

# SCHOOL BOARD notes

## NJSBA: Move Forward with Race to the Top Reforms

New Jersey lost its bid for some \$400 million in funding in Race to the Top grants designed to encourage educational reform, federal officials announced Tuesday.

New Jersey was one of 19 applicants that were finalists for \$3.4 billion in the second round of Race to the Top grants. But only nine states and the District of Columbia received funding in the grant competition.

Even without the federal funds, the strategies included in New Jersey's grant application should go forward, according to Marie S. Bilik, NJSBA executive director. "The innovative reforms included in

our state's Race to the Top application can pay dividends in the classroom, regardless of today's decision by the federal government," she said.

In May, NJSBA was one of the first statewide education organizations to formally endorse New Jersey's grant application. At the time, Bilik pointed to the proposal's "innovative strategies" that would "open doors to educational opportunity for disadvantaged students, advance student achievement by providing additional teacher compensation based on classroom performance, build an accurate

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## State Comptroller: Schools Lose Out on Tax Abatement Incentives

New Jersey's municipal tax abatement program is pulling critical funding away from school districts and leaving taxpayers to pick up the costs, according to a report released last week by the Office of the State Comptroller (OSC).

New Jersey's abatement laws are intended to encourage development by giving municipalities the power to exempt developers from paying property taxes. In the process, municipalities often receive more funds by granting tax abatements because they arrange for payments in lieu of taxes, the study found. However, school districts do not receive a share of those payments. In some cases, the result is schools' increased reliance on state aid.

Despite the impact on their funding, school districts and counties are afforded no role in abatement decisions and, according to OSC interviews with local officials, are often unaware when abatements are being considered or are granted.

**NJSBA's View** NJSBA policy advocates proportional distribution among local entities of revenue received in lieu of property taxes. In particular, when these arrangements involve residential development, they can result in enrollment increases – yet they provide no revenue to offset the increased cost to the public

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## On Legislators' Radar: Sick Leave, Charters, Superintendent Tenure



*Barbara Horl, NJSBA Governmental Relations staff member, discusses sick-leave cap legislation this month with Sen. Joseph M. Kyrillos of Monmouth County.*

State lawmakers have focused on several key issues this month, including sick leave for school staff, charter school authorization, and reinstating tenure for superintendents.

The Senate Budget and Appropria-

tions Committee on Aug. 16 discussed S-2220 (Sarlo), a recently introduced bill that caps sick leave and vacation pay for school employees at \$15,000 and limits its use before retirement.

The provision would apply to both current and future employees of boards of education and local governments. Current employees would be able to retain any supplemental compensation already accrued as of the bill's effective date.

The bill was up for discussion only and

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schools.

The report also found that abatement practices go largely unmonitored by the state and that municipal governments

have little incentive to comprehensively assess whether abatement is necessary to attract development, whether the type of development is needed in the first place or whether the abatement ultimately achieves its desired economic development goals.

**Suggested Changes** The report makes 12 recommendations for improving New Jersey's abatement program, including giving school districts, counties and the public greater roles in the abatement process; structuring PILOT arrangements to encompass the interests of counties and school districts; ensuring that a comprehensive and detailed cost-benefit analysis occurs before awarding an abatement; and conducting periodic reviews and reclassifications of "areas in need of redevelopment."

The OSC undertook the study to examine broad issues underlying tax abatement implementation and to inform taxpayers about this complex development tool.

The full report can be found online at [www.nj.gov/comptroller](http://www.nj.gov/comptroller).



### Workshop Features Programs Not to be Missed

With the *Workshop 2010 Preview Guide* arriving in mailboxes, NJSBA members will find a host of new and exciting sessions in store for them at this year's event.

Workshop, the premiere training conference for New Jersey school officials, will be held Oct. 19 and 20 in Somerset. Highlights include:

**Science Leadership Academy: School 2.0** Workshop will open on Tuesday, Oct. 19 with an exciting program from the Science Leadership Academy (SLA) of Philadelphia and Apple. Attendees will learn how SLA is thinking outside the box, and how Apple is involved. Chris Lehmann, principal of SLA, and Brent D. Frey, Apple's Education Development Manager, will be joined by students and teachers from the school for this unique session.

**A Conversation with the Commissioner** New Jersey Education Commissioner Bret Schundler will speak at the Exposition Hall at 4 p.m. Oct. 19 on the current issues facing education statewide. Be sure to get there early, as seating is limited to 1,000.

**School Safety** At 10:30 a.m. Wednesday, Oct. 20, school safety takes center stage as the New Jersey Department of Education and the New Jersey State Police give a joint presentation on school security and drill laws. School officials will want to learn about new regulations that every New Jersey school district must adhere to.

**Social Media** If your district is wondering how to engage the community using social media such as Facebook and Twitter, Workshop is providing an informative program called, "Social Media: It's Not as Scary as you Think." Participants will meet two notable speakers: Jim Long of the NBC News Washington Bureau, who travels with President Obama and shares his insights with 40,000 Twitter followers, and Eric Scheinger, the principal of New Milford High School, who connects with his community on both Facebook and Twitter. The program will be held at 3:30 p.m. Oct. 20.

For more information on these and the dozens of other programs available at the conference, go to the Workshop website at [www.njsba.org/workshop](http://www.njsba.org/workshop).

### Sept. 24 is Deadline for Board Member of the Year Nominations

Do you know a board member who has made a significant contribution to public education? If so, consider nominating him or her for NJSBA's Board Member of the Year Award. Nominations are being accepted through Sept. 24.

Given annually, the Board Member of the Year Award honors an individual board member who has:

- Made significant contributions to education
- Exemplified leadership in education with a strong commitment to the children of New Jersey
- Demonstrated a strong commitment to his/her personal and professional development as a board member
- Shown active involvement in school governance at the local, county and state levels

Nominees must have five years experience as a board of education member and must hold NJSBA's Certificated Board Member designation. The winner will be recognized at NJSBA's Delegate Assembly in November.

For more information, go to [www.njsba.org/memberofyear](http://www.njsba.org/memberofyear) or contact Ann Marie Smith at (609) 278-5209 or by e-mail at [amsmith@njsba.org](mailto:amsmith@njsba.org).



### NJSBA's Backpack Brigade

Kimberly Blum, director of human resources at NJSBA (left), and Linda Rottloff, human resources assistant, display

backpacks filled with school supplies that Association staff collected. The backpacks will be distributed to children by Homefront, an agency that works with low-income and homeless families in Mercer County. This is the fourth year NJSBA staff has donated filled backpacks to area agencies.



### Change in Executive Committee Meeting Time

In accordance with the Open Public Meetings Act, notice is hereby provided of a change in the time of the previously noticed Executive Committee, which will be held at the Holiday Inn Somerset, 195 Davidson Ave., Somerset, N.J. Aug. 28. The starting time of the meeting has been **changed to 9 a.m.** on Aug. 28.

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

# Communications in Troubling Times

## NJSBA Fall School Public Relations Forum

**Thursday, September 30, 6:30 to 9:30 p.m.**  
*(registration/light refreshments, 6 p.m.)*  
**Rowan University, Glassboro**

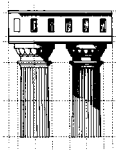
From difficult contract negotiations to negative news coverage, the variety of communications challenges facing local school districts is broad. A recessionary economy and volatile political climate underscore the need for a sound, rational approach to crisis communications.

Attend NJSBA's Fall School PR Forum to learn about:

1. Principles of crisis communication
2. Strategies for communicating during emergency situations
3. Methods to communicate during difficult contract negotiations

**Registration Fee:**

\$50 (NJSBA members) • \$100 (non-members)



Credits: 1

Core Area for CBM: Relationships, School/Community Relations

Core Area for MBM: Relationships, School/Community Relations

Core Area for CBL: None

### Communicating During Negotiations

Learn how and when it is appropriate to tell the community about the content of negotiations, strategies to effectively address union statements to the news media, and how a district should communicate about employee job actions. Drawing on NJSBA's extensive resources in collective bargaining and negotiations law, this session will focus on ways to keep the public informed without jeopardizing the negotiations process.

### The Principles of Crisis Communication

Whether you represent a corporation facing a product recall or a school district experiencing a school bus accident, your response during an emergency affects your organization's clients, its mission and its credibility. Faculty of the Rowan University College of Communications will provide an overview of the principles that should guide a school district when communicating in a crisis situation.

### Case Study: Out of Context and Going Viral

Someone edits down an hour's worth of video into a three-minute snippet, places it online and *voila*...you've gone viral! See what happened to a South Jersey school district when a segment from a four-month-old video of a student rehearsal appeared online one day, resulting in network news crews descending on the school...and hundreds of angry telephone messages. Learn how school officials handled the situation and what they learned from the experience.



**The 2010-2011 \$2000 NJSBA Service Credit may be applied towards the Public Relations Forum. Visit [www.njsba.org](http://www.njsba.org) for more information.**

**To register, complete the coupon below and fax to (609) 278-5280.**

**Cancellation Policy:** A fee of \$25 will be charged for cancellations made within 10 working days of the program.

Cancellations made within 72 hours and no-shows will be charged the full fee. For possible program cancellations due to inclement weather, call 609-392-2000.

Please register me for NJSBA's **Fall School Public Relations Forum**, Thursday, September 30, 2010, 6:30 to 9:30 p.m. (registration/light refreshments, 6 p.m.), Rowan University, Glassboro.

- Members: \$50 per person                       Non-members: \$100 per person
- Bill Board (Voucher enclosed)\*               Payment enclosed (Make check payable to NJSBA)

**Do you wish to apply your service credit? (Applies to regular member school districts only)**     Yes     No

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

DISTRICT: \_\_\_\_\_ COUNTY: \_\_\_\_\_

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

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

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

RETURN TO: New Jersey School Boards Association, Call Center, 413 W. State Street, P.O. Box 909, Trenton, New Jersey 08605-0909 or FAX: (609) 278-5280

\*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.

was not released by the committee. NJSBA is seeking amendments to clarify language in the bill.

**Charter Authorization** Also on Aug. 16,

the Senate Education Committee discussed S-2198 (Ruiz, Cunningham), a bill that would enable Rutgers University to authorize charter schools. The bill would also expedite approval of charter school applications, and permit authorization of

special purpose charter schools. NJSBA testimony sought amendments that would allow local districts to authorize charter schools – a power that only the Commissioner of Education currently has the authority to perform.

Nationwide, 45 percent of charter-school authorizers were local school districts, 41 percent were state educational agencies, 12 percent were higher education, and 2 percent were other entities, according to a 2004 report of the Public Charter Schools Program. As of 2009, local school districts accounted for 55 percent of charter school authorizers in the nation, according to the National Association of Charter School Authorizers.

School districts can authorize charters in 21 of the 41 states that currently allow charter schools, according to the National Alliance for Public Charter Schools. When a local school board has authority over chartering and oversight, both the design and accountability of the charter school are more likely to be more responsive to the needs of the local community and the charter school students than without such involvement, according to NJSBA.

The bill was up for discussion only. Senator Teresa Ruiz, chairwoman of the committee, said she would consider stakeholder input as she makes improvements to the bill.

**Superintendent Tenure** Two lawmakers are advocating a bill, A-2359 (Voss, Caputo), that would reinstate tenure for superintendents and administrative principals. The legislation, which was introduced in February, would begin providing tenure to those positions after the employment contracts expired. The legislators contend that reinstating tenure would bring more stability to the position of superintendent.

NJSBA opposes lifetime tenure protection for school employees, including superintendents. New Jersey was the only state that provided tenure to superintendents, until it was abolished in 1991. 🍏

### County Association Programs Explore Critical Issues

The county school boards associations' evening programs will help board members meet their responsibilities in an era of change – with topics ranging from negotiations in difficult times, to the governor's proposed "toolkit" of legislative changes to control local spending.

Besides hearing from experts at the state level, the county association programs provide board members the added value of a forum to share mutual concerns and to learn from colleagues.

Registration for all programs begins at 6:30 p.m., and the programs begin at 7 p.m. The registration deadline is the day before the event.

County association programs scheduled through the end of September include:

**Camden/Gloucester:** Tuesday, Sept. 7. Alternative energy sources. Clementon Elementary School.

**Passaic:** Monday, Sept. 13. A discussion with municipal officials of the 2-percent cap, toolkit legislation, and how districts will be affected. Clifton High School.

**Morris:** Wednesday, Sept. 15. High school reform, national standards, and providing a quality education in challenging times. Madison High School.

**Essex:** Thursday, Sept. 16. The 2-percent property tax cap and the impact of the governor's legislative toolkit. West Essex Regional High School.

**Cape May:** Monday, Sept. 20. Negotiations and the governor's legislative toolkit. Cape May County Technical School, Cape May Courthouse.

**Warren:** Monday, Sept. 20. Municipal and community leaders discuss the 2-percent property tax cap and toolkit legislation. Harmony Township School.

**Cumberland:** Monday, Sept. 27. "A Conversation Between You & Your State Representatives." Cumberland County Technical Education Center, Bridgeton.

**Hudson:** Tuesday, Sept. 28. The governor's legislative 'toolkit' and how it affects your district. Union City High School.

**Salem:** Wednesday, Sept. 29. Energy savings program. Oldmans Elementary School, Oldmans Township.

For more information on county associations, visit [www.njsba.org](http://www.njsba.org) and select a county from the dropdown box under "County Associations."

### Talking about the Toolkit

*Barbara Horl of NJSBA's Governmental Relations Department meets with legislators on Aug. 17 to discuss the governor's proposed "toolkit" legislation to control spending at the local government level. To the left, Horl meets with Assemblyman Ralph Caputo of Essex County, and at right she meets with Assemblywoman Joan M. Voss of Bergen County. Caputo and Voss are both members of the Assembly Education Committee.*





# Is Your District Feeling the Squeeze?

Whether your district is self-represented or uses the services of a professional negotiator, NJSBA's bargaining conferences will help your board negotiate more effectively.

## Negotiate Effectively in Tight Times

### Preparing for Bargaining

**Saturday, September 11, 2010**

\$125 (\$250 for non-members)

9:00 a.m. - 4:15 p.m.

RWJ Hamilton Center for Health & Wellness

This fast-paced program will guide you through the preparation activities and legal framework critical to effective bargaining. Topics include:

- The Board's Obligations and Rights
- The Roles of the Bargaining Team and the Board
- Costing Out the Current Agreement
- Developing Board Proposals

Academy Credits: 2  
Core Area for CBM: Labor Relations  
Core Area for MBM: Labor Relations

### Intermediate Bargaining

**Saturday, September 25, 2010**

\$125 (\$250 for non-members)

9:00 a.m. - 4:15 p.m.

RWJ Hamilton Center for Health & Wellness

Learn what happens at the bargaining table; what to expect and how to respond. Topics include:

- The Mechanics of Bargaining (ground rules, timing, procedures)
- Analyzing Union Demands
- Using Comparative Data
- At-the-Table Techniques
- Impasse Procedures

Academy Credits: 2  
Core Area for CBM: Labor Relations  
Core Areas for MBM: Labor Relations, School Law



**The 2010-2011 \$2000 NJSBA Service Credit may be applied towards the Bargaining Programs. Visit [www.njsba.org](http://www.njsba.org) for more information.**

**Cancellation Policy:** Cancellations made up to 10 working days prior to the program date will be refunded the entire registration fee. Cancellations made between 10 working days and 72 hours of the program date will be charged \$25. Cancellations made within 72 hours and no shows will be charged the full fee. For possible cancellations due to inclement weather, call (609) 392-2000.

To register, click on the Bargaining Conference link at [www.njsba.org](http://www.njsba.org).

## Coming This Fall: New Schedule, Format for Notes

Beginning Sept. 16, *School Board Notes* will have a new look and format.

The electronic version of *School Board Notes*, which is e-mailed to NJSBA members, will be sent weekly – carrying the latest information on state and federal legislation, State Board of Education action, relevant court decisions, local and county school board activities, and NJSBA events

and membership services.

The print version will be published twice a month, rather than on the current weekly schedule. It will be a compilation of the previous electronic versions. This is designed for board members who prefer not to read their news online.

This change will allow NJSBA to continue to focus on rapidly providing

members with the latest news and features, while saving money on printing and mailing costs.

Help the Association save money and help the environment by signing up to receive the electronic-only version of *School Board Notes* by going online to [www.njsba.org/sb\\_notes/subscribe.html](http://www.njsba.org/sb_notes/subscribe.html).



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**SCHOOL BOARD NOTES**

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**Race to the Top**  
*continued*

and useful database of student achievement, and give local school officials the ability to retain the best teachers making needed changes in the state’s tenure and seniority system.”

Many local school officials were hopeful the federal government would award the grants, especially in light of the loss of more than a billion dollars in education funding. Since February, school districts have experienced two state funding cuts totaling \$1.2 billion. Those cuts were followed by additional reductions that municipal officials made to local tax levies after a majority of proposed school budgets were defeated by voters in the Annual School Election in April.

**Early Round** In the first round of Race to the Top grants earlier this year, 40 states applied for funding, but only Delaware and Tennessee received \$600 million in

grants. By giving the first round of grants to only two states, the U.S. Department of Education sent a message that it emphasized applications that acquired the buy-in from local stakeholders, including teacher unions. But in New Jersey, union leaders in more than 350 participating school districts refused to sign on to the program because the federal grants encourage states to adopt merit pay – which labor unions routinely oppose.

NJSBA had also written a letter of support for the state’s grant application.

The Race to the Top grants require states to implement educational reforms to help low-performing schools, raise standards, ensure effective teachers, and use data to track student performance.

Gov. Chris Christie said state education officials expect to move ahead with its planned changes, even if New Jersey did not receive the grant.

**C A L E N D A R**

**September 13**

▶ Passaic County School Boards Association (SBA), Clifton High School, Clifton, 6:30 p.m.

**September 15**

NJSBA Executive Committee, NJSBA offices, Ewing, 3 p.m.

▶ Morris County SBA, Madison High School library, Madison, 6:30 p.m.

**September 16**

▶ Essex County SBA, West Essex Regional High School, North Caldwell, 6:30 p.m.

▶ Denotes pre-registration required

For more information about county school boards association activities, go online to [www.njsba.org](http://www.njsba.org) and select the name of the appropriate county association.