

MASC (virtual) DAY ON THE HILL: Friday, April 16

Day on the Hill is MASC's annual legislative advocacy day. Typically, this event brings hundreds of school committee members, superintendents and student leaders to the State House in Boston to meet with the executive and legislative leadership as well as local senators and representatives. It is a critical opportunity for MASC members to advance the message of the value of public education and ensure that legislators and other key decision/policy makers understand the issues and challenges that you confront and that they can support.

New this year—which follows The Year Like No Other—is that MASC will host the Day on the Hill program via zoom. The Board of Directors invites all school committee members and other school leaders to join legislators and other key education and fiscal policymakers in a conversation about moving forward from the pandemic



and how to allocate funding to support learning loss and social/emotional remediation and move forward with lessons learned from the Covid crisis.

The focus of this year's event: What we have lost? What have we learned? What can we build upon? will be discussed in conjunction with MASC's recently released 2021 legislative priorities (listed on page 6). Moderated by MASC President Ellen Holmes (who recently presented educationally and fiscally compelling testimony to the Joint

Ways and Means Committee), the dialogue will include highlights of the Administration's newly announced American Rescue Plan and the dollars that will be coming to school districts to help with recovery initiatives.

Invited legislators include: **Senate President Karen Spilka** (a former member of the Ashland School Committee); **House Speaker Ron Mariano** (a former member of the Quincy School Committee);

Education Committee Co-Chairs: **Senator Jason Lewis** and **Representative Alice Peisch** (a former member of the Wellesley School Committee) among others.

Mark your calendars for **Friday, April 16, 9:00am-Noon**. There is no charge to attend but we ask that you register in advance so we can send you the sign-on link and background materials.

REGISTER NOW at: <https://www.masc.org/events-and-conferences-2/day-on-the-hill>.

Department of Labor Relations rules in favor of Melrose School Committee in determining educational model

Summary prepared by **Steven Finnegan, Esq., MASC General Counsel**

This decision offers a brief summary of the 11-page Department of Labor Relations (DLR) opinion, and wherever possible uses the language found in the opinion. The full DLR opinion may be found on the DLR website. Districts should consult their Legal Counsel for further information.

MASC finds that the DLR Melrose Decision provides needed clarity to districts that likely will face similar issues in the near future.

On December 21, 2020, the Melrose Education Association (MEA) filed two charges with the Department of Labor Relations (DLR) alleging that the School Committee had violated Section 10(a)(5) and Section 10(a)(1) of Mass General Laws, Chapter 150E by repudiating the parties Memorandum of Agreement (MOA).

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Mashpee and Norton School Districts Receive National School Boards Association Magna Awards

Two MA public school districts (Mashpee and Norton) are among the recipients of the National School Boards Association 2021 Magna Awards.

Mashpee Public Schools won one of the three Grand Prize awards (under 5,000 enrollment category) for its commitment to equity as reflected in the district's Mashpee Wampanoag Tribe Partnership. Norton Public Schools won

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MASC 2021 Board of Directors

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Division X

At the January 2021 Board of Directors meeting, the Board voted unanimously to recognize the Minority Caucus as a formal Division X of the Association.

Chair: Virginia Simms George, Assabet Reg. Voc. Tech.

Vice Chair: LaTonia Naylor, Springfield

Secretary-Treasurer: Denise Hurst, Springfield

Melrose School Committee

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At the beginning of the 2020-2021 school year, the Melrose Public Schools provided in-person instruction for high-needs students; remote instruction for grades 2 through 12; and hybrid instruction for kindergarten and first grade students. On October 19, 2020 the School Committee commenced hybrid instruction for grades 2-12.

The MEA filed a grievance at step 2, asserting that contractual language was not followed and is in violation of the MOA between the Committee and the MEA generally and specifically, as it relates to Community Metrics. As a remedy, the MEA sought that the schools move to a fully remote learning model for all and continue with that model until the “metrics meet the agreed upon MOA benchmarks for a return to in-person instruction.” The MEA asserts that the Committee violated the Law by failing to provide the MEA with notice and the opportunity to bargain over both the decision to make the change to the MOA and the impacts of that change.

In contrast, the School Committee maintains that it did not violate the Law as alleged. The Committee contends that the clear language of the MOA gives the Superintendent discretion in making decisions regarding the learning method. The Committee believing that the decision about whether to offer instruction through an in-person, remote or hybrid model is a core managerial decision that is not negotiable, instead proposed that the Superintendent had discretion in determining which learning model was used. The final agreement provides for the Superintendent to consider various factors but gives her discretion to make the final decision. In any case, DLR found that the Superintendent had full discretion to decide whether to revert to fully remote instruction, and she did not repudiate the MOA when she did not revert to fully remote instruction in December.

DLR held that the Superintendent had full discretion to decide whether to revert to fully remote instruction, and she did not repudiate the MOA when she did not revert to fully remote instruction in December. DLR found that the MOA was ambiguous, and that the bargaining history does not sufficiently clarify the parties’ intent. Therefore, DLR did not find probable cause to believe that the School Committee repudiated the MOA and dismissed that portion of the charges.

Furthermore, the Committee argued that the decision as to which educational model to utilize is one of those core governmental decisions. It is the School Committee that establishes educational policies for the district, consistent with the requirements of law and the statewide goals and standards established by DESE G. L. c. 71, S. 37. The Superintendent is vested with all operational decisions for the District and is required to manage the system in the manner that is consistent with state law and the policy determinations and the policy decisions of the Committee. G.L.c.71, S. 52. *School Committee of Newton v. Newton School Custodians, Local 454, SEIU, 438 Mass. 739, 746-748 (2003).*

Mashpee and Norton receive NSBA award

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a First Place award for its Priority One: Social-Emotional Learning program.

The Magna Awards go to school districts that advance equity and break down barriers for underserved students. Mashpee was honored for its school committee's working partnership with the Mashpee Wampanoag Tribe. The partnership has helped create an inclusive district that recognizes and celebrates Wampanoag heritage and culture. It also aims to advance the academic growth and social-emotional well-being of Wampanoag students through culture-based educational principles and practices.

"When you're recognizing the tribe's heritage and culture and celebrating that, you're improving the academic growth and social and emotional well-being of all of our students," said Nicole Bartlett, the school committee's vice chairwoman.

Even though this partnership is only being honored and recognized this year, it is a result of years of hard work by the School Committee and the Tribal Council.

During the 2017-2018 school year, these two groups met jointly for the first time ever. As a result, there were two important outcomes from this meeting, Ms. Bartlett said. First, a standing agenda item was added to the school committee meetings: A tribal representative is given a slot to speak, voice any concerns and share thoughts. Second, a leadership team was created consisting of members of the tribe and the school.

Ms. Bartlett called this a "new way of doing business" and something she was very proud of that the two sides have accomplished.

"I really wanted to make this partnership very deliberate and consistent throughout the year. Some of the people who went through Mashpee schools as tribal members didn't always have a good experience," she said. "Our children are really what connects us. That's why I feel the schools were just really well-positioned to take a leadership role by formally partnering with the tribe to support the 150-plus native students we have in our school."

"We're not making decisions about what's best for native students. We are asking the tribe to tell us what native

students need and also identifying opportunities to educate non-native students and our staff about the Mashpee Wampanoag culture, language and heritage."

The Norton School District Social-Emotional Learning Initiative which received a First Place award was supported by the School Committee and administration in conjunction with the local teachers association. According to the district, the rationale was simple: Strong minds will lead to success in the classroom and life. In supporting this priority, the district spent a full academic year working through a task force.

The task force consisted of three working groups: the Data and Information Committee gathered student, teacher, and parent survey data at the district level. This data supported the School Culture and Climate Committees at each school. The third piece of the triangle was the Social-Emotional and Behavioral Learning Advisory Committee that uses the information from the other two committees to improve the academic, civic, social, and co-curricular opportunities for students via a system that supports both equity and equality.

After collecting survey data via a Panorama Survey from students, parents, and staff, the district held a full day professional development session with the task force. The outcomes included the creation of action subcommittees, including SEL framework, professional development, curriculum, and best practices. Administration and staff engaged in districtwide book studies which enabled staff to look at students who struggle from a different perspective. The School Culture and Climate Committees were established in each building to ensure school and district values were upheld.

Subsequent student survey data showed significant improvement in how connected students said they had become to school, how they view their teachers, and how they view the future. Attendance has improved for struggling students by more than 30%. Disciplinary reports show a decline in office referrals across the districts. Grades have improved with more students in the honor roll level. The program has also helped the district identify students who are succeeding academically but who are struggling with mental health issues.

PEOPLE IN THE NEWS

Mildred Lefebvre, a member of the Holyoke School Committee who also serves on the MASC Board of Directors as Secretary-Treasurer, has been re-elected as Northeast Region Director of the National School Board Association's National Hispanic Caucus (NHC).

The NHC promotes quality education for all students, with a focus on equity—building access and closing the gap on learning and achievement of Latino students.

SAVE THE DATES

(All programs are virtual unless otherwise indicated.)

Friday, April 16

DAY ON THE HILL

Time: 9:00am-noon

Friday, May 7

MASC LEARNING LUNCH

Topic: Remediating Learning Loss
Presenter: James Caradonio, Ed.D.

Time: Noon-1:15pm

Saturday, June 12

CHARTING THE COURSE: Part 1

MASC's new member
orientation program

Time: 8:30am-12:30pm

Saturday, June 19

CHARTING THE COURSE: Part 2

MASC's new member
orientation program

Time: 8:30am-12:30pm

MA Legislative Committee Chairs/Members Announced

Last month Senate President Karen Spilka and House Speaker Ronald Mariano announced their appointments to lead joint legislative committees. Those of particular interest to MASC members are listed below. **The full list of legislative committees can be found at <https://malegislature.gov/Committees>.**

WAYS & MEANS

Senate:

Michael Rodrigues, Chair
Cindy Friedman, Vice Chair
Michael Barrett
Joseph Boncore
Michael Brady
Paul Feeney
Barry Feingold
Anne Gobi
Adam Hinds
Patricia Jehlen
Eric Lesser
John Keenan
Michael Moore
Michael Rush
Patrick O'Connor
Ryan Fattman
Bruce Tarr

House:

Aaron Michlewitz, Chair
Ann-Margaret Ferrante, Vice Chair
Christine Barber
David Biele
Natalie Blais
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Nika Elugardo
Dylan Fernandes
Natalie Higgins
Brian Murray
Christina Minicucci
Elizabeth Malia
Kathleen LaNatra
James Hawkins
Jack Lewis
Patrick Kearney
Meghan Kilcoyne
Paul Schmid, III
Alan Silvia
Chynah Tyler
Paul Tucker
Bud Williams
Steven Ultrino
Andres Vargas
Todd Smola
Angelo D'Emilia
Donald Berthiaume, Jr.
Peter Durant
James Kelcourse

Joseph McKenna
Mathew Muratore
Timothy Whelan

EDUCATION

Senate:

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Sal DiDomenico, Vice Chair
John Cronin
Adam Gomez
Patricia Jehlen
Patrick O'Connor

House:

Alice Hanlon Peisch, Chair
Steven Ultrino, Vice Chair
Smitty Pignatelli
Andres Vargas
Elizabeth Malia
Danillo Sena
Kip Diggs
Vanna Howard
Joseph McGonagle, Jr.
James Kelcourse
Kelly Pease

CHILDREN, FAMILIES & PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES

Senate:

Adam Gomez, Chair
John Velis, Vice Chair
Brendan Crighton
James Eldridge
Rebecca Rausch
Patrick O'Connor

House:

Michael Finn, Chair
Natalie Blais, Vice Chair
Jack Lewis
Tami Gouvela
David LeBoeuf
Michelle Ciccolo
Natalie Higgins
Carol Doherty
Jacob Oliveira
Donald Berthiaume, Jr.
Alyson Sullivan

COVID-19 AND EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS AND MANAGEMENT

Senate:

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John Cronin
Julian Cyr
Eric Lesser
Patrick O'Connor

House:

William Driscoll, Jr., Chair
Jon Santiago, Vice Chair
Orlando Ramos
Rob Consalvo
Elizabeth Malia
Chynah Tyler
Mindy Domb
Christina Minicucci
Carolyn Dykema
Paul Frost
David Viera

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

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Paul Feeney
Edward Kennedy
Patrick O'Connor

House:

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Brian Ashe
Brian Murray
Bud Williams
David Biele
Kathleen LaNatra
Edward Philips
Jessica Ann Giannino
Kip Diggs
David Muradian, Jr.
Shawn Dooley
Michael Soter

ELDER AFFAIRS

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Diana DiZoglio
Anne Gobi
Ryan Fattman

House:

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 Kate Lipper, Vice Chair
 Michelle DuBois
 Bruce Ayers
 Carmine Gentile
 Michelle Ciccolo
 Kay Khan
 Tommy Vitolo
 Erika Uyterhoeven
 Timothy Whelan
 Steven Xiarhos

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 John Keenan
 Eric Lesser
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 Christine Barber
 Steven Ultrino
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 Jon Santiago
 Patricia Duffy
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 Thomas Golden, Jr.
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 Mathew Muratore
 Lenny Mirra

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 Marc Pacheco
 Michael Rush
 Ryan Fattman

House:

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 Carmine Gentile, Vice Chair
 Sean Garballey
 Rady Mom
 Mindy Domb
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 Jay Livingstone
 Patricia Duffy

Kelly Pease
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House:

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 John H. Rogers, Vice Chair
 Christopher Hendricks
 Patrick Kearney
 Mike Connolly
 David LeBoeuf
 Rob Consalvo
 Nika Elugardo
 Kip Diggs
 David DeCoste
 David Muradian

MENTAL HEALTH, SUBSTANCE USE AND RECOVERY**Senate:**

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 Joanne Comerford
 Brendan Crighton
 John Keenan
 Patrick O'Connor

House:

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 Michelle DuBois, Vice Chair
 Paul Tucker
 Natalie Higgins
 Daniel Carey
 Tram Nguyen
 Susannah Whipps
 Christopher Markey
 Michael Kushmerek
 Sally Kerans
 Alyson Sullivan
 Donald Berthiaume, Jr.
 Hannah Kane

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 Julian Cyr, Vice Chair
 Joanne Comerford
 Adam Gomez

Adam Hinds
 Bruce Tarr

House:

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 Elizabeth Malia, Vice Chair
 Adam Scanlon
 Brandy Fluker Oakley
 Nika Elugardo
 Gerard Cassidy
 Frank Moran
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 Walter Timilty
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 House:
 Mark Cusack, Chair
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 John Velis
 Bruce Tarr

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 Christopher Markey
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 Mary Keefe
 Paul Donato
 Paul Schmid, III
 Steven Xiarhos
 F. Jay Barrows

MASC 2021 Legislative Priorities

As noted by MASC President Ellen Holmes in her testimony earlier this month before the Joint Committee on Ways and Means, MASC this year will advocate for:

- Full implementation of the **first and second** year of the Student Opportunity Act, which was to begin being implemented in FY21 and was not
- Foundation budget calculations based on the October 2019 or October 2020 enrollment of students, **whichever** is higher (hold harmless on enrollment)
- Defense of local district authority regarding instructional modes during the pandemic
- Full funding of the special education circuit breaker
- Full funding for regional transportation reimbursement
- Full funding for charter school oversight, reform, and tuition reimbursement
- Full support for METCO
- Addressing concerns of Native Americans in Massachusetts
- Full support for the Children's Services Safety Net
- Protecting rights to privacy as a matter of equity
- Earmarking special funding to study efficiencies and economies for small and rural districts
- Rethinking appropriateness of testing and accountability
- Retention of Medicaid reimbursement for covered services
- Local, negotiated approach to vocational technical school enrollment
- Update of Open Meeting law
- Directing of stimulus dollars appropriately to local districts for uses that are creative, sustainable, and thoughtful

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