

# MeASBO

The official publication of the Maine Association of School Business Officials  
Summer 2011

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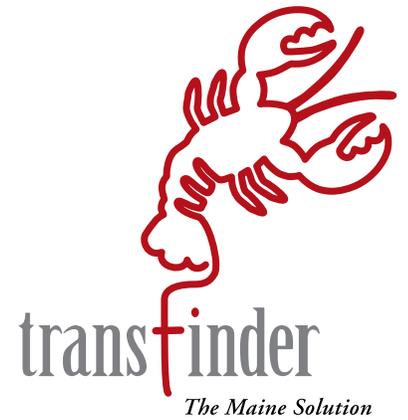
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# 2011-12 MeASBO leadership



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# INSIDE MeASBO

## NEWS

### 5 Joining the Ranks

The Wells-Ogunquit CSD has nabbed Robert Sirpenski, who has a broad experience in the finance, medical and civic worlds to replace Scott Smith, who has moved on to Brunswick.

### 6 Seattle hosting ASBO Int'l

ASBO International lines up an all-star cast for its annual conference. School business managers are encouraged to sign up early.



### 21 A Facelift of Major Proportions

School-based Medicaid Program faces major changes in Maine.

### 22 Taking It for Granted

Grant-writing can build a broader base for education dollars for Maine schools.

**Cover Graphic:** This graphic at the corner of a Maine country road depicts that the state's schools stand at a crossroads finding ways, like outsourcing, to save money.



## FEATURES

### 7 Member Profile

Sue Lambert never steps back from a challenge — especially when it involves technology.

### 10 Outsourcing HR

It may be time for Maine officials to explore outsourcing a constant nemesis: the human resources component of the central office.

### 14 A Presidential Q&A

Kathy Warren proves not only that no woman is an island, but that the mainlanders can learn a lot from island wisdom.

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# President's Message

## 2011-12 promises to be an exciting year

Greetings from the middle of Penobscot Bay! I am honored to have the opportunity to serve you as your president this year. I think it is awesome that someone from a little place like Vinalhaven has the opportunity to lead this organization. I want to thank you all very sincerely for your support.

I am looking forward to learning more about your districts and to discovering more ways that we can collaborate and innovate to support education in the state of Maine.

As you will read in my interview [page 14] I believe as school business officials we are uniquely qualified to help identify ways that our schools can restructure financing and funding, identify new resources, and think creatively about our programs and infrastructure in order to best serve kids and communities.



Kathy Warren

You are all passionate about what you do and invested in the success of your schools for all stakeholders. I admire your commitment and your own unique roles as educators in your communities.

Keep up the good work. You are making a difference. By the time you read this, our MeASBO Executive Committee will have met on Vinalhaven and plotted out a year of excellent professional development and collaboration.

The Certification Committee has already met and has some great topics and resources lined up. Please plan on marking your calendars for our meetings. They will be in September, November, January, March and

at 20<sup>th</sup> annual Tri-State Conference in Portland in May. Plan now. You're not going to want to miss this year!

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## Wells-Ogunquit hires Sirpenski; Boucher moves to G-NG; Ward retires

The Wells-Ogunquit CSD has reached out and nabbed a man with broad experience in the finance, medical and civic worlds to replace Scott Smith as director of finance and human resources.

Certified by the Connecticut Department of Education as School Board Administrator, Robert Sirpenski holds an MBA with a concentration in finance, a master's degree in management and a bachelor's degree in business administration.

Most recently, Sirpenski served as controller for the Charles River Laboratories of Wilmington, Mass., with worldwide responsibility for the Avian Vaccine Service Group.

Sirpenski has held various positions within the medical field, including 12 years at Lawrence & Memorial Hospital in New London, Conn., where he was manager of financial planning and budget director.

"The most fun," he said, was his work as administrative coordinator for outpatient and emergency services because of the interaction with people.

Saying he has a longtime interest in educational matters, Sirpenski has served on school building committees in Voluntown, Conn., where he is still on the Board of Selectmen.

Meanwhile, Smith left his position at Wells-Ogunquit CSD and has taken the post of director of food services at SAD #75 in Topsham-Brunswick.

A former director of finance for eight years at SAD #11 in Cumberland-No. Yarmouth, Smith was director of food services at St. Joseph's College before that, so he is returning to that area of expertise.

.....

Polly Ward, long-time director of finance, human resources and operations for the South Portland School Department, has retired. She has been succeeded by Rafe Forland.

Diane Boucher, former business manager at RSU #5 in Freeport, has replaced the retired Terry Towle as director of finance & operations at SAD #15 in Gray-New Gloucester.

## Tri-State Conference judged best ever; Maine in '12

By Mark Leslie

STOWE, Vt. — School business officials from Maine, New Hampshire and Vermont left Stoweflake Resort and Conference Center here ranking the Tri-State ASBO conference the best ever and excited about their 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary next year in Maine.

Asked if there will be fireworks over Portland Harbor during that conference at the Downtown Holiday Inn, 2011 Conference Co-chair Marilyn Frederick laughed. "We're already planning that," she said.

This year's conference theme, "The Trouble with the Future Is, It's Not what It Used To Be," focused on a variety of issues that met universal acceptance as the conference "with the most meat in it," Frederick said. "I don't know that we can keep getting better than this, it was so good. The surveys showed there was not one bad session in the bunch."

Frederick reported a good turnout, down slightly from previous years, and one or two fewer vendors. She laid the blame on the economy, not the location.

And, as usual, issues of finance dominated the sessions. As the conference brochure noted, 4,400 changes have been made to the Internal Revenue Code since 2000. So the Internal Revenue Service was foremost, along with developments in labor legal issues, payroll matters, the E-Rate program, energy

costs, Social Security changes and the economic outlook.

"The health-care initiative [Obamacare] was a big focus," Frederick said, "because of different state initiatives to negate it. Vermont is at the forefront of that and has already taken steps forward in having its own statewide insurance."

Attorney Chris Stevenson of Drummond Woodsum; Ty Gagne, chief executive officer (CEO) of Primex; and Kevin Goddard, vice president for external affairs at Blue Cross Blue Shield of Vermont were the presenters.

Marian Kenseth, president and CEO of Kenseth Commu-  
*Continued on page 23*

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# ASBO Int'l Conference boasts headliners

SEATTLE, Wash. — From the opening general session — featuring best-selling author, Dr. John Medina — and the closing general session — presented by Victoria Labalme, creator of the groundbreaking theory and system called The Prism Effect™ — the 2011 Annual Meeting of the Association of School Business Officials (ASBO) International promises help toward cost-effective and effi-

cient school financial operations.

Attendees of the Sept. 16-19 meeting at the Washington State Convention Center here can choose their conference schedule to fit their professional development needs from:

- **Educational Enterprise** — Focuses on public policy, intergovernmental relations, and the legal frameworks that affect schools.
- **Financial Resource Management**

— Provides expertise on the effects of financial management on budgeting, financial planning and reporting, accounting, investments, debt management and business technology.

- **Human Resource Management** — Addresses personnel management concepts and leadership styles, including personnel and benefits administration, professional development, labor relations, and employment agreements.

- **Facility Management** — Focuses on the latest in school planning and construction, school maintenance, and the environmental aspects of school operations.

- **Property Acquisition and Management** — Focuses on purchasing, supply and fixed-asset management, and real-estate management.

- **Information Management** — Deals with critical information on strategic planning, instructional support programs, and management information systems.

- **Ancillary Services** — Addresses issues involving transportation, risk management and food service.

- **International Aspects** — Focuses on global school business management issues.

- **Leadership Development** — Focuses on aspects of developing leadership skills in the field of school business management.

- **Social Responsibility** — Addresses a principle that integrates social, environmental and financial successes into operations and policies. SR is building green school facilities, purchasing local produce for the cafeteria, creating volunteer tutoring programs, encouraging quality of life for employees, explaining the budget to your community.

- **Economic Recovery/Stimulus** — Sessions directly related to the economic stimulus (the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act) and/or featuring revenue-generating or cost-saving strategies to aid school districts' economic recovery and pro-

*Continued on page 20*



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# Sue Lambert: Lady of many hats

By Mark Lambert

Colleagues at Maine SAD #49 in Fairfield are surprised that Sue Lambert could take on yet one more assignment: first vice president of MeASBO. It's not that she did not already have a plenteous plate: as finance director she oversees payroll, AP, accounting, sub scheduling, budgeting, human resources, reporting, compliance and food service; she serves on the district committees for technology, wellness and safety; and she is enrolled in the in computer information systems program at the University of Maine – Augusta.

But that decision, to help her MeASBO colleagues, at least partially defines Sue Lambert. Tackling new challenges, learning innovative software and, indeed, new technologies is at her core.

"She's a bit like our tech experts," said Nora Murray, assistant superintendent at SAD #49. "She can work with people with different levels of understanding and make them feel very comfortable. She's very supportive of people at any range of expertise who come and seek her help."

While Superintendent Dean Baker was on vacation, Murray was happy to speak about Lambert, with whom she works closely. "Sue is very knowledgeable of federal and state regulations and grant applications and all the requirements for the business end of education," she said. "She's cooperative, friendly, supportive and punctual. And she's very much involved with the school budget, working closely with the superintendent, getting information out to the communities, posting warrants..."



*Sue Lambert, left, and her business office assistant, Beckie Seeley, check over budget figures at their MSAD #49 office in Fairfield.*

"I enjoy learning new things and I certainly have plenty of opportunity for that," Lambert said. "I especially enjoy tackling new technology and software and configuring them so that processes are streamlined and we have less duplication of effort."

Indeed, being life-long learners is one thing Lambert wants students to be taught.

She has walked that path herself.

Lambert has come a long way since her first job in education — at Mallett Elementary School in Farmington — where she remembers "scratching my head a few times when I tried to understand a fund balance world with an asset/liability background."

Having grown up in Stratton and graduated from Mt. Abram High School, she started working on the teller line for Kingfield Savings Bank, a small local bank

with only one branch at the time.

"I eventually was asked to do 'back-office' work such as reconciliations, general ledger and loan documents," Lambert said. "As the bank grew and acquired more branches and more staff, I held various positions such as treasurer, vice president of branch operations, vice president of accounting, data management and loan servicing."

Because the bank was in a growth situation it gave her the opportunity to grow even though she did not hold a college degree.

"My experience was my education," she said, "and I learned the value of using logic and critical thinking to solve problems."

After 11 years at Kingfield Savings Bank, Lambert sought a job

with a modified schedule — to spend more time with her growing family — and was hired as the lead secretary at the Mallett Elementary School in Farmington which gave her time off that coincided with her daughters school schedule.

“The schedule was perfect and I got my first glimpse of school finance and accounting.”

Getting her feet wet, and enjoying working with the staff and students at Mallett for four years, Lambert was hired at MSAD #49 in July 1999 as the bookkeeping supervisor under then-Business Manager Charlie Richardson. When Richardson retired, district officials decided to split the

**‘ My experience was my education and I learned the value of using logic and critical thinking to solve problems.’  
— Sue Lambert**

position with an operations director overseeing facility and transportation and Lambert assuming the responsibilities as the finance director.

Shortly after her move to finance director, Lambert decided to pursue her college degree.

“I’m taking a couple of courses a semester and hopefully will have my degree before I retire,” she laughed. “In today’s business world, computer information systems are important whether you’re using Tyler-Profund Software, Infinite Campus or VFA facility software. It’s all about access and management of good reliable data.”

#### **Advancing the Role of Technology**

Lambert sees a bright future in the use of new technology and software in every segment of modern education.

“From a personal perspective I enjoy considering ways that technology might help the educational process,” she

said. “I know that right now textbook publishers are trying to determine if high schools are ready for digital textbooks. On the college level digital and even interactive textbooks have been in use for some time. I’ve used them myself in my classes at UMA — all of which I have taken through the online Blackboard system similar to Virtual High School.



*Sue Lambert*

“I think it would be great if the MLTI [Maine Learning Technology Initiative] devices could be used to store a student’s digital textbooks. The need for backpacks full of heavy books would be eliminated. Hopefully the cost of electronic textbooks would also be less and result in a savings for the district. The challenge is that it would require some type of cost-effective one-to-one device for all students.

“I would also hope,” she added, “that technology advances would help teachers by giving them more immediate feed-back and assessment results so that they can take action to help the individual students to be more successful.”

#### **Seeking Savings**

The biggest role for school business officials, of course, is “to help save money and keep costs down in order that more resources can be devoted to the education of the students,” Lambert said.

Because SAD #49 has more than 2,500 students, it did not consolidate with other towns, for years it has been a member of the Kennebec Alliance, a group of schools that have been working together for years to collaborate and share services.

Lambert said some schools are investigating outsourcing custodial, transportation and food service.

“We’ve just agreed to share a food service director with SAD #54 and other districts around us are going that route as well,” she said. “Years ago I believe outsourcing of some

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custodial was tried here but it was not considered successful. I think all things should be considered but I'm not sure how much information has been compiled as to costs in order for districts to compare the outsourcing to having their own staff and be able to make a good informed decision.

"It would be an interesting topic for MeASBO to hear from districts that have utilized outsourcing and the pros and cons that they encountered."

Meanwhile, on the topic of streamlining, Lambert would like state and federal officials to reconsider tying short deadlines to burdensome new programs and projects.

While she enjoys new challenges, "Sometimes the new changes come with short deadlines and all at once and make it a challenge to come up with an plan and standard operating procedure before it starts," Lambert said.

Asked if there are any parts of a business manager's job that is time-consuming and mostly useless and created by well-meaning bureaucrats or legislators, she replied: "I think staying in compliance and using the correct procedure and documentation for COBRA, FMLA, Wage and Hour can be challenging. Try reading what qualifies for FMLA and then attempt to put that into practice in order to correctly classify leave as FMLA. I keep threatening to create a flow chart to wade through it."

#### MeASBO et al

It's that creativity and forward-looking that MeASBO will gain from Lambert's participation.

"I've been involved in Maine ASBO now for several years," she said. "Last year I was on the Executive Board. We should stick together. There are a lot of issues that affect a lot of us and we can learn from each other. I'm definitely glad to do my part."

MeASBO, she said, is "a great resource to learn from other professionals in my field. The meetings usually involve speakers who bring valued information and education

to give me ideas of ways to improve our processes and to save money."

Even on her own time Lambert is focused on learning. While usually reading textbooks for her college classes, she is

Between the time on her job, college classes and MeASBO, Lambert will continue to squeeze in time to travel to natural wonders like Yellowstone National Park, "splash

**‘ I think it would be great if MLTI [Maine Learning Technology Initiative] devices could be used to store a student’s digital textbooks. The need for backpacks full of heavy books would be eliminated.’**

**— Sue Lambert**

awaiting arrival of the John Medina book, *Brain Rules: 12 Principles for Surviving and Thriving at Work, Home and School*.

"It is a book that those of us on the wellness committee plan to read together," she said.

"Someone once told me that electronic books could never replace the feel and smell of a 'real book,' but I feel that the value of a book is what it inspires in you through education, imagination and inspiration. It is the words and thoughts that convey this — not the medium itself."

in the pool with my grandkids," and relax at cookouts with husband Scott, a CDL driver; sons Scott, a Colby College mathematics professor, and Jeremy, who works in a motorsport store in Oakland; and daughter Amanda Poulin and their families.

And just as she would love to see American and foreign students "aspire to be life-long learners," be assured: her grandkids will learn the same. •••



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# Is farming out the HR component worth exploring?

By Mark Leslie

**S**chool business officials everywhere wear multiple hats, but for many the most burdensome nuisance is one for which they have no previous training: human resources (HR).

Indeed, HR is such a bane to so many corporations, small businesses and non-profit organizations that its duties are shared by two, three, four and even more people in the central office and beyond.

For this reason, school districts are beginning to investigate outsourcing HR, thereby hiring experts educated and trained in the field of HR while not paying full-time wages and benefits.

“Contracting out is something people are looking at for HR, buses and janitorial,” said Lewiston School Department Finance Director Dean Flanagin. “I’ve fielded probably six calls from colleagues this year inquiring about whether it works.”

Flanagin can only speak to busing, which Lewiston has outsourced to Hudson Bus for decades.

The range of human resource tasks seem daunting:

- Compliance
- Compensation
- Performance management
- Employee relations and investigations
- Conflict management

*Next issue: Outsourcing busing and janitorial services*

- Management training
  - Mentoring and leadership development.
  - Job description development.
  - Performance evaluations
  - Maine-mandated training for prevention of sexual harassment
  - Family medical leave.
  - Maine active care for families
  - Maine family medical leave
  - Military leave.
  - Dependent exigency leave
- The list goes on.

Adam Hanson, business office supervisor for the Auburn School Department, had to take on HR duties when he worked as the payroll officer for Great Salt Bay AOS and he is glad to be rid of it. In Auburn, secretaries, the assistant superintendent and the payroll official all handle a piece of what traditionally would be called HR.

“Parts of it were not that much fun,” Hanson said. “I enjoyed helping people with their insurance and interacting with the employees, but it’s very difficult to keep up. The most challenging part is staying on top of the labor wage-and-hour issues and making sure everything is in compliance. Not just staying up with the law but keeping your district in compliance. You have to think about it on a constant basis — the changes, new laws, what’s coming down the pike... None of us keep up with it as well as we should.”

Flanagin said he has seen the HR component “handled in all sorts of ways.”

In Lewiston, the HR duties are split up between three people, he said. “Especially when budgets are going through and the district is cutting back on retirement benefits, you need a good payroll department and payroll is sometimes the HR person.”



Deborah Whitworth

Portland School Department has its own HR director.

In the Yarmouth School Department, Finance Director Herb Hopkins said, “We are the HR department and handle benefits and finance. It can be difficult, especially when budgets go through and the district is cutting back on retirement benefits. The payroll department is sometimes the HR person and you need a good payroll department.

“If we’re dealing with deeper things, like negotiations, than I get involved.”

Karla Miller of the Augusta School Department said she and the superintendent share negotiations, everyone who has to hire does reference checks, and an HR administrative assistant handles unemployment and job applications, schedules interviews and performs background checks.

Sue Lambert, business manager at SAD #49 in Fairfield, said: “In most schools I’m familiar with, the superintendent’s office or the principals review applications and bring in candidates for interviews. Once that’s done, my office handles employee benefits, keeping up on the COBRA, family medical leave and other matters. I don’t have a set person who does all of that.

“The hardest thing,” Lambert added, “is keeping up with compliance because it’s constantly changing. The consequences of not doing it right can be detrimental and lead to a financial impact to the district. So I think that definitely is important. But with the many hats we’re wearing, it’s difficult to get the training we need.”

Miller, who worked in the Maine Department of Education for several years until 2010, said she knows of no school districts who hire outside HR experts, but added that outsourcing might work best at smaller school units.

### The HR Expert

Deborah Whitworth, managing director of Human Resources Consulting for Lebel & Harriman in Falmouth, assesses the possibilities of school outsourcing based on 30 years experience in HR management.

Whitworth’s clients range from accounting and financial firms to medical practices, software developers, hospice and home care, manufacturers, retailers, trucking firms, and many nonprofit organizations.

At this point, she has no school districts on her speed-dial but agrees they could use the help.

“People who wear a lot of hats in an organization — sometimes it’s the office manager or office administrator — also are often the HR coordinator,” Whitworth said. “That part of the job, in many instances, is ancillary, so the person respon-

sible for the HR function doesn’t have the training for it. And because the laws and regulations are changing so quickly, it’s difficult to stay on top of.”

Small institutions like schools don’t need a full-time HR executive, but can tap into consultants like her.

“When you need that high-priced HR executive you can get the needed information *a la cart* without paying the 24-7 cost.

“Like the wizard behind the curtain, having somebody like me telling that person what to do and how to do it, providing the expertise needed to get the job done, alleviates the need for a high-priced executive ... that’s clearly overkill.”

### To Take the Plunge or Not?

Yarmouth’s Hopkins casts doubts on the possibility of outsourcing HR.

“If dealing with laws and regulations, specific issues like that, training for employees, than it could work. But I’m not so sure about day-to-day operations. One thing you do lose [with outsourcers] is the knowledge of the employees, especially some who work at more than one school.”

**“I’ve fielded probably six calls from colleagues this year inquiring about whether it works.”**

**— Dean Flanagin,  
Lewiston School Dept.**

Auburn’s Hanson said, “Anything that saves time and money is worth looking into. Because all [Maine schools’] central offices are so different from one another, it would serve some districts better than others, depending on how they are set up.

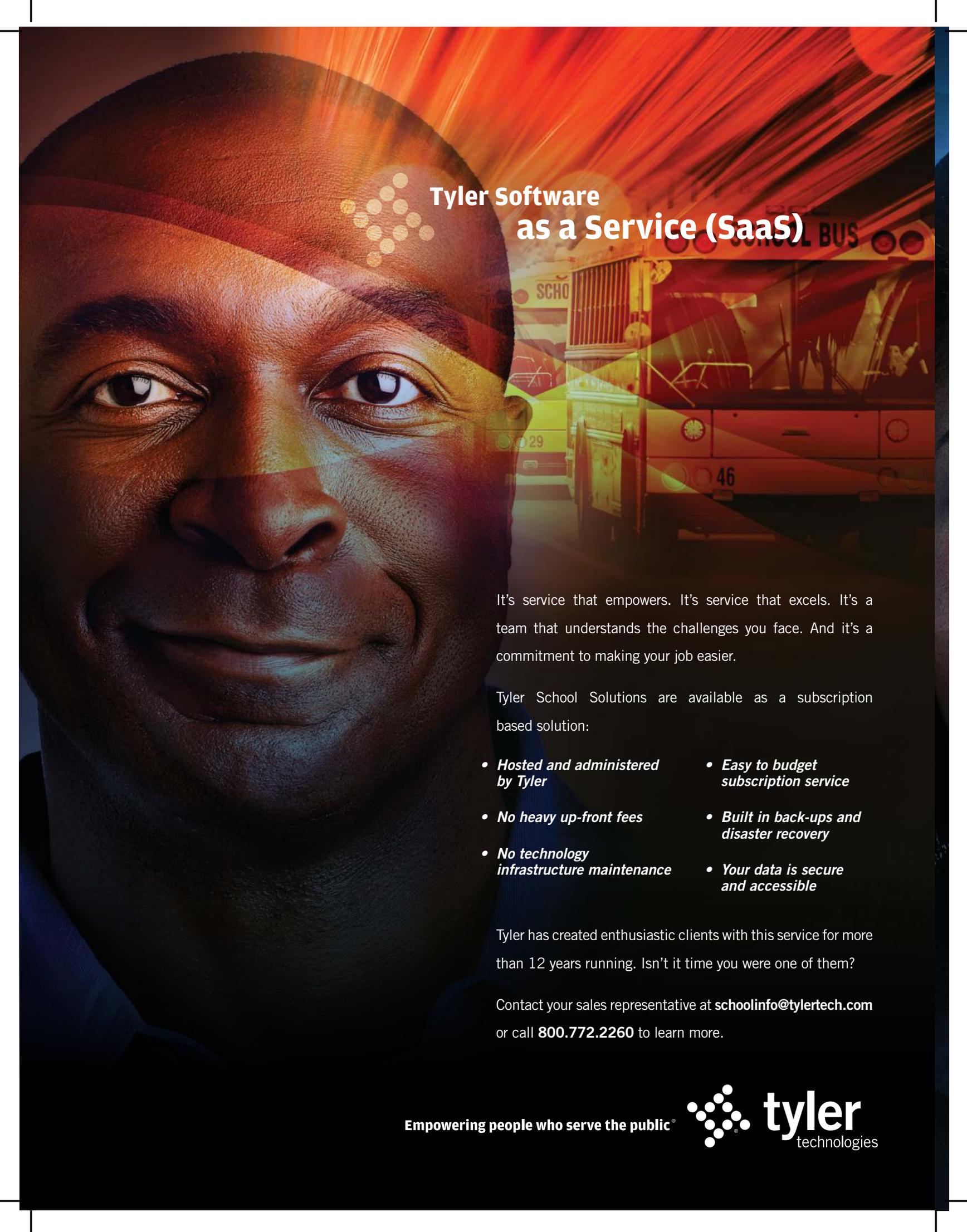
“There’s no one-size-fits-all in this business. But I would see outsourcing working in certain districts.”

“We’re there when you need us and will help you develop solutions to problems faced by your most valuable resource — your employees,” said Lebel & Harriman’s Whitworth, who is a certified senior professional in human resources, the highest designation the HR Certification Institute provides. “Any time you work with an organization where people work under a contract, you’re limited in scope as to the work that can be done. But there is always something to be gained from having somebody on the outside involved in an employee-relations matter, training, conducting an investigation.”

Noting difficulties associated with having someone within a school department perform a personal-conduct investigation, she noted, “It might be cost-effective, but in the long run it’s not done without prejudice in many instances.

“I’ve had sophisticated HR managers, who could certainly conduct their own investigation, hire me to do it because they can’t do it without prejudice. Sometimes having someone from the outside involved gives them the objectivity that is needed for a particular project.”

The bottom line: With school boards and officials exploring every angle for financial efficiency, some might find HR worth the look. ••



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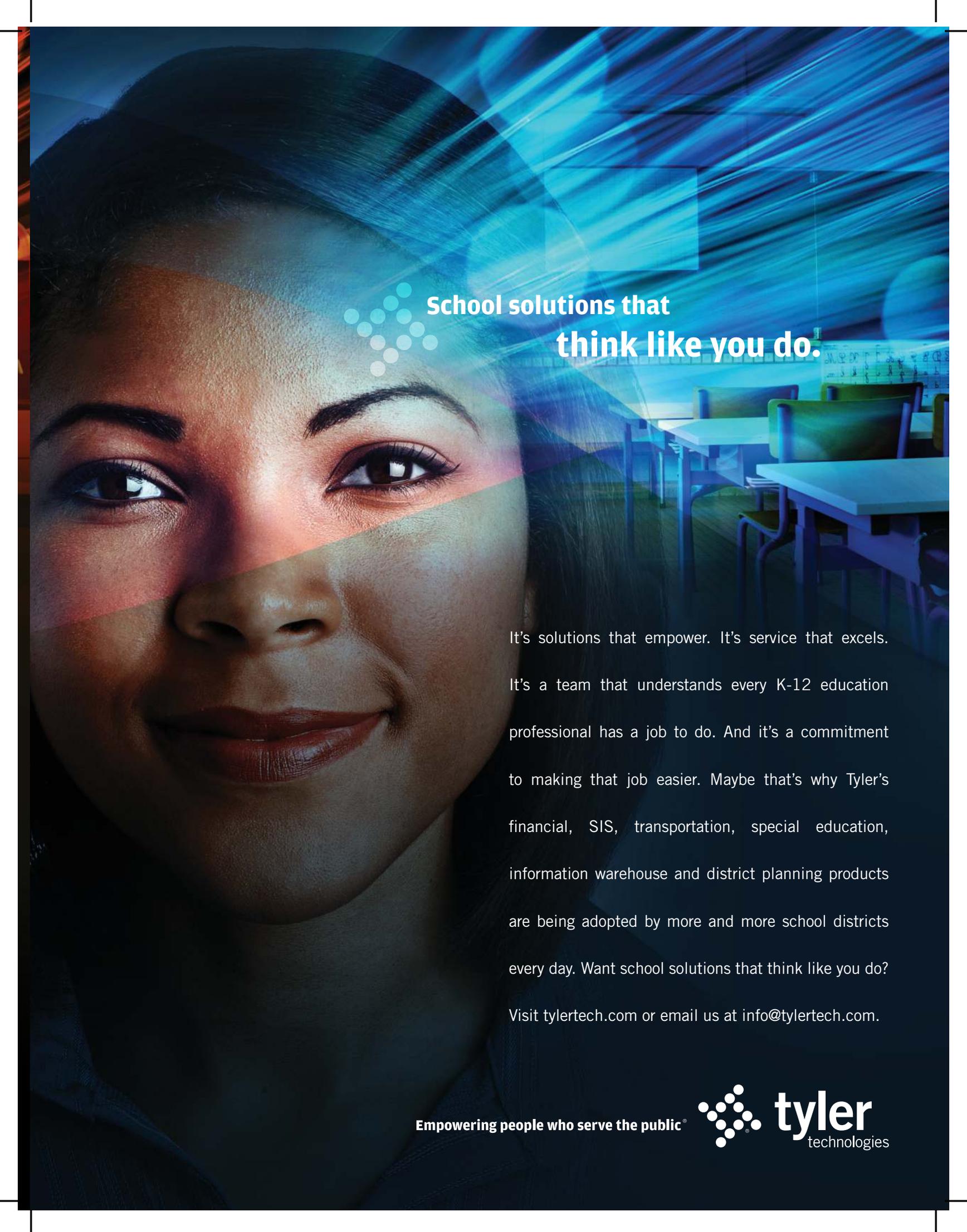
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# MeASBO President Kathy Warren proves no woman is an island

**S**he may be living and working on an island with a 75-minute ferry ride to Rockland, but Kathy Warren has given a vault-full of her time to MeASBO, including the last few years rising through the officers' positions. Now she heads the association while balancing her duties with work and family and volunteer work on Vinalhaven Island.

For this interview, Managing Editor/Publisher Mark Leslie caught up with her during a timeout in her life.

**MeASBO: When the MeASBO Executive Board meets in August on Vinalhaven what will be the major points of discussion?**

**Warren:** Our main objective in August is to put our heads together as leaders and as a cross-section of the organization and plan and set priorities. As always, funding is a big issue. With the new LD 1274, rural schools may see some increases but that always means someone else is losing. The pot has not gotten bigger in a while. The new Charter School legislation will also be impacting folks, but that impact will take longer to become clear.

We will continue to develop our Certification program, ASBO's presence statewide and encouraging membership. We're anxious to do some more outreach and getting more people involved is a major priority. With that in mind, in August we will be choosing speakers and brainstorming to stay ahead of what our members are going to want to learn about and prepare for.

The challenges have been pretty



*Kathy Warren talks budget with Maine SAD #8 Superintendent Lew Collins.*

constant this year at the local level, but at the state level there have not been many changes for schools that have really come to light yet. The new commissioner [Stephen Bowen] seems to be focused on transformation in schools, what are the best practices, who is doing the thing that everyone else should be learning from.

I'm very interested to see if that translates into the operational side of schools. Many creative leaders and many innovations and collaborations are happening in Maine schools in terms of purchasing and energy use, finance, transportation and operations.

We would be very happy to help lead those kinds of conversations within MeASBO and with our stakeholders. On the finance and operational side of schools, we've been seeking efficiencies for years and our experience shows.

We would love to work with the commissioner to use our experience to share transformational best practices in our side of the business.

**MeASBO: You bring up charter schools. What are your thoughts on them? Could Vinalhaven be a prospect for a charter school?**

**Warren:** Vinalhaven is an innovative and progressive small rural school. We're already a school that's run by a site-based management model. We have teachers at each grade level who work together on leadership teams that run the whole school day to day with our school leader. All decisions are made at the lowest possible level. We just received a commendation from the NCLB review team for our implementation of RTI in grades K-12. Because we're small and responsive we were able to get this transformational program started and completely implemented, including assessment, in two school years.

We're currently working on designing and implementing our approach to Standards Based and designing an

individualized program for our high school that really addresses challenges faced by individual student learning needs and aspirations. Once again, because of our size we can focus on this initiative and really implement changes and make real improvements in learning for kids, and measure those changes in the space of a school year or two.

We're a school that is very committed to place-based education and we're very integrated with our community. We focus on teaching our students the history, science, economics, and arts using our community and strive to develop involved students who will grow to be committed citizens. It is vital to Vinalhaven's sustainability as a community and economically that they understand the interconnectedness of our lives.

In another direction next year we're piloting a March break instead of February and April vacations. We've had challenges with families being on island in March and it was impacting student learning. This is an attempt to meet that challenge.

On the operations side, we were designed as an energy-efficient school shortly before the state began requiring and funding many "green" initiatives. We've participated in the Greenhouse Gas Survey with DEP

and are currently piloting an energy-monitoring program with the Island Institute and coordinating that with a pilot of an Energy Leaders program with DOE and DEP.

**MeASBO: But Maine schools have been forced to turn on a dime with things like No Child Left Behind, MEDMS and consolidation.**

**Warren:** There has been a lot of mandated change in an attempt to handle political concerns about state aid to education, property taxes and student achievement. Broad-based federal and statewide mandates tend to be one-size-fits-all and often do not accommodate or even allow for the course corrections, adaptations and innovations that can help achieve meaningful goals and efficiencies.

I hope the Department of Education [DOE] is looking at the data and assessing as we go along. We're providing more consistent data than ever before and it should be forming the foundation for some relevant statistics. I hope they are spending time in the new RSUs and learning about how consolidation is being implemented. It may be a bit early but they should assess whether achievement is changing, and if costs are improving. They must have some data they can compare to measure the differences – even if it must be anecdotal there is information to learn from.

I'm a big fan longitudinal data systems. With MEDMS and Infinite Campus, we

have more data than ever before. If you're going to try and manage schools at a statewide level, you can't do it without information and it needs to be standardized information. This is a very important part of what DOE is doing and the collection of it has improved greatly over the years. I hope it is informing the changes that are taking place.

**‘ There have been too many initiatives and not enough focus.’**

**MeASBO: Do you think there is enough manpower at state level?**

**Warren:** In some ways, perhaps. Everyone is getting squeezed. My question is: Do we have enough manpower in the right places? There is a finite amount of money we're going to spend on education. I am fiscally conservative, but that does not eliminate the vision for excellence. We need enough money to fund our priorities. We need to measure and assess for effectiveness and make sure our money is spent in the places that create value and create a ripple of improvement throughout education statewide.

It does seem that we've gotten more

## MeASBO meetings

**Sept. 16** — At Green Ladle, Lewiston High School Campus, 9 a.m. to noon.

### ASBO International

**Sept. 16-19** — 2011 Annual Meeting at Washington State Convention & Trade Center, 800 Convention Place, Seattle, Wash.

**Oct. 12-15** — Annual Meeting and Exhibits at Phoenix Convention Center, 100 North Third St., Phoenix, Ariz.



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focused over the last few years on fewer priorities; we're not chasing as many initiatives as we have been. That might be my geographic situation; maybe that's not the case in all districts. One of my goals this year is to learn more about how education is working in districts different from mine.

**‘ It would be interesting to take a backwards look at regionalization ... A lot of school managers would argue that there was never a lot of money to be saved, that we were only shuffling dollars into different pockets.’**

**MeASBO: What do you hope will be the major achievements of your term as MeASBO president?**

**Warren:** I am really interested in encouraging collaboration amongst all of the participants in education in Maine. My personal vision of my role in our school is that I ensure all of the finance and operational work is well communicated and planned so that the instructional side can put their entire focus on educating kids. I believe the daily work of the non-teaching staff, maintaining the finances, the reports and records, the technology, the building and grounds, the policies should all serve maximizing time on task for kids. We all need to work together to demonstrate to our taxpayers that we're focused on educating kids in a fiscally responsible manner with mea-



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surable outcomes and that our responsibilities, concerns and priorities are focused on that purpose.

Education is the foundation of Maine's economic future. If we invest in our kids and our citizens, in our K-12 schools, adult education, our public libraries, and our colleges and universities, we will lay the foundation for prosperity. We need to link our education system to our communities and to their natural resources and economic challenges and opportunities. If we see our citizens as our greatest natural resource and harness the potential, the creativity, the innovation, and dedication of each of them, we will build the communities and the industries and the statewide economy that our state motto of Dirigo "I lead" inspires.

**MeASBO: Do you have any specific expectations from the new governor of Maine?**

**Warren:** My first specific expectation for any governor concerning education is to focus on the outcomes for the kids. Are they learning? Are they leaving school educated? I don't know if [Gov. LePage's proposed 5th year of high school] is the way to go, but we should be looking to education to prepare kids for the job market in addition to preparing them for college. The most important part of that is that you're looking at the individual student. Not everyone will respond to the same recipe.

Community by community, they know best about the demographics in their areas, they know the needs of their kids, and they need to be customizing what they're delivering classroom by classroom in order to have kids go out in the world to be good employees and good citizens. If you're doing that, the benefits of an educated workforce will follow.

One of the things we do in our school is focus on place-based education. That means we use the community to teach the kids. They're learning, through local industries, the local environment and the local economy, about the world, whether it's history or science or math. That applies to school districts everywhere. If you're doing those things, you're orienting kids in the skills that are necessary to work in the industries that are in their town.

That's one of the things the governor was getting at in his 5th-year high school idea. He tried to put some focus on career education. We need to pay attention to what's going on with big firms like Bath Iron Works and Cianbro and places like that. They're having a hard time hiring people prepared to work in our industries.

**MeASBO: Can you pass on any cost-savings or efficiency ideas to your colleagues that you've learned from dealing with the 30-percent higher cost of things when buying from an island?**

**Warren:** We've been forced into such economies because of tight budgets that schools everywhere have learned to be efficient. One of the secrets about island life is that everyone wears a lot of hats. I see that in a lot of school districts, so it is not necessarily unique to us.

Our school has a lot of teachers moving to different teach-

ing positions. We try to play to peoples' strengths. When you do that, you tend to be more efficient because people like what they're doing and they're good at what they're doing. So you spend less time mediating and disciplining and losing productivity in the workplace.

I think in a small town there's a lot more direct responsibility to the taxpayers, especially in our town, where probably 80 percent is self-employed. The whole idea of having a job with benefits as we do in public education is extremely unique. Taxpayers are strongly aware they are paying for your benefits. That keeps everyone more accountable to the public than they might be in a bigger place. Your friends and neighbors know what you cost.

**MeASBO:** We spoke about the governor. What are your expectations from the new commissioner of education, Stephen Bowen?

**Warren:** Same thing. Just be focusing on the outcome for kids and encourage best practices and innovation. I think Commissioner Bowen is doing a really good job with that. A lot of people were nervous because of his limited educational background, but I like his focus on transformation, innovation and best practice. His *Commissioner's Updates* are good at getting the word out about what is being done in other places and passing along ideas; and best yet it's one-stop shopping for information. I love that we finally have that!

I was pleased with the idea of his listening tour and I hope it worked out as well for him as it had the potential to. Any time you're getting out there and letting people be heard, you're gaining an important perspective.

I'm optimistic by nature. Over the last couple years our school has had some difficult changes internally. That has opened up the chance for new things to happen. I think that's the same thing that's going on state-wide and nationwide.

Gov. LePage's actions have forced people to identify and stand up for what's important to them. It's always

good to discuss, negotiate and reevaluate why you support something and if conditions have changed. Change is inevitable and requires adjusting course, not simply taking things for granted.

Clearly, pieces of legislation go through that people feel strongly about. That's not new. I like that part. Some of the contentiousness comes from those innovative and transformational ideas. Hopefully, through the challenges we will develop something better than we've had before because people are having to think a little bit harder and creatively.

**MeASBO: Will the state ever get to 55 percent funding?**

**Warren:** I think it's becoming a false standard these days. Since EPS [Essential Programs and Services] has become the state's official "cost of education" I would rather be focused on making EPS a formula that makes sense and really represents the cost of education as opposed to shooting for a somewhat arbitrary percentage.

EPS was always supposed to be a guideline, not a formula that was tailored to every district. It was never meant to be an official figure to be quoted in all situations. It doesn't include a lot of legitimate costs

of education.

The job percentages alone are often irrelevant to a lot of other small schools. According to EPS, we only need one-third of a librarian, or one-third of a guidance counselor. That's not even educationally responsible in our situation.

We have a library that needs somebody in it to work with all the students

**I think a longer school year — a different school year — is inevitable.**

and teachers at 13 grade levels. If you're going to find someone qualified for that job, the chance to find them at one-third the salary is not realistic. Our "librarian," a certified teacher, employed as a library media specialist, also runs meeting groups on the side, is a team leader and her list of responsibilities is very broad because of her many hats. Her responsibilities are probably a lot broader than a librarian in a larger or suburban school. There is



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no way we could have access to that resource at all if we could only have a third of a person.

Our guidance counselor has to be all things for all people. She's doing all of the social services, all the college placement, the health education and other duties; for K through 12. Working in that wide age range is a whole other ball of wax. It is a very diverse set of needs. In those ways, for us, the EPS formula is totally irrelevant to running a good school.

**MeASBO: If you were in Commissioner Bowen's position, what are the first three things you would do?**

**Warren:** First, sit down with the stakeholders. For the commissioner, it's at a lot of different levels. It's the Department of Education, the Legislature, the communities. Get out there and see what people feel needs to be focus on. It has been really fractured. There have been too many initiatives and not enough focus.

Second, pick a limited number of priorities. Try and develop what are going to be the foundational ideas that will lead to

“I want to see more evidence that [the DOE] is using the [MEDMS] data and learning from it... Good data applied poorly is still ineffective.”

getting other things done. That is one of the reasons why it's good he's focusing on transformation and innovation in schools and trying to draw attention to that. That helps other schools think outside the box.

There is a move around the state to advance standards-based education. Is that something we want to look at as a state? We've signed on to the Common Core. How is that going to be implemented statewide?

Third, it's all about consistency and leadership. Define those priorities and stick with them. Continue the investment in Infinite Campus, MEDMS and assessment data collection so we can have the data to work from. Make sure we're achieving outcomes for kids and being responsible to taxpayers. It's really that straightforward. Make sure the things we're doing are making the impact we intended.

**MeASBO: What are your thoughts on a longer school year?**

**Warren:** It's important that we look at other models. We know kids lose a lot of ground in the summertime. You want to eliminate that. A lot of schools are doing summer programs. We're doing a targeted summer program for kids who are below grade level.

I think a longer school year, a different school year, is inevitable. Clearly a lot of economic and cultural issues need to be addressed. To be able to get kids to have the time to learn the things they need to learn, to be ready for the job market or college, they need to be learning more than they're learning and they won't be able to do it in the same amount of time we're requiring now.

I think we should consider going to school for eight to 12 weeks and having a two-week break; then another eight to 12 weeks, followed by a two-week break. Something like that could be workable. There are a lot of cultural institutions in play, like jobs and day care, that would have to change at the same time. It has to be a gradual shift because so many things are tied into the school schedule.

Many innovative models are being tried in charter and public schools for various reasons. In the next decade or so we will find out the answers to some of those questions.

Another issue concerning a longer school year is that, here in Vinalhaven, if you are a student and play three sports and go on instructional field trips, they're missing 30 to 35 days of school. Kids are required to be in school 175 days and these student-athletes are not getting in those days. Think of the change in the amount of pressure on these kids, and their teachers and parents, if the school schedule reflected the demands of all those competing interests.

People don't realize that that's one of the costs we pay for interscholastic sports. That would be one of the things that would make me in favor of a longer school year.

We could adopt the European club-sport idea, which would be a radical change. Sports there are completely not a part of school. I'm not advocating for it right now, I don't know enough about all the variables, but it's a fascinating conversation to have.

What do we want to accomplish? If we want to educate the kids for the 21st century, college, the job market, our economy, then we need to focus on the educational responsibilities of schools.

**MeASBO: What sort of impact do you foresee MeASBO members having on the future of Maine education?**

**Warren:** Huge. We bring the financial, human resource, operational, and often facility-management expertise to Maine schools. We're a highly diverse and skilled group of managers and educators. One of the things I respect the most about my colleagues in MeASBO is that these folks are passionately committed to education and to creating learning communities. They've chosen to bring their business skills to the educational environment in order to make a difference in the lives of kids and in their communities and they're all very cognizant of their responsibilities to our taxpayers. We lucky to have every one of them!

I hope to see many of them at the table as we build the future of education in Maine.

**MeASBO: The consolidation hasn't affected island school systems like yours. You must feel a sense of relief that you're excluded.**

**Warren:** That's a perfect example of something that just should not have been applied to islands. If Vinalhaven had been forced to consolidate, say, with Rockland, what would have happened in the assessment process, because of state valuation, was that about \$1 million or more of Vinalhaven property tax money would have gone into the new consolidated RSU.

If we were reasonably adjacent to another community, I wouldn't have a problem with my tax dollars going to the school in the town next door. In our situation there could never have been educational parity for our students or for our taxpayers. It never made sense in my mind to send Vinalhaven tax dollars ashore.

My hope for consolidation was that those conversations would take place in those communities and in places where they really could take the region's money and spend it responsibly for all the kids in that region, that's what you would do.

I'm sure there were situations where it was not more cost-effective to bus kids, however many miles, just to get them into a regional school. I'm hopeful that in those situations there were decisions, especially in rural Maine, to allow a small school to continue to exist. That would be more fiscally responsible. I'm a believer in community schools. Small schools need to be held accountable for student achievement and receive equitable funding — given care and community commitment they can succeed as well as any other school — often better.

It seems from things I heard from my colleagues that the places that could have benefited from consolidation are places like Lewiston-and-Auburn, Waterville- and-Winslow, Bangor-and-Brewer. Those are the sort of places where you could find economy of scale. For small community schools those saving, and educational parity, is a whole different ball of wax.

**MeASBO: But Lewiston-and-Auburn, Waterville- and-Winslow, Bangor-and- Brewer are all standing alone.**

**Warren:** That, to me, is inefficient. Waterville and Winslow could share an administrative and operational structure and probably save money doing it. Consolidate the city schools and let the outlying schools they had been connected to become an RSU, perhaps. I know they looked into it, and

I guess there were some places they couldn't save money or maybe they were already doing it. Many of those cities explored things like purchasing cooperatives and sharing administrators or operations in their areas long before the consolidation bill came along.

**MeASBO: What has been the single most helpful change in school business in the past few years?**

**Warren:** I think the transition to MEDMS was painful but the online filing of data is critical. It's a real labor-saving device for me. It's also more consistent. When I first started my job in 1998 I came from bank operations and I was astounded at the lack of standardized online filing of data. We had been doing it in banking for years!

In education then, the things people reported on certain lines varied widely. There was a lot of room for interpretation. There still is some, but it has gotten a lot less diverse. If the state is to be making data-based decisions, they have to have true data. We've made a lot of progress that way.

In the final equation I want to see more evidence that they are using the data and learning from it. I don't think that's happening very broadly yet and good data applied in adequately is still ineffective.

**MeASBO: Would you like to see a stronger or weaker Maine Department of Education, with the local school units being more or less autonomous from state control?**

**Warren:** I'd like to see a stronger DOE and more autonomy locally. There are functions that need to be performed at the state level, a broad outline of standards for instruction; a specific set of expectations for financial reporting; and a broad set of goals for professional development for teachers and school staff. After you do that, give the money to the school districts in a fair and equitable way and leave them alone and let innovation happen.



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The local districts usually know what to do. If you have consistent ways to identify low-performing districts, you know to help them. If you have consistent ways of identifying high-performing districts, you know where the best practices are.

But if you are constantly telling people how to do things and constantly hamstringing them with regulations, you're stifling creativity and innovation in tackling the problems that are happening at the local level.

The problems are diverse. Lewiston-Auburn's issues are not the same as Vinalhaven's. There's a lot of geographic diversity that affects the social environment in schools and it needs to be addressed in the way they deliver education in that community. Educators at the local schools need the skills and the autonomy to make those decisions. The state can help ensure the skills are in place and the results follow. Let the educators determine the delivery — teaching is an art and a science.

#### **MeASBO: Are you going to continue MeASBO's Mentors and Experts Program?**

**Warren:** The intent is really important. I think most of that collaboration is happening informally. I think as we develop the certification program more, we may find ourselves having individual business managers serve as instructors for some of those components of the program. That may be a way for people who are comfortable with their expertise who want to share it. I'm sure there are other ways to communicate with each other that open up the pipeline for collaborations with people who are in situations where they need help.

There's a wide variety of skills people have to bring to the table that others may not even realize. I don't think people realize when I'm talking budget or minimum receiver funding that I'm also a Level II Certified Building Operator and can help with the building controls question, too, and believe

I'm not alone, we school business officials are a diversely talented crowd!

As we explore what we're working with the web site, we will have an expert exchange where we can do things similarly to what we done with the list-serve but in a more targeted environment.

We can learn from the *Commissioner's Update*, which gives you links to things you need to know in a way that's easy to access and with varied choices for delivery. I'd love to see us send something to our members periodically that summarizes the big need-to-know issues for them and reminds them of the resources, like mentors, that are available to them daily.

#### **MeASBO: When you're not working, how do you fill your time?**

**Warren:** Hanging out with my kids, helping out with their activities. My son Trey is 17 and just got done playing Nathan Detroit in our school's production of *Guys and Dolls*. He will be a senior next year.

My daughter Lily just turned 10 and is going into the 5<sup>th</sup> grade next year. Her grade level just got done doing *Suessical!* I am also taking care of my Mom. I'm one of the sandwich generation. My mom is 84 and lives alone, so I'm traveling back and forth every Friday or Saturday to the mainland to do her shopping & visit.

My other sideline is economic development. This last year I was honored to be a member of the Sigma class of Leadership Maine. It was an awesome experience. I'm doing a lot of volunteering this year with the town of Vinalhaven. Next year I'll be advising an Island Institute fellow who's coming to Vinalhaven for a year or two to work with the town and the Chamber of Commerce to update the town's comprehensive plan and identify opportunities for economic development. ...

## ASBO Int'l Conference promises loads of help

*Continued from page 6*  
mote education reform.

Getting the conference moving, at 9:30 a.m. Sept. 17, will be Medina, whose *Brain Rules: 12 Principles for Surviving and Thriving at Work, Home, and School* made the New York Times bestseller list.

A brain scientist, Medina will open people's minds regarding how brain functions have major implications for the way we work and design and run our schools.

The closing general session, at 11:30 a.m. Monday, Sept. 19, will show attendees how to tap into the creativity and unique talents that drive their best performance.

Incorporating her theater background and communications experience, Labalme shares specific tools to catapult



*Dr. John Medina*

communications and teamwork skills to a new level.

According to Labalme, "By understanding how your hobbies and passions can improve collaboration and communication in the workplace, you will gain new insights into how your team can be more productive."

ASBO International's Itinerary Planner on its web site ([www.asbointl.org](http://www.asbointl.org)) can help school business managers search the 2011 session listings online, choose their favorites, and send their schedule — complete with room numbers — to their Outlook account and PDA.

They can search by topic, date, or speaker to find the professional development that meets their needs, or browse the complete list for sessions related to a particular track.

The deadline for early-bird registration is July 29. ...



*Victoria Labalme*

# School-based Medicaid Program faces major changes in Maine

By Catherine Wood

 Almost since its inception in 1995, the School-Based Rehabilitative Services (SBRS) Program in Maine has been criticized for its bundled-rate billing method.

It is important to recognize and clearly separate the school-based policy from the school-based billing methodology.

The underlying principles of the SBRS policy were clearly rooted in the federal Medicaid statutes and remain so today. However, Maine has experienced scrutiny at the federal level over the bundled-rate billing method and has chosen to change the SBRS program to a fee-for-service billing method in conjunction with implementation of the new MIMHS payment system set for Aug. 1.

On Jan. 5, 2010, the Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) proposed repeal of Section 104, School Based Rehabilitative Services. Section 104 governed the majority of school-based Medicaid reimbursements for health-related services delivered in the school setting pursuant to a child's Individual Education Program (IEP). That repeal was finalized on March 5.

Effective upon MIMHS implementation, Occupational Therapy Services will be reimbursed through Section 68 of the MaineCare Benefits Manual, while Physical Therapy will be reimbursed through Section 85 of the manual; Speech/Language Therapy through Section 109; Personal Care Services and Private Duty Nursing through Section 96; and Behavioral Support Services through Section 65 and/or Section 28.

DHHS proposed repeal of Section 41, Day Treatment Services, on March 4. But that repeal has not been finalized. DHHS intends for the repeal to be effective as of the MIMHS implementation date. As stated above under SBRS, Behavioral Health Services will be reimbursed through Section 65 and/or Section 28 of the manual.

DHHS has also proposed rulemaking in Sections 68, 85 and 109 to add language to regulations that could help schools seek federal reimbursements under the new sections.

In the coming months, Maine schools will face many challenges as they digest the changes to the Medicaid regulations. Among them are:

- Implementation of new regulations at the district and school level.
- Administrators and service providers must attend

regional training sessions to digest the nuances of implementing school-based Medicaid in six sections of the MaineCare Manual. Previously, districts were required to know two sections of the MaineCare manual in order to seek reimbursement.

- Incorporation of new regulatory requirements into IEPs and other required "plans."

- Each section of the MaineCare Manual has different "plan" requirements. As districts incorporate the new policies into their procedures, they will require consultation and support to ensure they are meeting all regulatory mandates.

- Submission of service logs as claims to DHHS to receive Medicaid reimbursement for medically necessary therapies delivered in the school-based setting.

- A fee-for-service billing method can help ensure that services are delivered to students as ordered on the IEP.

In order for this statement to become a reality, service providers must be provided with a user-friendly way to log their services as they occur in real time.

Service providers are focused on the students they serve. They will require a system that allows them to document their services and move on with their day.

- Database management of forms.

School districts will be billing in six different sections of the MaineCare Manual. It is critical that the Medicaid administrator at the district level understand the program and be able to manage the program with a database. Maine will no longer be able to manage this many sections using a paper system.

- District reporting.

As the school districts of Maine move to a fee-for-service program, it will be critical for the district administrators to monitor their Medicaid reimbursements closely.

During the last several months, there have been many estimates of whether schools will be affected financially by this regulatory change.

One thing is clear: school districts will need to closely monitor their Medicaid program. Superintendents and school business officials will want to know whether they are on target to receive the same amount as last year.

In order for the program to grow stronger in Maine, officials must look deeper than the overall dollars returned to service provider use. These reports will reveal who needs more training and expand the program. •••

*Catherine Wood, vice president of educational integration for Maine State Billing, holds a master's degree in education.*

# Grant writing: A tool to vast funding

## *Building a broader base of education dollars*

By Melissa L. Cilley

**M**ationwide, the funding picture for schools is changing.

California's education budget took a \$17-billion hit over the past two years and it isn't finished; the Golden State is slated to cut another \$2.4 billion this year.

Kansas City, Mo., projects the closing of nearly half its public schools to meet its budgetary constraints.

The city of Detroit is employing a similar strategy with its schools.

In Maine, general purpose aid for FY11 is reported as \$27 million less than FY10, even with a \$25-million budget restoration. And general purpose aid for FY 12 is projected to be \$60 million less than FY 11.

The current state of education funding poses challenges for which many school leaders may feel woefully unprepared. Performance expectations are increasing while resources diminish. Yet, a small shard of light shines through the clouds of budgetary strife for some educators: More money is available for those who know where and how to get it.

Sources say federal incentive programs will delay the full impact of budgetary cuts until about 2014. By that time, a school can be up and running with an expanded approach to education funding. And, should you commit to this expanded approach, you may even see an increase in dollars and a broader base for your education budget as early as next year.

Grants can supplement budgetary shortfalls in public schools. So learning the basics of aggressive grant writing is crucial.

### **Grant Writing in Schools Today**

Many schools currently seek isolated grants from corporations and other funding entities. It is not uncommon to hear about local schools receiving special donations from companies like Hannaford and L.L. Bean.

These donations are important additions to any school that keeps programs afloat or permits special acquisitions. But most schools are completely unaware of the vast number of other grant-makers who are willing and able to give significant allocations to public schools.

Virtually every educational leader has had the experience of applying for a grant and, chances are, every one of them

views that task as tedious. Still, grant writing is necessary as it provides critical relief for shrinking education budgets.

### **Grant Pool Is Deep**

What many educational leaders may not know is that most schools have barely skimmed the surface of the funding pool.

For example, most schools write at least one grant application seeking formula funds from the U.S. Department of Education. Writing a formula grant takes most educators less than eight hours, and schools are generally rewarded for their grant-writing efforts by garnering thousands of dollars for such a modest amount of work.

But assume you also apply for five *competitive* grants from five other governmental agencies — and even one gets funded. You have just doubled your grant-writing success (and potentially your funding) for less than one week's work.



*Melissa L. Cilley*

### **Developing Capacity**

Grant writing is a skill that can be developed through practice, training and consultation with an experienced

grant writer. While it is true that most grants are competitive and there is no guaranteed payoff, there are a few simple guidelines to make the most of grant-writing efforts.

- Be organized. Once you identify a grant you intend to write, calendar the date it is due to the funder and all of the components you will need to include. Your application must be on time and complete for consideration.

- Be thorough. Grant applications have very specific directions. Follow them to the letter. If you are unclear about any aspect of the application, contact the funder. Contacting the funder demonstrates your interest and conscientious observation of their requirements. With one communication, you will have made the impression that, should they fund you, you will use their money wisely.

- Be clear. A well-written grant is far more likely to be funded than a vague, poorly written abstraction. Take the time to get it right. Use fresh language — no clichés or over-used jargon. Get advice on whether your application meets the criteria set out by the funder. You need to be sure that you clearly express what you intend to do, how you intend to do it, how you will measure your success, and exactly how

**‘What many educational leaders may not know is that most schools have barely skimmed the surface of the funding pool.’**

you will spend their money should you receive the grant.

- Be efficient. You must demonstrate that the goals you have set for your project are measurable so they will know you have used their money wisely. Funders are particularly interested if you can design a strategy to spend less than your competitors while producing the same or better outcomes. This may mean that you share the load with other schools and/or non-profits.

Grantmakers are very attracted to collaboration. Call together a group of stakeholders who share an interest in your project. Together, you may find a completely new approach.

- Be visionary. Think about projects you are currently doing that you might do differently. Or consider successful projects you might do with different groups in a different area. Again, think collaboration and innovation for the greatest access to new pockets of funding.

### Identifying potential grants

So, where is all of this money hiding?

Several resources are available to schools that are often untapped or underappreciated for the amount of assistance they can offer.

First, don't assume that the U.S. Department of Education is your only avenue to pursue federal dollars. Other governmental agencies like the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services and even the U.S. Department of Justice are worth investigating for possible funding. Numerous independent federal agencies also provide funding.

Next, take another look at your local corporations. Corporations are most likely to fund schools in their own communities, so closely examine those in your area. Be particularly mindful of new arrivals as economic incentives in Maine invite corporate growth.

A new company in your community will be looking for opportunities to build its reputation and collateral; a sizable grant to the local school department may provide the perfect opportunity.

Finally, don't forget about local, regional and national foundations.

Grant applications for these groups are often the least cumbersome to prepare and can be the most lucrative.

Consider building a "grant portfolio" for each concept, project, or acquisition you wish to fund. Stock it with the key elements of a grant application. Then start writing.

Your school can generate multiple applications based on one portfolio. If you don't get funded the first time you apply, try again. The more you apply, the better you will become at identifying the key components funders seek. The better you become at writing a quality grant, the more money you will procure.

### Getting started

The first critical step in moving toward a broader funding base is a commitment to aggressive grant writing. This does not necessarily mean you need to hire a grant writer. However, it almost certainly means dedicating resources toward enhancing grant-writing efforts.

Identify several people within the school system who excel in clear, concise, descriptive writing. Invest in a modest training on grant writing. Then begin your research on funding available to your school.

Numerous websites are dedicated to funding research. The U.S. Congressional offices are a helpful resource in identifying federal grant opportunities. Corporations often have their grants listed on the homepage of their website.

The links listed below should provide some direction:

√ **Federal Grants:** [www.grants.gov](http://www.grants.gov)

This is the website for accessing all federal grant information. You can view funding opportunities from any federal agencies without registering. It is also the portal for applying for federal grants and submitting applications electronically.

√ **Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance:** [www.cfda.gov](http://www.cfda.gov)

Every federal funding opportunity is assigned a CFDA number for identification purposes. At this site, you can find a complete catalog of these opportunities.

√ **Foundation Center:** [www.foundationcenter.org](http://www.foundationcenter.org)

This is a valuable resource for exploring grant opportunities from foundations.

Keep in mind that aggressive grant writing and the broader funding base it should generate are long-term goals. Do not expect to see a significant boost to the budget right away. Much of successful grant writing comes from practice, training and consultation.

Additionally, the impact of collaborative relationship-building cannot be underestimated.

But as educational leaders in Maine direct their focus more intently toward innovative teaching practices, Maine schools are perfectly poised to explore new ways of funding those practices. Aggressive grant writing can enhance their ability to provide a quality education. •••

*Melissa L. Cilley, an associate with Drummond Woodsum when she wrote this article, is now 1st Executive Director of the Susan L. Curtis Foundation in Portland. She brings a decade of non-profit experience to the firm.*

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## 19th Tri-State conclave proves to be 'best ever'

*Continued from page 5*

Communications Consulting, recommended maximizing revenues by using E-Rate, a federally subsidized program that allows school districts to receive government subsidy of 40 to 90 percent for their total internet costs.

Stan Faryniarz, managing consultant with La Capra Associates, displayed charts of trends explaining when schools should lock in energy contracts, or when it is clearly not the time to do so.

Speaking on The Economic Outlook for Northern New England, Dennis Delay, deputy director of the New Hampshire Center for Public Policy Studies, told attendees that the economy is not as bleak as a year ago.

Frederick said that when Delay was done, "A number of Vermonters said, "Thank God, we're in Vermont,"

which has not suffered as badly as

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## Advertisers Index

### Architectural Services

Harriman Associates.....3

### Banking

Bangor Savings .....8  
TD Bank.....inside front cover

### Building Technologies

Siemens.....4

### Buses and Bus Parts

O'Connor..... 19

### Dental Insurance

Northeast Delta Dental ..... 6

### Energy Procurement

Maine Power Options .....9

### Engineering – Full Service

Allied Engineering, Inc..... 15

### Fund Accounting Software

Tyler Technologies/ADS ....12-13

### Investment Services

Gorham Savings Bank.....  
inside back cover

### Leasing/All-Purpose

Maine Municipal Bond Bank...17

### Modular Buildings

Schiavi Leasing Corp..back cover

### Office Equipment/Technology

Océ North America ..... 16

### Retirement Planning

Maine PERS .....5

### Student Routing & Transport

Transfinder ..... 1

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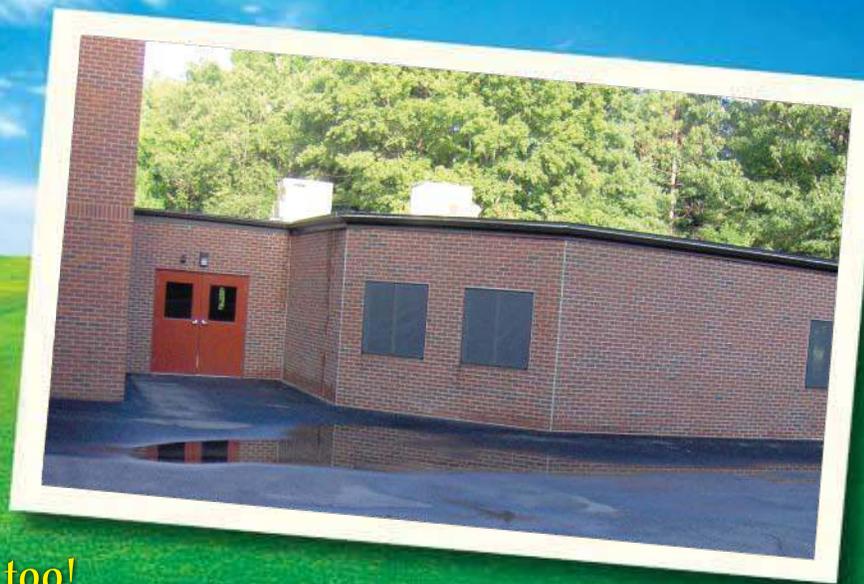
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