. Creating politically appointed “super county superintendents” with near-dictatorial power over local school district budgets and with control over purchasing and aspects of human resources will do nothing to reform property taxes. Instead, it would:

- Create a bloated county-level bureaucracy.
- Increase costs by wiping out savings achieved by individual local school districts.
- Distance education policy from parents and voters.

**November Elections** Moving board member elections from April to November – another part of A-4/S-42 – would have no bearing on property tax rates at all. However, it would subject local education matters to the same partisan political environment in which legislators operate.

**Veto Power** Classroom programming, meanwhile, could fall victim to a structure,  
*continued on page 2*

## Coalition Scores on QSAC Change

The state Senate and the Assembly Education Committee this week agreed to NJSBA-advocated amendments to bills affecting the state monitoring process. The changes altered provisions that would have substantially increased the state's authority under the N.J. Quality Single Accountability Curriculum, or NJQSAC.

The changes followed a joint statement by NJSBA, NJEA and the New Jersey Principals and Supervisors Association, which cited serious concerns.

**Bring It Back** The Senate Education committee released a version of the bill, S-2136, on Nov. 13. However, the full Senate on Monday approved the amend-

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### Ciak Discusses Special Session on Cablevision

NJSBA President Kevin E. Ciak addressed many of the special session issues during a recent half-hour interview on Cablevision's “Meet the Leaders” program. The show can be viewed through the Association's homepage, [www.njsba.org](http://www.njsba.org), by clicking the link under the “In the News” heading.

“Meet the Leaders” explores people, policies and issues that influence New Jersey's communities.

Ciak talks to host Dallas Grove about how he got his start in public school governance, state education issues, and NJSBA services.

# Special Session Panels Hear Bills

All four joint legislative committees on property tax reform have scheduled meetings for Thursday, Dec. 7.

NJSBA Vice President Eva Nagy and School Finance Chairman Roger Butler were scheduled to testify before the school funding, and the government consolidation and shared services panels.

The Joint Legislative Committee on Government Consolidation and Shared Services was scheduled to discuss bills and expected to vote them out of committee for consideration by each House next week. They include:

A-4/S-42: Creates executive county superintendents, who would absorb many responsibilities of local school boards; implements CORE proposals by Assemblyman Joe Roberts, R-Camden; and moves school board elections from April to November.

A-8/S-49: Establishes a pilot program in state Department of Education for the organization of a county administrative

school district.

A-9/S-46: Authorizes individual boards of education to self insure for certain insurance; removes current prohibitions.

**Public School Funding** The Joint Legislative Committee on Public School Funding Reform was scheduled to take public testimony on its recommendations and bills concerning school district accountability and monitoring, elimination of state mandates, and the reorganizing the state Department of Education.

NJSBA expressed concerns about the state requiring additional administrative burdens on local districts and increasing the state education commissioner's authority over local districts.

NJSBA will publish a story about its testimony later this week in the electronic version of *School Board Notes* online at [www.njsba.org](http://www.njsba.org). The *School Board Notes* EXTRA will be e-mailed out to members and also appear in next week's print version. 🍏

## Record Number of N.J. Students Take ACT test

Eight percent of New Jersey's 2006 high school graduates took the ACT college entrance exam at some point in their high school career, the Iowa-based testing company recently reported.

While the SAT exam still outranks the ACT test by a 10-to-1 margin among teens in the Garden State, 7,823 high school grads took the ACT, marking a 33 percent increase over last year, and a whopping 97 percent hike from 2002.

It is not unusual for many students take the SAT and the ACT to increase their chances of getting better scores and gaining entry into more prestigious colleges and universities.

The ACT exam is measured by a score of 1 and 36.

New Jersey's test takers scored an average of 21.8 percent – also up from last year, and slightly higher than the national average of 21.3 percent.

Although the state's high school graduates are out performing many of their peers in the nation with their test scores, the ACT results suggest that many are “lacking at least some of the skills they will need to do well in college coursework, particularly in the area of science.”

The 27 percent of New Jersey students who met or exceeded the company's College Readiness Benchmark score in science, compared equally to the national average.

More than 1.2 million people took the ACT nationally. For more information, visit [www.act.org](http://www.act.org). 🍏

### Special Session continued

also part of A-4/S-42, that would give the super county superintendent veto power over communities' ability to voluntarily increase educational expenditures through above-cap ballot questions. This veto power comes on top of a proposal from another joint committee to impose “hard” budget caps that would provide no adjustments for costs that are out of local school districts' control.

**The Real Problem** A-4/S-42 and many other special session proposals are red herrings that detract from the real cause of high property taxes: *inadequate state aid to public education*.

Since 2002, the state has short-changed communities nearly \$1 billion a year in school aid. Local property taxes had to fill in the gap. The yearly under funding only worsened New Jersey's chronic overuse of property taxes to pay for schools. National Education Association statistics place New Jersey state government's share of public school expenses at just over 38 percent of the total education costs. Other states, on average, pay close to half the costs.

Despite these facts, school boards—not state officials—have been painted as the villains in the Statehouse property tax drama.

Your Association will continue speaking up for local school boards and school children during this intense period of legislative activity. But you also must sound your voices.

We urge you to contact your legislators, join in NJSBA's plan of action, and express your concerns to parents and concerned citizens. For assistance, contact NJSBA's Governmental Relations Department at (888) 886-5722, ext. 5215. Visit [www.njsba.org/govrel/special](http://www.njsba.org/govrel/special) session for information and resources. 🍏

Sincerely,

Kevin E. Ciak, President

Eva M. Nagy, Vice President for Legislation/Resolutions

# Hone Your Leadership Skills

A hallmark of insightful leadership is communication.

These two Certificated Board Leader courses offer strategies to be a more effective board and to garner public support for your district through enhanced communication skills.

## Engaging the Public *New!*

The time to educate and connect with the public is now—not just during times of crisis or selling the annual budget. Learn how to inform the community of your district's goals and plans, and encourage public participation and involvement. In this highly interactive session, you will:

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As part of the new Certified Board Leader (CBL) curriculum, this interactive, hands-on training program is designed to help you:

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To register or for more information, call Heidi Bullock, Business Department, at 1-888-886-5722 extension 5217 or direct line 609-278-5217 or complete the coupon below and fax to 609-695-2934.



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 **January 6, 2007**, 9:30 a.m.-12:30 p.m.,  
Williamstown HS, Williamstown

- Members: \$55 per person  
 Bill Board (Voucher enclosed)\*

**Communicating Effectively**

- December 9, 2006  
9:30 a.m.-12:30 p.m., Clifton HS, Clifton  
 **January 6, 2007**, 9:30 a.m.-12:30 p.m.,  
Williamstown HS, Williamstown

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\*If you wish to be billed and a voucher is required for your records, please send it with your registration to avoid duplication. Travel directions will be provided when your registration is confirmed.



## Summary: Semi-Annual Delegate Assembly

The NJSBA Semi-annual Delegate Assembly met at the National Conference Center/Holiday Inn, East Windsor, N.J. on Nov. 18, 2006 to consider two resolutions: sunset review of the NJSBA *Positions and*

*Policies On Education Manual*, Section 3000 (Business and Non-instructional Operations), Section 4000 (Personnel); and the sunset review of NJSBA *Bylaws*.

### Proposed Bylaws Amendments

The proposed Bylaws amendments, submitted as part of the three-year systemic review process were approved as submitted with the following exceptions.

The proposed amendments to restructure standing committees, to reduce the number of delegate assemblies to one per year and to establish a one-year board member service requirement for delegates to the delegate assembly were defeated.

### Resolutions

Resolution No. 1 - from Berkeley Township, Ocean County, proposed **new** policy language for adoption by the Delegate Assembly and inclusion in the NJSBA's *Manual of Positions and Policies on Education*. The resolution requested that the NJSBA adopt a belief that the Legislature should establish criteria to evaluate progress toward financial and educational benchmarks for state aid for all districts, and specifically any Abbott district not meeting benchmarks should not receive increases in funding until progress toward those benchmarks is demonstrated. **APPROVED** the following recommendation:

The Delegate Assembly refer this resolution to a committee for comprehensive review together with entire NJSBA policy on State School Finance System, File Code 3220.

Resolution No. 2 – from Pennsville Board of Education, Salem County, proposed policy language that would reflect a belief by NJSBA that there are presently sufficient opportunities for board of education members to pursue training and education in the duties and responsibilities of their office, on a voluntary basis, that a compulsory program of continuing training and education could discourage potential board candidates from running for office, and that establishing and maintaining such a program would represent a substantial financial burden for the taxpayers of New Jersey. This resolution proposed that NJSBA oppose legislation that would require the Commissioner of Education to develop and maintain a program for the continuing training and education of board of education members, and to impose penalties on board members who fail to complete the continuing education requirement. **APPROVED** with the following substitute policy language:

**The NJSBA believes** that school board members are public officials who perform roles in our public school system which are parallel to those performed by all other state, county, and municipal officials, and therefore should not be singled out for mandated continuing education.

The delegates also approved the sunset review of all policies classified as Section 3000 (Business and Non-instructional Operations) excluding File Code 3220 which was removed for comprehensive review by a committee with recommendations to be presented to the Board of Directors for adoption with final approval at the next meeting of the Delegate Assembly and File Code 4000 (Personnel) of the NJSBA's *Manual of Positions and Policies on Education*. The adopted sunset policies can be viewed by visiting [www.njsba.org](http://www.njsba.org), under Delegate Assembly -Sunset Policies.



William C. Sullivan Sr., North Hanover Township, addresses a Bylaws proposal.



Leah Arter of Beverly City at microphone. At left is Pat Walsh of Middletown.

## Ed. Building Named for Civil Rights Judge

The New Jersey Department of Education building recently has been dedicated to honor U.S. District Court Judge Robert L. Carter, a pioneering civil rights attorney who presented part of the legal argument in the famous *Brown v. Board of Education* case.

Born in Florida and raised in Newark and East Orange, Carter now is 89. He worked as a legal assistant to Thurgood Marshall, the first African-American justice to sit on the U.S. Supreme Court. Marshall was general counsel for the NAACP Legal Defense Fund.

“Judge Carter is a brave champion of civil rights, whose courageous legal battle and illustrious career exemplify the qualities that have put our state at the forefront of education reform,” Gov. Jon S. Corzine said during the dedication ceremony at the education building, 100 Riverview Plaza in Trenton.

“The dedication of this building will serve as an important reminder of his legacy and commitment to providing all of our children with nothing less than the very best.” 🍎

### ETS Seeks Survey Participant

The Princeton-based Educational Testing Service is planning a study on “non-cognitive” factors that might influence student learning. ETS has identified three variables linked to student achievement that it will evaluate, including student engagement, student learning skills and school environment.

School districts interested in participating in the study would be asked to attend a one-hour initial meeting, allow a 20-minute survey for teachers, and provide one “data collection day” during which ETS researchers would conduct brief interviews with select teachers, students and administrators.

For information contact Peter Yeager, ETS manager of external relations, at (609) 683-2797 or [pyeager@ets.org](mailto:pyeager@ets.org).

## QSAC Change continued

ments, which were proposed by the bill's sponsor, Sen. Ronald Rice, D-Essex. The action will bring an amended version of the bill back to the Senate floor for a second reading.

Meanwhile, the Assembly Education Committee made identical changes to another version of the bill, A-3676, on Monday. It voted the amended bill out of committee for action by the full Assembly in the future.

**Amendments** The associations pointed to two areas of legislation that, if approved, would have conferred virtually absolute powers to the state education commissioner and to "highly skilled professionals," appointed by the commissioner, to work in *any* public school district under state intervention—even *partial* invention. The revised amendments include:

- "Highly skilled professionals" would no longer have the absolute authority, as previously proposed, to directly oversee the hiring, firing or promotions of district staff in the area of state intervention. Instead, the state education commissioner would make a recommendation to the State Board of Education for approval.

The three state associations said that they believed that granting such uni-

lateral authority, especially in relation to districts under partial state intervention, would have been an extreme and unnecessary infringement on the autonomy of local school districts.

"Since highly skilled professionals are appointed directly by the commissioner, with no local district involvement, they represent a potential for a great abuse of power," according to a letter the three associations sent lawmakers Nov. 30. "Furthermore, as in the case of current state takeover districts, they may represent an intrusion by individuals sent by the Department of Education to 'fix' perceived problems in a district and in a community about which they have little understanding."

- Another proposal that would have given the education commissioner power to bypass the state's Administrative Procedures Act for 36 months and adopt emergency regulations concerning NJ QSAC was reduced to 12 months and now requires that a community meeting be held. Had the proposal not been changed, the commissioner would have had the same emergency powers which, up until now, only had been authorized over Abbott districts and could have allowed any changes to go through without public input. 🍌

## Four Districts Earn Language Grants

Four New Jersey school districts will share more than \$500,000 in grant funds over the next three years under the federal National Security Language Initiative.

East Windsor Regional will create a dual language immersion program in Spanish that includes a summer professional development institute for elementary teachers.

Fair Lawn will begin a Mandarin Chinese program in grade five in each of the its six elementary schools.

Northern Valley Regional High School

District will create a Chinese language program aligned with both national and state standards.

Vernon Township will begin language instruction in Mandarin Chinese in the fall of 2007 in Kindergarten and in grade nine.

In a related development, the Linden Public Schools recently received \$75,000 from the Italian American Committee on Education to expand its Italian language program.

For more information, visit [www.nj.gov/education](http://www.nj.gov/education). 🍌

## CONFERENCE NOTES



Registration is now open for the "Growing the Future: Meeting the National Challenge to Recruit, Develop, and Retain New Teachers" national conference.

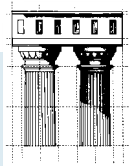
The conference will be held Sunday, March 25, to Tuesday, March 27, at the Boston Long Wharf Marriot Hotel. Key-note speakers include Jonathan Kozol, Daniel Goleman and Theresa Perry.

The conference is sponsored by the Beginning Teacher Center, the National Commission on Teaching and America's Future, and the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards.

For more information, visit [www.simmons.edu/conferences/btc](http://www.simmons.edu/conferences/btc), or contact Clare Bertrand or Pamela Penna at (781) 416-0980 or [btconference@simmons.edu](mailto:btconference@simmons.edu).



Technology in education will be the focus of the November/December issue of School Leader magazine. Articles will address school district policies on Internet safety, the hazards of social Web sites, the importance of a coordinated technology plan in securing federal grants, and more. School Leader is received by all school board members, superintendents and school business administrators.



## Board Member Academy Courses in January

**January 6** – Communicating Effectively; Engaging the Public; and One-Day Orientation—Williamstown High School, Williamstown

**January 20** – Focusing the Board on Student Achievement; and Parliamentary Procedure—Raritan Valley Academy, Middlesex County Regional Services Commission, Piscataway

**January 26** – School Public Relations Forum—The Conference Center at RWJ Hamilton Center for Health and Wellness, Hamilton Twp.

For information, visit [www.njsba.org/training](http://www.njsba.org/training).

## Special Ed Survey Due Dec. 15

How New Jersey funds special education is a major issue facing state leaders as they construct a new school finance system. To influence the public debate, NJSBA is currently engaged in a comprehensive study of special education costs and programming. The study will provide information on cost drivers, will identify total special education costs to local school districts, will recognize exemplary programs, and will recommend changes in statute and regulation.

A vital component of the study is a survey of local school districts, which should be returned by Dec. 15. NJSBA has sent the survey to superintendents and special education directors and coordinators.

To receive an electronic copy of the survey, contact Frank Belluscio at (888) 886-5722, ext. 5205 or at [fbelluscio@njsba.org](mailto:fbelluscio@njsba.org).

## CALENDAR



### Dec. 14

PAA Meeting, RWJ Conference Center, Hamilton, 9 a.m.

Salem County SBA Meeting, Washington Club, Penns Grove, 6:30 p.m.

For more information about county school boards association activities, visit [www.njsba.org](http://www.njsba.org) and click on the name of the appropriate county association.

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Assembly Summary  
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### SCHOOL BOARD NOTES

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