

MeASBO

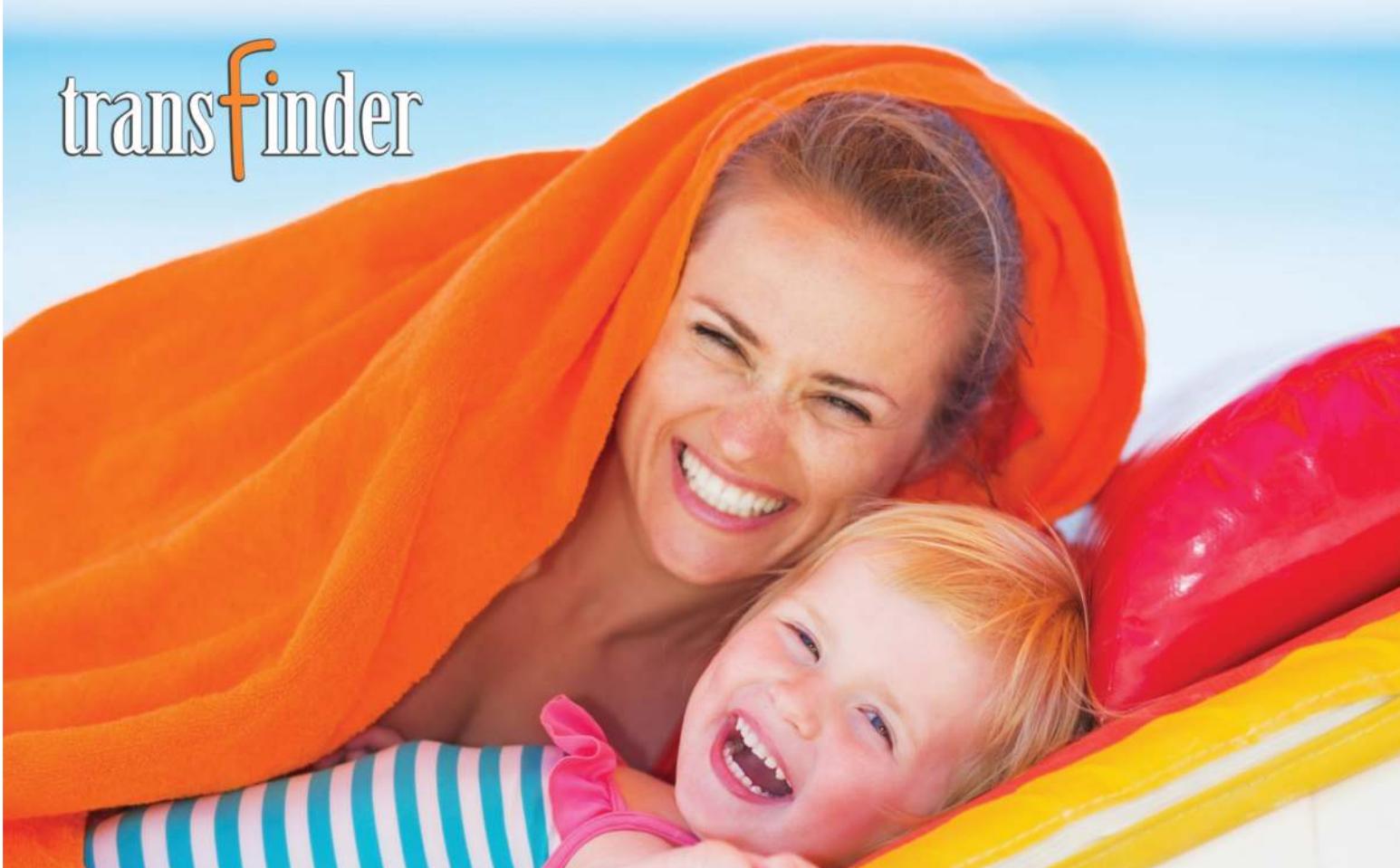
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Summer 2017

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INSIDE MeASBO

FEATURES



Member Profile

Bobbi Avery continues to work her way into new responsibilities as she makes her mark as COO and director of financial services at RSU #18 in Oakland.

10 Not Your Parents' Cafeteria

Freeport High School's café atmosphere and revamped food court prove you can attract "customers" and turn a profit.



20 Cash Flow

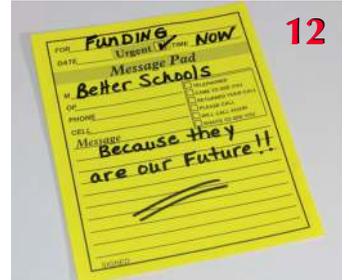


How much can a school district borrow? Better check the IRS rules and regulations before "turning on the tap."

COVER STORY

Grants for Regional Initiatives

Ten school districts and nearly 100 towns win \$4 million in grants that are expected to return sixfold over the first five years. The big winners: programs educating challenged and at-risk students.



NEWS

Tri-State ASBO

25th annual conference wins accolades from Maine ASBO members who attended the Vermont conclave.

Technical Grants

The Maine DOE proposes greater flexibility in dealing out technical grants.

Summer Training

Maine sets July and August dates around the state for half-day training sessions in NEO and Synergy.

12

3

4

19

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18

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Ready to transfer the MeASBO reins



Hello Everyone,

The school year is almost over and we are winding up for our busy summer of prepping and dealing with the auditor. I hope everyone's budgets have passed without issue.

This is my last letter as president and I am happy to transfer the reins to Luci Milewski's very capable hands.

I had the pleasure of attending the Tri-State ASBO Conference in Burlington, Vt., this year. It was great to explore the city of Burlington and the Shelburne Museum, which is fascinating — an amazing collection of historic buildings and gardens, each building housing a different exhibit or collection. One was filled with antique furniture, another with antique quilts, a third one contained antique toys.

There was a huge horseshoe-shaped, two-story barn that housed all types of sleds and carriages. Another horseshoe-shaped building was specifically designed to showcase the hand-carved miniature circus parade, which stretches over 500 feet.

There was even a steamboat and lighthouse on the property which I didn't get to visit because I ran out of time. The day at the Shelburne Museum ended with a ride on the carousel and a BBQ dinner in the basement of the round barn.



Cathy Messmer

I would love to go back to both Burlington and the Shelburne Museum to spend some more time and do some more exploring.

As usual, the conference was very educational and informative and a great way to meet other school business officials to commiserate with.

The sessions that stood out for me were: Pietro Lynn, presenting an update about the Fair Labor Standards Act; Jon Wortmann and his presentation on communication challenges in the workplace; and the two keynote speakers on Friday morning, Meagan Johnson and Dan Thurmon. Meagan and Dan were both very entertaining and thought-provoking.

I came away from the Tri-State Annual Conference tired but happy because of time well spent.

This summer the MeASBO Executive Committee will get together to plan our meetings for the new school year. We will also be planning how to make our website more useful for our members. Our goal is to make it easier to use and have resources to assist members perform their jobs better.

Thank you all for your attendance and support during this school year. I hope you all have a quiet and productive summer and I will see you next year at our MeASBO meetings.

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25th Tri-State Conference wins accolades

BURLINGTON, Vt. — The “strongest group of Tri-State Conference presenters I have seen in the 25 years” is how St. George Municipal School Unit Business Manager Scott Vaitones saw the 25th annual Tri-State ASBO Conference held here in May.

A MeASBO past president, Vaitones said the most helpful suggestion he you heard was to figure out what is getting in the way of moving something forward and address it.

Luci Milewski, business manager at East Millinocket School Department, said the most profound comment she heared came from speaker Dan Thurmon.

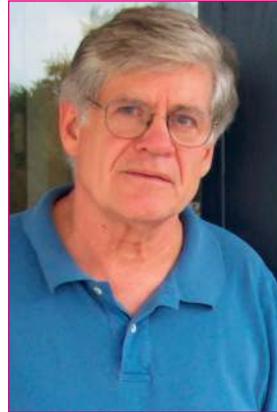
Speaking on “Off Balance on Purpose,” Thurmon told attendees that trying to maintain a balance only results in you staying in one place.

“If you want a change if you want to move forward, if you want to grow or challenge yourself, you have to purposely be off-balance; otherwise, you aren’t going to go anywhere,” Milewski learned.

Vaitones was also impressed by Thurman who, he said, recommended “lean into a problem, don’t duck it if you really want to solve or resolve it.”

Vaitones and Milewski were both impressed by Jon Wortmann, who spoke on “Brain Health.”

An engaging speaker, Wortman offered thoughtful insights to how the human brain works,” Milewski said, adding, “With personal stories and humor, he offers skills for communication and stress management that we all can employ. In one session, he offered 15 ways to improve our brain health. In another he



‘Lean into a problem, don’t duck it if you really want to solve or resolve it.’
— Scott Vaitones, business manager St. Georges Municipal School Unit

offered eight communication skills that create clarity and trust.”

Meagan Johnson’s “Zap the Gap” presentation also drew praise from Milewski.

Johnson, she said, discussed the differences – and similarities – of the multiple generations in the workforce today. Fifty years ago, the complaints that people had about the “younger generation” of baby boomers are the same complaints that we have about today’s “younger generation” of millennials.

“Our own restrictive mindsets need to be challenged so that we can embrace what the younger generation has to offer so that we can all succeed,” Milewski recounted Johnson saying.

Speaking to the camaraderie of the Tri-State Conferences over the years, Vaitones said the most profound comment he heard was “Great to see you!” •••

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Greater Technology Grant Flexibility Proposed

The MAine Department of Education (DOE) announced on March 15 that many of the schools ending their 2013 MLTI participation in June would be eligible for grants to continue providing 1:1 mobile computer devices to their students and staff.

The grants are available for:

- Students and staff in 7th and 8th grades, where the school did not refresh its devices in 2016 students;
- High school staff in schools where students are provided 1:1 mobile devices at local expense, provided their MLTI participation ends in June; and
- High school staff in schools that have not participated in MLTI before, if they provide 1:1 mobile devices for their students at local expense.

The prior announcement focused on grants to continue 1:1 device programs, which is the intent of the program.

In response to inquiries from technology directors and schools that wish to pursue more innovative approaches to achieving the same objectives as a 1:1 program, the DOE is refining its guidance.

It is expanding the types of educational

technology that can be funded by the grants.

The DOE is seeking a statutory change that will allow more flexible use of these grant funds.

Pending that change, DOE will fund 1:1 programs as well as programs that do not provide devices on a 1:1 basis.

The focus of the programs must be on integrating technology into the classroom, for the purpose of enhancing student outcomes, and may include hardware, software, educational materials and support for educators in the use of technology in teaching.

Schools will be asked to explain how student learning will be enhanced by the program, and how they will measure that enhancement.

Eligible schools may apply for the 1:1 program or the alternate program (not limited to 1:1). If the statutory change needed to authorize use of funds for the alternate program is not approved, those schools may re-apply for a grant for a 1:1 program.

Application materials are posted on the MLTI website. For additional informa-

tion, officials may contact MLTI Project Manager Deb Friedman at 624-6834 or deborah.friedman@maine.gov.

Maine DOE replaces its reporting calendar

The Maine Department of Education (DOE) has officially replaced its Reporting Calendar with the Data, Collections & Reporting (DC&R) DC&R calendar in NEO.

This module, which began April 1, is a one-stop shop for all organizations to go to see what report is required and when, and to get the most up-to-date version of a form.

DOE staff have been submitting reports to be loaded to the module with information on when the report is due, instructions and links for completing the reports, as well as contact information from within the department.

School districts and the public can now see reports that are due and past due, if applicable.

There is an indicator as to whether submitting the report has an impact on funding as well as a tab for "As Needed" reports, such as IEP forms, where districts can have access to the most up-to-date forms they need in one place.

The Helpdesk is in the process of loading all DOE reports.

For more information, officials may contact the Data Systems Helpdesk at 624-6896, or medms.helpdesk@maine.gov.

MeASBO meetings

MeASBO's Executive Committee is meeting on July 28, during which members will set the organization's meeting dates for the school year 2017-18.

To provide input, contact any of the officers of Executive Committee members shown on the leadership page (23) in the magazine.



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Bobbi Avery keeps working herself “into” new jobs at RSU #18

By Mark Leslie

From stay-at-home mom to chief operating officer and director of financial services for a 2,800-student school district, Bobbi Avery’s multi-tasking career speaks volumes to: focus, determination, confidence and being a huge proponent of personal and professional growth.

“It doesn’t matter if you’re at the beginning, middle or end of your career, as long as you’re constantly watching and allowing yourself to be mentored by somebody with a little more knowledge,” Avery says from her RSU #18 office in Oakland. “I want to be around those people because that’s how I can become better myself.”

And help those on her staff do the same.

One of the district’s three goals this year was to grow and develop staff, and Superintendent Gary Smith says, “I see that in Bobbi all the time. She’s always encouraging and pushing her staff to achieve more.”

Smith, himself a former school business manager in Winslow and past president of MeASBO, says, “A successful superintendent has a successful business manager. With Bobbi in that seat, we at RSU 18, definitely have that.”

“I use the term ‘Work yourself out of a job,’” Smith adds. “Well, Bobbi came here as business manager and as I worked with her and saw her capabilities, I said, ‘You’re doing great here, so how about handling facilities, grounds, custodial and maintenance?’ ‘You’re doing pretty good there, how about adding transportation?’ Then it was ‘How about nutrition?’

“Ultimately a lot of those positions had reported directly to me. But since I was going to get more involved in the educational side of things, I was swamped. Bobbi assumed those duties and responsibilities very nicely.”

A numbers wonk, Avery says, “I knew I’d do a good job at this. I love it. I love numbers.”

Indeed, she had flown through accounting courses at Mexico High School (now Mountain Valley), where she graduated in 1988 before earning an undergraduate degree in accounting at Husson College in 2005 and a MBA from



RSU #18 Superintendent Gary Smith, a former president of MeASBO, appreciates working with the multi-skilled Bobbi Avery, chief operating officer for the Oakland-headquartered district.

Norwich University in Vermont in 2010.

Avery seems to ride a wave of positivity with a certain degree of finesse and aplomb, no matter what “life” may throw in her way.

Raising three children while attending college? No problem. Adding a full-time job while earning an advanced degree as those children enter their teenage years? Ditto.

“It was an awesome experience for all of us,” Avery says with a laugh about her and her three children.

A stickler for plans — be they three-, five-, or seven-year — Avery has learned to be nothing if not flexible.

Changing Career Paths

While still finishing her MBA studies and eyeing a career with the U.S. Department of Defense in Washington, D.C., in 2009, she was given a completely different opportunity: a position as accounting coordinator for Portland Public Schools, working with Business Manager Herb Hopkins to straighten out a financial mess in the state’s biggest school system.

A year later, her MBA in her pocket and any DoD plans in the rearview mirror, Avery was promoted to comptroller of Portland Schools.

Indeed, another year later a “role reversal” put Avery’s career in schools in full ascension and she has never looked back, never

second-guessed the importance of her position.

“If you look at the end-user, the student, it’s what we do on the administration side that contributes to all our students and their lives, their futures,” Avery says. “We’re contributing to that. We may not be in the classroom educating them — and that is the most critical piece to all of them — but we are here to support the teachers. That’s what fires me up. I remind my staff that we’re here to support those experts in shaping every student’s future.”

“Shaping.” It’s an integral element in Avery’s life. Being shaped and helping to shape others, that is.

It began with Courtney Prentiss, then-superintendent at Mexico High School whose “warmth and positivity helped send me in the right direction.”

I continued with Hopkins and now with Smith, “who has shaped me, mentored me and helped me grow not just professionally but personally.”

Smith, Avery says, “gets it. He has so much wealth of knowledge, not just in school finance but personal knowledge.

“I’m a very black-and-white person and an accountant,” Avery adds, but Smith has taught her “to view situations and the world with the possibility of having some gray” and with the importance of “slowing down and really deliberating. It’s okay to take 24 or 48 hours to think about something. It’s invaluable.”

That is not taught in school, she says adding, “It comes from experience, with working with people you trust and value. If you’re smart you watch them and that’s what I’ve done.”

The growth is a two-way street, Avery says.

“I love working with people, providing leadership, mentoring

Bobbi came here as business manager and as I worked with her and saw her capabilities, I said, ‘You’re doing great here, so how about handling facilities, grounds, custodial and maintenance?’ ‘You’re doing pretty good there, how about adding transportation?’ Then it was ‘How about nutrition?’
— Superintendent Gary Smith

and shaping people... For me, the job is not just showing up and providing eight, or 12, or 14 hours of service to an organization. It’s about working with people, developing those relationships, and at the same time I’m developing them, they’re developing me.”

Smith attests to the “two-way street.”

As a former business manager, Smith was comfortable, even obsessive, in his ways of preparing budgets. But Avery got up to speed so much that “This year, I finally and totally put lock, stock and barrel in Bobbi’s work and used that as my tools for the budget,” he says. “I’m a bit neurotic about this, so that says a lot about what Bobbi has done and the trust in our relationship and her work being right and accurate.”

Avery, Smith says, “loves process improvement. She loves for me to give her a problem, some parameters and tell her, ‘Go do it.’

“She’s really good with data analysis. We’ve been working together so long, you know what the other person is thinking. It’s either, I say, ‘This is what I need’ and I hardly have to say it, or even before I ask for it, she’s handing it to me.”

Among Avery’s tasks is contract negotiations, a fact proven by the recent teacher talks which Smith described as “unbelievably successful.”

Reorganized Central Office

In 2015 Smith, whose background includes a position as director of Enterprise Resource Planning Systems at SAPPI, reorganized RSU #18’s central office as if it were a private business. And Avery’s COO title reflects that mentality.

The reasoning goes: schools are big businesses — just a very unique kind of business. In a lot of towns they’re the biggest business.

RSU #18 encompasses eight schools and 583 employees for its 2,800 students. Running the system requires excellent communication and cooperation.

“Our district has a very high bar and there’s a lot of expectations,” Avery says. “We operate like a business. We hold folks accountable. We expect continuous growth and process improvement. We do things very collaboratively.”

To Avery, that collegial atmosphere means she leads but does not micro-manage.

q“It’s not about demanding and dictating. It’s about knowing your staff, how to tap into and maximize their strengths, to expect and encourage them to flourish and grow, so that at the end of the day they feel satisfied in the work they’ve given for

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‘ We may not be in the classroom educating them [students] ... but we are here to support the teachers. That’s what fires me up. I remind my staff that we’re here to support those experts in shaping every student’s future... I love working with people, providing leadership, mentoring and shaping people.’
— Bobbi Avery

those eight hours.

“My staff is fantastic. I cannot wear the hats I wear without them doing what they do,” she adds. “I think you can have a person wear many hats and not be successful because they don’t have a strong support system. I have that system in every department.”

She hopes that support for her MeASBO colleagues.

“I think the average person doesn’t understand how hard every single business manager in this state works, how many hours we put in, how much effort, the lengths we go to, the demands from different agencies. We put in a lot of hours and effort, and a lot of the compliance falls in our laps... Superintendents will say, ‘That’s my job,’ but the business manager really makes sure that it happens.”

If Avery could change one thing in the world of school finance — that is, besides funding — it would be to end contention between local government and school districts.

“It would be wonderful, if I could wave a magic wand,” she says. “I’d get us all on the same page, so that we’d all respect and understand each other’s positions.

“I understand this is pie-in-the-sky thinking, but I’m a taxpayer, too. I totally get what folks are saying. I’m not retired yet, but I did have three children in the public school system and I know the importance of this and I wish we could all agree that these kids are our future, our communities’ future.

“We don’t want taxes to go up, but there are things that have to happen to support our future. To me, a big part of that is providing our students what they need to get the best education they can have.”

Personally, she has witnessed that success with her children.

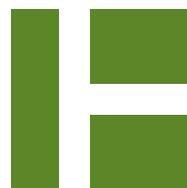
Jordan, 25, works at Spurwink School in Portland. Ryan, 21, just graduated from St. Joseph’s College and is working in finance in Portland. And Nick, 20, is attending Thomas College and will be senior in the fall.

Meanwhile, she lives in Hallowell with her husband, Troy Avery, an eye doctor at Central Maine Eye Care in Lewiston. And her spare time is spent with that family.

“They’re all adults and have their own lives,” she says. “I’m very blessed that they still include me in all they do. We’re constantly doing things together.”

At work, an important element to life for the ever-planning Avery is “knowing when your job is done.”

“At RSU 18 my job is not complete,” she says. “You know when it’s done. I have a lot more to provide, a lot more to give and, most importantly, I absolutely love what I do.” ...



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With dry economic times, alternative revenue sources a solution



Crafts Cars of Lisbon Falls has offered a vehicle for raffle to benefit the high school's sophomore classes since 2006. Sold for 1 for \$5 or 3 for \$10, the raffle tickets are available at the dealership and annual Moxie Festival, with 100 percent of the proceeds going directly to the students.

Looking for innovative revenue sources, school districts across the country, are tapping into the lucrative idea of “naming rights” for their stadiums, athletic fields, gymnasiums, etc. Investigating this realm of thought reveals a number of other possibilities in this cash-strapped time.

Among the school-based commercial activities, wherein a business exchanges fiscal or in-kind resources for address to students and staff, are:

- Exclusive agreements in which districts grant businesses exclusive right to sell or promote their products or services. Examples include vending contracts and “pouring rights” agreements.

A number of school districts once sold these “pouring rights” for carbonated beverages at a good profit, but in the zealous move to “not endorse” these products they have **remove** all such products. Perhaps it is time to rethink this notion? 

- Sponsorship of programs and activities. Here, businesses associate their name with a school event like an athletic contest or play and, in exchange, pay for or subsidize the event. Advertising with banners and handouts is carried out during the event.

Think of the Thanksgiving Day football game between two rivals: “Supermarket X’s Portland-South Portland Turkey Bowl.”

- Appropriation of space. In this case, a district allocates space in its school or schools to businesses to display their logo or

advertisements.

Imagine logos on scoreboards at football stadiums, baseball parks, etc., and even on buses, rooftops and textbook covers. Imagine a Best Buy screen saver on all the school computers.

The New York Times reported that one Texas school district raised several hundred thousand dollars by selling advertising space on its buses and web page.

- Incentive programs. This scenario has businesses giving districts fiscal or in-kind resources, like pizzas, when school community members perform a given task. Examples include students, staff and their families collecting vendor-specific product labels or receipts.

Think of the Campbell Soup label collections a couple years ago.

- Sponsored educational materials. Here, businesses give the district instructional materials that highlight the business, while promising to serve a legitimate learning outcome. Mr. Peanut’s Guide to Nutrition is one example.

- Electronic marketing. Businesses give districts technology to provide instructional programming. The exchange? The business

is given the right to advertise to students during the programs.

- Fund-raising. Businesses provide districts with products, which are then sold and distributed by students with the profits shared between the district and the vendor. Candy and catalog sales are among the most visible examples of such activities.
- Raffles and auctions. Community-minded businesses offer up a product for raffles or auction, with the proceeds going to the school.

Every year since 2006 at Lisbon Falls, Crafts Cars has offered up a vehicle for raffle. Business Manager Haley McCrater said Crafts has raised more than \$70,000 for the sophomore classes to put toward their future Project Graduation, prom and other events.

This year's car is a 2009 Ford Fusion SE with leather seats and sun roof, the entire proceeds benefiting the class of 2019. Already possessing a reputation for charity and community spirit, Crafts gained extra public relations by placing its car at the entrance to the high school for weeks.

McCrater added that the Lisbon Falls High School's Music Department also conducts an annual mattress sale at the facility in the winter time, and the school rents out its new gymnasium to groups like the Girl Scouts and AAU basketball.

For or Against?

Proponents of these fund-raising ideas argue that they allow districts to raise nontax revenues, foster students' understanding of the business sector and economy, and can even promote consumer choice.

Opponents say commercial activities can be unethical, promote unhealthy products, corrupt instruction and promote consumerism.

This could all lead to a healthy debate at a school board meeting, but also might allow a district to keep a program, or teacher, or sport that would otherwise be axed.

One 2014 analysis of Pennsylvania and New York — performed by Brian O. Brent, PhD, of the University of Rochester in New York and Stephen Lunden of Maryvale Union Free School District in New York — school districts revealed that 94 percent of Pennsylvania's respondents and 75 percent of New York's respondents used one or more commercial activities.

Since 2006 Crafts Cars has offered up for raffle a vehicle for raffle, raising more than \$70,000 for the sophomore classes to put toward their future Project Graduation, prom and other events.
— Haley McCrater, business manager

Half the Pennsylvania respondents and 23 percent of New York's reported having "pouring rights" contracts. (This survey predated New York's ban on large sodas, which lost in the courts, by the way.)

Exclusive agreements and appropriating space were reported to be the two most lucrative activities.

Proponents of exclusive agreements say these revenues are used for various reasons, among them, property-tax relief; to supplement local revenues; to fund specific programs or activities; and to provide goods or services to students and staff at a lower cost.

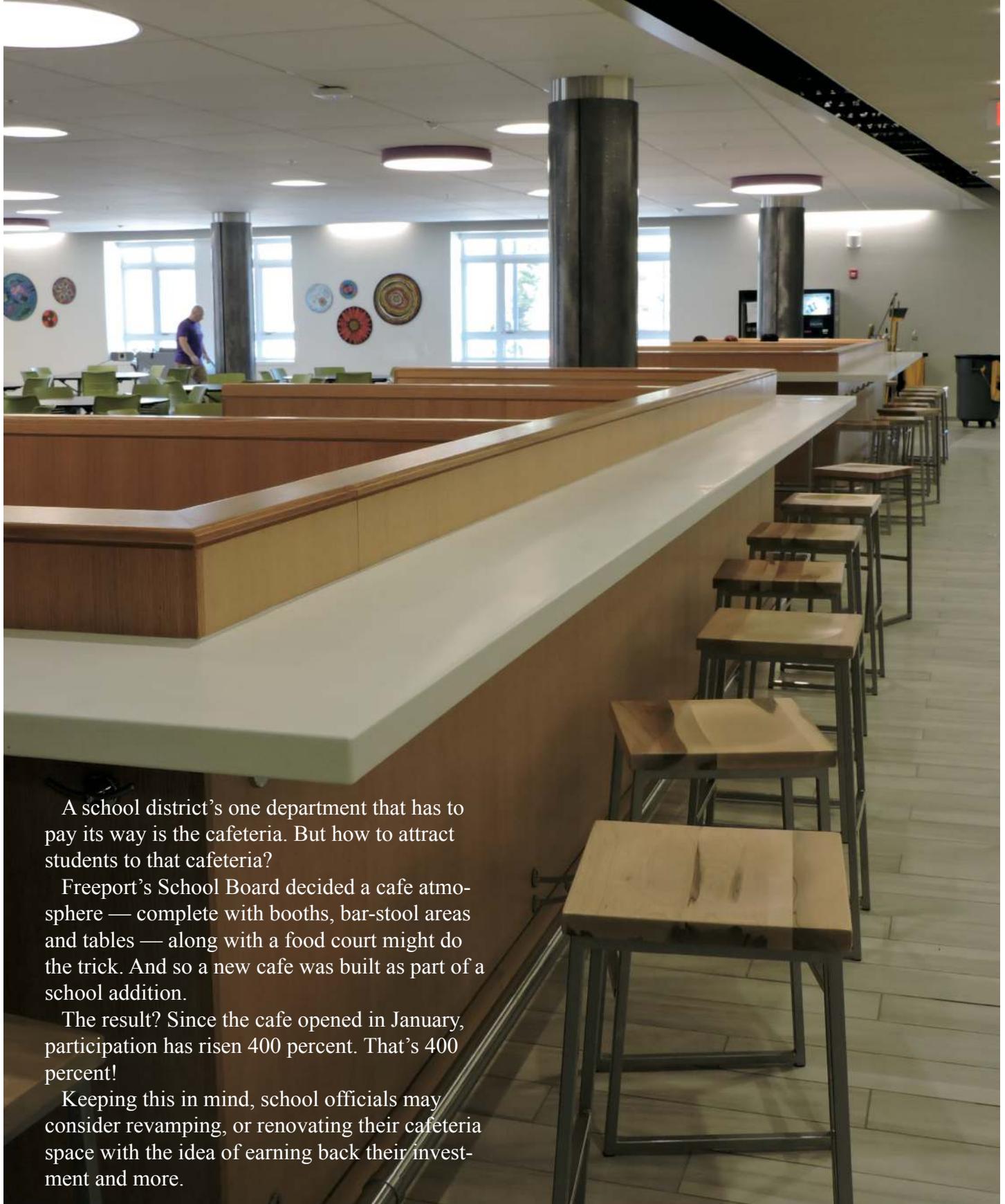
Proponents of selling appropriated space was often to fund a specific program.

One interesting finding in the Pennsylvania-New York survey: about 20 percent of respondents said their desire to develop or sustain positive relationships with local businesses was the most important factor in deciding to appropriate space.

Is Time an Issue?

Despite the thinking that dealing with these revenue matters is time-consuming, the analysis revealed that Pennsylvania business officials spent an annual average of 6.44 hours and 10.06 hours, respectively, acquiring and stewarding exclusive agreements and appropriated space. Officials in New York, where appropriated space mostly involved soliciting scoreboards, reported spending only 5.45 hours and 0.38 hours annually managing those tasks. •••

Not your parents' cafeteria



A school district's one department that has to pay its way is the cafeteria. But how to attract students to that cafeteria?

Freeport's School Board decided a cafe atmosphere — complete with booths, bar-stool areas and tables — along with a food court might do the trick. And so a new cafe was built as part of a school addition.

The result? Since the cafe opened in January, participation has risen 400 percent. That's 400 percent!

Keeping this in mind, school officials may consider revamping, or renovating their cafeteria space with the idea of earning back their investment and more.



Freeport food-court makeover — a classing blend of retro and new industrial — is paying its own way

By Mark Leslie

Freeport High School’s sparkling new dining facility is warm, inviting and efficient, and the icing on the cake is that the number of “customers” has skyrocketed by more than 50 percent, according to Director of School Nutrition Kim Austin.

The brainchild of the Freeport School Board’s Building Committee and Austin’s retired predecessor, Judy Goodnell, the cafeteria oozes a coffee-house atmosphere of comfort and variety while its speed of service flashes a green light to students and staff who have little time to spare.

Austin called the look “very classy—a blend of old retro and new industrial, clean aluminum frames and things along that line with the pastel colors and cool lighting and circles everywhere.”

While naming her huge tilted skillet as the most helpful new equipment, Austin’s highest praise goes to the open-concept serving area where “40 to 50 people can mill around and pick things up they want versus the military-like single file” of the old 15-foot-long traditional serving line.

Those lines and their 10- to 15-minute waits, she said, “scared away a lot of people because they didn’t want to stand waiting that long.”

And when they’re ready to “go” they have choices. The new space, which opened Jan. 3 as part of a new wing of the school, boasts about 125 percent more square footage and its design, Austin said, “makes a statement” with booths, tables and counter spaces that have high stools. Large windows let in a tremendous

amount of light, showing off a lot of pastel colors and dramatic black subway-tile walls.

“I really like the new stools,” Austin said. “People can sit and enjoy their lunch and be a part of the whole atmosphere but not necessarily have a seat at a booth.

“It’s very warm and inviting.”

It’s utilitarian as well.

“In my opinion we have a full professional kitchen cook line, she said. “The kitchen and dish room are laid out well. The storage room, the walk-in cooler and freezer, and you go right outside to the delivery door. It’s a long narrow corridor but it flows well.”

With the open food court, Austin and her staff have been able to increase their offerings. The tilting skillet itself, with 4-to 5-inch sides, allows a lot of options from Italian sausage sandwiches that are grilled with peppers and onions; grilled cheese sandwiches; even to adding new French fries because they can be put in an oven and later browned up on the skillet.

“The skillet opens up more opportunities to us to meet school regulations without deep-fat frying but we can get a similar type of product without having to use all the oils,” Austin said.

Freeport High has 500 students and Austin’s staff serves about 150 to 175 a day with one lunch period. The School Board is discussing having two lunch periods next year which, Austin said, “would be a big help. I predict we’ll get a lot more kids if that’s done.” •••



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Maine DOE funnels grants

State's \$4.1M investment expected to reap five-year \$23.5M payback

By Mark Leslie

Regionalized projects for special-education students dominate the initiatives that have received grants from the Maine Department of Education's (DOE) fledgling EMBRACE, a program created to encourage regional partnering that will improve education services while lowering local costs.

Four of the 10 funded initiatives target at-risk students — from the Sheepscot Regional Education Program, centered in Wiscasset, to the SPRCPCE Innovative School, housed in Bangor's the Western Maine Regional Program for Children with Exceptionalities, with a facility in Oxford; and the Western Maine Regional Education Program at RSU #10 in Buckfield.

In all, a DOE investment of \$4,165,311 in the 10 projects is expected to yield a five-year savings of \$23,505,885. Of these totals, the special-ed projects represent \$2,165,735 in grants, yielding a five-year payback of \$16,614,379.

Buoyed by these high expectations, Gov. Paul LePage has requested \$5 million per year in the biennial budget proposal, which would enable additional rounds of applications to EMBRACE (Enabling Maine students to Benefit from Regional And Coordinated approaches to Education).

Choosing from among 21 applications, DOE officials tabbed three initiatives that will bundle administrative and other services; two that target collaborative STEM (science, technology, engineering and math) education; and one centralized transportation facility.

The largest projected savings? The Sheepscot Regional Education Program, whose proposed cost of \$518,000 would yield an estimated five-year savings of \$8,086,664.

The smallest DOE investment? Service Bundling special-ed, psychological, transportation, technology and facilities services in the Presque Isle area, whose cost of \$162,500 are expected to yield \$537,500 savings over five years.

Whether the grants are large or small, school officials are thrilled at the prospect of their projects.

"We're so appreciative of this grant. It gives us funding for a good a year a half," said Dr. Heather Wilnot, superintendent of the Wiscasset School Department which will house the Sheepscot program involving RSUs 1 and 12, AOSs 93 and 98 and the Bath Regional Career and Technical Center as well as Wiscasset.

"It's difficult to go to taxpayers and say, 'I have this great idea, but I need a ton of money to get it started so I can focus on sustainability,'" Wilnot said. "This funding gets us started."

"This grant is perfect timing for us. It allows us to move up our timeframe by about a year," said Clinton Deschene, business manager at SAD #1 in Presque Isle. "So often, you get money and the state says, 'Here's the money and this is what you have

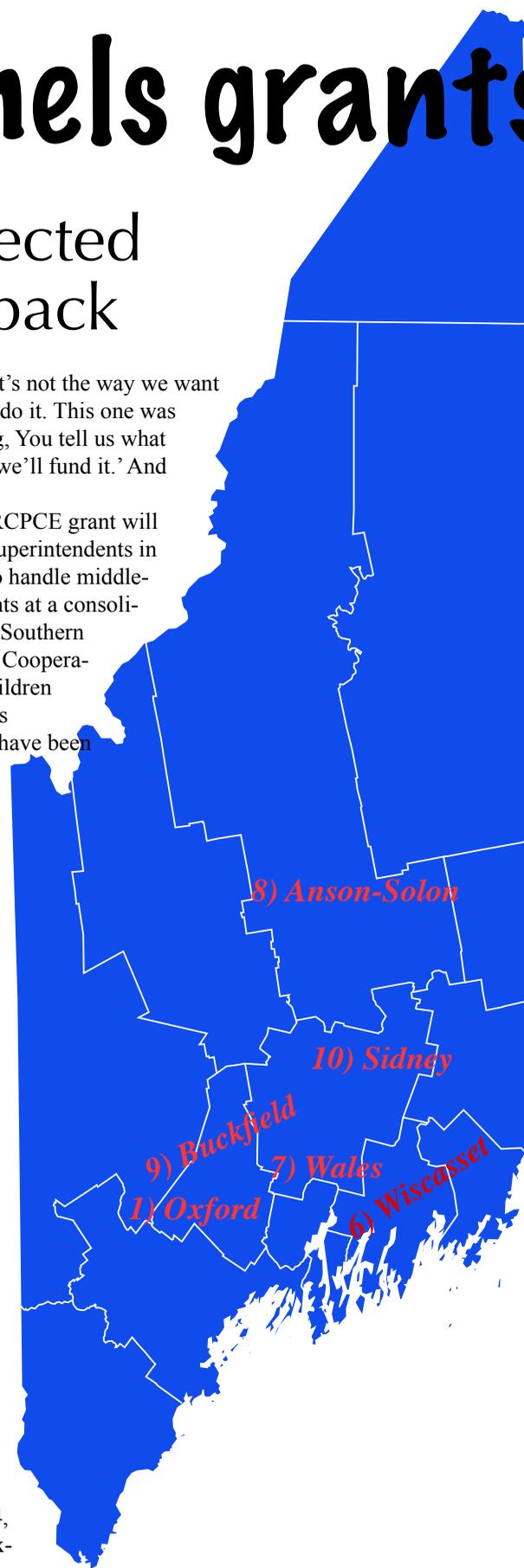
to do to get it.' But it's not the way we want to do it, so we can't do it. This one was truly the state saying, 'You tell us what you want to do and we'll fund it.' And we did."

Similarly, the SPRCPCE grant will expedite a plan by superintendents in the Bangor region to handle middle-school at-risk students at a consolidated facility called Southern Penobscot Regional Cooperative Program for Children with Exceptionalities

"Superintendents have been discussing this for sometime," said Alan Kochis, business manager for the Bangor School Department, which is the lead school unit in the project. "It came to fruition when this grant process was announced.

"Many districts have an alternative program for their high school students, but there's nothing at the middle-school level in most towns."

At SAD #17 in Oxford Hills, Business Manager Cathy Fanjoy Coffey said discussions have been ongoing with RSU #44, RSU #72 and the Oxford Hills Technical School "for at least two years, wishing we had the space" for a program for children with exceptionalities. "Finally, we came up with the space and a grant to make it happen."



Continued on page 12

ts to 10 initiatives

2) Ft. Kent

3) Presque Isle

4) Houlton

5) Bangor

Regional efficiency projects

1) Western Maine Regional Program for Children with Exceptionalities

Proposed cost (not necessarily size of award): \$314,500

Estimated 5-year savings: \$2,050,000

Participants:

- Lead SAU - MSAD 17 (Harrison, Hebron, Norway, Otisfield, Oxford, Paris, Waterford, West Paris)
- RSU 44 (Bethel, Greenwood, Newry, Woodstock)
- RSU 72 (Brownfield, Denmark, Fryeburg, Lovell, Stoneham, Stow, Sweden)
- Maine Regional Vocational Center 11 (Oxford Hills Technical School)

2) Rightsizing Education in the Upper St. John Valley

Proposed cost (not necessarily size of award): \$508,200

Estimated 5-year savings: \$901,509

Participants:

- Lead SAU - MSAD 27 (Eagle Lake, Fort Kent, New Canada, Saint Francis, Saint John Plantation, Wallagras)
- MSAD 33 (Frenchville, Saint Agatha)
- Madawaska School Department
- St. John Valley Technology Center
- University of Maine at Fort Kent

3) Service Bundling

Proposed Cost (not necessarily size of award): \$162,500

Estimated 5-year savings: \$537,500

Participants:

- Lead SAU - MSAD 01/RSU 79 (Castle Hill, Chapman, Mapleton, Presque Isle, Westfield)
- MSAD 45 (Washburn, Perham, Wade)

4) So. Aroostook Area Regional Transportation Facility

Proposed Cost (not necessarily size of award): \$415,000

Estimated 5-year savings: \$929,917.45

Participants:

- Lead SAU - RSU 29 (Houlton, Hammond, Littleton, Monticello)
- RSU 70 (Hodgdon, Amity, Haynesville, Linneus, Ludlow, New Limerick)
- RSU 50 (Southern Aroostook and Kathadin)
- MSAD 14/RSU 84 (East Grand)
- Region Two School of Applied Technology

5) SPRCPCE Innovative School

Proposed Cost (not necessarily size of award): \$538,235

Estimated 5-year savings: \$3,308,825

Participants:

- Lead SAU - Bangor School Department
- AOS 47 (Dedham, Orrington)
- AOS 81 (Holden, Eddington, Clifton, Amherst, Aurora, Great Pond, Osborn)

Many districts have an alternative program for their high school students, but there's nothing at the middle-school level in most towns.'



Alan Kochis, business mgr.
Bangor School Dept.

Continued on page 16



“ So often, you get money and the state says, “Here’s the money and this is what you have to do to get it.” But it’s not the way we want to do it, so we can’t do it. This one was truly the state saying, “You tell us what you want to do and we’ll fund it.” And we did.’

**— Clinton Deschene, business manager
SAD #1 in Presque Isle**

Continued from page 12

What might become the most financially impactful initiative is ongoing in Fort Kent (SAD #27), where school officials called their plan Rightsizing Education in the Upper St. John Valley.

“We can’t keep doing things the way we are. We can’t afford it,” said SAD #27 Director of Finance and Projects Lucie Tabor, adding that three regional districts have been studying “right-sizing” education in the economically strapped area since last summer.

“This strategic planning process and this new grant really meshed well together,” Tabor said, adding that the three districts “were heading in the same direction, walking parallel and didn’t know it. We’re at the fork. The roads have met.”

In Tabor’s case, this first grant of

\$508,200 for Phase One, examining efficiencies for the Upper St. John Valley districts, will help them all combine such services and personnel as central office, superintendent, transportation and specialized.

Tabor hopes a regional combined high school/CTE center looms in the future for SAD #27’s six towns, SAD 33’s three towns and the Madawaska School Department.

“This was looked at 10 years ago when the impending consolidation penalties were coming,” she said.

“These three districts looked at creating an RSU, but when the vote was taken ... at least one of the towns voted it down. But the economic realities have changed the discussions.”

This first regional efficiency grant is a

three- to 5-year plan, so it gives school officials “some time to plan it right,” Tabor said. “Any future grant for building a school or combining high schools depends on what the DOE awards. If we build a new school there’s a timeline to go with that. If we don’t, then we will discuss which of the existing high schools will be the school of choice.”

Special Ed for At-risk Kids

With a low-end cost of \$34,000 a year per student, special education is easily the most expensive segment of public education, driven by transportation costs and extraordinarily high tuition at specialized facilities.

School officials have, therefore, been collaborating to ease the burden.

The Sheepscot project came about through a “candid discussion among area superintendents about what was the greatest area of need for students who are underserved,” said Wiscasset’s Wilmot.

“The population of students we were concerned about who needed support — and also an area of service in programming that would demonstrate an efficiency financially — were our students in grades 6 through 12 with disabilities, particularly in the area of social, emotional needs,” she said. “We had problems in two areas. We had students we’re sending out-of-district to other highly therapeutic programs at high, high rates of cost, and we had students of our own who we didn’t have placements for. They needed more support but there was no program available for them.

“That was our impetus.”

Beginning this fall, the program will be hosted at Wiscasset Middle High School with an initial population of 10 to 13 students at the high-school level “because it’s the greatest need and sense of urgency,” Wilmot said. “We’ll then grow to middle-school students.”

Sheepscot’s \$518,000 grant will cover



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\$360,000 for a licensed clinical social worker, who will take the lead on program development and treatment options, a certified special educator and a support staff of six educational technicians as well as \$75,000 for a psychiatrist and occupational and physical therapists; \$25,000 for technical and administrative support; \$15,000 for classroom renovation; \$10,000 for operating expenses, facility maintenance; and \$5,000 for professional development and training.

But besides the centralized staffing, the greatest savings for the participating districts will come in lower transportation costs, Wilmot said.

When figuring the costs and savings for their grant application, the Sheepscot superintendents and special-ed directors looked at the profile of similar projects — particularly RSU #1's in Bath.

"RSU 1," Wilmot said, "projected that based on program shares (the costs they pay for high-cost students), savings of almost \$650,000 because of transportation and high tuition costs.

"Wiscasset budgets close to \$200,000 for out-of-district costs, plus transportation, which is so high now, especially for individualized transportation in a van. If your van driver is not under your collective bargaining and you have to use a private you could be paying \$200 to \$240 a day. So to keep program within your community, or a neighboring community is a substantial savings."

The Sheepscot districts will work together to maximize the use of vans and buses, she added.

Southern Penobscot

Bangor's Kochis said the SPRCPCE Innovative School,



We can't keep doing things the way we are. We can't afford it.'

— **Lucie Tabor, director of**



dinance and projects
SAD #2, Fort Kent



carrying a \$3.3-million savings over five years, will combine three existing programs for at-risk students that involve 13 school departments and Eastern Maine Community College: the Multi-handicapped, Acadia Hospital and Bangor Day Treatment Program for students with severe behavior issues.

Starting this fall, he said, 40 7th- and 8th-graders will attend the new facility in a Bangor location, learning in small groups in hands-on, project-based approaches.

"For each school to offer a program within itself, to hire a staff and other expenses is simply not practical for a handful of kids," Kochis said. "We're in the process of finding space to lease and hiring staff: two teachers and one ed tech."

The Bangor School Department will run the program, but all the superintendents meet monthly to keep abreast of what's going on and to vote on various issues.

While the \$531,000 grant will run the school for one year, Kochis



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For at least two years [we've been] wishing we had the space (for a program for children with exceptionalities.) Finally, we came up with the space and a grant to make it happen.'

**— Cathy Fanjoy Coffey, business manager
RSU 17, Oxford Hills**

said superintendents expect the number of students will grow.

Children with 'Exceptionalities'

Between the Western Maine Regional Program for Children with Exceptionalities in Oxford and the Western Maine Regional Education Program headquartered in Bucksfield, that region of the state is well represented in the care of behaviorally challenged students.

SAD #17's Cathy Fanjoy Coffey is ecstatic about how things have worked out and huge savings beginning this fall.

Beginning with 12 children and hoping to expand that number to 30, she said, "These are students we've had to send out of district as far as Scarborough at a cost of \$50,000-plus per student per year. With a regional program that's closer to all of our schools, it's not only better for students — less time sitting in a vehicle. It means less transportation cost and less tuition."

She said the number of students affected has "crept up already" with the

closing of a Spurwink school.

While officials had been planning to lease the former Boxbury School for the program, "the day after we received the grant we found out they'd sold the building to the Oxford School-Age Child Care Program. Since that program had been leasing the Oxford Annex, a building that sits by Oxford Elementary School, from the city, that space became available.

"Since we own the facility and it has five classrooms, rather than use the money to pay for a lease, we're using the money to renovate bathrooms and the kitchen area."

Meanwhile, the RSU #10 initiative in Bucksfield will support development of a regional k-12 program for students from RSUs 9, 56, 58 and 78 and SAD 44 who need a therapeutic educational setting.

It will include family work and community collaboration in the least restrictive educational environment. Students' academic and treatment goals will focus

on reintegration and participation with nondisabled peers.

Service Bundling

Presque Isle's Service Bundling will begin the same day Oxford begins its renovation work: July 1, according to Deschene.

The districts — SAD #1 (Presque Isle, Castle Hill, Chapman, Mapleton and Westfield) and SAD #45 (Washburn, Perham and Wade) — have already begun the transportation piece of the initiative in what Deschene said is "a great fit for us — a no-brainer."

He explained the districts "wanted to get together and we were doing it slowly on our own. SAD 45 signed on a year ago for administrative and business services.

On July 1, the operations, maintenance and transportation all begin, while IT actually began in mid-May.

The savings?

- \$83,000 a year for special ed for social workers, a director, a teacher, ed techs.
- \$10,000 a year for the school psychologist.
- \$30,000 a year in transportation.
- \$14,000 to \$15,000 a year in administration.
- \$4,000 a year for IT which, Deschene said, "is the least of the up-front savings but the most long-term, and it was SAD 45's highest-requested item.

Also "bundling" their services are Maine Academy for Natural Sciences in Fairfield, which is the lead unit in the initiative, and Cornville Regional Charter School, Snow Pond Arts Academy in Sidney, and non-profits Snow Pond Center for the Arts and Good Will Hinckley.

Those services will include residential and learning space, financial services, transportation, needs assessment and special-ed administration.



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Transportation Facility

Just as several years ago Presque Isle built a facility for care and repair of its bus fleet and is sharing that facility with area schools, so now will RSU #29 in Houlton.

RSUs 50, 70 and 84 as well as Region Two School of Applied Technology will share in the facility serving as a bus garage for the combined fleet of buses vans and service vehicles of the partner districts.

The state's \$415,000 grant is expected to save the 14 participating towns close to \$1 million over the net five years.

Science Collaboratives

Meanwhile, RSU #4 (Wales, Sabattus and Litchfield) and SAD #74/RSU #74 (Anson, Solon, Embden and New Portland) are both taking the lead in initiatives dealing with the sciences.

RSU #4 Business Manager Scott Eldridge is overseeing the Western Maine Mathematics 9-12/CTE Leadership Network.

At the same time, the Kennebec Valley STEM Collaborative Outreach will target the needs of all students from at-risk to gifted and talented.

Coaches will work with teachers, providing high-quality professional development in both programs. ...

Tech Committee updating web site

MeASBO's Technology Committee is in the process of reviewing and researching potential upgrades for our website.

Members should be prepared for it to be "Under Construction" this summer.

They are asked to be patient with us as the committee seeks to improve the functionality and make it more user friendly.

Committee members hope to add sections for "Best Practices" and "Shared Forms" as well as updating the Forums area.

If any MeASBO members have ideas on how to update, improve and/or enhance the website as this transition proceeds, or if they have awesome technological skills, they are willing to share and want to join the Technology Committee, they are asked to e-mail Luci Milewski at lmilewski@emmm.org.



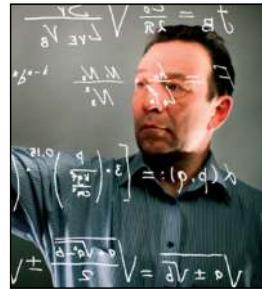
We're so appreciative of this grant. It gives us funding for a good a year a half.



— Dr. Heather Wilmot, superintendent Wiscasset School Dept.



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Left to right: Tonya Arnold, Principal at Maine Academy of Natural Sciences; Travis Works, Executive Director/Principal at Cornville; Lyford Beverage, Superintendent of RSU 74; and Ken Coville, President/Director of Development at Good Will-Hinkley.

Continued from page 13

- Brewer School Department
- Glenburn School Department
- Hermon School Department
- Maine Indian Education
- Milford School Department
- RSU 22 (Hampden, Newburgh, Winterport and Frankfort)
- RSU 26 (Orono)
- RSU 34 (Alton, Bradley, Old Town)
- RSU 64 (Bradford, Corinth, Hudson, Kenduskeag, and Stetson)
- RSU 87 (Carmel, Levant)
- Veazie School Department
- United Technology Center
- Eastern Maine Community College

6) Sheepscot Reg'l Education Program

Proposed Cost (not necessarily size of award): \$518,000

Estimated 5-year savings: \$8,086,664

Participants:

- Lead SAU - Wiscasset School Department
- RSU 01 (Bath, Arrowsic, Phippsburg, Woolwich)
- AOS 98 (Boothbay Harbor)
- AOS 93 (Sommerville)
- RSU 12 (Alna, Chelsea, Palermo, Somerville, Westport Island, Whitefield, Windsor)
- Bath Regional Career and Technical Center

7) Western Maine Math 9-12/CTE Leadership Network

Proposed Cost (not necessarily size of award): \$231,082

Estimated 5-year savings: \$403,798

Participants:

- Lead RSU 04 (Wales, Litchfield, Sabattus)
- RSU 09 (Chesterville, Farmington, Industry, New Sharon, New Vineyard, Starks, Temple, Vienna, Weld, Wilton)
- RSU 10 (Buckfield, Byron, Canton, Carthage, Dixfield, Hanover, Hartford, Mexico, Peru, Roxbury, Rumford, Sumner)
- RSU 58 (Avon, Kingfield, Phillips, Strong)
- RSU 73 (Jay, Livermore, Livermore Falls)
- RSU 74 (Anson, Embden, New Portland, Solon)
- Winthrop Public Schools
- Foster Career and Technical Education Center
- University of Maine Farmington

8) Kennebec Valley STEM Collaborative Outreach

Proposed Cost: \$130,000

Estimated 5-year savings: \$1,176,000

Participants:

- Lead MSAD 74/RSU 74 (Anson, Solon, Embden, New Portland)
- MSAD 13/RSU 83 (Bingham, Moscow)
- MSAD #59/RSU #59 (Madison), Somerset Career and Technical Center (Skowhegan)

9) Western Maine Reg'l Education Program

Proposed Cost: 798,000

Estimated 5-year savings: \$3,168,890

Participants:

- Lead – RSU 10 (Buckfield, Byron, Canton, Carthage, Dixfield, Hanover, Hartford, Mexico, Peru, Roxbury, Rumford and Sumner)
- RSU 9 (Chesterville, Farmington, Industry, New Sharon, New Vineyard, Starks, Temple, Vienne, Weld, Wilton),
- MSAD 44 (Bethel, Greenwood, Newry, Woodstock),
- RSU 56 (Canton, Carthage, Dixfield, and Peru),
- RSU 58 (Phillips, Avon, Kingfield, and Strong), RSU 73 (Jay, Livermore, Livermore Falls),
- RSU 78 (Dallas Plantation, Magalloway Plantation, Rangeley, Rangeley Plantation and Sandy River Plantation).

10) Shared Services Model

Proposed Cost: \$549,794

Estimated 5-year savings: \$2,942,782

Participants:

- Lead - Maine Academy for Natural Sciences (Fairfield)
- Cornville Regional Charter School (Cornville)
- Snow Pond Arts Academy (Sidney)
- Snow Pond Center for the Arts (non-profit)
- Good Will Hinckley (non-profit). •••

Synergy and NEO training goes statewide

The Maine Department of Education is offering five half-day sessions for NEO updates and training and one half-day for Synergy Training. An additional full-day session will also be held for districts who manually enter information into the State level Student Information System.

During the NEO session, Maine DOE Helpdesk members will review changes to NEO, which include Maine State Reports previously located in Infinite Campus State Edition.

Other changes to NEO include:

- The new Data Collection and Reporting (DC&R) module;
- Access to NEO;
- Changes to NEO staff; and
- Clarification of Staff and District Roles.

There will also be a short session on Student Data Privacy. Attendees should include those who currently complete NEO Reports, those who previously worked with student reports in Infinite Campus State Edition, and those who will be doing these activities in the coming school year. Student data certifications will now be done in NEO, so Superintendents who certify reports may also want to attend.

A light lunch will be provided, and during this time, Maine DOE and Synergy staff will be available for questions.

For the Synergy session, participants will learn how to use Synergy DOE to upload student data required by the State of Maine. In addition, participants will learn how to use Synergy DOE to enter and validate student data that is not included in the upload process.

Upon completion of this session, participants will under-

stand how to perform uploads and will be able to:

- √ Log in to Synergy and navigate the interface
- √ Use and understand Synergy concepts and terminology
- √ Change Focus to view other years/schools
- √ Create personal Navigation Menus
- √ View existing student information
- √ Find a single student or multiple students
- √ Enter and modify student data
- √ Truancy
- √ Discipline
- √ Use a Matrix to print student information or export student information to other desktop programs
- √ Create student filters
- √ Create Graph information
- √ Preview and Print common reports
- √ Save report settings

The August 1 Manual Entry Session will be an all-day in-depth look at how to enter

student information directly into the system. (NEO topics will not be covered at this session).

Dates and Registration

July 25

Houlton High School

7 Bird Street

Houlton, ME 04730

[http://events.egov.com/event-](http://events.egov.com/event-treg/ME/event.htm?name=doe)

[treg/ME/event.htm?name=doe](http://events.egov.com/event-treg/ME/event.htm?name=doe)

[neosynergytraininghoulton](http://events.egov.com/event-treg/ME/event.htm?name=doe)

July 26

Ellsworth Elementary School/

Middle School

20 Forest Avenue

Ellsworth, ME 04605

[http://events.egov.com/event-](http://events.egov.com/event-treg/ME/event.htm?name=doe)

[treg/ME/event.htm?name=doe](http://events.egov.com/event-treg/ME/event.htm?name=doe)

[neosynergytrainingellsworth](http://events.egov.com/event-treg/ME/event.htm?name=doe)

July 27

Orion Performing Arts Center

50 Republic Avenue

Topsham, ME 04086

[http://events.egov.com/event-](http://events.egov.com/event-treg/ME/event.htm?name=doe)

[treg/ME/event.htm?name=doe](http://events.egov.com/event-treg/ME/event.htm?name=doe)

[neosynergytrainingtopsham](http://events.egov.com/event-treg/ME/event.htm?name=doe)

July 31

Cony School

60 Pierce Drive

Augusta, ME 04330

[http://events.egov.com/event-](http://events.egov.com/event-treg/ME/event.htm?name=doe)

[treg/ME/event.htm?name=doe](http://events.egov.com/event-treg/ME/event.htm?name=doe)

[neosynergytrainingaugusta](http://events.egov.com/event-treg/ME/event.htm?name=doe)

August 1

MANUAL UPLOAD Schools

only. NEO not presented

Cony School

60 Pierce Drive

Augusta, ME 04330

[http://events.egov.com/event-](http://events.egov.com/event-treg/ME/event.htm?name=doe)

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[nualentry](http://events.egov.com/event-treg/ME/event.htm?name=doe)

August 2

Portland Arts & Technology

High School

196 Allen Avenue

Portland, ME 04103

[http://events.egov.com/event-](http://events.egov.com/event-treg/ME/event.htm?name=doe)

[treg/ME/event.htm?name=doe](http://events.egov.com/event-treg/ME/event.htm?name=doe)

[neosynergytrainingportland](http://events.egov.com/event-treg/ME/event.htm?name=doe)

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to Maine's Data Systems

Helpdesk manager, Shannon

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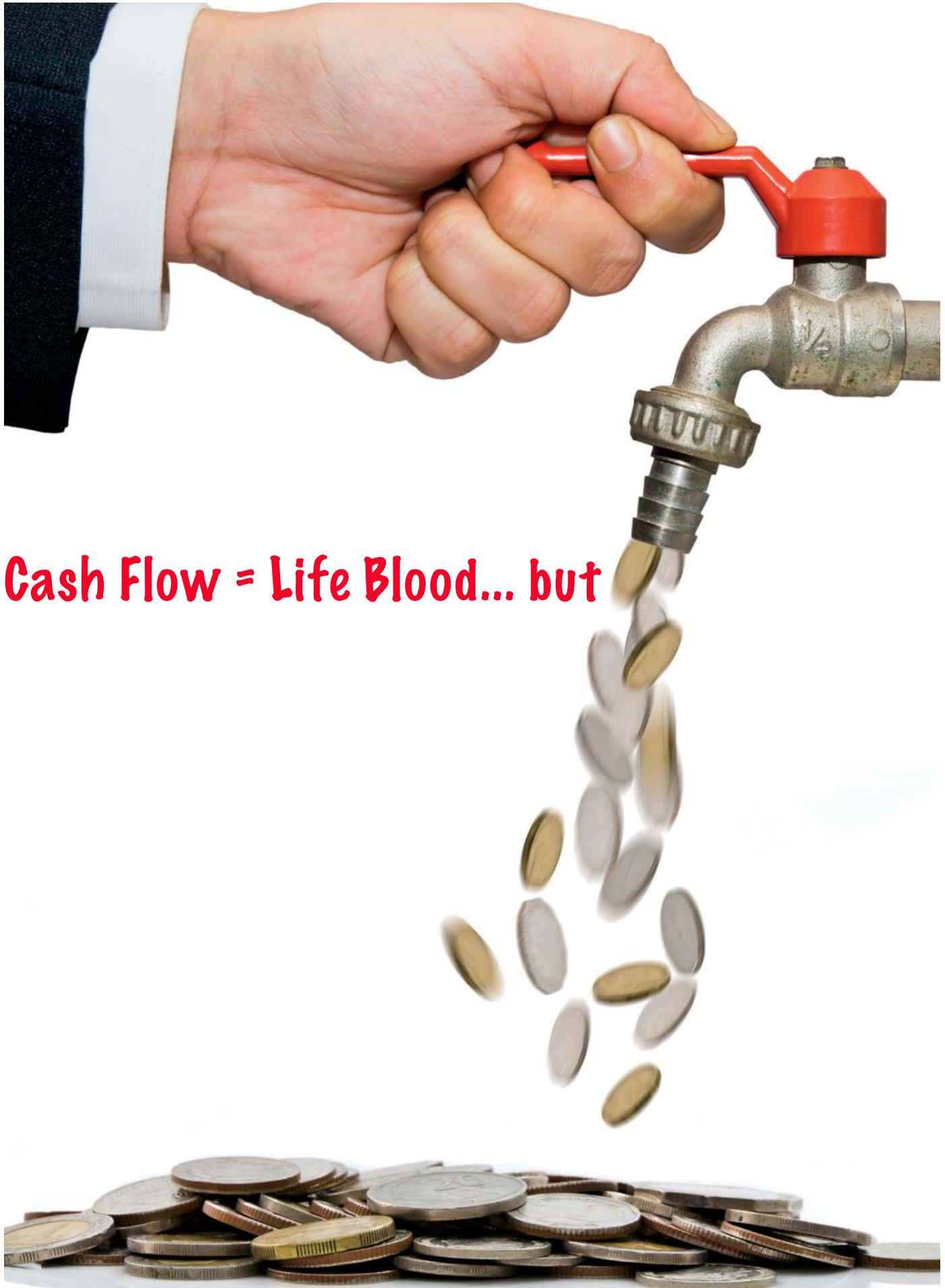
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Cash Flow = Life Blood... but

How much will the IRS allow a school district to borrow? Sit down.

By Rodney A. Lake

We often advise school districts that they cannot borrow as much as they would like for the purpose of funding general operations until tax or other receipts arrive (so-called “cash-flow” loans, or tax- and revenue-anticipation notes (“TRANS”)) – even when a bank has agreed to lend the requested amount.

Frequently, this is the result of federal tax law that effectively restricts the amount a school district may borrow for cash-flow purposes.

Under these tax rules, the maximum cash-flow loan amount is the sum of two components: the district’s “maximum cumulative cash-flow deficit” and a reasonable working capital reserve. This article explains how these component amounts are determined. But first, why does the federal government even have a say in how much a school district can borrow for cash-flow purposes?

Why the IRS Cares How Much You Borrow

When a school district borrows money, the lender typically expects it will not be required to pay federal income tax on the interest it receives from the school district.

In other words, loans to school districts are generally designed so the lender’s interest income is “tax exempt.” This allows lenders to offer lower interest rates than they would on comparable loans to commercial borrowers, where their interest income would be taxable.

The federal government views this exemption of the lender’s interest income from tax as a subsidy upon which it may impose restrictions. In the case of TRANS, one of those restrictions is the cap on the sum that may be borrowed. The basic idea is that the federal government does not want to subsidize a cash-flow loan

any larger than what, in its view, a school district truly needs to bridge the gap until revenues arrive.

First Limit: Maximum Cumulative Cash-flow Deficit

Although a mouthful to say, the “maximum cumulative cash-flow deficit” simply represents the largest cash-flow shortfall that a school district projects experiencing during the year. In rough terms, the federal government views the amount of this projected shortfall as a school district’s greatest need during the year.

So how do you determine the “maximum cumulative cash-flow deficit”? The basic calculation is: “available amounts” less expenditures.

We usually measure the projected cash flows on a monthly basis, taking into account available amounts at the start of the fiscal year, adding the estimated receipts that are includible in available amounts for each given month, and subtracting estimated expenditures.

These calculations result in a running, “cumulative” projected cash-flow deficit (or surplus).

The first step in this cash-flow analysis is determining “available amounts.”

If a school district understates its “available amounts” (perhaps by unwittingly excluding available amounts, or by mischaracterizing available amounts as unavailable), the cash-flow deficit may be inflated, with the consequence that the school district borrows more than what federal tax law permits.

Conversely, overstating available amounts would generate an artificially low cash-flow deficit, unnecessarily minimizing the allowable borrowing amount.

So what amounts must a school district count as “available amounts”?



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The answer lies in the U.S. Treasury Regulations.

According to the regulations, “available amounts” are any amounts that are available to a school district for working capital expenditure purposes of the type financed by cash-flow borrowing (i.e., generally, any current operating expenses) without legislative or judicial action and without a legislative, judicial, or contractual requirement that those amounts be reimbursed.

This is, of course, a broad definition, and would likely capture more than simply the amounts in a school district’s general fund.

In essence, the federal government wants to know, aside from the TRAN proceeds, what amounts a school district could access to pay its current operating expenses.

Roughly speaking, only to the extent current operating expenses exceed these available amounts does the federal government wish to subsidize borrowing.

In practical terms, all amounts in unrestricted funds generally used for current operating expenses, except for the proceeds of the TRAN itself, must be counted as “available amounts.”

In addition to amounts in a school district’s general fund, amounts in special funds that may be used for current

operating expenses would also generally constitute “available amounts.”

This would include most governmental grants (such as Title 1 and Local Entitlement grants) that are not restricted to capital expenditures, like school construction.

By contrast, amounts in funds that legally may not be used for current operating expenses generally would not constitute “available amounts.”

For example, amounts in a reserve fund established for school construction projects, capital improvements or equipment usually would not be “available amounts.”

However, a school district may not itself restrict funds for the purpose of making amounts “unavailable” in order to issue a larger TRAN.

Second Limit: A Reasonable Working Capital Reserve

The second component of the total TRAN amount

schools are allowed to borrow on a tax-exempt basis is a “reasonable working capital reserve.” This essentially amounts to a “fudge factor.”

Remembering that the tax policy is to limit TRAN size to actual need, and remembering that a “maximum cumulative cash-flow deficit” is only an estimate of that need, prepared in advance, it is understandable that the IRS permits dis-



Rodney A. Lake advises clients on a wide range of tax and finance issues

tricts some wiggle room.

So what is a “reasonable working capital reserve”?

In answer to this question, the IRS provides a safe harbor: 5 percent of the prior year’s capital and working capital expenditures paid from the current revenues.

Generally, this is equal to all expenditures made from current revenues. Again, this component is not necessarily restricted to the operating budget approved by voters; it may include other amounts paid from “current revenues” as well.

Summary

Understanding the policy behind federal tax law limitations on the sizing of TRANs should help to clarify the purpose of the detailed financial information and cash-flow projections that we request at the outset of our representation of a school district that is borrowing for cash-flow purposes.

Given that our legal opinions in cash-flow borrowings rely upon, and assume, the accuracy

of a school district’s cash-flow projections, it is critical that those projections include all “available amounts” as described above.

If a school district has questions about whether specific amounts should be considered “available amounts,” or about any other aspect of the cash-flow borrowing process, Drummond Woodsum would be pleased to discuss the application of these principles to their case.

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Advertisers Index

Architectural Services

Harriman..... 7

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Androscoggin Bank 19

Bangor Savings 9

People's United Bank 2

Building Technologies

Siemens.....inside back cover

Bus Sales & Service

O'Connor 14

W.C. Cressey 3

Communications

Canfield 16

Energy Procurement

Maine Power Options 15

Engineering

Carpenter Associates 3

Fencing

Maine Line Fencing 6

Insurance

Clark Insurance..... 17

Investment Services

Gorham Savings Bank..... 15

Leasing/All-Purpose

Maine Municipal Bond Bank..... 4

Modular Buildings

Vanguard/Schiavi.....back cover

Student Routing & Transport

Transfinder.....inside front cover

School Management

MSMA..... 11

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