

report of the resolutions committee

The MASC Resolutions Committee met on June 8, 2015 to consider resolutions proposed by member districts for consideration at the 2015 Annual Meeting of the Association. Members present were: Jacob Oliveira, Ludlow (President-Elect and Chair), Paul Schlichtman (Arlington), John Columbus (Life Member), Cliff Fountain (Quaboag Reg.), Kathleen Robey (Life Member), Brian O'Connell (Worcester), Ann Marie Cugno, Medford (MASC Past President), William Fonseca (East Longmeadow), Wendy Rua (Agawam), Marc Peterson (Life Member), Beverly Hugo, Framingham.

The following resolutions were moved forward by the Resolutions Committee and approved by the MASC Board of Directors.

RESOLUTION 1—REGARDING HIGH SCHOOL STARTING TIMES

(Submitted by the Newton School Committee)

WHEREAS there is considerable debate and discussion about the appropriate starting time for certain students, including middle and high school students, and

WHEREAS several districts in Massachusetts have debated the merits of delaying the start of school for middle and high schools in order to allow students the opportunity for adequate sleep, and

WHEREAS The American Academy of Pediatrics and the Center for Disease Control (CDC) recognize insufficient sleep in adolescents as an important public health issue that significantly affects the health and safety, as well as the academic success, of middle and high school students, and

WHEREAS research and study could help determine how districts could better arrange schedules to allow for the sleep necessary for adolescents to succeed in school,

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that MASC be authorized to petition the legislature and to support legislation, including S.254, which calls for the establishment of a special commission to study the appropriate starting time for students in middle and high school.

RATIONALE: The American Academy of Pediatrics has issued a policy statement¹ indicating that lack of sleep is a public health issue that significantly affects adolescents. While adolescents need 8.5 to 9.5 hours of sleep, most high school students get 7 hours or less. Chronic sleep loss can cause issues such as depressed feelings, suicidal thoughts, risk-taking behavior, difficulty problem solving, poor judgment and lack of motivation.

The American Academy of Pediatrics strongly supports the efforts of school districts to optimize sleep in students and urges high schools and middle schools to aim for start times that allow students the opportunity to achieve optimal levels of sleep (8.5–9.5 hours) and to improve physical (e.g., reduced obesity risk) and mental (e.g., lower rates of depression) health, safety (e.g., drowsy driving crashes), academic performance, and quality of life.

Proposed legislation S.254 (sponsored by Senators Cynthia S. Creem, William N. Brownsberger, Carolyn C. Dykema, James B. Eldridge) calls for a nine member commission that includes MASC and MASS to conduct a comprehensive study, including (i) a review of the scientific findings relative to sleep needs of adolescents, relative to the effect which middle school and secondary school start times have on the health and academic performance of students; (ii) determining the number of districts in the Commonwealth which have implemented later school day starting times for middle school and secondary schools and examining the academic performance of students; and (iii) identify resources and opportunities to assist districts in implementing later school day start times for middle school and secondary schools.

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¹Policy Statement, American Academy of Pediatrics, School Start Times for Adolescents, Adolescent Sleep Working Group, Committee on Adolescence, and Council on School Health

RESOLUTION 2—POVERTY AND CHILDREN

(Submitted by the Framingham School Committee)

WHEREAS one-third of the children in Massachusetts are living in or near poverty, and

WHEREAS the perils of poverty include putting students and families at risk for health, social and emotional and educational disadvantage, and

WHEREAS students in poverty and at social and emotional risk face obstacles and impediments to their success that other students do not confront, and

WHEREAS there is a direct link between poverty and student and district academic performance, demanding our attention and our diligent efforts to address these challenges, and

WHEREAS the eradication of poverty among children is essential to generating a strong economy and vibrant society,

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the Massachusetts Association of School Committee will prioritize, as a matter of its public policy agenda, and file for and support legislation that will support the eradication of poverty

among children in Massachusetts and advocate for social and economic justice for students and their families that will include:

- Support for a revenue stream that supports social and economic priorities for children and families.
- Support for state programs and services that serve children at greatest social and emotional risk which are easily accessible to students and families.
- Advocacy for nutrition programs that eradicate hunger among children.
- Advocacy for healthcare including vision, hearing, dental and mental health through accessible service providers.
- Support for pre-kindergarten programs for all children.
- Advocacy for increasing educational opportunities for children to grow both inside and outside of school.

RATIONALE: This resolution would help ensure that our underserved population of school children will be provided with the supports and services necessary for lasting success in the classroom and in their future. Knowing that, by eliminating the ravages of poverty, these strategies have been proven to increase positive student outcomes, this resolution will level the playing field by helping to ensure equity and to close the achievement gap for this vulnerable cohort of children.

RESOLUTION 3—TYING TEST SCORES TO CHAPTER 70 FUNDING

(Submitted by the Framingham School Committee)

WHEREAS the Commonwealth of Massachusetts bases the amount of Chapter 70 funding disbursed to each school district upon enrollment measured on October 1 of any given academic year,

WHEREAS many students transfer between Massachusetts schools and districts throughout the academic year prior to the administration of statewide standardized tests,

WHEREAS the results of standardized tests taken by transferring students will more accurately reflect the strengths and weaknesses of the sending school and district and will be a far less useful analytic tool for the receiving school and district,

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that MASC support legislation to ensure that individual student MCAS and/or PARCC assessment data in a given academic year is ascribed to the school and district that claims Massachusetts Chapter 70 funding based on that student's October 1 enrollment, provided that the student is enrolled in a Massachusetts school when the tests are administered.

In addition, MASC requests the State Auditor to examine academic outcomes for students who move out of charter schools after October 1.

RATIONALE: If a school accepts Massachusetts Chapter 70 funding for a student in a given academic year,

that school should be responsible for the MCAS and/or PARCC results from that student in that academic year. This action will give the clearest assessment of a school's strengths and weaknesses and will remove any incentive for counseling students out of a school or district just prior to testing in order to avoid responsibility for a projected or expected result.

RESOLUTION 4—SUPPORT FOR AN EQUITABLE AND SUSTAINABLE PLACEMENT PROGRAM FOR STUDENTS COVERED UNDER THE MCKINNEY-VENTO HOMELESS EDUCATION ASSISTANCE ACT

(Submitted by the Framingham School Committee)

WHEREAS many families receiving services under the provision of the McKinney-Vento Act are placed in housing based on availability of affordable temporary housing,

WHEREAS the average length of stay for a family's placement is 70 days,

WHEREAS many students receiving provisions from McKinney-Vento are placed in a districts outside their home district after the October 1st cutoff date for Chapter 70 funding,

WHEREAS many receiving districts have consistently experienced a shortfall in McKinney-Vento funding that negatively impacts the receiving district's budget and imposes on the taxpayers the burden from a program that was designed to be funded by federal grant monies,

WHEREAS a recent DESE report calculated 4,362 of these students to be special education students,

WHEREAS the 2013 Youth Risk Behavior Survey calculated that 22% more homeless students as compared to housed students are members of a gang and that 17% more homeless students become pregnant as compared to housed students,

WHEREAS the above-mentioned report calculated that 14% more homeless students felt sad or hopeless for more than two weeks, as compared to housed peers,

WHEREAS the Institute for Children in Poverty (2008) found that homeless children are nine times more likely to repeat a grade than their housed peers; are four times more likely to drop out than their housed peers; and are three times more likely to be placed in a special education program than their housed peers.

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the Massachusetts Association of School Committees file for and support legislation that will design, implement, and fund a program that will provide a more sustainable and equitable placement program for the state's homeless and McKinney-Vento students. A placement program needs to

include consideration of the social-emotional and behavioral circumstances of the student, timing of the placement in relation to budgetary considerations, proximity to the student's previously established support system, and the availability of resources the receiving district has to accommodate the student's needs.

RATIONALE: At any given moment a child and/or family will be placed in a town or city that is foreign to them. Without a complete history, and in many cases without knowledge of the student's social-emotional or behavioral needs, the receiving district must make a decision for placement based on what is best for the student. Placement may be chosen outside the receiving district.

Current governing law does not require attendance in the "home-district" or district of parent's choice. Students and their families often have to move two to three times a year. Statistics show that inconsistencies in, and experience of, multiple school placements, have a negative impact on the success rate of students. There are no provisions in the governing law that placement should take into account the proximity to the family or student's established support system.

Studies done by multiple credible agencies have consistently correlated data that provide evidence supporting the inequities between the educational status and success rates of homeless and McKinney-Vento students as compared to that of their housed peers. Evidence supports the facts that these students have to overcome barriers that include hunger, abuse, depression, learning disabilities, and tendencies for risky behaviors. Often these students are placed in districts that are underfunded and understaffed, and, because they have not been budgeted for, leaving them to improvise a way to meet the students at their level and provide a fair and equitable level of education relative to that of their housed peers.

If the MGL states that education is to be provided to all children between the minimum and maximum ages established for school attendance by the board of education it needs to be equitable no matter the housing situation of the student. The placement of, and funding for, these students must account for all social-emotional and behavioral circumstances, timing of the placement, available support system for the student, and the ability of the receiving district to accommodate the student's needs.

RESOLUTION 5—TAX REFORM BALLOT QUESTION
(Submitted by the MASC Board of Directors)

WHEREAS there is a clear need to invest in our state's educational, social, and infrastructure systems, and

WHEREAS the need to rebuild our roads and bridges,

strengthen public education, and provide the necessary support to help ensure social and economic equity for the residents of Massachusetts, and

WHEREAS a reasonable solution could be a combination of tax reforms and measures of accountability to establish a more equitable source for revenue and a more effective way of measuring our success, and

WHEREAS net income growth over the past decade has demonstrated a disproportionately lower tax burden as a share of net income upon high wage earners within the current tax system than is asked of economically disadvantaged and middle class families, and

WHEREAS advocates for social and economic equity are considering seeking to ask voters to amend the Constitution of the Commonwealth to allow for greater tax equity that will not raise taxes on any but the wealthiest residents of Massachusetts,

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the MASC explore ways to promote social and economic equity through a ballot initiative whose purpose may include a state constitutional amendment, tax reform, protection of the state's neediest residents of all ages, and seeks additional revenue only from tax reform affecting the state's wealthiest residents. Further, that the goal of such a ballot referendum would be to secure a stronger financial base to underwrite needed improvements in the infrastructure of the Commonwealth as well as the educational, social and economic well-being of its residents.

RESOLUTION 6—MEMBERSHIP OF A SCHOOL COMMITTEE MEMBER ON THE BOARD OF ELEMENTARY AND SECONDARY EDUCATION

(Submitted by the MASC Board of Directors)

WHEREAS the Massachusetts Board of Elementary and Secondary Education (BESE) is established to oversee and implement policy related to public education, and

WHEREAS most boards and commissions in MA appropriately include representatives of constituent groups subject to the jurisdiction of those boards and commissions, and

WHEREAS a glaring omission among members of the BESE is a representative of the people elected to oversee public policy making among the many city, town and regional school district school committees,

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that MASC submit to the General Court proposed legislation that MGL Chapter 15, Section 1E be revised (see italics) as follows:

Section 1E. There shall be in the department a board of elementary and secondary education, in this chapter

called the board, which shall consist of the chairman of the student advisory council established under this section, the secretary of education, in this chapter called the secretary, or her designee, and 9 members appointed by the governor. The 9 members appointed by the governor shall consist of 1 representative of a labor organization selected by the governor from a list of 3 nominees provided by the Massachusetts State Labor Council, AFL-CIO; 1 representative of business or industry selected by the governor with a demonstrated commitment to education; 1 representative of parents of school children selected by the governor from a list of 3 nominees provided by the Massachusetts Parent Teachers Association; *1 representative from a school committee from a list of three nominees provided by the Massachusetts Association of School Committees* and 5 additional members.

RESOLUTION 7—RELATIVE TO THE TEACHING STRATEGIES GOLD ASSESSMENTS FOR KINDERGARTEN STUDENTS

(Submitted by the Arlington School Committee)

WHEREAS the kindergarten and preschool teachers in our district understand the importance of observing, nurturing and assessing the social-emotional and cognitive growth of their students, and

WHEREAS these early education teachers do this work every single school day and specifically focus on assess-

ing student progress at three intervals each year, and

WHEREAS requiring teachers to participate in the Teaching Strategies GOLD assessments on top of the assessments they are already doing is duplicative, and

WHEREAS the requirement to document student behavior and enter data on numerous objectives interrupts and takes time away from teaching, and

WHEREAS teachers in our district report that they and their students' parents gain little or no new information about their students from TS GOLD, and

WHEREAS teachers in our district have expressed concerns about uploading personal information about young students to the TS GOLD website, and

WHEREAS the cost of maintaining TS GOLD after federal funds run out would deprive our district schools of funds needed for more effective educational activities;

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that MASC urge the Department of Early Education and Care and the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education to end the mandate that districts implement TS GOLD or any other externally developed kindergarten assessment.