

SCHOOL BOARD
notes

State Prepares for Race to the Top

With a Jan. 19 deadline for the first round of federal Race to the Top (RTTT) grant applications looming, the state Department of Education held information sessions this week on the development of New Jersey's application. The \$5 billion RTTT program is part of the Obama administration's economic stimulus plan. For New Jersey, the grants could total between \$200 million and \$400 million.

Half of the funding will be shared among school districts that operate Title I programs. Statewide, 513 schools receive Title I funds. The remaining 50 percent will be used to fund state and district activities in support of the comprehensive program. Interested districts must complete a memorandum of understanding, signed by the board president, superintendent and head of the local teachers'

association by Jan. 14. The state's chances of winning a grant will be better if more districts participate. Information about the state's grant proposal, local district responsibilities, and the required forms have been posted at www.njsba.org.

The state's grant application addresses four specific areas of reform:

- Higher academic standards
- Teacher training and development: attracting and retaining quality teachers, including efforts such as performance pay and evaluating teachers and principals through multiple measures
- Enhanced statewide tracking systems: using data collection to measure student performance and guide instruction
- Improvement of low-performing

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Bill Would Affect NJSBA Membership

Legislation introduced Nov. 30 would eliminate unified membership in NJSBA. Sponsored by third district Assemblyman John Burzichelli, A-4297 is not likely to see action during the Legislature's lame duck session, which concludes on Monday. However, it will be automatically pre-filed with a new bill number for the new legislative session that starts next week.

NJSBA policy, adopted by local school boards through the Delegate Assembly, supports mandatory membership. "The NJSBA believes in mandatory membership of all local boards of education in the New Jersey School Boards Association, as established in the originating statute enacted in 1914," reads the policy adopted in 1994 and reaffirmed in 2008.

Reasons for Requirement The Association's delegates have supported mandatory membership for several reasons:

- NJSBA is the only statewide education organization that represents non-employees. Its members, unpaid volunteers, need an association to advocate the interests of their communities and school programs and provide necessary training.
- NJSBA counterbalances the well-financed, powerful NJEA, which benefits from a type of mandated membership: statutory "agency shop" that allows it to assess non-members a fee equivalent to 85% of standard union dues.
- Mandatory membership enables

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Gov. Proclaims January 2010 'School Board Recognition Month'

NEW JERSEY'S

Noting the hard work and dedication of New Jersey's local board of education members, Gov. Jon S. Corzine has proclaimed January 2010 as School Board Recognition Month in New Jersey.

"New Jersey's 4,800 local board of education members devote countless hours, at no pay, to the oversight of school district operations, including finances, curriculum and staffing," the governor said in his proclamation. "As the policymaking bodies for local school districts, New Jersey's local boards of education endeavor to meet the challenges facing public schools and help students achieve state academic standards."

"By making meaningful contributions to our schools and communities, the dedicated members of local school boards have enhanced our State and Nation," the governor said in his proclamation.

"Local boards of education set the goals and provide oversight for the entire school district," said Harry J. Delgado, president of the New Jersey School Boards Association. "The work of local school boards has a direct impact on the classroom, and their hard work has helped make New Jersey's public schools a national leader in student achievement."

Gov. Corzine's proclamation, as well as additional information on School Board Recognition Month, is available at www.njsba.org under the "What's New" section.

School Board Recognition Month

JANUARY
2010

NJDOE Readopts Accountability Regulations

The New Jersey Department of Education readopted the accountability regulations, effective Nov. 25. There are several notable changes in the readopted regulations; highlights are below. The regulations:

- Permit the promotions of relatives already employed in the district, as well as the hiring of relatives with Executive County Superintendent (ECS) approval under narrow circumstances.
- Remove the obligation of the ECS to study consolidation of pre-K or K-12 operating districts that are not regional districts.
- Revise the provision that all school boards should establish a list of specific procedures for the use of legal counsel. That requirement no longer pertains to all boards, but only those that have legal costs exceeding 130 percent of the statewide average (unless the district can show that use of the procedures would not result in a reduction in costs).
- Require the ECS plan for the consolidation of non-operating districts to stipulate the non-op be combined with the district that causes the “least

disruption” on education, operation and finances, with the current receiving district being the presumptive choice. The regulations also designate additional information to be included in the plan, including the distribution/liquidation of any assets. In addition, the readopted regulations also permit the ECS to consider alternative approaches to the allocation of property taxes, state aid, and the new resulting board of education, but only if/until the approaches are authorized by statute.

- Increase the number of students a district may have in order to be eligible to seek a waiver of the requirements to maximize Medicaid revenue. Previously a district needed 30 or fewer projected Medicaid-eligible classified students to request a waiver. Under the readopted regulations a district now may have up to 40 such students.
- Revise the obligation to solicit quotes for light meals and refreshments at board meetings.
- Require that in obtaining a waiver for in-state overnight travel, the sponsor-

ing organization must demonstrate that the scheduling of the event necessitates that it be held on multiple consecutive days with overnight lodging.

- Revise the information that must be in a travel request.
- Elaborate on the procedures following voter defeat of a district’s proposed budget.

The department received comments on the proposed readoption from 274 individuals and organizations during the comment period that ended on Aug. 14. There were also six public testimony sessions and three public hearings during that period. The New Jersey School Boards Association was among the groups commenting. The comments, as well as the department’s responses, are published in the Dec. 21 New Jersey Register.

Watch *School Board Notes* for continuing information about the readopted regulations.

Readers may access NJSBA’s comment letter and the readopted regulations on the NJSBA Web site, www.njsba.org.

NJSBA Addresses Possible Pension Plan Changes

An article in the Dec. 29 editions of the Bergen Record and the Star-Ledger addressed proposed legislation that would prohibit future employees of three associations, including NJSBA, from participating in the Public Employees Retirement System. The proposed legislation, which is sponsored by fourth-district Assemblyman Paul Moriarty, is not yet available for review.

Following is the full response that NJSBA provided to the Bergen Record reporter:

“NJSBA supports system-wide reform of the state pension systems that would be in local school districts’ interests—whether or not such changes would affect the Association’s eligibility to participate in the plan. We have not seen the proposed

legislation yet. However, Assemblyman Moriarty’s statement acknowledges that his bill does not address major issues facing the state’s pension system. These issues would include the cost to the state budget of post-retirement medical benefits.

“I would like to emphasize the following facts concerning NJSBA’s participation in PERS:

- While the Assemblyman’s news release mentions ‘officers and staff’ of the associations, no ‘officers’ of the New Jersey School Boards Association receive any compensation for their services, including membership in PERS.
- NJSBA does not provide current employees with post-retirement medical benefits.

- Almost 90 percent of NJSBA’s staff members are involved in non-lobbying functions, such as training, informational and on-site services to local school boards.
- The participation of active NJSBA employees in the state pension system has no impact on the state budget, since payments to the plan are made by the Association and its employees and not by the state.

“Since NJSBA is classified as a ‘local public employer’ by the Division of Pensions, it cannot unilaterally remove itself from the plan.”

The response was provided by Frank Belluscio, NJSBA director of communications.



The 37th Annual Federal Relations Network Conference

January 31- February 2, 2010 - Washington, DC

In 2010, Congress and the Administration will make important decisions about education policy and education funding that will impact your school district's future. Be part of the process by attending the Federal Relations Network (FRN) Conference. The FRN Conference is your opportunity to offer local insights and to advocate on behalf of your district on key issues including:

- Reauthorize the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA/NCLB), and enlist Congress to commit to our agenda before new legislation is enacted.
- Promote local governance and decision-making as keys to effective public education and student achievement in the 21st century.
- Ensure adequate funding for education programs, including full funding for mandates such as the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) and Title 1 – especially when stimulus funding ends.
- Advance forward-looking initiatives in pre-k education, teacher effectiveness, and education innovation.

The conference begins on Sunday, January 31 with speakers and policy commentators; it continues on Monday with seminars on critical legislative issues and breakout sessions.

To learn more about the [37th Annual FRN Conference](http://www.njsba.org/frn) or to register, go to www.njsba.org/frn.

A Day on the Hill (Hosted by NJSBA)

On Tuesday, February 2, attendees have the opportunity to meet with their congressional representatives face to face between 9:00 a.m. and 5:00 p.m. for approximately 30 minutes.

To register for "A Day on the Hill," call Ann Marie Smith at (609) 278-5215.



Race to the Top continued

schools: providing support to turn around failing schools, such as establishing charter schools.

At a Dec. 18 briefing, Gov. Jon S. Cor-

zine pointed out that the state has already taken steps that would contribute to the status of its application, such as compiling data on students through NJ SMART.

Other existing programs that address the four areas of reform include the state's

new curriculum standards and the new statewide student testing requirements, such as the end-of-term biology assessment, said Willa Spicer, assistant commissioner of education.

"We believe that New Jersey is well positioned to win a Race to the Top grant," said Lucille E. Davy in a letter to school superintendents. "We have created an aggressive, yet achievable plan to effect meaningful change in our schools."

The competition requires that states show support from other members of the statewide educational community, including schools boards, administrators and teachers' union leaders.

The state Department of Education is working with a consultant to develop the state's grant proposal. All elements of a state's plan must be sustainable, and not create ongoing expenses.

The U.S. Department of Education has said that it would provide feedback to applicants that are unsuccessful in the Jan. 19 grants; those applications could be revised and resubmitted in time for the second round of applications, due June 1. 🍏



NJSBA Executive Committee Meeting

In accordance with the Open Public Meetings Act, notice is hereby provided of a meeting of the New Jersey School Boards Association's Executive Committee. The meeting will be held at NJSBA Headquarters, 850 Bear Tavern Road, Ewing, on Wednesday, Jan. 13, at 6 p.m. The meeting is open to the public.

The agenda, to the extent known at this time, will include action/discussion of minutes of the Nov. 11, 2009 meeting, and a special meeting held on Dec. 22, 2009; ratification of Officers' vouchers; vouchers past 60 days; Association financials; parameters of the 2010-2011 budget; NJSBAIG update; Human Resources update; Officers' reports; NSBA 2010 Leadership/Federal Relations Network Conference update; and review of proposed agenda for the Jan. 22 Board of Directors meeting.

For further information, contact Nancy Fletcher at (609) 278-5214.

Obituary: Mario J. Gangi, former NJSBA president

Mario J. Gangi, a member of the Cresskill School Board for 29 years, and a former president of the New Jersey School Boards Association from 1990-1992, died on Jan. 2. He also was active in the Bergen County School Boards Association.

The president of Celwa Products of Elizabeth, Gangi was an active community volunteer. He was a member and past president of the Cresskill Borough Council, a member of the Cresskill Zoning Board, and served as the Cresskill Fire Marshall.

He is survived by his wife Caroline; children Caryn Hughes, Nicora Manwaring, Robyn and Christin; two brothers and a sister, eight grandchildren and one great-grandson.

Funeral services were set for Jan. 7. In lieu of flowers, the family requested that memorial donations be made to a charity of the donor's choice.

Excess Surplus Will Offset State Aid Cuts - Corzine

Current-year state aid to public school districts would be cut by \$260 million under Gov. Corzine's plan to address the state's \$924 million deficit for 2009-2010.

The reduction, announced by Corzine Dec. 22, would represent the first mid-year cut in direct school aid in memory. The cut would match, dollar for dollar, the funds accumulated in each local school district's budget that exceed the surplus allowed by law. Under a 2004 statute known as S-1701, a school district cannot appropriate more than 2 percent of its operating budget as surplus.

To help close this year's deficit, "the state would not provide school districts with funding to match that [excess] amount," explained Commissioner of Education Lucille E. Davy in a message to Marie S. Bilik, NJSBA's executive director,

prior to the announcement.

Corzine's proposal would require action by the state Legislature. Beginning in February 2010, districts would have to use a portion of their excess surplus balances – totaling \$260 million statewide – in place of state aid payments.

The administration touted the proposal as a way to avoid mid-year program cuts. While the action might not have an impact on school programs in 2009-2010, it would negatively affect many districts in the next budget year. In previous years, many school districts used the excess surplus funds that they accumulated in one budget year as revenue to support programs or property tax reductions the following year. For 2010-2011, that money would not be available under Corzine's strategy. 🍏



NJSBA ONLINE

NJSBA Invites Members To Connect Online

As new technology such as social media and mobile messaging transforms how people communicate, the New Jersey School Boards Association has embraced new tools that its members can use to stay informed of important issues and communicate with other school board members statewide.

On NJSBA's Facebook fan page www.Facebook.com/njsba, school board members will find up-to-the-minute posts about events and issues affecting education in New Jersey. Photos and videos, often posted live from training programs or county meetings, enable all NJSBA members to see what their organization is doing at any given time. Members can also comment on what they see, often leading to interesting dialogue with other school board members around the state.

When NJSBA needs members to assist in the legislative advocacy arena, it will use its "NJSBAAlerts" system to reach members instantly on their mobile devices. Members can sign up at www.njsba.org/mobile. The NJSBA mobile/text messaging platform enables it to instantly send text messages to subscribers and enables the recipient to take action if necessary. Subscribers can simply press a key on their mobile device to voice an opinion on issues of concern to school boards around the state.

The mobile messaging system is also used to provide advance notification regarding program updates and changes.

Standard service charges may apply to text messages, depending on a member's specific plan.

Last, but not least, is *School Leader Connect*, a new Web site that NJSBA built to enable members to easily communicate with one another. Join today at www.slconnect.ning.com. Members can join a group specific to their county, become an EAGLE to stay informed on legislative issues or discuss topics specific to education in New Jersey. *School Leader Connect* is the ultimate networking tool for school board members statewide, enabling collaboration and communication as never before.



LEGISLATIVE UPDATE

Bills on Diploma Mills, School Choice Advance

The Assembly Education Committee on Jan. 4 passed two bills that pertain to school districts that provide employees with tuition assistance or additional compensation when they take courses, acquire academic credits or complete a degree program. The committee combined the two bills, A-3671 and A-3228. The proposal requires that certain conditions be met in order for school districts to pay tuition assistance or extra compensation. Under the bill, an employee must get approval before enrolling, and compensation will be provided only for a degree related to the employee's current or future job responsibilities. Credits and degrees must be earned from an accredited institution, rather than an unaccredited "diploma mill" type of school. The combined bill passed by a vote of 9-0.

Public School Choice On Jan. 4, the Assembly Appropriations Committee released A-3472, which creates a permanent public school choice program to allow parents to move children to schools in other districts. Schools seeking to participate in the program and accept out-of-district students would apply to the Commissioner of Education. Students who wish to transfer would apply; districts could review the application based on the student's interest in the school's offerings. Schools could also start a lottery if demand outpaces the supply of available seats.

Community Service Pilot Program The Assembly Education Committee also approved A-4279, which extends and expands a previous pilot program requiring high school students to undertake community service as a condition of graduation. The pilot program would be started in the 2010-2011 academic year and would apply to freshman, who would have to complete a minimum of 20 hours of community service over their high school careers. Fifteen New Jersey schools would be selected to participate in the pilot program.

The bills all head to a vote by the full Assembly; although there are voting sessions scheduled on Jan. 7 and Jan. 11, none of these bills is currently on the agenda.

Passing Your Budget

Don't Miss NJSBA's Winter School Public Relations Forum!

Friday, January 29, 2010

Passing a school district budget can be especially challenging during difficult economic times. That's why it is more important than ever for districts to be prepared to mount effective budget campaigns. NJSBA's Winter School Public Relations Forum is designed to help.

Program Date: Friday, Jan. 29, 2010

Registration: \$70 for members, \$140 for non-members

Program: 9 a.m. to 12 noon (registration 8 a.m.), Brookdale Community College, Lincroft; Warner Student Life Center, Navesink Rooms I & II

2010 Program Topics:



Successful School Budget Campaigns

NJSBA Field Service Representatives Gwen Thornton and Kathy Winecoff will focus on your role as a board member in the budget process, simple strategies to assist the board in passing the budget and involving your community in a meaningful way. Learn how and why community involvement is key to success.



Using the "New" Media to Energize Get Out The Vote Efforts

Erik Endress, director of NJSBA's Association and Business Development Department, will show you innovative ways to disseminate your message via social networking and other media. Learn how to empower your key communicators, locate your voters and build on your base of supporters.



Do's and Don'ts of Budget Campaigns

Michael Kaelber, director of NJSBA's Legal and Policy Services Department, will help you get acquainted with the legal restrictions pertaining to school budget elections. Learn about the impact of recent regulations on budget campaigns.



Credits: 1

Core Area for CBM: Relationships, School/Community Relations

Core Area for MBM: Relationships, School/Community Relations

Core Area for CBL: None

The School District Accountability Act places travel restrictions on school board members. Advance travel approval is required. For details, visit www.njsba.org/accountabilityact.

To register, fax your request to (609) 278-5280 or e-mail callcenter@njsba.org. For more information, please call Member Services at (888) 886-5722 ext. 5260.

Harassment and Bullying Policy Updated

NJSBA's Legal and Policy Services department has revised its policy on harassment, intimidation and bullying, Policy 5131 in the *Critical Policy Reference Manual*.

The policy was most recently updated in September 2009. However, feedback from school districts and from the state Department of Education prompted a further revision.

"It is clear the New Jersey Department of Education is looking for a very detailed and district-specific policy on this topic," said Steve McGettigan, manager of policy services for NJSBA. "Unlike other policies, where the board sets a direction for the administration and then the administration develops the regulations, the code that governs

harassment, intimidation and bullying requires that the board must detail everything, including procedures, consequences and remedial measures, within the policy. This provides parents and guardians with one document they can review when it comes to this topic."

While no single sample policy would be appropriate for all districts, the revised Policy 5131 is designed to provide guidance for the board within the policy itself. The policy has examples and suggestions for procedures that districts may choose from.

When using the sample policy, each school district must decide which specific items to incorporate into its own policy.

The NJSBA policy was reviewed by the

New Jersey Department of Education, and found to be in compliance with the laws and regulations.

Districts that have a separate policy on harassment, intimidation or bullying should make certain that their existing policy contains the new content.

A sample model policy copy of Conduct and Discipline "Harassment, Intimidation or Bullying" section (File Code 5131) in the *Critical Policy Reference Manual*, may be accessed online by checking under the "Popular Resources" box on the NJSBA Web site at www.njsba.org.

For more information, contact Lou Schimenti of the Legal and Policy Services Department at (609) 278-5271 or via e-mail at lschimenti@njsba.org.



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SCHOOL BOARD NOTES

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Bill Would Affect NJSBA Membership

continued

NJSBA to provide services that all districts can afford, no matter their size or budgets. Benefits include on-site services, such as goal-setting, training in superintendent evaluation and NJQSAC, board self-evaluation, conflict resolution and effectively working with the chief school administrator. At no fee, the Association offers on-site labor relations assistance. Its dues provide all members with access to Association attorneys, as well as the *Critical Policy Reference Manual*.

NJSBA-sponsored programs, such as the Alliance for Competitive Energy Services (ACES), save districts statewide substantially more than their dues. Just one ACES program, cooperative electricity purchasing, will save school districts \$36 million over the next two years—almost two and a half times the

dues for the same period.

- Boards of education have continual turnover. Experienced school board members generally recognize the value of NJSBA membership. However, new board members might see only the limited savings in non-membership, rather than the financial and educational benefits provided by NJSBA.

Members Govern While statute requires membership, the Association is democratically governed. NJSBA's dues structure, policies and bylaws are established by its members through the Delegate Assembly.

- The current dues formula ensures that no district pays more than 0.001 (one-tenth of 1 percent) of its current expenses. Average payments statewide are closer to 0.0005 (or one-twentieth of 1 percent) of current expenses.
- For 2009-2010, approximately two-thirds of the state's school districts

C A L E N D A R

Jan. 14

- ▶ Ocean County SBA, Central Regional High School presentation room, Bayville, 7 p.m.

▶ Denotes pre-registration required

experienced dues reductions or level dues. The remainder had increases ranging from \$1 to \$658. For 2009-2010, average dues were \$12,688.

Elimination of mandated dues would have no impact on local school property taxes.

NJSBA has discussed the legislation with Assemblyman Burzichelli and plans to continue dialogue with him.