

## MASC/MASS Joint Conference Update

The November conference is taking shape, with a record number of important informational sessions and opportunities for attendees to network and share experiences and insights.

Check your mailbox for a recent update on the sessions that will be presented, including timings and descriptions.

We are also offering a special, low-cost **FRIDAY ONLY** registration package. The \$75 rate includes continental breakfast and lunch, as well as opportunity to attend all the Friday sessions (including the featured General Session on Artificial Intelligence and its role in teaching and learning, and a special lunch program which will update you on recent Supreme and State court rulings and the impact these will have on education and district operations).

Register online for the full program or the “Friday only” special at [www.masc.org](http://www.masc.org).



And a reminder: if you registered as an early bird attendee, make sure you are registered for the meals you wish to attend. Meals must be purchased in advance in order to be included in the hotel’s meal count. And don’t forget to indicate if you have special dietary restrictions: these can be accommodated but **ONLY** if we know in advance.

We look forward to seeing you in Hyannis in November. If you have questions about the conference or specific programs, please contact the MASC office: 617-523-8454 or Jenifer Handy at [jhandy@masc.org](mailto:jhandy@masc.org)

## Governor signs \$56 billion budget for FY24

After weeks of waiting for the legislative conference committee to send its final budget to the Governor, and for the Governor to review, on August 14 Governor Healey signed her first annual state budget.

The \$56 billion budget increases spending approximately 6.2% over the FY23 budgets, distributes newly available revenue from the surtax on those earning over \$1 million, and implements a slew of major policy changes, including permanently offering all students free school meals.

The budget was not without vetoes, which slashed \$272 in spending, and rejected a proposed outside section that would have added \$205 million of one-time spending into the budget. The Governor also sent back eight outside sections with proposed amendments, but approved the other 103, includ-

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## Steps Leaders Should Take to Prepare for Students’ Return

By Joshua Starr

A number of recent surveys, coupled with this year’s National Assessment of Education Progress (NEAP) scores, once again tell a daunting story about what educators are facing as they try to help students stay on track while overcoming losses stemming from the COVID crisis. You can sense the collective panic in our news headlines and in the national conversation around what’s next. Yet, I fear too many of the solutions proffered will be the same. Buy stuff! Hire more teachers! Get tutors! Summer school! After-school programs! It all reminds me of the common infomercial phrase, “But wait. There’s more!”

Certainly, there is value in these strategies and there are more resources that can be applied to help students recover.

Too many schools have been underfunded, and too many educators have been underpaid for too long. Money certainly matters, and schools need more of it. But leadership matters more.

Having spent years as a superintendent of schools in both Montgomery County, MD, and Stamford, CT and now working to help schools and school system leaders improve teaching, learning, and engagement, I believe there are some necessary leadership moves that can be made as districts prepare to welcome students back to schools.

**System and school leaders must ensure that every school has a rich curriculum aligned to standards.**

Sounds pretty basic, I know. But too often, curriculum is a

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## NEWS YOU CAN USE

### WHAT IS THE MASSHEALTH SCHOOL-BASED MEDICAID PROGRAM (SBMP) AND WHY DOES IT MATTER?

*By Margot Tracy, MassHealth, School-Based Medicaid Program*

Although schools' primary purpose is to educate children, educational achievement and health outcomes are intertwined. School-based health professionals, such as nurses, counselors, occupational and physical therapists, psychologists, and speech-language pathologists, are vital to early identification of health needs, connecting students to a broad range of health care services and resources, and providing physical and behavioral health services to students. MassHealth, our state's combined Medicaid and Children's Health Insurance programs, oversees the School-Based Medicaid Program (SBMP), which allows participating local education agencies (LEAs) to receive federal matching dollars that offset state and local costs for providing Medicaid-covered services in a school setting.

Through SBMP, LEAs have access to a stable and consistent federal funding stream that can support health-related staff positions, programming and infrastructure that serve all students, not just those with MassHealth.

As schools rebound from the pandemic, the time is ripe to re-engage with the SBMP. Historic infusions of funds like ESSER are set to expire in 2024. For LEAs to take full advantage of Medicaid funding, support from leadership is critical. To fully maximize future Medicaid reimbursement, school leaders should consider taking important foundational steps to support and enhance their Medicaid reimbursement programs. Anecdotal reports indicate that school committee members and superintendents may not fully appreciate the impact Medicaid funding has or could on school budgets if districts took full advantage

of all the reimbursement. Informing school leaders of the value of SBMP funding may encourage them to create structures that support staff involvement and to advocate for Medicaid funding to be returned to school budgets.

At the November MASC/MASS conference Margot Tracy (MassHealth SBMP) and Emily Hall (UMass Chan Medical School—SBMP administrator) will lead an informative breakout session where school leaders will consider their district's potential and the necessary infrastructure (i.e., policies and protocols, staff training and support, etc.) to maximize reimbursement for the benefit of their students. Staff from UMass will also be available for 1:1 consultation during "SBMP Office Hours" for an entire day of the conference to walk school leaders through their district's claiming profile and answer questions.

**Postscript:** National Public Radio (NPR) recently presented a program on school-base Medicaid. To access a report on the program: <https://www.npr.org/2023/08/24/1194170616/schools-medicaid-millions-special-education-money?f=1003&ft=nprml>

## NATIONAL NEWS

### WHITE HOUSE, ED DEPT ANNOUNCE EFFORT TO BOLSTER K-12 CYBERSECURITY

Late last month the federal government released guidance documents and announced other public and private initiatives to strengthen K-12 cyber defenses, to coordinate prevention, response and recovery efforts to better protect student data.

The White House and the departments of Education and Homeland Security said they would establish a government coordinating council to organize cybersecurity activities and communications. This collaboration among federal, state and local leaders aims to bolster protections against and responses for cyberattacks. The agencies and the White House emphasized that K-12's tech-

nology infrastructure must be a priority in the same way efforts are made to protect schools' physical infrastructures.

According to the White House, at least eight school districts were victims of major cyberattacks in the 2022-23 school year, with four of those districts having to cancel classes or close temporarily, which included the theft of sensitive student information.

A 2022 U.S. Government Accountability Office report said ransomware attacks impacted more than 2.6 million students between 2018 and 2021. The GAO report recommended federal agencies improve their coordination on K-12 cybersecurity to help schools address risks and threats.

#### The new initiatives include:

- A proposed pilot program that would provide up to \$200 million over three years through the Universal Service Fund to increase cyber defenses at schools and libraries in coordination with federal agencies that have expertise in cybersecurity.
- The ED's creation of a government coordinating council to organize information about preparing for, responding to and recovering from cyber threats and attacks.
- A guidance document specifically for K-12 that education leaders can reference to help mitigate vulnerabilities, manage third-party vendors, create cybersecurity governance, provide basic cybersecurity training and conduct other activities.
- Updated guidance from the FBI and the National Guard Bureau on how school systems can report cybersecurity incidents and get support from federal programs.
- Cybersecurity training conducted by the Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency for 300 K-12 systems over the next school year.
- Efforts from private corporations, such as Amazon Web Services, Cloudflare, Google, PowerSchool and D2L, to provide cyber solutions, including some no-cost options.

# Past Presidents' Scholarship Winners Announced

The MASC Past Presidents Council has selected two winners for the 2023 Past Presidents Scholarship award. Congratulations go to **Abigail Hennessy**, a 2023 graduate of Marlborough High School and **Kaia Rodrigues**, a graduate of Brockton High School.

Hennessy, who will attend Wagner College where she will focus on health sciences, has excelled in a variety of arenas. Graduating in the top 20 in her class, Abby was also a three-sport athlete, also competing year-round in club field hockey and coaching younger athletes in her club. She coupled those endeavors with a passion for music and drama, as President of the Jazz Band playing the lead trombone, historian in the Concert Band, and active in the drama club, where she was a lead in the Spring production of Matilda. She also served as Vice President for the Senior Class, as a State Student Advisory Class representative,

and a Regional State representative.

Community services and helping others have been an integral part of her life since her early days in the Girl Scouts and helping her parents and church and community service groups, participating in Mission trips and the Marlborough Junior Woman's Club Princess Boutique, the latter providing Prom gowns and accessories to students in need. Additionally she helps with the District's Unified program and is involved with elementary school special education students through the lunch buddies program.

Rodrigues, who will study architectural engineering this fall at Wentworth Institute of Technology, where she was the recipient of the Wentworth President's Award, discovered her love of STEM in middle school while learning how to build and code at the Brockton Public Library Maker Space. Not long after, she won second place at the Broadcom Science

Fair and more recently participated in the prestigious National Youth Leadership Forum in Engineering at the University of California-Berkeley. When not attending school and studying, Kaia works part-time at Good Samaritan Hospital in Brockton as a dietary nutrition assistant. On weekends, she runs a balloon design business, creating balloon sculptures for special events, and recently began designing and making personalized clothing for students and staff at the High School.

Rodrigues notes that one of her highest aspirations as an architecture student is to remodel the Brockton community: giving life to existing buildings, bringing out the history of Brockton, and hopefully, providing new opportunities and safe spaces for the youth of Brockton.

Congratulations and best wishes to both of them.

## MA NEWS

### SAFE ROUTES TO SCHOOLS: SAFETY PROTOCOLS REMINDER

The Massachusetts Safe Routes to School initiative and the Mass School Building Authority are reminding all school districts that nearly one million students and staff arrive and depart their school buildings daily using numerous modes of transportation. Supporting and managing these school-related interactions on an abutting school property prioritizes the health and safety of those on your school campus and within the greater community.

The adoption of universal school transportation safety protocols used for transportation safety and mitigation on school property and within the school zone will improve the safety of all modes of student arrival and dismissal through:

- separation of transportation modes;
- proper use of regulatory and informational signage;

- dedicated arrival/dismissal use of the school's front entrance;
- uniform arrival and dismissal planning and communication;
- encouragement of desired student transportation

Incorporating Safe Routes guidelines in your district's Wellness Policy is something your district could consider as ways to create a safe environment for students during arrival/dismissal times.

**For more information, please contact:** Judith Crocker, Statewide Coordinator and Outreach Supervisor  
Massachusetts Safe Routes to School, A Program of MassDOT  
judy.crocker@aecom.com  
[www.mass.gov/safe-routes-to-school](http://www.mass.gov/safe-routes-to-school)

## MASC NEWS

### POLICY UPDATE

MASC is preparing to send electronically to all members and school committee secretaries/administrative assistants two policy newsletters that will provide updates on some

recent changes and new model policy language regarding purchasing. The newsletters will identify policies added to the Policy Reference Manual, policies that have been removed from the Reference Manual, and policies you should review as changes have been made reflecting legal guidance, changes in practice, or language update to reflect more modern needs. The newsletters will include links to download the updated files.

Check your inbox for these updates.

### SELECTED GENERAL LAWS.

Copies of the 2023 edition of the MA Selected General Laws for School Committees were mailed to school districts earlier this summer with copies for each school committee member, superintendent, business officer and the student representative to the school committee. If you would like additional copies, email MASC Communications Director Jenifer Handy: [jhandy@masc.org](mailto:jhandy@masc.org).



# Eight resolutions to be presented at the Annual Meeting in Hyannis

The MASC Annual Meeting will be held on Wednesday, November 8 at 3:15pm at the conference in Hyannis. Delegates will vote on the 2024 Board of Directors slate, nominations for Life Membership in the Association, and eight resolutions that have been put forward by member districts and approved for consideration by the Board of Directors.

Resolution topics include: full, stable funding for METCO; recommendations for transportation bidding procedures; regional transportation; diversity, equity, and inclusion; MA School Building Authority; school bus stop arm surveillance act and enforcement; MCAS; and safe storage of firearms.

The full text of the resolutions, including rationales, as well as bios of the board of directors slate, and members recommended for life membership are included in the **2023 Delegate Manual which is being mailed to all members in mid-September**. This will allow districts time to discuss and determine their positions on the issues. Resolutions and their text can also be accessed on the MASC website at [www.masc.org](http://www.masc.org)

**REMINDER:** Have you registered your delegate for the annual meeting? The delegate registration form is available online on page 25 of the annual "Forms" book: <https://www.masc.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/04/mailler23.pdf>

## Students' Return

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compendium of assignments and content that isn't thoughtfully aligned to what students must know and be able to do. Leaders should organize expert teachers to go through a curriculum-alignment process to ensure that only the most essential material is taught. They can ask the best teachers in every school to work with district curriculum leaders to ensure that there are clear learning outcomes with matching assessments, engaging and relevant learning experiences, and high-effect-size instructional strategies. And yes, teachers will have to be compensated for this work.

### **Every school needs a series of interventions—academic and social-emotional—to address the needs of children when they first present a problematic behavior.**

These behaviors may include absenteeism, failing grades, or behavioral issues. Off-the-shelf programs can be purchased, but the best intervention practice is when educators can sense an emerging challenge and act early to change course. Given the significant challenges many children face, it's essential to understand the true issue students may be facing prior to interceding so that school personnel or community partners can provide the appropriate interventions. Which leads to the third strategy.

### **Having good data and acting on it.**

Leaders need to schedule teachers to regularly review student data and act accordingly. Student work, common assessments, and standardized growth measures are all leading indicators of student learning that can be used to adjust instructions. Allow teachers to collaborate and act on what they are seeing with their students. Leaders need to get training for teachers, schedule them accordingly, and support their efforts.

### **Leaders must encourage and allow teachers to lead.**

In the best schools, teachers are leading, supporting each other, and

holding each other accountable. Those who are closest to our students should be empowered to make decisions—within a framework, of course.

When teachers are collaborating with each other and leading the work, are well-trained, and have access to great curricula and multiple measures of student learning, they're able to adjust instructions and make better decisions. There will be no change to student achievement without good first instruction.

### **Leaders must have the courage to put their best teachers with the kids who need them the most.**

We know who those teachers are, we're just sometimes afraid to name them. If we want our most vulnerable students to make the kinds of academic and social-emotional leaps they'll need to overcome the ravages of the last few years, they must have the absolute best teachers in front of them every day.

### **We need to pay educators more, ensure they are in safe, supportive environments and keep them engaged and inspired.**

Yes, we're still in a crisis. Yes, the strategic use of money matters is we're going to get out of it. But we also know what makes a great school and how adults can help all students not only recover, but thrive. Ensuring that our educators are well taken care of is essential if we want a path out of our current state. Happy adults means happy kids. Now is the time to double down on what we know works, rather than chase silver bullets and brass rings.

*Joshua Starr is the managing partner of The Center for Model Schools and the author of Equity-based Leadership: Leveraging Complexity to Transform School Systems (Harvard University Press, 2022). He is a former superintendent of the Montgomery County public schools in Maryland and the Stamford public schools in Connecticut. This article is adapted from one that appeared in August 2023 Education Week.*

## FAQ : Student Representatives on the School Committee

Recently, MASC has received a number of questions regarding student members on Massachusetts school committees. In order to clarify the role of this mandated position, we offer the following FAQ:

### **Are school committees in Massachusetts required to have a student member?**

Yes. Under Massachusetts General Law Chapter 71, section 38M, a student member is required.

### **How is this student representative selected?**

The student representative is the chair of the student advisory committee, elected prior to the first day in June in any year to serve in that position for one year by the members of the student advisory committee.

### **How is the student advisory committee selected?**

The student advisory committee is a five member body, elected by the students of the high school or high schools of the district.

### **What further role does the student advisory committee have?**

The School Committee is required by law to meet every other month with the student advisory committee during the months that school is in session.

### **Must the student representative be a single designated individual?**

Yes, as the student representative is the elected chair of the student advisory committee.

### **What role does the student representative play at meetings?**

The student representative serves as an ex-officio, non-voting member of the committee, without the right to attend executive sessions unless expressly granted by the individual school committee. They have the right to address any matter before the committee.

### **Is the student representative there to deliver a report?**

While a student representative may deliver a report if that is the wish of the student advisory committee and school committee, the role of the student representative is to be the voice of the student body on matters before the committee during the public meeting of the committee.

## \$56 Billion Budget

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ing measures that will expand access to subsidized health care, and allow high school graduates without legal immigration status to tap into in-state tuition rates and financial aid at public colleges and universities.

The spending plan makes use of revenue newly available from a 4% surtax on annual personal income above \$1 million that voters approved in November, which must be earmarked for education and transportation uses. The budget divides the expected \$1 billion in surtax money into \$524 million for education and \$477 for transportation. Investments include the launch of a "MassReconnect" program that supports free community college for students ages 25 and older, MBTA infrastructure improvements, and a permanent universal school meals option.

Of the \$272 million vetoed from 35 different line items, the Civics Education Trust fund was cut by \$1M to \$1.5M; \$300K in earmarks was

cut from EL & Literacy programs (funded in FY24 at \$5.36M); and \$100K was cut from AP math and science (thus funded at 3.29M).

Healey noted that the \$5.6M vetoed in the Special Education Circuit Breaker line item was the funding the Legislature would have carried over from the prior fiscal year, and that this funding was not necessary to fully fund the projected need. The FY24 budget, as was the case in FY23, fully funds the circuit breaker at the 75% threshold.

K-12 schools will receive a \$594 million (9.9%) increase in Chapter 70 funding as the budget continues to move forward toward full implementation of the 2019 Student Opportunity Act funding law. Regional transportation was funded at \$97 million, an approximately 90% reimbursement rate; full funding for homeless student transportation was approved, as was a 400% increase in state reimbursement for out of district vocational transportation.

Other recipients of increases

include: \$100 million investment in school building projects; \$558 million to the Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs to address impacts of climate change and move toward a clean energy future, including \$50 million in Green School Work grants; \$325 million (48% increase over FY23) in funding for the emergency assistance family shelter program; \$475 million in Commonwealth Cares for Children grants to early education providers; a 3.2% increase in unrestricted general government aid (UGGA); and \$173 million in Chapter 257 rate increases for human service providers.

One outside section the Governor approved will revive and make permanent a lapsed pandemic-era eviction diversion program, which requires courts to pause eviction proceedings for failure to pay rent if a tenant has a pending application for rental aid. Another approved outside section is a pilot program increasing eligibility for Connector-Care health insurance, which provides a new option for Bay Staters.

## UPCOMING EVENTS

**Saturday, September 23**  
**CHARTING THE COURSE**  
Lee Middle/High School  
8:00am-noon

**Friday, October 6**  
**MASC LEARNING LUNCH**  
Topic: [Joint Conference](#)  
[Resolutions Review](#)  
noon - 1:00pm

**Wednesday, November 8 -**  
**Friday November 10**  
**MASC/MASS**  
**JOINT CONFERENCE**

## SAVE THE DATE: Social Justice Forum

**Defending Democracy**, a public forum on current threats to civil liberties, including book banning in public schools, the assault on minority voting rights, and efforts to eliminate or marginalize the teaching of black history, will be held on Wednesday, **October 4 at 6:00pm** at Lynn Memorial Auditorium in Lynn City Hall. The free event, open to the public, will feature as speakers MA Education Secretary Patrick Tutwiler; Dr. Kabria Baumgartner, professor of History and Africana Studies, Northeastern University; and Dr. Martin Gamar, director of the Amherst College Library/former chair of the American Library Association's Intellectual Freedom Committee, among others. The program is co-sponsored by the Grand Army of the Republic Museum in Lynn and Lynn Museum/Lynn Arts. Advance registration for the event is not necessary.

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