

# SCHOOL BOARD notes

## Alternative Proposal Would Place 2.9% Cap on Taxes

Senate President Stephen M. Sweeney has proposed legislation to create a 2.9 percent cap on property taxes.

Under the plan, annual increases in property taxes would be capped at a maximum of 2.9 percent. Since the creation of the current 4-percent levy cap in 2007, property tax increases have dropped to an average increase of 3.3 percent – or about 17 percent below the 4-percent ceiling. Previously, average annual increases were near 7 percent.

Sweeney believes that the 2.9 percent

cap closely approximates the actual rate of inflation, giving local entities a budget scenario based on realistic cost increases.

A key feature of his proposal would allow for “cap banking,” in which communities that keep increases below the cap could set aside the difference for future use when circumstances arise that would require a budget to increase property taxes above the cap.

Sweeney believes that allowing communities to bank against the cap would give them greater long-term flexibility. Further-

more, towns and school districts would be more inclined to conserve resources by budgeting below the cap if they knew they could access the additional “reserve,” should some unanticipated costs arise.

The 2.9 percent cap bill differs in many ways from the 2.5 percent hard cap proposed in Gov. Chris Christie’s toolkit. The “Cap 2.5” proposal would be created through a constitutional amendment and would preclude districts from exceeding the cap unless approved by a supermajority of voters in each community. 🍏

## Legislators OK Summer School, Background Check Bills

The full Assembly and the Senate Education Committee on Monday unanimously approved a bill that would allow districts to charge tuition for summer school. On

Monday, the Assembly, by an 80-0 vote, also passed a measure that calls for criminal background checks of school board members.

The legislation that would allow districts to charge for summer school (A-2794/S-1974) is now set for a vote by the full Senate. On May 15, school board members at NJSBA’s Delegate Assembly set a goal to seek approval of legislation that would allow school districts to charge for summer programs. Currently, the state prohibits districts from charging for remedial or advanced summer classes.

If a student is from a household that is at or below the most recent federal poverty guidelines, the district would not be allowed to charge any tuition for summer programs, according to the bill. For all other students, the district could charge tuition ranging from 50 to 100 percent of tuition, based on the student’s household income.

**Background Checks** The Assembly also  
*continued on page 4*

### NJ Adopts National Core Standards

The State Board of Education on June 16 adopted a resolution calling for New Jersey’s curriculum standards to be aligned with national Common Core Standards in math and language arts literacy.

The Common Core Standards is a state-led initiative that aims to establish basic, uniform education requirements across the country. It is sponsored by the National Governors Association and the Council of Chief State School Officers with the participation of many states, including New Jersey.

The standards will be phased in over time, with curriculum development scheduled to begin in 2010-2011. The State Board’s resolution “directs that school district curricula for all students be aligned with these revised K-12 standards in mathematics and English language arts and literacy in history/social studies, science, and technical subjects,” according to the phased-in timeline.

NJSBA had testified in March in support of the standards, saying that the authority for the management of public schools must remain with local boards of education – and the concepts embedded in the Common Core Standards appear to maintain that local authority.

The Common Core Standards can be accessed online at [www.corestandards.org](http://www.corestandards.org).

# Low-Achieving Schools Awarded \$45.3 Million in Federal Grants

On June 16, the New Jersey Department of Education awarded \$45.3 million in federal grants to 12 low-performing New Jersey schools that agreed to undertake dramatic action to improve their schools. The School Improvement Grant program is designed to fund persistently low-achieving schools, as measured by standardized tests and low graduation rates.

The reform plans proposed by the schools fit into one of four models of reform provided by the U.S. Department of Education.

Seven of the 12 schools selected the "Transformation Model," which requires the school replace principals and improve the school through comprehensive curriculum reform, professional development, extending learning time, and other strategies.

The "Turnaround Model," selected by four schools, mandates replacing the principal and 50 percent of the staff. The new principal must be granted sufficient control of staffing, the academic calendar and

budgeting to implement a comprehensive approach to improve student outcomes, according to federal guidelines.

One school, Renaissance Academy High School in Newark, will undertake change using the "Restart Model," which requires a school to be converted to a charter school or run under an education management organization. The Renaissance Academy will be converted from one alternative education school with 14 separate programs to two independent schools.

The fourth approved reform model requires the school to be closed and students sent to higher-achieving schools in the district. None of the schools will adopt that model.

Twenty-seven of the state's lowest-performing schools applied for the federal funds; 32 New Jersey schools were eligible to apply. The full listing of schools receiving funds is available on the department's website at [www.state.nj.us/education](http://www.state.nj.us/education) under the "NJDOE News" heading.

## Substitute Teacher Bill Moves

The Senate Education Committee approved on June 17 a bill that limits the amount of time a substitute teacher can serve in a temporary capacity to 60 days.

The bill, S-2071, also gives the executive county superintendent authority to grant an extension if the district cannot find an appropriately certified teacher within the original 60-day limit. This extension fulfills the request that NJSBA made to cover situations when there is a demonstrated shortage of certified teachers in certain academic areas, which makes teacher recruitment very difficult; or when unforeseen medical or personal events may necessitate a longer leave than originally requested.

The provisions in the bill, if approved, would place in law what is currently addressed through the New Jersey Department of Education's regulations. The bill's language is similar, but not identical, to the department's regulations.

**Magazine Subscriptions** NJSBA achieved amendments to a bill (A-2062), a measure that would prohibit anyone from delivering more than one issue of a magazine for which payment is due without first obtaining the consumer's billing information. A violation of anti-fraud measure would be punishable by a \$10,000 fine for the first offense. The bill's sponsors agreed to NJSBA's request to exempt school fundraisers.

## Trenton Reaches Budget Accord

It appears that state legislators and the administration have reached an agreement for the 2010-2011 state budget, although no appropriations bill has yet been unveiled.

The state's \$29.3 billion spending plan will restore some funding for programs to help needy residents, but it will not change the \$820 million cut in state aid to school districts that was part of the governor's original budget proposal in the spring.

A balanced state budget must be approved by June 30 to avoid a government shutdown. According to press reports, legislators are expected to vote on the budget early next week. A government shutdown, which would affect aid payments to school districts, now appears unlikely.

### NJSBA Executive Committee Schedules Meetings



In accordance with the Open Public Meetings Act, notice is hereby provided of two meetings of NJSBA's Executive Committee.

On Wednesday, July 7, at 3 p.m., a meeting of the Executive Committee will be held at NJSBA's temporary headquarters at 850 Bear Tavern Road, Ewing. The agenda, to the extent known at this time, will include an update of the headquarters building renovation, and a meeting with department directors that will include an overview of departmental responsibilities, goals for 2010-2011, and department updates.

On Saturday, July 10, at 1 p.m., the Executive Committee will meet at the Mountain Villa School (Rutherford Hall), 1686 Route. 517, Allamuchy. The agenda, to the extent known at this time, will include an overview of the meeting with department directors and a discussion on the direction of the Association and the goals of the Executive Committee.

Both meetings are open to the public. For further information, contact Nancy Fletcher at (609) 278-5214.

# THE LEADERSHIP CONFERENCE



**Saturday, July 10, 2010**

**9:00 a.m. – 2:15 p.m. (registration 8:30 a.m.)**

**Mountain Villa School (Rutherford Hall)**

**1686 Rte. 517, Allamuchy, NJ**

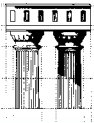
The Educational Leadership Foundation of NJ (ELF NJ) in partnership with the Princeton Center for Leadership Training (PCLT) present a Leadership Conference designed to help you increase your effective leadership skills and motivate and inspire others to achieve shared objectives. If you would like to improve your performance, this conference is one that you **must** attend!

This full-day program includes:

- Continental breakfast
- Keynote address by Dana Elizabeth Egreczky, VP for Workforce Development, NJ State Chamber of Commerce
- Morning program: "Leading with Vision & Focus"
- Lunch
- Afternoon program: "Maintaining Focus through Difference & Conflict"

This program is being provided free of charge to the first 100 registrants, approved through a grant provided by the ELF NJ.

## PENDING APPROVAL:



Academy Credits: 4  
CBM Status: Elective  
MBM Status: Elective  
CBL Status: Required Course

To register for this program, you must complete both the registration form and the grant application. To obtain a grant application, visit [www.elfnj.org](http://www.elfnj.org). For more information, e-mail [info@elfnj.org](mailto:info@elfnj.org). Fax BOTH the completed grant and program registration forms to (609) 583-1041.

The school district accountability law places travel restrictions on school board members. Travel approval is required in advance. For information, visit [www.njsba.org/accountabilityact/](http://www.njsba.org/accountabilityact/)

Please register me for the **Leadership Conference**, Saturday, July, 10 at the Mountain Villa School at Allamuchy Farms.

**Registration Fee:** The registration fee for the first 100 registrants is covered through a grant provided by ELF NJ. Please see note above regarding the grant application.

NAME: \_\_\_\_\_ TITLE: \_\_\_\_\_

DISTRICT/ORGANIZATION: \_\_\_\_\_ COUNTY: \_\_\_\_\_

ADDRESS: \_\_\_\_\_

PHONE: (h) \_\_\_\_\_ (b) \_\_\_\_\_

FAX: \_\_\_\_\_ E-MAIL: \_\_\_\_\_

**FAX THE PROGRAM REGISTRATION FORM TO (609) 583-1041.**



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**Bilik's Speech Earns National Recognition**

NJSBA earned a distinguished honor this month with the publication in *Vital Speeches of the Day* of the address by executive director Marie Bilik to the May 15 Delegate Assembly.

*Vital Speeches of the Day* is a monthly collection of addresses by the nation's government and corporate leaders. In addition to Marie, contributors to this month's edition include President Obama; Robert Gates, U.S. secretary of defense; David Petraeus, leader of the U.S. Central Command; and Dennis Blair, director of National Intelligence.

Through her address, titled "Public Schools Must Thrive – Not Just Survive – in Troubled Times," Marie wanted to focus the NJSBA delegates on the role of local school boards in advancing public education, despite severe economic difficulties.

Although their names are not mentioned, some of America's most prominent speechwriters worked on the addresses that appear in the publication. "Mike Yaple, NJSBA's public affairs officer, constructed an excellent vehicle that conveyed Marie's sentiments clearly and strongly," said Frank Belluscio, NJSBA's communications director. The text of the speech is online at [www.njsba.org/PI/ed-da-address2010.pdf](http://www.njsba.org/PI/ed-da-address2010.pdf).

**Lawmakers OK Bills**

*continued*

unanimously passed A-444, which would require school board members to undergo criminal history background checks and would disqualify members convicted of any crime that would disqualify a person from public school employment.

NJSBA supported the original statute requiring criminal background checks of prospective school employees. Based on its belief that students' health and safety is a primary responsibility of school boards, it has supported expansion of that statute. In addition, current Association policy supports disclosure of past criminal convictions by current and prospective school board members. NJSBA has sought amendments that would make a background check requirement less burdensome for board members.

The Senate version, S-295, is in the Senate Education Committee.

Check the online version of *School Board Notes* for important stories not included in the print version. Click on "School Board Notes" under the "In the News" heading of [www.njsba.org](http://www.njsba.org).