

MASC welcomes two new field directors to the team

On January 1, MASC said farewell to two of its longtime Field Directors, Pat Correira (who covered the western part of the state) and Mike Gilbert (whose territory covered the north shore). We are delighted to welcome two new Field Directors to the team: Kathleen Kelly and Liz Lafond.

Kathleen has been a member of the Cambridge School Committee since 2014 and currently serves as the committee's Vice



Kathleen Kelly

Chair. During her tenure, the district has conducted one Superintendent search, instituted social emotional learning and RTI, and hired a new assistant superintendent of special education. In addition, Kathleen is chair of the Special Education Subcommittee, the Superintendent Evaluation Subcommittee, and represents the School Committee in union bargaining negotiations. Previously, she served as Budget Co-chair for three FY budget cycles.

Kathleen will be assisting districts across the MetroWest area, including districts south and west of the 128 belt (see the complete list of districts and their individual field reps on the MASC website). She will also assume responsibility for developing sample policies as needed, and advise districts on questions of policy.

Kathleen's professional background makes her uniquely qualified to assist school committees as they struggle

with the challenges of under-funding and over-regulation, and the growing need to reach out to diverse families who are struggling with the economics and politics of 2019. Kathleen is a member of the National Association of Social Workers (NASW) and the Massachusetts Association of Social Workers. She graduated from public schools in Connecticut. She served as a parent representative on the School Council at her child's school and also



Liz Lafond

was active in supporting effective early childhood education and after-school programs. Kathleen earned an MA/MSW from Boston College and an MBA from Simmons University.

A Life Member of MASC, Liz Lafond served on the Hatfield School Committee from 1998-2003 and returned to serve from 2008-2012. In 2016 she joined MASC as a field consultant, having previously been among the founding members of the Association's District Governance Support Project.

Liz has consulted on numerous MA superintendent searches, participated as a trainer in the Charting the Course new member orientation program, overseen several policy review projects and continued to share her district governance expertise with school committees in the Berkshires and Connecticut Valley.

In addition, Liz has served on the

People in the News

Six MA school committee members were among a select group of citizens honored at the State House on February 4 as part of the "Black Excellence on the Hill" event, celebrating black culture, excellence and achievement in the Commonwealth. Presenting tribute to the recipients were members of the Beacon Hill leadership team including Lt. Governor Karyn Polito, House Speaker Robert DeLeo, Senate President Karen Spilka, Treasurer Deborah Goldberg, Senator Sonia Chang-Diaz and nearly a dozen members of the House.

Honorands included:

Framingham School Committee member **Noval Alexander** who was cited for leading a campaign that led to successfully securing funding to build a new local middle school.

Lynn School Committee member **Maria Carrasco**, a (recently retired) five-term member of the school committee and the first Latina to be elected to municipal office in Lynn. She was honored for her efforts to promote diversity and strengthen ethnic communities in Lynn by canvassing during elections, registering people to vote and promoting education through workshops.

Andre Green, a member and former Chair of the Somerville School Committee, who in his role as Executive Director of FairTest, has focused on fair and open evaluation of students, teachers and schools.

Natalie Kanellopoulos, a Falmouth native and first-term member of the Falmouth School Committee, has many years of involvement with the district's public schools. A long-time member of the PTO, School Advisory Council, classroom volunteer and most recently as a member of the

Education Reform 2019: It's About Much More than the Money



MASC President Devin Sheehan

pled with rigorous accountability standards like MCAS tests and several other measures of performance. Because we enjoyed seven of the most productive consecutive years of economic growth in the history of the U.S., the state shred the revenue it earned to meet the goals of the law and maintain every school district at theoretically adequate funding.

Since 2002, however, the foundation budget has not only trailed inflation, it has also failed to address costs of health insurance, retiree benefits, special education, and everyday classroom instruction. Moreover, poorer districts with higher costs have suffered, and across the state, enrichment curricula, elective courses, and extra-curricular activities including sports have been cut.

The foundation budget system and the state's accountability programs are complex policies explained in Chapter 70 of the MA General Laws and are widely believed to be the great educational public policy challenge of the moment.

Nevertheless, money is only one element of the debate that demands we address the fine point of further reform and the best ways to support students. A vast array of underfunded support services like health Care, mental health services, social welfare and family support demand that attention be paid to the insidious effects of poverty.

Public funding always depends on the economy to generate revenue and, since 2002, the best of legislative intentions has not overcome limits to state revenue from economic ups and downs. This has left serious fiscal shortfalls while state agency regulations not subject to the economy expanded.

And now in the mix are the alumni plaintiffs of the landmark equity lawsuit (McDuffy, 1993) who are mobilizing to file another lawsuit. It is likely that this will encourage plaintiffs and lawmakers to work on a legislative remedy. MASC cautions however that the public must pay close attention to ensure that strategies that may be put forth actually support students and learning. Special interests have already begun positioning themselves to profit from the legislative

The new legislative session that is now underway brings calls for jumpstarting another round of education reform proposals. At the heart of the financial side of the debate is determining how much a district requires to educate its students (i.e., the foundation budget), what share the school district can afford (local contribution), and the difference between the two that the state will guarantee to make full funding possible (state share).

In 1993, following a landmark lawsuit and groundbreaking legislation, the state struck a grand bargain with municipalities that assured greater school funding, cou-

outcome. Some are camouflaging their personal and business agendas as a campaign for children.

Many children's advocates fear that the tempting mention of a large appropriation directed to our poorest students is not more than a talking point designed to draw attention away from other, less popular agendas, like privatizing public schools or expanding charter schools. For that reason, MASC is putting forward a list of principles for public policy makers to consider for any legislative proposal.

- Recognize that poverty is a barrier to improving academic outcomes and provide a path to secure multi-agency collaboration to support a children's services safety net.
- Improve the foundation budget based on the recommendations of the FBRC plus recalibrate the current budget to realistic and inflation-adjusted levels. We support spending a meaningful share of it on the poorest students provided fiscal oversight is established in law rather than in punitive regulation.
- Preserve for the community the right to alter the structure and management of their school districts and required local approval before the state or a non-public entity takes control of schools or districts.
- Mandate in law an accountability system primarily as a means of improving outcomes for students and professional practice and skills for educators as opposed to serving as a vehicle for a punitive system of sanctions.
- Count all students, including all immigrant children whom we welcome and educate and fund them in full.
- Fund in full the legally required mitigation funds when charter schools are imposed upon communities over the objections of local citizens.
- Maintain the promise to fund in full regional school transportation costs.
- Continue to fund special education, including high cost, complex cases.

No one about the complexity of our funding system and state accountability programs. They cannot be improved or changed without broad public debate and clarity about the implications for students, parents, educators and community leaders. It's not all about the money, and dollars should not be the headline.



*Pat Correira.
Mike Gilbert.
Memories over
40 years of school
committee service*

Earlier this month, retiring field directors **Pat Correira** and **Mike Gilbert** shared some of their observations about school committee service and their experiences on both sides of the school committee table with the MASC Communications staff. Excerpts of their comments appear below.

MASC: When did you join your school committee and how long did you serve?

Pat: I was first elected in 1976 and served until 1988.

Mike: After attending Holliston School Committee meetings for about 18 months I decided to run and take on an incumbent member. The first time I ran I lost but I continued to attend meetings and speak out on issues. The next year, 1990, I ran again and won a seat on the 7 member committee. I was re-elected twice more (1993 and 1996). In 2000, after moving to Salisbury, I was doing work for MASC at Whittier Voc-Tech and the Superintendent mentioned to me that the representative from my community was retiring and they were looking for someone to fill an appointed seat. I was appointed to a 3 year term on the 14 member Whittier School Committee by the Triton Regional School Committee in March of 2001. I served until 2011.

MASC: What motivated you to run for the school committee?

Mike: In the late 80s most school committees were not yet televising their meetings and if you wanted to know what was going on in town you actually had to go to meetings. It was an article in the local newspaper, one that didn't get all of the story, that got my attention. There were potential budget cuts that appeared to mean that my young children would have to walk to school across a busy state highway. I started going to meetings. I learned the issues and the culture of the Committee. I ran because I thought I could contribute.

Pat: I had no strong reason to run the first time. A friend of my mother's was a member of the school committee and had decided to run for the city council and asked my mom to find out if I would be interested in taking his place. I

was flattered and said OK I'll do it. As I campaigned I began to realize there were many issues facing the school department and felt very strongly that I could make a difference. Of course I lost that first election, but stayed involved by joining my local PTA and presenting the issues my kids' school were facing.

MASC: What for you was one of the "this is why I ran" moments? Or what were some of the challenges that were particularly memorable insofar as how they were resolved?

Mike: Budgets were always challenging and being able to ensure the continuation of the unique programs that Holliston offered to students was rewarding but I think the "this is why I'm here" moment in Holliston was listening to graduates talk about what those programs and the district in general had given to them and allowed them to move towards after graduation. At Whittier, there was special satisfaction in working with a School Committee and administration to turn around a school district that was once on the verge of being declared underperforming to a school district that consistently graduates students with solid academic and trade skills.

Pat: Springfield desperately needed to build a new High School. We had always had "theme" schools: technical, classical, commercial, and trade. At that time however, both technical and classical were in need of major renovation and/or replacement. The question had been on the ballot three times and failed each time. So a group formed to put together a coalition of community and business members to try and convince the voters to approve a new combined technical and classical school. Long story short, we prevailed and a new school was built. On the other hand, one of the most devastating things that occurred during my tenure was when our

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teachers went on strike in May of 1980. We tried to keep the schools open, but it turned out not to be possible. The strike lasted 3 weeks, teachers went to jail and 25,000 kids were out of school. We spent many days and nights negotiating and away from our families and our jobs. I remember how MASC Field Director Hank Greiner came and stayed with us the entire time.

MASC: What changes did you experience at the beginning of your service that were very different by the time you ended your service?

Pat: When I was first elected, the school committee was still autonomous regarding the budget and hiring practices. Whatever budget we submitted was the budget the City Council had to accept. We also hired and fired every employee in the district from the grounds keeper to the superintendent. It was very daunting and political, to say the least. By the time I stepped down Proposition 2 1/2 and Ed Reform had totally changed the way school committees operated. At first it was very difficult but I thought it was one of the best changes we experienced.

Mike: Wow. Lots of things have changed. I began my school committee service before the 1993 Education Reform Act. How we govern has changed dramatically, but, I think, for the better. There is more focus on setting expectations and providing resources and less on the day-to-day operation. Communication is another big change: school committee meetings are televised almost everywhere and available for long periods online. And social media has up-ended the way we interact with the community and each other – not always in a good way.

MASC: Did anyone have a particular influence on you, or teach you along the way? Anyone memorable, colleague or otherwise?

Mike: I've learned something from every superintendent and school committee member I served with but a couple come to mind. Dr. Sam Placentino taught me about the need for a school district to not only have but own its own vision. Bill Mayer, my first chairperson, taught me the art of small town politics. Karen Sarkisian taught me the importance of culture in a school.

I would also say that each and every one of my MASC colleagues taught me about collegiality and friendship in the workplace. I've had multiple careers and worked for organizations large and small over the last 45 years but MASC was the best place I ever worked and the MASC staff supports each other and we kept each other humble!

Pat: As I said earlier, Hank Grenier from MASC was my inspiration, however I was fortunate to have served with several other people who really made a difference. Among them, now-Congressman Richard Neal, who was serving as our Mayor during part of my tenure. Also, Ted DiMauro who was Mayor at the time of the strike, Tom Donahoe, Springfield Superintendent, whose advice to me when I would be crazed over an

issue was: "Mrs. Correira we need to massage this issue to reach a positive conclusion".

MASC: What did you have to learn (unlearn) as a field director?

Pat: I learned to trust and depend on my colleagues, even though I might disagree with them. There is nothing we can't accomplish, or challenge we can't overcome, if we work as a team.

Mike: I always thought I had good people skills, political skills, and customer service skills. I wasn't nearly as good as I needed to be. I had to hone those skills and add training skills. Thankfully, both my MASC colleagues and my national colleagues helped a lot along the way.

MASC: You have both been field directors for over 20 years? Is there any difference in what you see school committees needing from you now, versus when you started?

Mike: When we started doing this work it was really at the beginning of the implementation of the Education Reform Act of 1993. At that time, everyone needed guidance in interpreting the intent of the legislation and moving from operations to governance. I see school committees today, partly because of the new member training we do, as having a better understanding of their roles and responsibilities and now needing more information and data about the complex issues facing public education.

Pat: Our world today moves faster than we ever expected. Sometimes we tend to forget how important it is to slow down and reach out, and above all, listen to one another. Listening as opposed to thinking we know it all.

MASC: Change in issues/priorities?

Pat: Everything old is new again. . . funding education adequately and equitably.

Mike: It's still about having the resources to do the work of building an educated society. The problems we face as a nation and world have gotten more complex but students still need the skills to be life-long learners so they can solve the problems we haven't yet been able to. In addition to academics, fund schools to allow for the social safety net and the extra curriculums. Educators in Massachusetts are, in my opinion, paid a decent salary in comparison to other parts of the country. However, we need more of them to do all of the work it takes to build an educated citizenry.

MASC: So really, what are you going to do with yourselves now that you have your days and evenings free? I know that you will still be "on call" as Field Directors Emeritus. continued on the next page

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Mike: For a number of years I've been collecting a lot of family information, doing some genealogical research, and building family trees. I hope to do more of that. I'm going to spend time traveling and chasing grandkids. I may also do some consulting when asked.

Pat: Sleep, vacation, probably bother Mike because he has a place in Florida. Try to finish all my Baileys and Moscato, and enjoy not driving dark back roads late at night in the dead of winter.

MASC: Advice for Liz and Kathleen?

Pat: Just remember you have a lifeline 24/7 with your colleagues at MASC. In my case, to quote an unknown source, "find something you love to do, then get paid for doing it." I did and I have no regrets!

Mike: My advice to Liz and Kathleen is always do your homework, rely on your peers both inside MASC and across the country, and use your good judgment. You will be fine.

I would like to think that we left MASC a better place than when we arrived, we raised the bar for those who follow us, and that our colleagues will remember us fondly (even if they do tell newbies all their Mike and Pat stories!).

New Field Reps

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Board of Governors of the Hampshire Educational Collaborative and as a participant in the ongoing Berkshire County Regionalization Task Force. From 1994-2015, she was the Executive Assistant to the Holyoke School Committee and continues to perform those duties under the district's receivership agreement.

With Kathleen and Liz now on board, MASC has realigned the geographic regions that Field Directors cover, so some districts now have a different Field Director assigned to them.

To find the Field Director that serves your school committee, check the MASC Division List on the website, which includes an alphabetical table of each district, its MASC Division, and its Field Director.

We encourage you to contact your Field Director with any questions, comments, concerns, or needs. As always, you also are welcome to call the MASC office for any reason: 617-523-8454 or 1-800-392-6023.

Save the Date

MASC Day on the Hill

Wednesday, May 1

Check your mailbox for further details.

Redesigned district report cards offer information based on parent survey indicators

The MA DESE recently released new, redesigned school report cards. Just as a student's report card shows how they are doing in different classes, school and district report cards are designed to show parents and community members how a school or district is doing in different areas. Report cards highlight a school or district's strengths as well as any challenges that need to be addressed in order to make sure the needs of all students are being met. The report cards are a requirement of the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) and were developed with the input of parents and stakeholders across the state.

Based on extensive surveys and meetings with parent and community groups, DESE realized that data the Department has traditionally focused on communicating (MCAS and other test score information; national test scores comparisons) were of less interest to parents than information about the school learning environment, teachers' credentials, disciplinary data, and school

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People in the news

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Superintendent Search Committee, Natalie is committed to being an active participant in the school and larger Falmouth community.

Newton School Committee member **Bridget Ray-Canada** has been passionate about promoting educational equity, educational excellence and strong fiscal management in the district. In addition she has been active in a variety of youth-centered programs including criminal justice reform advocacy and youth mentoring. A member of the National Society of Black Engineers with a degree in physics from Spelman College, Bridget recently served on the Blueprint Conference for Girls at MIT.

Serving over a decade on the Cambridge School Committee, **Denise Simmons** was subsequently elected to the Cambridge City Council (serving several terms as Mayor). Her civic career began in the 1980s as the Executive Director of the Cambridge Civic Unity Committee and since that time she has been relentlessly committed to promoting opportunities for all students and promoting equity and diversity in local endeavors. Denise is also a Life Member.

Also among the honorees is Sharon Superintendent **Victoria Greer** who is cited for exemplary leadership and innovation in a school system charting its course for the future. Her initiatives includes a new high school building project and a passion for education that has become contagious in the community.

MASC takes message of equality and adequacy to Congressional leaders

Members of the MASC Executive Committee and Legislative Advocacy representatives reinforced MASC's ongoing commitment to vocational education, school safety, protecting social security and safeguards and services for immigrant and low-income students with MA Congressional leaders in Washington DC earlier this month. As part of the National School Boards Association annual Equity and Advocacy Summits, Massachusetts members attended sessions on identifying and eradicating discriminatory practices, prejudices and beliefs in education policy; designing paths to equity; creating trauma-sensitive schools; best practices for eliminating school upshots and student criminalization; the 2020 census and its impact on student counts and funding; workforce readiness; and full funding for IDEA. Members also heard from political analyst Norm Ornstein on the subject of dysfunctional national politics and governance and acclaimed presidential historian Jon Meacham on the state of presidential politics today.

On the final day of the program, MASC members met with their Congressional leaders including Richard Neal; James McGovern; Katherine Clark; Seth Moulton; Joseph Kennedy and Lori Trahan; and discussed MASC priorities with staff from the offices of Representatives Lynch, Keating and Ayana Pressley.

Representing MASC were President Devin Sheehan (Holyoke); President-Elect Deborah Davis (Northeast Metro Voc. Tech.); Vice President Ellen Holmes (Ashburnham-Westminster); Secretary-Treasurer Denise Simmons (Springfield); Past Presidents Beverly Hugo (Framingham) and Jake Oliveira (Ludlow); FRN representative Laura Fallon (Northampton).



Pictured above (left to right) Devin Sheehan; Jake Oliveira; Congressman McGovern; Ellen Holmes and Laura Fallon

Report cards

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progress. This revised focus has been incorporated in the redesigned cards, which can be accessed online or printed as a pdf. District and school information will include:

- Who are the students and teachers?
- What does student engagement look

like in our school?

- What academic opportunities are available to our students?
- How prepared are our students for success after high school?
- How do your students perform on state tests?
- How much does our school spend per student?
- How is our school doing in the

state accountability system?

DESE also has a dedicated report cards website where you can search for a school's or district's report card: **reportcards.doe.mass.edu**. The site also contains supporting documentation, including a glossary and a sample report card cover letter, both of which are available in English and nine other languages.

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