

MCSBA Member Services



The Monroe County School Boards Association (MCSBA) is a member-driven organization providing support to public school leaders as they strive to provide an equitable education for all students.

This document describes the many programs, publications, facilitations and affiliations that the Association offers to the membership.

Publications

Facts and Figures – published every year, in full color since 2022. Provides a listing of information on each member school district, plus a “highlight” page where every district can write about anything that they would like to showcase. The printing for this book is also paid for by the “sponsor” ads. It is not a free download because real estate agencies and relocation agencies purchase this book and it provides a small revenue stream for MCSBA. All districts receive this book for Central Office administrators and board members. Anyone in the greater community can request one copy at no charge. A copy of the book is also provided to our legislative representatives, libraries, colleges, media groups and to anyone who purchased an ad.

MCSBA Directory – in order that all members can effectively communicate with one another, MCSBA publishes a directory of key contacts for each district. Also, in the book is the officer contact information and our calendar of events. The paper Directory goes to Board members and Central Office staff only. This directory is accessible to the MCSBA membership on the *membership only* section of the website.

Website – www.mcsba.org Contains all documents and information on who we are and how we function. There is a “members only” login for member documents and password protected sections for committees and meeting video recorded access. The district clerks have their own section that they can access for specific materials as well. The website was redesigned in 2022 and is the hub for sharing best practices, historical data, meeting minutes/recordings, and serves as a key communication source for the membership. A Current Trends and Topics members only page was created for the membership to access recent articles pertaining to education.

Professional Development

MCSBA is certified to teach the two NYSED trainings; New Governance and Fiscal Oversight. We provide the New Governance in June before newly elected board members take their oath of office and the Fiscal training in the fall after new board members have had a chance to review some budget documents. Each six-hour training session is done by local board members, superintendents, business administrators and school attorneys. Both breakfast and lunch are included along with a comprehensive notebook of resources for each training session. The Association consistently receives very positive reviews for the content of the presentations, the ability to ask questions, and the opportunity to network with other regional board members. ***We charge \$175 for each six-hour training. In contrast, other school board associations charge up to \$255 per session for members; \$510 for nonmembers.**

Two of our standing committee meetings, District Operations (DO) and Information Exchange (IE), are professional development opportunities with topics chosen by the membership. A survey is sent out each summer to all members to solicit ideas for the upcoming year. We also offer a Zoom option for all DO and IE meetings. We record the Zoom and store the meetings on a secured members-only location on the website and are free to access. It is important to note that many of our member district ASI's, Business Officials and Human Resource administrators also come to these meetings to hear the speakers for their own update on information or to expand their learning.

In 2022, MCSBA added two social hours for the membership to gather, collaborate, and network. At the executive director's discretion, we will add a short presentation to the social hour(s).

All professional development activities are posted on the MCSBA website homepage with date/time/location.

Advocacy

The other standing committee is Legislative and they work on our collective advocacy. Each fall they choose, if necessary, any subcommittees that need to work on position papers. They set up priorities for the year for the local appointments in the fall and spring, the one-day virtual meeting to educate state leaders representatives in December and a one-day trip to Albany in March. They also set up for the legislative breakfast (we typically have over 100 attend the breakfast each year). The executive director and legislative liaison (a per diem MCSBA hire in 2022) prepare all of the briefing notes and talking points for all legislative activities. The executive director also prepares a monthly legislative update on federal, state, local and NYSED current issues. Every legislative committee member also receives a Legislative Handbook so that they can have contact information for easy reference for their Board. We emphasize the importance of Boards inviting legislative representatives to come to the schools in their legislative districts to see what great things are happening and talk one-on-one with individual board members and administrators.

Our COAC (Communications Outreach Advisory Committee) also works to produce key talking points on issues related to advocacy so that Boards can tailor them for their own use when communicating out to the public.

One of the other roles for the association related to advocacy is to provide education briefings to all legislators and legislative candidates who would like one. Many do opt for one and it helps them not only understand the issues of public education, but also be able to speak to them. Many candidates understand very little about public education structure and mandates, and they don't know much about the school districts that they represent. These briefings give them a chance to ask questions and get information without feeling like they need to be also "campaigning" or feel like they are "supposed to know".

The executive director has direct and ongoing relationships with most of our legislators including Federal legislators. The executive director has been asked to speak at several press conferences for our legislators. Legislators call from Albany or Washington for information because they know the executive director will respond quickly. The legislative liaison has developed relationships with key staffers within legislators' and SED offices as well. This outreach benefits the entire membership as they work to provide quality instruction and deal with the other impacts to

providing that instruction. It also nurtures those relationships so that our members continue to have access. As an example, last year, our members were able to meet in Albany with the Governor's deputy budget director and the Governor's assistant secretary of education as well as an education policy team from NYS Senator Andrea Stewart-Cousin's office. Those are key appointments that not every SBA is able to get.

Collaborations

MCSBA collaborates with the following groups on behalf of the entire membership

- ACT for Education – Act for Education was established by the local superintendent's council to share out positive messages about public education. It has (through MCSBA), two board members who sit on the committee in order to bring back information to our local boards of education. Currently, Terry Melore (Greece) is the MCSBA westside Board member representative and Mark Kokanovich (BOCES 1) represents the east side Boards. Business partners and not for profits also sit on this committee. Recently, the committee added a communication director. MCSBA has been instrumental in providing information to the committee that they can use for presentations on the successes in Monroe County school districts. The committee works with Causewave in order to advance its message and ACT has its own website. In the past two years, ACT/MCSBA produced a webinar on board service and created board vignettes highlighting various aspects of board service from current school board members. These vignettes have been on Channel 13 and are available on the MCSBA and ACT websites.
- SIT/TogetherNow – The systems integration team was put together in 2017, because of an IBM report that studied the important issues related to poverty and services in Rochester City (primarily) but Monroe County, as well. The report spoke about how our county is “resource rich, but results poor”. This project is working to better integrate services between education, health, and social services, for our most vulnerable populations, but ultimately for everyone. It is a 7-year project that is backed by state dollars and funded through the work of our local Foundations. United Way is the fiduciary agent for the project, but TogetherNow is in the process of moving to an LLC under a new governance structure. SIT started with 30 steering committee members representing each of the three sectors. The Superintendents from Monroe One BOCES and Monroe 2-Orleans BOCES, the SED Commissioner, and under the MCSBA operating agreement, the MCSBA executive director represented our BOE's. Beyond RCSD, several of our schools participate in TogetherNow, which ultimately finds ways to improve the system and help children, adults, and families move along the spectrum from crisis to thriving. Congressman Joe Morelle and Regent Wade Norwood co-chaired this project.
- School Attorneys Committee – Once a month the school attorneys meet with the MCSBA office to talk about the current legal issues going on in the state and locally that are impacting school districts. It is here that we plan the Fall/Spring Law conferences by gathering those topics together and developing the agenda for the conferences and the presenters. If a topic doesn't arise to a law conference topic but is still important, we bring that to the Information Exchange or District Operations standing committees to see if they would like us to add it to the listing of options for our meetings. For the past three years,

Daniel Morton-Bentley, General Counsel for the Commissioner of Education, has been a guest presenter at the MCSBA Fall Law Conference.

- Affiliate Steering Committee – we were asked a few years back if we could develop a committee of former board members who have retired, but are still interested in staying informed about public education issues. The Executive Committee gave us permission to do so and the MCSBA Officers preside over that committee and the executive director sits as an “ex-officio” member. The affiliate steering committee plans a couple of events every year and the executive director will attend (with any available officers) to give an update on what MCSBA may be working on and the current issues that we are addressing.
- COLSBA – this is the Coalition of Local School Boards Association. We meet quarterly via Zoom and in-person at the NYSSBA Convention. This is the executive directors and the SBA presidents who work together to share information and align advocacy. We have a formal agreement with NYSSBA that allows all executive directors of local SBA’s to attend NYSSBA law conferences, seminars and trainings for free. In turn, we make sure that our members are aware of their events.
- In the past, the previous executive director sat on the SKIPP (influenza vaccine project to provide flu clinics in schools) and UNITE Rochester (D&C initiative to work on the issues related to Racism). Currently, we have collaborative relationships with the Monroe Art Gallery (MAG) and Rochester Museum and Science Center (RMSC).
- URMIC Behavioral Health Committee – the current MCSBA executive director was asked to participate on this committee that meets quarterly regarding behavioral health trends/needs locally and nationally. The Committee consists of health experts, business professionals, URMIC executives, and the MCSBA executive director.

Communication

While every district has communication specialists, many of the questions asked by the media are not district specific but are a response to a greater public education issue.

As the spokesperson for the Association, it is the executive director’s responsibility to develop relationships with all the media groups and to answer these larger questions.

The current executive director has contacted all the television channels, the D&C, and WXXI to develop a positive relationship with them so that they will come to her with the mutual trust that information will be shared and relayed accurately.

The executive director is invited to join the Communications Director (GRSPRA) committee annually so that we can work together on larger issues facing public schools and the Association may better understand district specific issues. They appreciate that they can call on MCSBA to deal with the general public education issues and they can concentrate on what is going on within their districts.

Conferences and Seminars

- Law Conferences - We offer a half-day fall law conference every year and a spring law conference. We provide CLE to any attorney who attends, free of charge through the relationship we have with Hodgson Russ. The conference includes a breakfast and a

notebook with all of the topic presentation and back up information. We have found that more members can attend a half-day session versus a full day.

- District Clerk Conferences – We offer a fall and spring district clerk seminar for our clerks to discuss issues related to their varied job descriptions and to be able to network and share information among themselves. We have a planning committee that works on the topics and we find the presenters for the conference. Within the past five years, the clerks decided to move their conference(s) to a half-day, plus lunch to enable more time to network with one another. We have many clerks that come from outside of our association and therefore, our clerks feel like they have incredible support amongst each other.
- Prospective Candidate Seminar – We advertise this seminar through the district clerks (via our website and email) for those who might be interested in running for a board seat. It is a 4-hour Saturday morning seminar in March that highlights the roles and responsibilities of BOEs and also helps candidates understand the rules/regulations for petitions and campaigning. We have a panel of veteran board members, a superintendent, and a school attorney present information that they believe is necessary in order to make an informed decision about running.

Tax Bills

Many years ago, the county decided that it no longer wanted to deal with the school tax bill printing process. Through a long-standing agreement, MCSBA is responsible for doing this for our member districts. Because we do this as a “consortium” of sorts, school districts get a break on the printing and mailing of the school tax bills. The executive director is the receiver of all the tax bill information, provides that to all the business administrators (or their designee), makes sure that all the address information is correct, makes sure that all the districts have the information filled out correctly and turned in by due dates for the county and the printer. The executive director is the liaison between both the county lead person and the ABS CEO where they are printed. MCSBA pays all of the costs associated with the printing (paper, PDF’s, envelopes, etc.) upfront and then once the bills are mailed out, we get a copy of the number of bills printed for each district and bill that back to each district.

Board Workshops/Retreats/Candidate Nights/Other Outreach

The executive director provides board workshops, retreats, and board candidate night facilitation for any member district that requests it. MCSBA does not charge a fee for any of these services whether it is a day, evening, or weekend event, or whether it is half-day or full day.

The executive director has facilitated conversations on Board priorities/goals, midyear goals, critical conversations and communication, policy, board make up on committees, codes of ethics and other Board roles and responsibilities. She also provides the highlights/notes from each of these facilitations to enable the Board to concentrate on the work at hand and not have to bring in their district clerk, although they are welcome to do that.

The executive director is available to facilitate Board candidate nights. Historically, the executive director has facilitated: Brighton, Penfield, Pittsford, Webster, Gates Chili, and West Irondequoit.

The executive director incorporated a Board Member of Color network in collaboration with the RCSD Commissioner President in 2023. The group conducts networking meetings and the executive director coordinates the logistics of each event.

The executive director has been a guest presenter at multiple graduate classes in education administration for the University of Rochester. This helps those going into education administration get a better sense of the role of a board and how public education is impacted by other levels of government.

The executive director makes every attempt to attend both BOCES Annual meetings, the RCSD Legislative Breakfast and any event that members may invite her to.

Research

Board members are extremely busy people and their first priority is to their own districts. Therefore, they do not always have the time or opportunity to stay abreast of the information that is or will soon impact our member districts.

In addition to legislative updates and briefings, the executive director and/or legislative liaison works on collective information for our districts. This isn't just used by our member boards, but by our superintendents and other cabinet members.

MCSBA keeps track of poverty rates, homeless students, English Language Learners, students with disabilities, graduation rates, etc., for all member districts so that a larger picture can be seen by our members, their cabinets, and legislators.

The executive director and legislative liaison keeps track of what is going on at the Board of Regents and the State Education Department regarding implementation of laws and regulations and what might be going on with State or Federal government that could impact our local member districts.

Through our office, we can view emerging issues and bring them forward like the concerns over the recent movement of interests groups going to BOE meetings to push for the removal of books in our schools. We also stay ahead of current proposed legislation such as later start times, universal meals, mental health initiatives, UPK, LBGTQIA+, foundation aid changes, and zero-emission busing (to name a few).

Our legislative liaison works on additional research for our MCSBA position papers such as "What does the NYS Per Pupil cost pay for?" which relates to our position on mandates or the impact of Charter Schools which relates to our school choice paper.

The executive director and/or legislative liaison attends either the NAI in Washington or the NSBA convention to gain direct information. They also attend the NYSSBA and NYSCOSS conventions each year to make sure that our members have what they need and share pertinent information gained from attending the presentations (especially legislative debriefs).