

# MASC Bulletin

February 2003 v.37 n.2

[www.masc.org](http://www.masc.org)

MASSACHUSETTS ASSOCIATION OF SCHOOL COMMITTEES

## Chapter 70 spared (for now) in Governor's proposed cutbacks

Reminding the Commonwealth of his campaign promise to balance the budget while protecting education and essential core services, Governor Romney last week announced a sweeping \$343 million in spending cuts for the remainder of the FY03 year. These cuts, while sparing Chapter 70 appropriations directly, include losses of \$114 million in local aid to cities and towns, \$133 million out of health and human services, \$5.8 million from public safety, combined with a \$143 million package of further cuts that will require legislative approval. Higher education took a \$15.9 million budgetary hit, and three K-12 grant programs: School Readiness; Early Literacy; and School Breakfast were cut \$10 million; \$11.8 million; and \$5.3 million respectively. The Governor has also proposed \$5 million in increased fees for state services.

Secretary of Administration and Finance Eric Kriss, who announced the specifics of the Governor's budget balancing strategy, emphasized the need for these fourth quarter rollbacks in order to accommodate a potential \$650 million shortfall in the state's FY03 budget. These cuts, which would go into effect immediately, have sent school districts across the state scrambling to plug holes for the remainder of the year, while awaiting release at the end of the month of the Governor's FY04 budget.

In response to the proposed reductions, MASC President Carol LePrevost noted that with 2004 school budgets due in the next few weeks, school leaders are facing a three-pronged juggernaut: the shrivelled economy; a growing (largely unfunded) list of state and

federal assessment/ accountability mandates; and a substantial enrollment increase. Reduce the teaching staff and the district will exceed class size requirements; eliminate remedial and enrichment programs and risk higher failure rates on tests tied to federal funding and graduation requirements. "It's like *A Perfect Storm* meets *Catch-22*."

Prior to the release of the specific cuts MASC President-Elect Paul Schlichtman sent a letter to Lieutenant Governor Healey requesting that school committees as well as municipal officials be sought out for input on how the current fiscal crisis is affecting local districts.

MASC Legislative Counsel Stephen Finnegan has sent a special *Legislative Bulletin* to all MASC members, detailing the FY03 reductions and proposed legislative changes, as well as a summary of the municipal relief package proposed by the Lieutenant Governor. Given the likelihood of a reduction in FY04 local aid, MASC is asking its members to have their superintendents and business managers prepare comments on the impact of state regulations and mandates on their budgets at this time and submit these to MASC executive director Glenn Koocher by the third week in February. Based on these comments, MASC will prepare a report which it will deliver at an upcoming meeting with the Administration.

The ongoing fiscal crisis will be the focus at MASC's Day on the Hill, Monday, April 14 at the State House. Don't forget to check the website ([www.masc.org](http://www.masc.org)) for further information.

## Budget to lead discussion at MASC's Day on the Hill

School finance concerns and the implications of the state's current economic fallout will lead the agenda at MASC's upcoming Day on the Hill at the State House on April 14. [Invited speakers include Governor Mitt Romney; Secretary of Education-Designate Peter Nessen; House Speaker Thomas Finneran, Representative John Rogers, chair, House Ways and Means Committee; Senator Robert Antonioni and Representative Marie St. Fleur, co-chairs, Joint Education Committee; and Commissioner David Driscoll.](#) MASC urges school committee members to begin collecting district-specific information about how the recently released FY03 cuts and projected FY04 fiscal cuts will impact education and achievement in their communities.

As in the past, the event will showcase the talents of Massachusetts vocational school culinary arts students at the registration breakfast table and buffet luncheon. Call your legislators now, make an appointment to see them while you are at the State House and invite them to join you at the luncheon.

Registration details will be available shortly. Check the MASC website ([www.masc.org](http://www.masc.org)) or your mailbox for more information.

# MASSnews

## State Education Committee members appointed

Senate President Robert Travaglini and House Speaker Thomas Finneran recently announced their legislative committee appointments. Serving on the Joint Committee on Education will be Senators Robert Antonioni, co-chair, (D-Leominster), David Magnani, vice chair (D-Framingham), Robert O'Leary (D-Cummaquid), Pamela Resor (D-Acton) and Diane Wilkerson (D-Boston) and Representatives Marie St. Fleur, co-chair, (D-Boston), Kevin Murphy, vice chair, (D-Lowell), Karen Spilka (D-Ashland), Brian Golden (D-Brighton), Alice Wolf (D-Cambridge), David Torrisi (D-North Andover), Geraldine Creedon (D-Brockton), Arthur Broadhurst (D-Methuen), Jeffrey Sanchez, (D-Jamaica Plain), Robert Hargraves (R-Groton) and Jeffrey Perry (R-Sandwich). Members of the education committee have been invited to join MASC members at the Association's upcoming Day on the Hill, April 14 at the State House.

## DOE releases draft guidelines for implementation of Question 2

Question 2, the new Massachusetts law governing the education of students who are English learners was an initiative petition on the November 5, 2002 ballot that the voters approved. The law went into effect on December 5, 2002, however, with one exception, the substantive provisions of the law do not take effect until the start of the 2003-2004 school year. Section 7, regarding the administration of academic and English language proficiency assessments to English learners, is the only section of Question 2 that must be implemented during the current school year.

To assist school districts as they begin planning for the implementation of the new law, the DOE has produced a series of questions and answers regarding some of the law's provisions and their applications. These include new definitions of English Learner,

mandated timelines, components of the new law, waiver options, issues around students with disabilities, program types and services and licensing requirements, among other concerns. The full text of the law and the DOE's draft questions and answers are available on the MASC website ([www.masc.org](http://www.masc.org)). The DOE has asked that MASC members report back to them on the usefulness of the document or with additional questions and concerns. A special email address has been set up to enable you to comment directly to the DOE online. ([www.question2@doe.mass.edu](mailto:www.question2@doe.mass.edu))

## MA plans for NCLB approved

Massachusetts is one of only five states to have received approval from the US Department of Education for their No Child Left Behind accountability plans. The announcement was made by President Bush last month during ceremonies to commemorate the one-year anniversary of passage of the NCLB legislation.

In addition to Massachusetts, Colorado, New York, Indiana and Ohio have outlined specific steps for ensuring that all public school students in their states will achieve adequate yearly progress in reading and math achievement.

## 112 additional MCAS appeals granted

A total of 112 of the 196 MCAS appeals submitted from 28 districts for students in the class of 2003 were recently granted by the DOE following the second round of appeals. In the first round granted in December, 201 out of 392 appeals from 63 districts were approved.

To be eligible for an appeal, a student must have taken the grade 10 MCAS in either English or math at least three times, scored a 216 or above at least once, maintained at least a 95 percent attendance record, and participated in tutoring and academic support programs in school. Once deemed eligible, the appeal must be filed by the district's superintendent and include evidence of the student's

knowledge and skills in the subject area, including teacher recommendations, grades in courses taken in the subject and work samples. The appeal must also contain grades and MCAS scores of other students in the school who took the same courses. For more information on the MCAS appeals process: [www.doe.mass.edu/mcasappeals](http://www.doe.mass.edu/mcasappeals)

# MASCnews

## MASC takes education agenda to Capitol Hill

From Bangor to Boise, it was the same story over and over again as participants to NSBA's School Leadership and Federal Relations Network conferences exchanged concerns over increasing demands on school districts, decreasing state and federal monies and narrowing funding streams, and, above all, the goliath of accountability/achievement mandates, the year-old No Child Left Behind legislation.

Focusing on issues as wide-ranging as the implications of census data for school districts, board member standards and communications styles and strategies, school leaders from across the country convened in Washington January 31-February 4, united in their determination to raise student achievement in spite of the current financial, societal and political challenges.

Delegates to the Federal Relations Network heard from Senate Minority Leader Tom Daschle and North Dakota Senator Kent Conrad, who is a member of the Appropriations Committee. Both legislators reaffirmed their commitment to fully funding the education budget and expressed their frustration with the disparity between the administration's education rhetoric and the FY04 appropriations. Also on the program was Elijah Cummings, president of the Black Caucus, who delivered a rousing statement on the importance of supporting high standards and achievement for all students. Participants were also well-briefed on key education issues including the need to increase federal investment in

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# MASC testifies at charter school hearing

Tempers flared and emotions ran high, but MASC members captured the crowd's attention with thoughtful and candid testimony presented at the Department of Education's public hearing on charter schools held in Pittsfield on January 22.

The hearing was one of several conducted around the state last month, designed to give the public an opportunity to comment on the 11 new charter school applications currently under consideration. These include six new charter schools proposed for Boston and one each in North Adams, Haverhill, Waltham, Salem and Worcester. Approval for the schools will be voted on by the Board of Education at its February 25 meeting.

At various points during the two-hour session the tone grew acrimonious as Berkshire-area municipal officials, superintendents, principals and legislators blasted accusatory salvos at the North Adams charter school proponents and members of the DOE and Board of Education in attendance. Chief among their concerns was the unwillingness of the Board to consider a moratorium on charter schools given the financial strains on districts brought about by the current economic crisis.

MASC President Carol LePrevost, a member of the Lee school committee, urged the Board to consider the implications of diverting dwindling

resources from local school districts to charter school coffers.

Deny it though its proponents try, she insisted, "charter schools have a significant cost implication. A charter school within a community distorts the whole concept of economy of scale and requires us to support extra classrooms, supplies, teachers, support staff and administration because we must continue to maintain the current classrooms, staff and facilities. There is little, if any savings, but significantly greater expense for everyone." LePrevost concluded her testimony with a call for a moratorium on any new charters.

Stephen Cozzaglio, also a member of the Lee school committee and Chair of MASC's Division VI, noted that charter schools have a very poor record of recruiting and educating students at risk attracting instead "students with the resources to transport themselves to school and bring with them funds diverted from the "at risk" students left behind in the sending districts."

He further noted that charter schools provide a vehicle for parents who want to re-segregate their community by class or race or learning status, a prospect that has significant—and potentially devastating—implications for sending districts given the requirements of MCAS and the federal No Child Left Behind legislation.

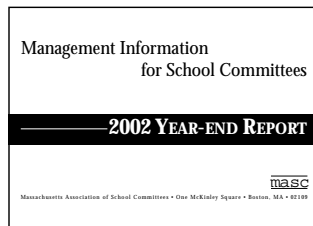
After a similar public meeting in

Lexington the following day, MASC President-Elect Paul Schlichtman, a member of the Arlington school committee, sent a letter to the *Boston Globe* responding to Board of Education chair Jim Peyser's comments that public schools don't lose a dime when children go to charter schools.

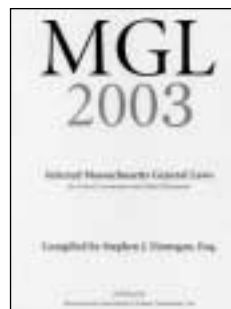
That's correct, Schlichtman suggested, schools don't lose a dime. "Public school districts lose more than 1.25 billion dimes—\$125 million—to charter schools." He also noted that, considering 41% of students attending charter schools today are in charter schools that failed to make Adequate Yearly Progress under the federal No Child Left Behind mandates, "we can conclude that the charter school experiment is costly, destructive, and largely ineffective."

On **Thursday, February 13** the Alliance for Educational Equity, in partnership with MASC, MASS, MA Municipal Association, the MA Teachers Association, Citizens for Public Schools and a number of state legislators, will hold a press conference at the State House to call for a moratorium on charter school expansion. MASC encourages members to show their support by attending the event, which will take place in Room A1 at 10:00am. For more information, contact Pam Richardson at (508)788-9461 or Worcester school committee member Kate Toomey (508) 798-1815.

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education; the ongoing struggle to defeat voucher and tuition tax subsidy proposals; and the unintended consequences resulting from passage of the No Child Left Behind legislation.

Another complex—and controversial—issue of concern to school leaders is the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) which is up for reauthorization this year. NSBA announced that it has called on Congress to fully fund the federal share of the law and is also advocating that Congress clarify the eligibility definition for special education services and eliminate requirements and mandates that restrict local district flexibility.

MASC was represented during the leadership portion of the

program in a session on the financial outlook for state associations, and strategies for maintaining services in an economic downturn. Panelists for the program included MASC President Carol LePrevost and Executive Director Glenn Koocher. On the final day of the conference, the MASC delegation met with Representatives James McGovern and Barney Frank and with education aides to Senators Edward Kennedy and John Kerry and Representatives William Delahunt, John Olver, Edward Markey, Marty Meehan, John Tierney, Richard Neal and Steven Lynch. At each meeting, MASC emphasized the need for additional federal funding and explained issues relating to the No Child Left Behind regulations.

## MASCEvents

**February 11 (Tu)**

Division VII meeting  
Upper Cape Cod Tech., Bourne

**February 12 (W)**

Legislative Committee  
meeting, Radisson, Marlboro

**February 12 (W)**

Board of Directors meeting  
The Radisson, Marlboro

**February 13 (Th)**

Charter school press  
conference (see page 3)

**February 27 (Th)**

Division III meeting  
Diman Voc., Fall River

**March 12 (W)**

Board of Directors meeting  
The Radisson, Marlboro

**March 29 (Sa) TENTATIVE**

Student Assessment  
Committee meeting  
Radisson, Auburn

**April 5-8 (Sa-Tu)**

NSBA Annual Conference  
San Francisco

**April 14 (M)**

Day on the Hill, State House

**Massachusetts Association of School Committees**

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**[www.masc.org](http://www.masc.org)**

**governor announces budget cuts**