

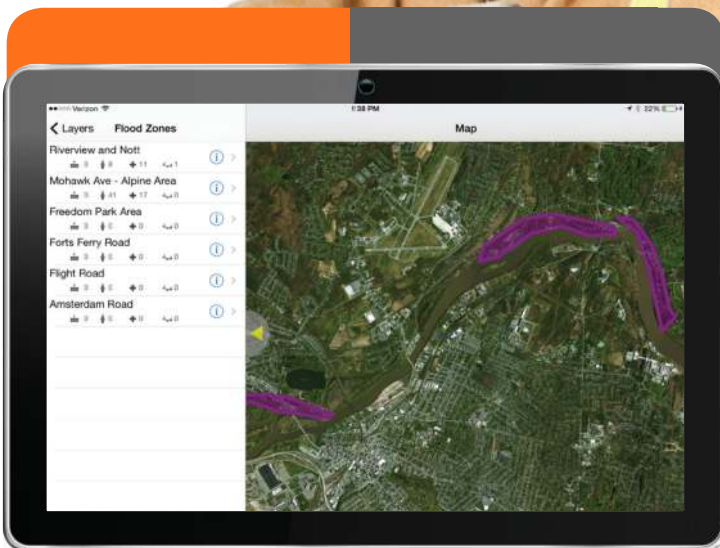
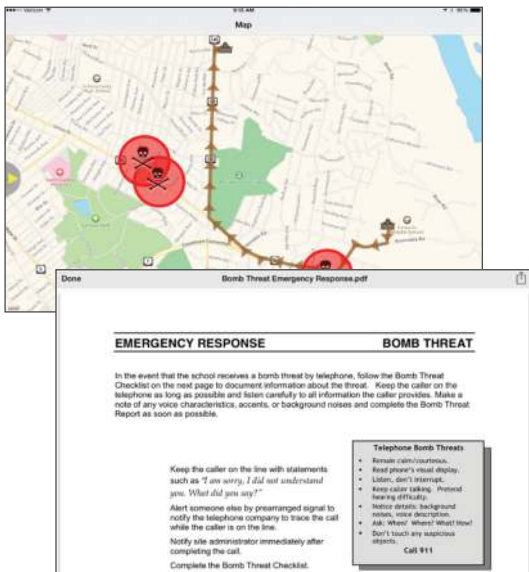
MeASBO

The official publication of the Maine Association of School Business Officials

Winter 2014-15



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PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Tri-State, loaded with info, is coming

It has certainly been a very busy fall and winter for school business officials as we prepared for the final implementations of the Affordable Care Act, as well as working with our auditors to complete FY 14, while also beginning to construct our budgets for FY 16.

I recently heard it said that multi-tasking is *not* productive. I am confident the source has never met a school business official.

While gas prices have produced an added bonus for our economy, both in Maine and nationally, the recent blizzard and snowstorms have caused turbulent times for faculty, staff — and perhaps most of all, maintenance crews and bus drivers.

As an avid skier, I am thrilled at this turn-around in snow fortunes. It would be wonderful to approach the budget season with some positives to the economy this year as well.

Our members are always taking advantage of our professional development opportunities and this year we are hosting the 23rd annual Tri-State ASBO Conference, so everyone in Maine can attend.

The conference will be held at the Holiday Inn by the Bay in Portland, May 20-22.

Negotiation, employee investigations, retirement planning, fraud prevention, facilities management — a plethora of topics — are being presented and we can all network with colleagues from New Hampshire and Vermont as well as around the state.

From the opening welcome from Maine Acting Commissioner of Education Thomas Desjardin to a lobster feed at Fort Williams to the keynote address, the conference promises to be memorable.

Indeed, keynote speaker and motivational speaker Karyn Ruth White possesses a comedic résumé that ranges from “How To Turn Stress into Laughter” to “We Hired You, You’re Perfect, Now Change” and “The Positive Power of Humor in Navigating Health-Care Reform.”

And we can all do with a bit of humor at this time of year, right? ...

— Stacie Field, MeASBO president



Stacie Field

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PUBLISHER'S MESSAGE

School business officials could write a 'Survival Kit' from their last 20 years

7twenty years of Nanny State politics (see No Child Left Behind, Affordable Care Act and Healthier Hunger-Free Kids Act). Twenty years of unfunded mandates (see charter schools and, again, Affordable Care Act and, yet again, Healthier Hunger-Free Kids Act). Twenty years of broken promises (see LD1 and its citizens' demand for 55-percent state funding of education). Twenty years of state demands (see school consolidation, Handbook IIR and MEDMS). Twenty years of confounding changes-with-the-wind (Essential Programs and Services).

As a journalist, the myriad issues confronting school business officials over the two decades since we transformed the MeASBO "newsletter" into a true magazine, have been bountiful fodder.

It's left me feeling, at once, sorry for MeASBO members and amazed and envious at the high-wire act they must perform daily.

We've followed story lines that seem to live on a never-ending continuum: school consolidation, EPS, the fight for certification, MEDMS and, God forbid, the "Affordable" Care Act, pejoratively (or lovingly?) known as Obamacare.

We've witnessed business officials roll with the punches,



Mark Leslie

survive driving over "The Cliff" and, time and again, invent new ways to tighten budget belts and miraculously keep their boats afloat.

We've profiled extraordinary MeASBO members from one end of the state to the other.

And we've seen terrific leaders and friends retire (and a couple even come out of retirement) and, most recently with our beloved Anne Stinchfield, pass away.

Through it all, members have shown extraordinary ability to share their knowledge, help each other through some pretty demanding changes, and build their expanding foundation of expertise through expert speakers, certification courses and

Tri-State Conferences.

Preparing for this edition of *MeASBO Magazine*, we've had some fun digging through some 60 editions (that would be three-score in Abe Lincoln jargon), pulling out incisive, insightful, sometimes incendiary, thought-provoking and funny comments and stories. In the next two issues this 20th year we will also feature some of the highlights of the past.

We hope you enjoy them as well as our normal fare of up-to-date articles, including the featured Cadillac Tax. ...

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Tech Tips:

Use the Suggestion Box to improve web site

By Sue Lambert

How can MeASBO's Technology Committee help you? Would you like to see changes to the forum or the way it works? Do you want different topics or information available? How about the web page? Do you think it's time to change things up a bit?

Go to the forum and make suggestions. We have recently added a new forum called "The Forum Suggestion Box."

I think it's time to change things up a bit. Do you agree?

Tell us what's working and what needs tweaking. We are ready to reformat and remove the deadwood and maybe add some new ideas or forums. Some ideas we've thought of: MainePERS section, ADS-Tyler software section, Anthem/Health Ins section, more pictures for the web page and reorganizing the document repository section. What do you think?

Share your thoughts in the Forum Suggestion Box. We have built and formed this forum with input and suggestions from our members; let's continue to make it work for us!

Cross Training Forum Administration:

In 2015, one of the goals of the Technology Committee is to move away from one person updating the forum. We plan to hold training sessions with the MeASBO Administration Assistant Ida Baker. Ida will be trained to be the person who updates meeting dates, posts surveys, minutes, committee listings, agendas, budget and treasurer reports.

She will also approve new members and will suspend forum membership for unpaid dues after the deadline set by the Executive Committee.

It became apparent during the last six months that there should be at least two people trained to administer the forum. This is very important should someone become ill or not be able to commit as much time to the tasks involved. The forum must go on!

Holding onto our name on the worldwide web:

Recently the committee renewed our domain name registration. Domain names must be registered and renewed and ours was due to expire this month.

It has been renewed for another five years and the Administrative Assistant will be notified of the new expiration date and the company who is the domain name registrar. Failure to renew our domain name registration could mean that someone else could end up with MeASBO.org, so it's important that someone is watching for that in 2020.

Digitizing our history:

A second goal of the Technology Committee, and MeASBO in general, is that in 2015 we will be working to get all of our historical documents scanned and organized. We have begun the process of gathering all of the various documents and records in boxes from the far reaches of the earth and various past presidents' file cabinets, and MeASBO Secretary Luci Milewski and I plan to meet with Ida to pass along the documents and outline the project.

Duplicate and irrelevant records and documents will be weeded out and relevant and remaining records will be organized and made readily available in a scan format. Having documents and records digitized will make the process easier when we are looking for old information and could be helpful to future leaders of MeASBO. We would also like her to create some historical data such as meeting attendance history.

Tech Tip #1: Subscribe

Remember our prior posts about subscribing? Subscribing is the No. 1 way to stay up-to-date on what is being discussed on the forum. There is a section in the forum telling you how to subscribe or if you still have questions about how to subscribe, send an e-mail to the forum administrator and we will get you up and going. If you do subscribe you will receive an e-mail when people post in the forums for which you have chosen to subscribe.

Tech Tip #2: ... But don't reply

The one downside to our forum is that you cannot hit REPLY to the e-mail you receive about forum posts. If you REPLY, that e-mail only comes to the forum administrator. You will need to log into the forum to continue the discussion. That's a great segue into Tech Tip 3.

Tech Tip #3: Start your day off right

One suggestion from Adam Hanson of the Auburn School Department is that you automatically start your day by including MeASBO. You can do that various ways. You can add a shortcut to the forum to your desktop to make it quick and easy to get into and make it easier when you sign onto your computer in the morning to open that up.

You can also choose to have the username and password automatically saved so it is a quick-and-easy process to sign in. That way if you think of a question or get an e-mail you want to respond to, you will be more apt to post it instead of not bothering.

Another option is that in your web browser you can have two "home" pages so when you open your browser you can have normal home page, be it Gmail or whatever and then another tab with MeASBO forums which makes it easy to jump over there.

To change your home page or add an additional one, in Chrome, go to Settings, then to "On Startup," then in the small window, click "Open a Specific Page or Set of Pages," hit "Set Pages" and in the small window that comes up you can add or delete as many web addresses as you want.

Alternatively you can open the pages that you want in the browser tabs ahead of time and then follow the same directions and simply hit the "Use Current Pages" button. I typically have it open my Gmail, MeASBO and Infinite Campus in three tabs when I open Chrome.

For Internet Explorer, go to Internet Options, General tab, in the home page area, where you can paste or input each web address on a separate line. You can also have the tabs that you want as your home pages opened first and then follow the directions and once in the home page screen, hit the button that says "Use Current."

Make sure to include the forum <http://measbo.org/members/forum/default.asp>

Tech Tip #4: Get me out of this one!

Many of you probably already use some of these tools, but I think it's great to share tools you've found that are helpful. One of my favorite tools for Gmail is Undo Send. Undo Send allows you a few seconds after you send an e-mail to do the "Oh shoot, I meant to..." Or "No-o-o-o, I didn't mean to send that to her!!"

Continued on page 7

Beware Obamacare's Cadillac Tax

By Christopher Stevenson

Many school districts have historically provided generous health-plan benefits to school employees as a significant part of their overall compensation package. In addition to helping to promote the overall wellness of a school district's workforce, the health benefits are especially valuable to employees because employer-provided health coverage is a tax-free benefit (free from income taxes and any applicable employment taxes) to employees.

However, beginning in 2018, a key provision of the Affordable Care Act, often referred to as the "Cadillac Tax," may trigger new taxes on employer-provided health coverage and ultimately change the structure of health benefits provided to school employees. This article will provide an overview of key provisions of the Cadillac Tax and highlight some issues schools should consider in order to prepare for the new tax.

Key Cadillac Tax Provisions

The Affordable Care Act added section 4980I of the Internal Revenue Code, which provides that beginning Jan. 1, 2018, an excise tax will be imposed on the "coverage provider" if an employee receives an "excess benefit" with respect to employer-sponsored health coverage.

The excise tax is equal to 40 percent of the excess benefit. The excess benefit is calculated as the amount by which the total cost (employer's and employee's share) of health coverage (health insurance and any health FSA contributions) selected by the employee exceeds an IRS-prescribed threshold amount (for 2018, \$10,200 for individual coverage and \$27,500 for other coverage, subject to indexing discussed below).

For fully insured health plans (health coverage provided under a health insurance policy), such as those sponsored by the vast majority of school districts, the tax is assessed on the health insurance company issuing the insurance policy (e.g. Anthem, Cigna, etc.). However, any tax would likely be passed on from the health insurance company to the employer sponsoring the health plan in the form of increased premiums.

For example, if in 2018 a school district provides single-subscriber coverage to an employee under an Anthem health insurance policy with a total premium cost of \$11,200, the excise tax on the policy would be \$400 (40 percent of the \$1,000 excess benefit), assuming no HCAP adjustment (discussed below). Although the \$400 excise tax would be assessed on Anthem, the health insurance policy issuer in this example, Anthem would likely pass this \$400 excise tax on to the school district.

Absent special language in an employment contract or collective bargaining agreement addressing responsibility for the tax, the \$400 Cadillac Tax would likely be shared by the school district and the employee in proportion with the amount each pays for the underlying health insurance coverage.

So, if the employee were responsible for 20 percent of the cost of the health insurance premium pursuant to his/her employment



agreement, the employee would likely be responsible for 20 percent of the Cadillac Tax, or \$80, and the school district sponsoring the plan would be responsible for the balance.

Other relevant details regarding the Cadillac Tax include:

- May Apply to Small or Large Employers:

The Cadillac Tax may apply to any employer-sponsored health plan.

Unlike the "Play or Pay"

penalties, there is no exemption from the Cadillac Tax for small employers.

- Applies if the Coverage Selected Exceeds the Applicable Threshold:

Any excise tax is triggered by the health coverage selected by the employee and not by the health coverage offered to the employee. For example, if a school district provides two coverage options, basic coverage (which is below the applicable threshold) and expensive coverage (which is in excess of the threshold) and if an employee selects basic coverage, there is no Cadillac Tax triggered with respect to the employee covered under the Basic Coverage.

In this example, a Cadillac Tax could only be triggered by employees selecting expensive coverage.

- HCAP Adjustment for 2018:

The Cadillac Tax includes a health cost adjustment percentage ("HCAP") whereby either of the standard thresholds (\$10,200 or \$27,500) are subject to a possible upward adjustment for 2018 if the cost of either single or non-single standard coverage under a certain federal employees' health plan increases by more than 55 percent from 2010-18.

If either of such costs of coverage increases by more than 55 percent, the corresponding threshold amounts for 2018 will be increased by the percentage excess. If such costs increase by 55 percent or less, there will be no adjustment to the current Cadillac Tax threshold amounts for 2018. For years after 2018, there is no HCAP adjustment to the Cadillac Tax threshold amounts, but the standard threshold amounts are adjusted for changes to the consumer price index.

For example, if from 2010-18 the per-employee cost of providing self-only coverage for the Blue Cross & Blue Shield (BCBS) standard benefit option under Federal Employee Health Benefit Plan (FEHBP) increased from \$7,000 to \$12,000 (or 59 percent), the Cadillac Tax threshold for 2018 for single policies will be increased from \$10,200 by 4 percent (59-55 percent) to \$10,608.

Also, if from 2010-2018, the per-employee cost of providing non-single coverage (family, etc.) for the BCBS standard benefit option under FEHBP increased from \$22,000 to \$35,200 (or 60 percent), the Cadillac Tax threshold for 2018 for non-single policies will be increased from \$27,500 by 5 percent (60-55 percent) to \$28,875.

• **Calculating the Threshold Amounts, Include HSA, FSA Contributions:**

The cost of health insurance coverage for purposes of measuring the Cadillac Tax is the cost of COBRA premiums for such coverage, decreased by any portion of the premium costs that relates to a Cadillac Tax being passed on to the employer.

In addition to the cost of health insurance coverage, the following other types of coverage must be included or excluded as indicated:

Included in Cadillac Tax Calculation:

- Flexible Spending Account Contributions – (Employee and Employer contributions)
- Health Savings Account Employer Contributions
- Health Reimbursement Account Employer Contributions

Excluded from Cadillac Tax Calculation:

- Stand-Alone Dental or Vision Plans
- Accident or Disability Insurance
- Workers' Compensation Insurance
- Long-Term Care Insurance
- Supplemental Indemnity Coverage (e.g. AFLAC) Paid with After-Tax Dollars: For example, AFLAC coverage, if coverage is purchased by employee with after-tax dollars (e.g. outside cafeteria plan).

For example, consider a school district that sponsors a fully insured health plan and allows employees to contribute up to \$2,500 to a health FSA. If in 2018, single coverage under the health plan costs \$10,000 and employee X contributes \$2,000 of his salary to health FSA, a Cadillac Tax of \$720 would be imposed on \$1,800 excess benefit (\$10,000 + \$2,000 - \$10,200 threshold, assuming no HCAP adjustment).

Under the law, the pro-rata portion of the tax that relates to the FSA coverage is assessed directly on the school district and the portion of the tax relating the cost of the health insurance cover-

age is assessed on the insurance company (and likely passed on to the school district).

In this example, the school district would be assessed a \$120 tax and the health insurance company would be assessed the \$600 remaining excise tax (and likely pass it on to the employer as increased health insurance premiums).

• **Employer Responsible for Calculating Any Penalty:**

The employer is responsible for calculating the Cadillac Tax and notifying the IRS and each coverage provider (e.g., the health insurance issuer) of the amount of tax due.⁷

If the employer mistakenly underreports the tax due, the coverage provider (e.g., the health insurance company for fully insured health plans; the employer for self-insured plans and FSA coverage/HSA contributions) is required to pay any additional tax due, but the employer may be assessed a penalty.

In the case of a miscalculation, the IRS can assess a penalty on the employer equal to the additional tax due, plus interest.⁸

The IRS can waive the penalty in the event the employer had reasonable cause for the miscalculation and the error is corrected within 30 days that the employer knew or had reason to know that the miscalculation was made.

For example, consider a school district that in 2018 offers a self-only fully insured health policy with a total cost of \$11,200 but mistakenly assigns it a cost of \$10,200 for purposes of determining any Cadillac Tax, resulting in \$400 of unreported tax (40 percent, multiplied by the \$1,000 excess benefit). In this example, the health insurance issuer is responsible for the \$400 tax. Also, the employer is potentially subject to an IRS penalty of \$400, plus interest, on the underpayment of tax.

Conclusion

In order to begin to prepare for the Cadillac Tax provision in 2018, school districts should consider doing the following:



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√ Examine the health benefits package currently offered to employees and the current cost of health insurance premiums and determine whether it is likely that one or more of the current health insurance options available to employees will exceed the applicable Cadillac Tax thresholds in 2018.

If so, the school district should consider whether there are less costly health insurance options available elsewhere.

√ Examine current collective bargaining agreements and other employment contracts to determine whether those agreements call for the school district to provide the employee health benefits under a particular health insurance policy.

If they do, schools should consider the collective bargaining implications of that requirement. Because this can be a complex area involving the intersection of a significant change in federal law and the collective bargaining process, schools would be well served to consult with their legal counsel regarding how to address any collective bargaining implications that

may arise.

- Examine their supplemental health benefits offered, such as health FSAs, and determine whether those supplemental benefits are likely to generate a Cadillac Tax.

If so, the school district may need to make adjustments to these benefits prior to the school year beginning July 1, 2017.

For example, most school districts' health FSAs are drafted to allow employees to contribute the maximum permitted salary deferral (currently \$2,500).

School districts sponsoring health FSAs may need to lower the maximum deferral permitted under their particular health

FSA prior to 2018 so that the total cost of the school district's health insurance policy offered to employees plus the maximum health FSA deferral cannot exceed the applicable Cadillac Tax thresholds.

However, prior to adjusting any health FSA benefit, school districts will need to consider any collective bargaining implications of the change. •••

Christopher Stevenson is an attorney with Drummond Woodsum in Portland. This article was reprinted with permission from Drummond Woodsum from the company's fall edition of School Law Advistory.

Tech Tips

Continued from page 4

With a click, you can pull that e-mail back and correct your error or add the additional thought that you had. To activate this feature in Gmail, go to the gear on the upper right, click settings, then click the Lab tab, then scroll down until you see the choice Undo Send. Enable it and test it out.

Every time you send an email text appears that includes the chance to undo. You only have a few seconds but that is often all you need.

Tech Tip #5: Catch a falling star:

The last Tech Tip is the STAR function in Gmail. Most e-mail programs have something similar.

As you read through your email, it's a way to mark the ones that need more attention later, so those stars don't fall off the horizon.

Some programs use "flags." There are also programs and applications that help you quickly throw mail into various boxes "Read Later," "Do Soon."

Each day, I check my "Stars" to take care of the ones that I can and not lose track of important e-mails.

Do you have a tech tip? We have added a section to the forum to discuss Tech tools that help us keep our crazy day manageable.

Task apps, mobile apps; let's hear about what you can't live without! •••

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A case for revising Maine's referendums

By Stacie Field

With the stroke of a pen, the entire school budget is voted down. Maine's school consolidation law changed the way school systems obtain voter approval for their annual budgets. A one-question referendum, with the only answer being either "yes" or "no," makes it very difficult when the majority votes "no."

Taxpayers need to know they have a way to be heard, and a revised referendum pro-

ANALYSIS

cess would give voters the opportunity to be heard on each article.

The budget cycle begins again and continues indefinitely until a successful vote is reached. The process can be both frustrating and costly for all parties as there is no way to obtain feedback through a refer-

endum. A taxpayer may only be unhappy with a single line item, or one cost center, but their only option is to vote down the entire budget.

Cities, towns and even state government have no such requirement, and it seems something better could be put in place for a budget that provides the livelihood of thousands of Maine citizens, as well as the funding for the educational offerings of hundreds of thousands of Maine children.

School budget approval across the United States varies by state, from no voter approval to accepting or rejecting budgets in total. Results by selected states include:

- California — voter approval is not required for the general operating budget.
- Connecticut — voters accept or reject a total budget, with the town and school budgets presented as one.
- Delaware — referendum voting, maximum of two elections may be held each year.
- Georgia — maximum local levy without voter approval is 20 mills.
- Massachusetts — town meetings and city councils must approve school budgets.
- Mississippi — districts are limited to no more than a 7-percent increase from the prior year's *ad valorem* revenue without a referendum. From 7 to 10 percent, the referendum is by Protest Petition.
- Michigan — maximum local levy without voter approval is 27.5 mills.
- Nebraska — the county sets the levy necessary to collect the dollars needed.
- Nevada — the state government sets tax rates and collects and distributes proceeds. School districts have no taxing authority.
- New York — school districts place their budgets before the voters for approval. There is a limit of two votes on a budget and a simple majority is required for approval.
- Oklahoma — districts may levy up to 20 mills without voter approval. One election per month to exceed 20 mills can be held during the school year.
- Oregon — local permanent property tax rates can be applied to assessed value without voter approval.
- Rhode Island — voter approval is required for budget and tax increases. There are no limits on the number of elections that can be held in one year.
- Utah — all 40 school districts in Utah are fiscally independent. They may levy up to 13 different property taxes.
- Virginia — County boards of supervisors or city councils approve the school

Continued on page 30

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Caution Ahead:

School districts facing E-Rate funding phase-outs

By Angel Allen

Many Maine school districts, especially those in more economically disadvantaged areas, rely on the revenue from E-Rate to supplement their technology budgets. But the program's upcoming phase-outs in funding for telecommunications and intercom services are causes for concern.

For many years, the term "E-rate" has been uttered with equal parts excitement, angst and mystery.

Technology directors or business managers, who are responsible for filing the multiple forms necessary to receive E-rate funding, understand that the process is complicated and sometimes frustrating.

As a technology director, I have been involved with E-Rate since November 2000. E-Rate funding has allowed our small, rural district to provide students with access to technology that we could never have provided through local taxation. I have spent many hours immersed in the E-rate process. I am not a licensed E-rate consultant and I don't claim to be an expert, but I am happy to share my experience and research.

The Education Rate, commonly shortened to E-Rate, was established in 1996 to help schools and libraries connect to the Internet by providing refunds on services and selected equipment. The money for E-Rate is provided through fees assessed on consumers' telecommunication bills. On every phone bill, there is a fee, usually indicated by "Federal USF Charge," or something similar. The program is administered by the Universal Service Administrative Co. (USAC) and is overseen by the FCC.

Changes Coming

The 2015-16 school year will mark the beginning of changes to the E-Rate program that, in my opinion, will have significant impact on Maine schools. The "E-Rate Modernization Order" was issued in July 2014. The stated goals of this order are to ensure affordable access to high-speed broadband for schools and libraries, to maximize cost effectiveness of E-rate spending, and to simplify the E-rate application process.

Nationally, a commitment has been made to increase funding from \$2.4 billion to \$3.9 billion per year and to re-focus the funds to increase the number of



Of more concern, is the phase-out of telecom services. Each year, starting with 2015-16, the discount rate for these services will be decreased by 20 percentage points until it is completely eliminated.

— Angel Allen

schools with high-speed broadband and wireless connections.

As Internet technology has changed over the past 15 years, the proposed changes realign the E-rate program with its stated purpose – to help schools connect to the Internet.

Any reasonable person would certainly agree with those goals and intent of the Modernization Order, but to understand the impact that this will have on Maine schools, we need to look at a little history.

E-rate funding has always been divided into Priority 1 and Priority 2 requests. Priority 1 requests include telecommunication and Internet services. This allowed schools and libraries to receive refunds for a portion of what was spent on telephone service, cellular phone service, paging, webhosting, e-mail hosting, and Internet connections. The percentage refund is based on the free-and-reduced lunch rate

in the school or district, thus providing more funding to the most needy areas.

The most significant change for Maine schools is the immediate elimination of funding for some Priority 1 services and a five-year phase-out of funding for telecommunication services. As of the 2015-16 year, reimbursements will no longer be provided for website hosting, e-mail hosting, voice-mail hosting, paging, text messaging and some minor telecom charges (i.e., directory assistance).

Of more concern, is the phase-out of telecom services. Each year, starting with 2015-16, the discount rate for these services will be decreased by 20 percentage points until it is completely eliminated. A district that qualifies for a 6-percent discount, in 2015-16, will have 40-percent refunded; in 2016-17, only 20 percent, and in 2017-18 will receive no funding at all.

When E-rate began, many schools

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accessed the Internet through dial-up connections that required traditional phone service. Phone service is no longer needed for Internet connectivity. While the logic behind this decision is sound, this will have a large impact on Maine schools.

In the 2013 funding year, Maine schools received \$8.3 million in total E-Rate reimbursements. More than \$6.7 million of that was for telecommunication services. Approximately \$500,000 was for Internet connections and the remainder was for Priority 2 requests or Internal Connections such as servers, firewalls, and networking equipment.

While it is not strictly required by E-rate regulations, a majority of school districts dedicated the telecommunications refunds to supplementing their technology budget. In our district, it has been used to fund the ineligible portion of internal connections projects, provide additional funds for unexpected repairs, upgrade infrastructure, and increase access to technology devices in classrooms.

The loss of E-rate revenue will need to be a consideration for districts planning future budgets.

The revised program sets targets for Internet speed and wireless connectivity for schools as well as setting five-year budget limits for internal connections and encouraging consortia such as our Maine Schools and Libraries Network (MSLN). It also institutes administrative changes, including a 10-year document-retention requirement, elimination of the need to

have an approved technology plan, the requirement that all forms be completed online, and a change in terminology from Priority 1 and 2 to Category 1 and Category 2 requests.

In addition, many Priority 2 (now Category 2) components will no longer be eligible for funding. Historically, districts could apply for internal connections projects to install servers and internal telephone and voicemail systems. Effective immediately, these requests are no longer eligible.

Internal components that support a wireless data network such as switches, routers, firewall and wireless access points continue to be eligible, but are now subject to a five-year cumulative funding cap per school.

Though we sometimes don't realize it, the technology infrastructure of Maine schools is, on average, better than many states. The Maine Schools and Libraries Network (MSLN) offers high-speed Internet access to schools for a very minimal cost and middle schools and many high schools have updated wireless networks through the Maine Learning Technology Initiative.

While the changes to E-rate will likely result in a revenue loss for many Maine school districts, but should ensure that our Internet access and wireless networks continue to grow to meet our needs far into the future. •••

— Angel Allen is technical director for SAD #58

MeASBO Past President Anne Stinchfield passes away

AUBURN — Former Maine ASBO President Anne Marie Stinchfield, 71, of Phillips, passed away at The Hospice House of Androscoggin Home Care and Hospice here, with her loving family by her side.

Anne was born on Aug. 11, 1943, in Van Buren, the daughter of Albert and Bertha (Bellefleur) Michaud. She was educated in Limestone schools, graduating from Limestone High School in the class of 1961. She married John Stinchfield on Dec. 29, 1972, in Phillips.



She worked as business manager for SAD #58 from 1978 to 2011 and served all the offices for Maine ASBO (MeASBO), including its president in 2000-01.

She worked extensively on the Tri-State ASBO Planning Committee from 1998-2012.

In 2000 Anne received MeASBO's Dave Holden Award for outstanding achievement among school business officials.

She was active in the local PTF and Red Hats Society. She enjoyed sailing, knitting, golfing and attending her grandchildren's sporting events.

Among her survivors are her husband of 42 years, John E. Stinchfield of Phillips; her children, Julie A. Dyer and husband David of Phillips, Kenneth G. Stinchfield and wife Sarah of Windsor, Laurie J. Keck and husband Dennis of Valrica, Fla., Michael J. Stinchfield and wife Angela of Vassalboro, Kathy J. Knapp and husband James of Sanford; 12 grandchildren and four great-grandchildren.

•••

Donations may be made in Anne's memory to the Androscoggin Home Care & Hospice, 15 Strawberry Ave, Lewiston, ME 04243.



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Thwarting school data hackers

By Tony Payne

Google “hacking into school websites” and you may be amazed to see that more than 79 million results appear in just .38 seconds. Those results include step-by-step directions of how to create havoc and mayhem in the world of education.

The idea isn’t new. In 1983, actor Matthew Broderick was hacking his school’s grading system in the movie *WarGames*. If a bunch of computer-savvy kids are anxious to know more about breaking into school databases, consider there are professionals sitting in another country — but only a few key strokes away — who have a monetary incentive to access and sell your data.

Awareness of cyber security is growing. *CSI: Cyber* will launch on CBS in March, bringing the public increased awareness of the risks in our digital world. As one of the show’s producers said: “We are not in the business of inducing paranoia. The show will encourage people to think about their digital exhaust... every contact leaves a trace.”

No one would be making a big deal out of this crime if it were not for successful cyber attacks right here in Maine and across the globe.

Schools are attractive targets. For students, hacking a school computer is like winning a trophy in some unofficial competition. These “cyber-letes” are

looking for bragging rights in their circle of friends, or simply the self-satisfaction that they could do it.

Professional hackers are looking for data to acquire and sell (e.g. passwords, Social Security and bank account numbers, etc.)

When you are attacked, there are four very real consequences:

1) Your school’s reputation as a safe and secure repository for information is undermined.

2) Recovering and refortifying your system costs money.

3) The school system has legal obligations to notify all people whose data may have been accessed — and that costs a lot more money.

4) It is likely that someone is going to lose their job.

All this seems a long, long way from teaching kids the three Rs, but the role of schools has evolved into being social service providers and data repositories. With that expanded role, a school’s foundation is one of trust and the belief that those in authority have taken all reasonable precautions to make it a safe and secure place to learn and work. And that includes information.

People gain access to data in three primary ways:

✓ Theft: Someone steals a computing device on which data resides (e.g. cell phones, tablets, computers, flash drives). The theft or loss of devices has consequences. For example, a misplaced laptop by an employee of Alaska’s Department of Human

Services resulted in a \$1-million settlement with the federal government. It was not known if the laptop even contained personal information.

✓ Passwords: A hacker uses software that identifies passwords to gain access. SplashData, a research firm, reported that 3.3 million leaked passwords indicated that the most often used passwords are “123456” and “password.” Other passwords in the top 10 were “qwerty,” “dragon,” “baseball” and “football.” Password strength is your first line of defense.

✓ Deception: A school employee sees an email from a phony vendor representing themselves as an outside consultant doing an audit. The employee is asked to click on a link to review a file regarding that employee’s use of the school computer. “CLICK!”

The link is a worm that infiltrates your school’s computers.

This also is known as “social engineering,” a tactic to get people to take actions to gain access. This worm may then seek out financial data and encrypt it so that no one can access it until a ransom is paid.

If your school system has not done so, you need to create a cyber security plan

- the right insurance coverage (separate policies can provide higher limits and

greater coverage);

- a risk-control plan and staff training; and
- a recovery plan that addresses ongoing operations, data backup, regulatory compliance and reputation management.

All aspects of cyber security require that multiple people are involved in prevention and recovery. Your written (paper copy) plan should have all contact information, including after-hours telephone numbers and their roles and responsibilities when an event occurs. Make a note that your first call should be to the district’s legal counsel.

Administrators and staff have done an outstanding job of making schools physically safe places. Now the challenge is to thwart this surreal threat of data breaches, a task that is all the more difficult with unseen perpetrators.

Tony Payne is the Vice President of Business Development at Clark Insurance. They recently presented a breakfast briefing entitled Cyber Security Planning: Coverage, confidence & communications.

MeASBO moves on ...

It's been a Space Mountain-type ride

Changes in funding for Essential Programs and Services was voted as the most important issue MeASBO members have faced over the past two decades, according to a survey of those members.

EPS funding has been compared to the Space Mountain ride at Disney World: Up, down, around, sometimes breath-taking and always in the dark.

Running a close second was school consolidation, obviously grading far higher in its impact from business officials forced to ride that bronco than from their colleagues whose school systems were found worthy of standing unchanged.

Third was the fact that special-education funding is down 30 percent. (Does this reduction coincide with the supposition in the highest office of the DOE that schools have identified students as "special-ed worthy" simply because they were getting 100-percent funding for those kids?)

Fourth most important issue was LD1's 55-percent state funding of education, an aberration despite voters' approval. In fact, it stands as an emphatic display of the state Legislature's ability to sidestep, and completely ignore, a legal vote of the citizenry.

Rating fifth-most-important was No Child Left Behind, described by Brunswick's Jim Oikle as "No Behind Child Left."

Also gaining votes were the Affordable Care Act, charter schools, NEO, unfunded mandates, elected leadership who belittle school administrators and legislative changes that divert funds away from public education.

Other survey questions and some selected answers:

✓ **What has been the most important positive change over the past 20 years?**

• We have had much more appreciation shown to the Central Office staff.

• Automation of state reporting.

• Getting rid of the 45 Report and the SpEd02 Report.

• The elevation of business manager positions. One member said: "Twenty-plus years ago many of our business officials were entitled 'secretary,' or other such titles. Now we are recognized for our knowledge and skills as true 'business officials.' I am proud of the expertise we have as a group.

• The change in state funding of school construction projects.

• The Budget Validation Referendum model.

• Raising the bar on the professional skills and attributes nec-

essary to fulfill the role of the school business official.

• List serve and our web page.

✓ **What has been the most important technology advancement?**

• "I've been working in the central office for over 26 years, so I would definitely say going from typewriters to computers! Changed my life indeed!" exclaimed one member.

• Software, database and programs to manage time cards, payroll, HR, student information systems. Email and document scanning and storage.

• MEDMS financial replaces EFM-45.

• Streamlining of DOE reporting that has saved a lot of time during the summer months.

• Wireless technology, iPads, Google Docs.

• The MSLN data-line program.

• Digital reporting replacing manual.

1) That it has allowed instructional staff to provide customized learning experiences for students.

2) That it has allowed for complete and accurate student information and financial control.

3) A down side is the too accessible route of e-mail — communication that would not have been generated if you actually had to speak to someone personally.

• The MLTI program.

• Our web page!

• 1:1 technology for students.

✓ **What is your funniest memory of MeASBO meetings or conferences?**

Charlie Richardson walked away with this response as members recalled him showing up in a "lobstah outfit!" for a Tri-State ASBO trip to Peaks Island.

Dan O'Shea's guitar playing and singing famous tunes also won acclaim along with a Drummond Woodsum attorney who performed an electronic skit/caricature of former MeASBO President Ron Lavendar and the then-leadership team that was viewed at a regular meeting with the intent to loosen things up. It succeeded.

✓ **What has been your fondest memory of MeASBO?**

"Camaraderie" dominated these answers as members mentioned "meeting great people with all kinds of knowledge," "reconnecting with colleagues and old friends" and "all of the wonderful people I've met and who have been so supportive and from whom I have learned so much."

"How everyone is there to help everyone else. There is no

Continued on page 14

Knowing where to get the tools you need to solve problems can make a big difference in how successful you are... Being a member of Maine ASBO can help each one of us solve business problems that can surface at any time.'
—Then-MeASBO President Roger G. Levesque,
Augusta School Department (Fall 1998)

It is exciting to be part of an organization that has at its heart a worthy mission: the improvement of the service of its members through the establishment of high standards of this in our field. I could identify many of our members as exemplars of this mission.'
— Then-MeASBO President Donn Davis,
serving the Portland School Department (Fall 1999)

20 Years and Counting!

From 8 members to a place at the state 'table'

By Donn Davis and Jude Cyr
It is with great pleasure that we offer this missive as it relates to the history of our esteemed organization through the recent two decades.

We realize it is impossible to properly name all of the individuals who have been so instrumental in the creation and development of MeASBO. For that reason, we are being stingy with the identification of the many who are deserving of a more personal credit. Still, while we will sprinkle in a few names, please know that you all have had a part in the successes that is MeASBO and that no slight is intended. This is truly a homage to all of you.

We can identify with things beginning in the 1980s and framed our thoughts by the decades. To witness MeASBO's growth, from humble beginnings and anonymity to a time when it now has a "place at the table" at Department of Education and state legislative discussions, is exhilarating and highly fulfilling.

Clearly, the genesis of the organization was to provide an opportunity for those charged with the heavy responsibility of school business management to find a support network amongst colleagues. Colleagues seized the opportunity with enthusiasm, sharing contemporary ideas and networking with one another.

MeASBO's Constitution and By-Laws were fully authorized and officers were elected. (Right! More like if you were absent you were elected — and, by the way, congratulations!)

We can distinctly remember that we were invited as two "novices" to a meeting of the fledgling organization at Rolandeau's Restaurant in Auburn. There were maybe eight of us for these early meetings.

David Holden had soon moved on from his role as business manager in Portland to the world of real-estate development in Freeport. His many contributions gave rise to the naming of the School Business Official of the Year Award in his honor after his health-related early passing.

We remember the likes of Russ Fearon, Charlie Richardson, Ed Ainsworth, Robert Hodge, Connie Jones and Lee Akerley in those early meetings all impacted MeASBO's future growth.

Charlie was able to temper Ed's seriousness with well-placed doses of humor before fisticuffs ensued on any given topic.

"Heat" was usually generated as a result of legislative initiatives and Department of Education (DOE) rulemaking — mainly the advent of Handbook IIR and 1985 School Finance Act,

which coaxed more than a few superintendents and business managers into early retirement!

This is not an indictment of DOE; laws change as do rules. Lucille Johnson, Suzan Beaudoin and Gary Leighton were early colleagues and champions of our cause and are owed a debt of gratitude for their efforts on our behalf.

In fact, it is a hallmark of our organization that we, as members, embrace change with positive intentionality.

Two peanuts walked into a bar. One was ah-salted. (We just want to make sure you are paying attention!)

It is notable that it was not until the 1990s that women became more prevalent in holding the roles of superintendent and business manager. Connie Jones, Norene Leathers, Kris Pottle, Anne Stinchfield, Carol Kinney and Diane Boucher joined the ranks as real movers and shakers, with a penchant for growing the organization.

It was during these times that Betty Crocker (not the cook!), business manager in the Gray/New Gloucester schools, was invited to attend the Tri-State professional development conference. The first 1-1/2-day conference convened in 1992 and was held in Fairlee, Vt. She was so impressed with the program that she asked our president, Charlie Richardson, to look into the opportunity more thoroughly.

Shortly thereafter, Charlie, Bruce Powell and Jude were invited to attend a meeting in New Hampshire to discuss the concept of having MeASBO more heavily involved in the Tri-State professional development conference. Mein's members embraced the concept and the first officially endorsed Tri-State ASBO Conference ensued. The conference has grown from 1-1/2 to a full three days, rotating annually since then with the various state ASBOs hosting the event, like clockwork!

Clearly, gentlemen, any success the organization has had since the addition of the ladies can be attributed to them!

Still, Bruce Powell and Scott Vaitones were able to leave a mark of progress on the organization through the 1990s. It was then that the notion of upgrading the role of the profession through certification gained traction and momentum.

The current method of certification developed by the MeASBO future-focused Certification Committee is worthy of emulation regionally and nationally. The high-quality offerings have clearly raised the bar on our professionalism. Countless individuals have taken full advantage of these professional development opportunities through MeASBO workshops and the Tri-State Conference. These opportunities have strengthened the professionalism of school business managers across our state.

Here is to another 30 years of growth, success and empowerment as we embark upon the challenges of the future!

Collectively, MeASBO and the vendors who support our group contribute significantly to the efficient operation of education. We're not educators as such, but we certainly contribute to all that allows education to take place.'

**— Bruce Powell,
then at SAD #44 in Bethel (Winter 2003-04)**

MeASBO is a wonderful resource for business managers. Through 14 years I've seen it build pride and professionalism in managing the affairs of Maine's schools.'

**— Jim Oikle,
Brunswick School Department (Summer 2014)**

A Space Mountain-type ride

Continued from page 12

stupid question!” was one response.

Another mentioned collaboration, serving on the Executive Committee and attending “terrific” Tri-State Conferences.

√ What was your greatest learning experience?

“Oddly enough, finding out that you existed last year,” one member joked.

Others pointed to the state reporting process, achieving School Business Official certification, learning about budgeting and Chart of Accounts (MEDMS), the ED279/EPS tutorial, the Tri-State Conferences, the training, the guest speakers and round-tables at MeASBO meetings.

“For me,” said one, “it was serving as the VP and the President which really pushed me to develop professionally and to learn to go beyond my comfort level.”

“Every time Linda Blessing visits, I learn a lot about HR. And she is so funny!” said another.

√ What’s the best thing about MeASBO meetings?

Networking. Networking. And, oh, yeah, networking/interaction/reconnecting/sharing.

The idea that sharing contemporary ideas and raising issues “in a risk-free environment” was high on people’s list.

“It is a great forum to try and find out things that are changing that we need to be up to date on for compliance. It is also a great group of people,” said one member.

“Talking to and learning from other business managers,” said another. “Sometimes I wish we had more time to just chat between speakers. I always seem to have some issue I’m researching and getting feedback from other members helps.

Simply “getting together” cuts it for one member who added, “I work alone and the meetings give me fantastic support.”

√ What is MeASBO’s greatest accomplishment?

- The website, the certification program and professional development won whopping support.

“I also sense in recent years that perhaps the state and other education groups are starting to give MeASBO greater respect,” was one comment that was indicative of others.

“To have made itself relevant enough to keep folks wanting to join and be active members,” was another repeated evaluation.

- Staying focused on all important issues during unsettled

Primarily, for me, MeASBO is a great resource. You’ve got so many people with different backgrounds to draw from. If you have questions somebody can draw from past experiences to help you.’



— Scott Eldridge,
RSU #4 in Wales (Fall 2012)

Past Presidents

Stacie Lowe Field	Spruce Mountain	2014-15
Sue Lambert	Fairfield	2013-14
Kathy Warren	Vinalhaven	2012-13
Kathy Warren	Vinalhaven	2011-12
Herbert Hopkins	Yarmouth Schools	2010-11
Maddy Bassett	MSAD #72	2009-10
Scott Vaitones	MSAD #40	2008-09
Ron Lavender/	MSAD #75	
Deb Holland	MSAD #52	2007-08
Deb Holland	MSAD #52	2006-07
Gary Smith	SU #2	2005-06
James Reny	Waterville Schools	2004-05
Alan Kochis	Bangor Schools	2003-04
Scott Vaitones	Westbrook Schools	2002-03
Dan O’Shea	Gorham Schools	2001-02
Anne Stinchfield	MSAD #58	2000-01
Donn S. Davis	Portland Schools	’99-2000
Roger G. Levesque	Augusta Schools	1998-99
Carol A. Kinney	Yarmouth Schools	1997-98
Kris Pottle	Farmington	1996-97
Sherron H. Porter	Windham Schools	1995-96
Jude G. Cyr	Auburn Schools	1994-95
Bruce Powell	MSAD #44	1993-94
Charles Richardson Jr.	MSAD #49	1991-93
Edward Ainsworth	Falmouth Schools	1989-91
Russell Fearon	Formerly Westbrook	1987-89
Robert Hodge	Formerly Biddeford	1985-87
Constance Jones	Formerly Brunswick	1983-85
Patricia Duncan	Formerly Camden	1981-83
Thomas Connelly	Formerly SAD #71	1980-81
Danville Dearborn Jr.	SU #29 (Mech. Falls)	1979-80
Francis Amoroso	Formerly Westbrook	1978-79

times regarding school funding, charter schools and school consolidations.

- Staying a player in DOE/state school business conversation.
- Great vendor support.
- There are many. The publication—I LOVE t. Tri-State, our great meetings with excellent speakers...
- I like the magazine. MeASBO is professional, orderly and a good group to be with.
- I only attend when you are in Bangor. The magazines are helpful, though.

• Where do you see MeASBO in five years?

- Made up of fewer business managers and more “office staff.”
- Providing greater information and support to school business officials.
- Hopefully with an increasing number of members with Business Official Certification.
- Hopefully by then we’ve found a way to share meetings electronically so that far-flung districts are able to take part without having to commit to a long commute and overnight stay.
- I would like to see MeASBO promote sharing or gathering of data points to compare and learn from each other.
- Ramping up the Certification Program and taking a more proactive role in getting members to participate in that program. Also reaching out with training and mentoring to new business managers.
- Steady as she goes. ...

Funding, or the lack of it, over 20 years

‘ At a couple of town meetings around here people have referred to the Department of Education as The Kremlin.’

— David Bridgham,
SU #92/SAD #26 (Summer '07)

‘ Our staff is used to freezes beginning earlier and earlier in the year, so they buy supplies for the year earlier



and earlier. I hate to see it, but I'm afraid it will probably have to come down to some staff cuts to meet the budget.’

— Brigette Williams,
RSU #38 in Readfield (Fall 2009)



‘The amount of control being exercised by the state is the bane of our existence.’

— Brian MacFarland,
now-retired from RSU #20

‘ Due to the EPS funding formula, we're going to be losing about \$2.4 million in state funding for 2008-09, so nobody wants us in consolidation. We're the only SAD that lost money through the EPS funding transition each year for the three years.’

— Sherry Small,
SAD #61 in Bridgton (Fall '07)

Essential Programs and Services, special-education funding and LD1. Because school business officials bear the brunt of the burden of paying the bills, these three topics understandably stood at the top of 2014's most crucial stories along with, of course, school consolidation, No Child Left Behind and Obamacare. Even before 2004 when the state Legislature maneuvered around LD1 and its mandated 55-percent school funding, MeASBO members had been on the financial equivalent of a high-octane Los Vegas rollercoaster — you know, the one that drops straight down at such a velocity that it leaves half the skin on your face plastered to that of the person behind you — yeah, that one.

Federal “stimulus” funding comes and goes. Curtailments come and go. The EPS calculations change. The budget ax falls from all different directions — local, state, federal — even county, if that were possible.

And yet school business officials survive each and every attack to their budgets.

“When you think about it historically, it has always been the same problem: not enough money to go around,” said Don Martel, now-retired business office manager for the Auburn School Department. “No matter what formula the DOE tries, it never works. You're struggling for the dollar. All they're doing is shifting the money from the state to local and back. It's like tennis and the school department is caught in the middle.”

Check out the rollercoaster:

A Time of Flat Funding and Rebellion

An analysis from Winter 2008-09

Think of a mountain climber nearing the peak, grasping for that highest boulder, then tumbling all the way back down the slope to base camp. Landing on a tent, he awakens those who were sleeping inside. In turn, they pummel him soundly for the mess he has made, let alone for breaking his promise of reaching that mountaintop.

Now consider the Maine state Legislature's journey since 2004 when Maine voters approved Question 1A, demanding that the state fund 55 percent of the cost of kindergarten-to-grade 12 education. After transforming the referendum into LD1 so they could ramp up to 55 percent over four years, legislators in the spring of 2007 appropri-

Continued on next page



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20 Years

Funding an the lack of it

ated for the current fiscal year, \$1.02 billion, which would have been just shy of 55 percent.

They almost, almost, reached the mountaintop. Just one more year and they would have stood at the pinnacle. But in the spring of 2008 they reduced that \$1.02 billion for FY '09 to \$983.5 million; and this session they slashed it again (in the Supplemental Budget Bill) to \$956 million.

"That's about \$100 million short of where it should be," pointed out Geoff Herman, director of state and federal relations for the Maine Municipal Association. "And that is what's being proposed as flat funding for the next two years.

Is that mountaintop pinnacle, the one Mainers voted for — 55 percent funding — a dream? It appears so. Despite the people's will.

And then came The Cliff (Summer 2009)

If Maine schools see the return of their curtailment money from the national stabilization and stimulus funds as smoothing the highway ahead, they need to brace for "the cliff" at the end of the road, officials warned. A "vista stop" might be a good suggestion to reassess their financial future.

"2012 will be very scary," said the late Anne Stinchfield, who was to retire soon from SAD #58. "I'm glad I won't have to make decisions then because it will be a tough, tough year."

"The more money the state puts in FY'10 there will be that much less in '11," said Alan Kochis of the Bangor School Department.

China was and is the answer for some (Winter 2010-11)

Is China the Answer? Some Say So

In an age of continually shrinking education dollars, with no end in sight, from where will Maine's help come? Increasingly the answer appears to be: China.

Yes, the country that holds some \$900 million of U.S. government debt is overwhelmed with far too many qualified students for its universities to handle and wealthy Chinese are intent on sending their children abroad for both high school and college education.

The result for Americans is exposure to a new culture and, more importantly for many, an infusion of much-needed revenue for schools.

An Open Doors Report in 2010 found that international higher-education students spent \$34 million in Maine per year. Adding 500 high school students to that number extrapolates to \$47 million.

"I'm bullish on this," said Wade Merritt, vice president of the Maine International Trade Center in Portland. "I think it's a great idea and hope it works out for public schools as well as it has for private schools."

Dr. Ken Smith, superintendent at Millinocket, said his school's 25 Chinese students in the fall of 2011 "will mean more than \$300,000 in revenues. We'll lose roughly \$327,000 in state subsidy. So this program will maintain what we have. And we will grow on that."

"The bottom line in China," said Suzanne Fox of Fox Intercultural Consulting Services in Falmouth, "is that you really don't know. Right now it looks like this will go on for another 10-plus years. Will education reform be in place in China by then? We don't know." ...



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"The perception I get from Augusta is that we're always hiding a pot of money in the next room; they just need to ask the right questions to get to it... I understand the issues involved in the legislative process, but in what industry ... would you be called upon to develop a budget several months in advance, not knowing what money you will be receiving?"

— Peter Gray,
SAD #75 in Topsham (Winter 2008-09)

"I have no idea how you budget in the spring for what's going to happen in the fall, especially if it's a virtual school and the others as well because we don't know and those final enrollments aren't required to be known until the first of September. And you're responsible for them whenever they occur."

— Then-Commissioner Jim Rier (Summer '14)

School consolidation rules the roost

20 Years

Back in 1996, MeASBO President Kris Pottle of SAD #9 in Farmington spoke of consolidation — something that didn't become reality until years later.

Pottle said: "Regionalization is being done informally all across the state. Consortiums are being formed to increase purchasing power. There are partnerships in staff development, and others are being studied."

Mentioning a group studying withdrawal from her SAD, Pottle added, "There are still angry people and reminders of the promises that were made at the time of the change. Taking away what some will perceive as local control will not come without a lot of anger."

Then came the command from the Governor's office and DOE: Consolidate or suffer penalties.

"We have twice the number of administrators for our population than the national average," Baldacci said. "We need to be smarter about it. I don't want to see people get laid off. But I think we're going to have to — through attrition. And if we do this early enough then we can transition it and we'll be able to do it without those kinds of involuntary layoffs. That's my goal, but I have to be responsible to the taxpayers, too."

He was met by nearly universal opposition among school administrators.

"I'm asking you [Gov. Baldacci] to consider four years," Superintendent James Morse of SAD #47 in Oakland said that night of the announcement in Lewiston. "Give these communities time to make the proposal to you as to what are the best configurations [for consolidation]. Give them an opportunity to present a unified front. Yes, we know consolidation has to happen, but it can't happen in 18 months..."

The intent of saving an estimated \$250 million a year — yes, that's \$250 million a year — was admirable. The result: well, it depends on where you live ... and who you "marry."

In America the average length of first marriages that end in divorce is eight years. The leading reasons for the break-ups: finances and "irreconcilable differences."

Sounds pretty close to "marriages" of school systems in Maine. ...

There is momentum toward consolidation, but right now it is purely voluntary. There are conversations happening all over the state.'
— then-Commissioner Susan Gendron
(Fall 2003)



When Gov. Baldacci's plan first came out I called it a 'decapitation strike.' In a battle plan you take out the top management and demoralize their army and disorganization happens.'
— Randy Stewart of SAD #35 (Summer 2007)

The timeline proposed by the governor ... is a timeline for chaos that will not allow for the thorough development and implementation and standardized processes statewide and will not achieve even the truly possible cost savings.'
— Ron Lavender of SAD #75 in Topsham (Summer 2007)

When you regionalize you must standardize. You compromise your identity. For some districts, the new standard would be an improvement that increases their cost. For others, it may mean compromising the quality of a service or a product.'
— then-MeASBO President Carol Kinney,
Yarmouth School Department (Fall 1997)



If anybody's going to know savings potential, we are. We're doing it every day... Perpetuating the idea that there is all sorts of wasteful administration in schools is insulting.'
— Dan O'Shea,
Yarmouth School Department

People are definitely concerned for their jobs. When the governor's plan came out and said 40 percent of back-office jobs would be cut, that was pretty scary.'
— Sue Lambert,
SAD #49 in Fairfield (Summer 2007)

20 Years

While operating costs have been our bane...

Costs for any goods or services of any kind seldom go down — No. 2 heating oil, stand up! — but school business officials have a way of drilling deeper than a coal-mining outfit to discover new techniques for squeezing juice from the dry rock of finances.

Some insights from the past...

‘We spend a lot of time tracing our revenues and squeezing every penny.’
— Trish Hayes,
then at SAD #41



‘It’s like getting a haircut. If you get it cut every two or three weeks, people don’t notice. It’s the same with buildings. If you wait until everything is shot, then things are ruined and gone and the building looks bad... Every building should be renewed over a period of years: the boiler and hot-water heater every five to eight years, carpeting every seven or eight years, hot top every 20 years...’

— Dick Lewia, maintenance director
SAD #71 in Kennebunk (Winter 1998-99)



‘Math, science and English always stay, but photography, technology and foreign languages — which are forever evolving — those kinds of things must be evaluated.’

— Terry Gauvin,
Biddeford School Department
(Winter 2012-13)

‘Taxpayers have heightened awareness of the expenses of a school system. We have to keep that in the forefront of our minds as we start developing our budgets. We have to hold expenses in check as much as possible in order to get a budget passed.’

— Deb Holland,
Jay School Dept. (2007)



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Creative solutions have been our blessing

From Fall 2007

Performance Contracting: 'Pay late' is an easy choice for many school districts

In an era of tight budgets and rising energy prices, beleaguered school business managers are desperately seeking a hero to step to the fore. Look. Up in the sky. It's a bird. It's a plane. It's... it's Performance Contracting.

Performance Contracting is a mechanism to implement resource-efficiency improvements with minimal up-front costs. It uses savings resulting from the efficiency project to pay for the work over time.



A young Alicia Lyn Leslie knew the solution to the question.

"The list [of geothermal projects] has grown exponentially. Five or seven years ago, we were doing one geothermal project. Now we're doing eight," said Department of Education Facilities Director Scott Brown.

Foam roofing

Spray polyurethane foam (SPF) roofing systems are an energy-saving alternative. A 2004 study by Michelson Technologies in climate areas of the U.S. concluded that the average SPF roofing system cost between 15 and 50 percent less to install and maintain than conventional membrane systems over a 30-year period.

From Summer 2008

Reverse e-bay is saving eye-opening numbers.

The GetBestBid electronic bidding portal has completed a four-year development project which, through a six-month pilot demonstrated significant savings for the participating districts. Maine SAD #36 (Livermore, Livermore Falls) began work on the concept in 2004. In 2005 an online bidding portal (GetBestBid.com) was introduced.

Essentially the portal allows schools to enter bids for products that vendors use a reverse auction process that promotes the best price. Schools have saved on average 10 percent on laptops, 13 percent on ink cartridges, 24 percent on furniture and equipment, and 53 percent on cleaning supplies.

Cost avoidance

Like the motion sensor that turns vending machines on and off, is becoming a key to squeezing more out of every dollar and realize that, as energy consultant Doug Baston of Alna says, "It's cheaper to save electricity than to generate it."

In the four years Bill Donovan has worked as energy manager with SAD #75 in Topsham, Bowdoin, Bowdoinham and Harpswell, the energy-conservation program has saved taxpayers \$825,000. In the first year he plied his trade at Freeport taxpayers there realized \$84,000 in "cost avoidance."

- Turn off lights and computers.
- Daylighting
- A ventilation system designed for maximum use of fresh outside air.
- High-quality pendant lighting fixtures, with electronic ballasts.
- Replace old T12 lighting with new HPT8 lights which can mean 30-percent less electricity use
- Use Vending Miser, which regulates the machine to turn on only enough to keep temperatures at a prescribed setting.

Geothermal

"Think of the earth as a huge low-temperature boiler. It sits there at a constant 50 degrees and it has huge mass. That's our 'boiler,'" said Lyndon Keck of Portland's PDT Architects.

From Winter 2008-09

Furlough Days wins Oxford Hills coverage at NBC

Faced with a mid-year budget curtailment of \$502,000 and having trimmed the budget to the barest of bones but still falling \$70,000 short, Oxford Hills School District officials rolled out a program that others around the country might want to emulate.

Less than five weeks after being unveiled, the Voluntary Give-Back Program had raised \$78,000 and national television exposure when NBC's Nightly News named the district Citizens of the Week. Checks then came in from virtual strangers around the country.

"We're pretty proud of how it has turned out. It was a huge effort," said Business Manager Catherine Fanjoy.

The idea: voluntary furlough days.

The response: 360 of the district's 600 employees, including every ed tech (whose jobs were in jeopardy) participated.

From Summer 2009

P-Cards savings are huge

Exploding the myth that "more paperwork means a better paper trail" and all that plastic cards are evil, Ron Everett of the Illinois ASBO unveiled the Procurement Card (p-Card) to Tri-State school business officials.

p-Cards, a procedure for consolidating all a school's small monthly purchases into one invoice and one payment, had spread to New Hampshire, Vermont and seven other states since 2004.

"In the last 15 to 20 years changes in technologies have allowed us to create better tracking of transactions using electronic means than by paper means. But [schools] haven't kept up. We still process paper requisitions, paper purchase orders (Pos), invoices, checks. We still do all the things that use paper, paper, paper, paper," Everett said.

Meanwhile, then-Education Commissioner Susan Gendron reported: "School systems around the state that have used (the on-line procurement system E-procurement) have saved tens of thousands of dollars. They will reach hundreds of thousands a year in savings as more school systems come on-line."

20 Years

From Fall 2009

Biofuel opens the eyes in more schools

School officials around the state have been taking pilgrimages to Mt. Abram High School in Kingfield. The reason? Maine SAD #58 last year installed the first pellet boiler in the state and the upside — with the unstable price of oil from year to year — is promising.

“I was super-surprised how nicely this equipment works. I was worried about maintenance, but it just hasn’t happened. It runs as good if not better than oil-fired equipment,” said Dan Worcester, then-maintenance director at SAD #58.

From Winter 2009-10

Of teachers and buses

Jude Cyr said he found the Auburn School Department could save eight teacher positions if minimum class sizes were increased from the current 17 to 22. Those eight positions would mean a savings in the hundreds of thousands.

Portland School Department Transportation Director Kevin Mallory predicted the simple purchase of three six-passenger Dodge Caravans instead of a \$75,000 bus, which had been planned with Capital Improvement Program money from the city.

“I can now get 22 miles per gallon versus 7 mpg in what is basically a big yellow taxi cab,” Mallory said.

From Winter 2011-12

The wisdom of Cathy Messmer of the Lisbon

- Switching to natural gas saves at least \$40,000 every year.
- The department switched from paper time-sheets to an electronic time clock system. Those time sheets are uploaded directly

to the payroll software.

- Purchase orders are all electronic, sent electronically from the secretary to the principal and then to Messmer for approval.

From Fall 2012

‘Cash in lieu’ buyouts are a great idea with major savings — if done right

Some say the time has come for Maine school districts, if not doing so already, to consider offering faculty and staff “health buyouts” or “cash in lieu health insurance” which, when done effectively, can save hundreds of thousands of dollars a year.

In this instance, a school offers each employee from \$1,000 to \$3,500 in additional salary each year not to take their insurance. That means if the district pays 85 percent of a family policy worth \$20,000, that’s a cost of \$17,500. With the buyout, the cost goes down to \$3,500.

About one-third of Maine schools offer what they call “cash in lieu of health insurance.” But in New Hampshire most schools offer similar “health buyouts” and are saving substantially.

“Most bargaining groups have ‘bargained in’ health buyouts and those can be a big saver.”

From Winter 2013-14

Move over, Chocolate bar and cookie drives

RSU #2’s Futures Committee is organizing fund-raisers like ice-fishing derbies, a golf tournament, a mud run — outside-the-box endeavors.

“We want two things: one, to attract folks from outside so our towns can highlight what makes them great; and, two, to gain revenues from folk other than RSU #2 residents,” said Superintendent Virgil Hammonds.

From Summer 2014

And then there are school gardens

It’s a 21st century “revival” — not in religious terms but in agricultural. Not only has Maine reversed its downward spiral in the number of operating farms but an inspiring number of its schools have taken to starting student gardens; greenhouses; hoop houses; sugar houses; raised beds; blueberry, raspberry and strawberry fields; and even orchards.

Maine’s schools are taking advantage of numerous government, corporate and private grants as well as expertise from such programs as AmeriCorps, FarmCorps, Farm-to-School, Healthy Maine Partnerships, Maine Organic Farmers and Growers Association and Maine’s Department of Agriculture.

“Our students are involved in 100 percent of the cycle — planting cultivation of the crops, care of the farm, selling in the store. Our ag-science and career center continue to grow. The curriculum includes marketing and a variety of other courses that relate to practical hands-on experience,” said Dr. Gehrig Johnson, superintendent at RSU #1 in Presque Isle.

Presque Isle’s 38-acre School Farm, which hires 50 to 60 students each summer to work its farm and store, is the biggest school farm east of the Mississippi River and earns from \$175,000 to \$200,000 a year.

“What they’ve done is simply remarkable,” said Karla Miller, then of the Augusta School Department.

Another successful program is at SAD #17 in Norway, where farm director Danie Rennie said: “We’ve grown really fast. We had to slow down and say, ‘OK, what do we do very well and how do we make it sustainable and what is our mission?’ ... We’re the school’s farm. We hope to supplement as much of the school lunch program as possible especially the summer feeding program.” ...



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And then Big Brother intervened

20 Years

7 he 2,600-page Affordable Care Act, commonly known as Obamacare, may not be the equivalent of the Zombie Apocalypse, but neither is it “affordable.”

While Jan. 1, 2014, loomed upon schools with myriad provisions and demands, President Barack Obama unilaterally demurred, delayed and delayed again key segments of the law, confusing an already puzzled public. But, hey, it has kept school business officials, insurance industries — not to mention an army of lawyers — on their toes.

Combined with the ACA, the Maine Education Association Benefit Trust’s refusal to release health data to school officials and open up bidding for insurance contracts to someone other than Anthem, became a local hot-button issue. The MEABT and Anthem have owned a virtual monopoly on health coverage of Maine’s teachers for many years.

But in the fall of 2012 the Federal Appeals Court in Boston cleared the road and MEABT relented so that insurance carriers and brokers can now obtain the necessary information they need to use in their standard underwriting practice to determine plan design and cost options.

The ACA has taken many ‘hits’

“School business officials should, first, not fear the ACA like it’s the Zombie Apocalypse; and, second, stop searching for the affordable part.”

— Chad Cote,
Clark Insurance



... and so has the MEA Benefits Trust

“The last couple years haven’t been so bad, but we’ve had years of double-digit increases in premiums.”

— Alan Kochis,
Bangor School Dept.



“All I can say about Obamacare is that it is unethical. I don’t know how you can charge someone a penalty for not being able to afford insurance.”

— Stacie Field,
RSU #73 in Livermore Falls

“Unfortunately, the IRS’s final regulations do not directly address many of these issues [play or pay penalties]. However, they do include a few important new developments about which school districts need to be aware.”

— Christopher Stevenson,
Drummond Woodsum

“We did not want to do this. We wanted to remain fair to everybody. Altruism is done... Some districts will say, ‘Yahoo!’ We won! And will go somewhere and get a better deal. What most don’t realize is that they are not in the higher-performing segments. Districts in the 200s will literally see a doubling if they are on their own by themselves.”

— Christine Burke,
MEABT executive director

“The MEABT will be losing a lot of us in Southern Maine.”

— Dan O’Shea,
Falmouth Public Schools



Even in the cafeteria Uncle Sam took charge

It's a classic example of one level of government setting a priority and demanding that another level of government pay for it, according to Marge Kilkelly senior Policy advisor to Sen. Angus King. And now some exasperated Maine schools are joining more than 600 others nationwide that are rebelling against the federal Healthier Hunger-Free Kids Act of 2010 which demands exhaustive and seemingly inflexible regulations. We reported in the fall of 2014.

This all in the midst of a School Nutrition Association report that 25 percent of school lunch programs have lost money for more than six months because of the federal inspired food options; a U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) survey that found student lunch participation has dropped in 49 states; USDA estimates that the meal standards will force schools to absorb \$1.22 billion in additional food, labor and administrative costs in 2015b alone, up from \$362 million this year; and a Government Accountability Institute finding that students are throwing away more than \$1 billion worth of unwanted food a year.

Since the federal act was rolled out in 2013, it has been found to contain so many snags that, as Kilkelly noted, "not one silver bullet, but silver buckshot" is needed to fix it.

**“It has gone past
“healthier” to “What’s
the strictest thing
we can do?””**

**— Will Hamilton,
RSU #18 food service director**



**“The one-
size-fits-all
approach
doesn’t
help. It’s
frustrat-
ing because
we’ve been
recognized
for our**

**healthy food, our school nutrition
program is excellent and we’ve won
awards. And here we’re told that’s
not sufficient.**

**— Kate Bolton,
Scarborough School Department**



**“In one visit to the largest
of our six schools, I found that
we dumped over 90 of the 136
pounds of fruits and vegetables
that we served. We threw away
almost twice as much as the
students actually consumed,
and by all accounts that was a
typical day. A very conservative
estimate shows that we
will throw away over
\$21,000 worth of fruits and
vegetables this year.”**

**— Stephanie Salley,
food service director of RSU #34**

**“Our program had always made
money or broken even until all the
new regulations were put in place...
People have to understand that
all these regulations affect some-
thing. You’re going to either have
fewer supplies, laptops, curriculum
materials, et cetera, or an increase
to the community’s taxes to
support the lunch program.”**

**— Scott Poulin,
SAD #51 in Cumberland**



**“We are our distributors’ lowest
margin of profit. Some products
[to meet regulations] won’t be
available until next July.”**

**— Alisa Roman, food service director,
Lewiston School Department**



**“My question,
Mr. Secretary, is,
“What does the
department have
against pota-
toes?””**

**— U.S. Sen. Susan
Collins to Department
of Agriculture Secre-
tary Tom Vilsack, who
had declared potatoes
off-limits to school
lunch programs**

21st-century schools: a whole new world

By Jeff Larimer, AIA, CSI

To the architects at Harriman, there is no better context than the K-12 market in which design can impact both the present and the future. While empowering academic professionals to educate with greater effectiveness, good design also provides the best environments for students to live, learn and reach their full potential.

The last 20 years have witnessed a great many changes in how schools are designed and what it costs to build them. These changes have been driven by how children are educated, advances in technology, a desire for a healthy energy-efficient environment, and the need to keep our children safe.

Teaching Methods

Schools still have classrooms but they are being used differently as technology has transformed how students are taught and how they are learning. Today's learning spaces need to be more flexible in order to adapt to new technology and teaching methods.

However, classrooms are only part of the experience. Today, learning happens everywhere, it is project-oriented, and students learn individually or in groups. The traditional library has become a "commons," providing technology-rich learning, research and project spaces.

STEM education is being integrated into the curriculum as a popular component of preparing students for careers in science, technology, engineering and mathematics while allowing them to focus on collaboration and innovation.

Many students are learning in different ways and many need specialized education to help them learn. Special services being offered now have increased the need for more specialized spaces. It can be languages, learning disabilities, behavioral issues or some other need that requires individual attention to provide equity in education to all students.

Technology

Classrooms 20 years ago were lucky to have a TV in each room. The teacher was the center of learning, using chalkboards and cumbersome overhead projectors to teach and communicate lessons.

Today, an abundance of learning technology smart boards and wireless networks is integrated into the design of the classroom and each student may have a laptop or tablet for their own use. Teachers and students now have the world at their fingertips.

Energy Efficiency/Healthy Learning Environments

As energy costs have increased, architects consider energy-efficient lighting, heating, ventilation and plumbing fixtures to make the most of every dollar spent. Buildings are tighter and better insulated, systems and controls are significantly more complex but are more efficient in their operation.

Alternative systems, such as biomass or geothermal, have become more commonplace in new schools as they move away from traditional and more expensive fossil fuels.

LEED and other protocols now impact the design of schools as well as the selection of materials and equipment. A well-designed energy-efficiency project can also significantly improve lighting and indoor air quality — features that are essential for learning, health and the well-being of students and staff.

Safety and Security

The design of a school and its surrounding campus plays a

major role in preventing crime and facilitating safety measures. As a reaction to increasing threats facing society, schools have had to implement greater safety and security measures, such as security vestibules, security cameras, electronic card access systems, and redirecting how visitors are allowed to enter a school.

The question for architects and engineers is, what is next? With every school district being forced to do more with less, the next 20 years is sure to bring even more change to how schools are designed and constructed. ...

— Jeff Larimer is principal and architect at Harriman.

In 1998 the new 150,000-square-foot Leavitt High School in Turner, enrollment 734, opens for Maine SAD #52; the price tag: \$17.5 million. In 2006 the new 177,500-square-foot Cony High School, enrollment 967, opens in Augusta; the price tag: \$32 million. In 2007 the planned 182,000-square-foot K-12 Mt. View school complex in Unity for SAD #3, enrollment 1,100, gets under construction; price tag: \$40 million.

“It has been my experience, both as a design engineer and as an expert witness reviewing construction failure scenarios, that the design-bid-build process better serves the school on these reroofing/ structural upgrade projects.”

— William P. Faucher,

Allied Engineering (Winter 2004-05)

“Incremental costs associated with new codes, just a dime or quarter per square foot here and there, really adds up.”

— Joe Hemes,

Stephen Blatt Architects (Winter '06-07)

“There may come a day when school buildings will be treated as living machines. A lot of things flow in and out of buildings. Water flows in and waste and sewage out. Energy in and out. Air in and out. The idea of a 'living building' is that it doesn't just sit there passively, but contains actual systems and technologies that clean the air, the sewerage...”

— Danuta Drozdowicz

Fore Solutions (Winter 2006-07)

20 Years

Amazing advancements in security technology

Looking further into the future, with microprocessors getting exponentially smaller and the power to run them being equally reduced, forward thinkers envision a day when a whole myriad of wireless sensors (smoke, motion, temperature, humidity, air quality, gas, CO₂, just to name a few) will be mixed into the paint being applied to the walls and the power to operate them will be produced by the sway of a high-rise building.

By Bradford J. Norris

I recall back in the “good old days” when, for the very first time, I saw a security system that was controlled by a computer.

I am dating myself but I remember thinking that a computer is for things like word processing, chatting and Internet surfing, so how can it possibly be used as a security system?

Now of course, almost every security system is software-controlled. The security and fire-alarm control panels are really mini-computers, dedicated to a specific function.

I also remember an ad from one of the control-panel manufacturers that read, “Now with a microprocessor, you can do everything that you never cared to do with our system.” While I found it quite humorous, they certainly were not thinking out-of-the-box because today these systems are used in ways and integrated to other systems in modes that very few could even imagine back then.

Today, computers are an integral part of almost every electronic security system function. Whether it is an access control system or a Network Video Recorder (NVR – a special server with extra-large memory space), it is all run by software.

Most of the recent, truly amazing

‘ We already have cameras with special algorithms in the software to detect smoke and flame, camera systems that will point out where a fight has broken out amongst a crowd of tens of thousands, and video management systems that will highlight everybody wearing red when it was reported that someone wearing a red jacket just committed a crime.’

advancements in security have been with video surveillance systems.

We used to have cameras wired with expensive coaxial cable into one or maybe two locations with banks of small monitors that security guards would try to follow. Time-lapse recorders were used with VHS tapes and when an event occurred, you were seldom able to capture it on camera.

Now we can record thousands of cameras simultaneously full-time and have triggered events that automatically pull up live video onto a big screen.

With a Video Management System (VMS), these NVRs provide amazing search capabilities so that when an event occurs, you can actually find it amongst the hours, days, weeks of recorded images

from all of the cameras.

Security personnel and homeowners alike can now get onto a PC and remotely watch live or recorded video from their system, or even better, bring the video signal directly to a smart phone.

Another smartphone/VMS application is the ability to turn your phone into a camera to provide an instantaneous live feed to a security office and record it all on the system’s NVR. IP-Based Megapixel Cameras are not the future, they are here and now and one camera can cover the area of four or more analog cameras.

However, with the detail they provide, they take up a great deal more memory space and would not have been as widely accepted if it were not for two other advancements: new compression technologies (H.264) and the amazingly low cost for memory these days.

The new generation of IP-Based Cameras are also much less costly to install. They can be put on your existing network to eliminate wiring costs, or on its own dedicated network to substantially reduce wiring costs compared to the days of coaxial cable.

Video Analytics is another amazing technology and yet, it is only in its infancy. We already have cameras with special algorithms in the software to detect smoke and flame, camera systems that will point out where a fight has broken out amongst a crowd of tens of thousands, and video management systems that will highlight everybody wearing red when it was reported that someone wearing a red jacket just committed a crime.

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And with all of these feature advancements, the greatest advancement of all is that these feature packed devices are truly affordable. You can buy a high-quality indoor/outdoor, true day/night, 3-mega-pixel camera that includes IR illuminators (they illuminate the viewing field of the camera at night without casting visible light onto the scene) for less than \$250.

That is truly amazing!

What will the future bring? Video Analytics will grow by leaps and bounds. Cameras will be able to detect things or events that we never thought possible just a few years ago. Also biometric readers, a technology that didn't work well when it was introduced for access control, will be widely used.

Along with hand or thumbprint readers and iris readers, add the latest facial recognition system that uses standard off-the-shelf cameras to determine who the system should let into the building and who should be locked out as people pass by the camera just in front of the door.

Another great future advancement will be with wireless technologies. When I got into this business 35 years ago everyone was predicting, "Wireless is the future!"

However, it was another technology that failed when first introduced and most of the early generation of wireless systems were replaced or abandoned for a good reason. They were not reliable.

Today, wireless systems work as well as hard-wired systems.

You just have the extra battery maintenance to deal with, but new battery technology reduces that and the installation savings often makes up for it many times over.

We are also able to send huge packets of data over wireless networks today, allowing you to put sensors, cameras, or access-control readers in locations that would have been cost-prohibitive if it had to be wired.

The use of computers and smart phones for security will continue to be expanded by everybody in the workplace or at school to act as emergency alert and information centers.

Like so many others technologies, the security industry has seen so many rapid changes that even those in the industry struggle to keep up with it. Never before has it been more important for the security buyer to make sure they are partnering with a firm that is working on the leading edge of technologies; otherwise the systems being purchased today will soon be obsolete.

As Carly Simon put it, "These are the good old days." and in my world they are just amazing.

— *Bradford J. Norris is security professional with 35 years experience.*

From Summer 2013

20 Years

"If my taxes went up a hundred bucks a year I'd pay it in a heartbeat to know that my kids will be coming home from school every day."

— William Weese,
Lake Region Security

"We used to have a couple of street lights and call it 'good.'"

— Alan Kochis,
Bangor School Department



"We've seen a marked increase since Sandy Hook. Last year to this year, we are doing 43 percent more work in schools that we are in retail-commercial... A lot of school boards woke up..."

— Peter Green,
general manager of Securadyne in Westbrook



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Transportation technology saves thousands

School business officials battling in the tug-of-war between limited resources and giving students the best education possible, find few resources to save money.

Transportation routing software is one of them. In 2009, the state of Maine turned to Transfinder to provide its districts with a “no-cost” opportunity to access the company’s comprehensive suite of products and services to manage their pupil transportation departments safely and efficiently.

Transfinder has been a leading provider of student transportation management systems since current President & CEO Antonio “Tony” Civitella developed Transfinder Pro, the routing software system for school transportation.

Civitella fine-tuned the company’s flagship product and led it from its DOS foundation onto a new Windows platform, which made the product easy to use and intuitive for transportation personnel who were just becoming comfortable with Microsoft Windows applications.

Civitella continued to lead the development of the product while expanding the company’s line of product offerings, and in 2009 the state of Maine came on board.

Throughout the state, districts realized savings from not having to invest in new or upgraded hardware to run their transportation, and by incurring no annual support fees for the system and technical support services. All districts within the state have access to a comprehensive suite of products and services that include:

- Routefinder Pro for creating safe and efficient routes;
- Infofinder le for district-wide access to transportation data, via the district’s intranet, as well as electronic field trip management;
- Infofinder i for parents to see a map of their homes and the bus stops and schools serving them; and

Saving Schools Millions: Ruth’s Reusables making a huge impact from Kittery to The County

When Kevin Healy, then a UNUM vice president who handled charitable giving have her a start-up grant of \$26,000 in 1996, he asked Ruth’s Reusables founder Ruth Libby of Scarborough, “Do you realize how big this could get?”

Libby recalls, “I said, ‘Oh, yeah,’ but I was totally lying. I had no idea. I just didn’t. It’s a big snowball thing bigger than I ever every would have imagined.”

“I’m one of their frequent flyers. The savings is incredible, doubling, tripling, quadrupling the student membership fee,” said Kathie Marquis-Girard assistant principal at Portland High School

Kate Bolton of the Scarborough School Department said, “We received well over \$100,000, so the investment is really well worthwhile... an awesome resource for us.”

“Last year Millinocket saved \$25,000 in goods — from teaching supplies to books to tables and chairs,” said Dr. Ken Smith, superintendent of Millinocket schools. “And some of that furniture is very expensive — things you wouldn’t be able to buy for a school system.”

Through the years

1990s: Infofinder le and Infofinder I are new products added

+/- 2000: Fleet Maintenance is added

2008: Busfinder is developed (GPS integration software allowing district to compare their planned routes (in Routefinder Pro) to their actual routes (GPS data)

2009: RouteBuilder is introduced (portable GPS device used for implementation of routes)

2013: Infofinder mobile is launched to the market (1st mobile app)

- Servicefinder for fleet and inventory management.

Implementing the software has made significant improvements in these districts’ operations. In SAD #59 alone, then-Transportation Director Bob Hagopian was able to take advantage of the training and technical support services and completely revamp his routing operation. SAD #59 reduced transportation to one tier by redoing its routes and implementing a walking school bus. These changes alone saved the district \$200,000.

RSU #54 was able to save \$80,000 annually. Using the map as a visual tool to see all of her routes at once, Transportation Director Ann Barriault could see where the routes were overlapping. Then, using the software’s functionality, she adjusted the stops and moved students, saving miles, time and fuel.

In addition, Falmouth Public Schools, which already owned the software, added the Servicefinder program. Transportation Director Phil Dobson, who was very familiar with the routing component, and actively used it to organize his entire operation, was able to continue using it, and eliminate the annual support fees, valued at \$5,400 a year with Servicefinder, while also continuing to take advantage of the services that came with the software.

“Transfinder is a great product with a lot of benefits for districts,” Transfinder President & CEO Civitella said. “Transportation directors have a big responsibility on their hands, and this is an asset to help them keep their operations organized while also providing them with the ability to make decisions, taking safety and efficiency into account. It’s a great thing to be able to be a part of so many success stories in Maine, as well as throughout the United States.” ...

“ We have strict [bus] idling guidelines for our bus drivers. That can add up to some significant savings. And we are trying to be as efficient as possible with our bus routes.”

**— Charlie Richardson,
now-retired from SAD #49**



Myriad maintenance improvements made

The past two decades have seen immense changes in how educational facilities are maintained.

When evaluating the evolution of cleaning schools, three aspects pertaining to cleaning have shown significant efficiencies; the cleaning products used; the approach on how cleaners clean the schools; and the overall design of the buildings.

The biggest driving force behind these improvements has been the growing concern pertaining to health and environmental impacts.

The biggest change in cleaning products over the past 20 years has been the move from heavy-duty cleaners to more green products with a minimal environmental impact.

In the early 2000s the emergence of environmentally conscious groups like Green Seal and the US Green Building Council (USGBC) gained momentum. We started to see a shift in awareness of the implications cleaning products had on human health and the environment.

Prior to that, cleaning chemical companies were putting out very effective products but they contained Volatile Organic Compounds (VOCs) that were harmful to employees, occupants and the environment. The danger of VOCs is that they can be emitted as gases from certain cleaning chemicals, dramatically impacting the air quality in the buildings they are used.

Green chemicals have made a huge push in the last five to 10 years as demand for effective cleaning products with minimal health and environmental impact has grown. While these new green chemicals are better for the health of employees and

occupants and are less harmful to the environment than previous cleaning chemicals, they are also less effective and realize a higher frequency of cleaning needs to be incorporated in order to achieve the same level of cleanliness.

This has created a need for more efficient cleaning procedures and more effective equipment.

Team Cleaning was a concept that cleaners were using long before the green cleaning movement. However, the growing use of green products and the high frequency in which they needed to be used to achieve the same level of cleanliness, created a growing need for more efficient cleaning practices.

The process of having a group of cleaners performing job-specific tasks and working together completing sections of the building, increased the efficiency of cleaning and also created additional energy savings. Team cleaning has also reduced chemical consumption and equipment use.

While team cleaning proved to be a very effective alternative, it did not completely make up for the added time cleaners needed to spend on maintaining hard floor surfaces. The equipment being used to clean the spaces had to become more effective.

The growing popularity of auto scrubbers has helped improve the efficiency of cleaning and maintaining floors. Their growing popularity can be attributed to their improved designs and user friendliness. The auto scrubbers' separate dispensing tank and recovery tank have provided a more hygienic cleaning procedure and labor efficiencies versus the traditional method of using a mop and bucket.

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Equipment manufacturers have also contributed to better cleaning efficiencies through improved filtration systems. These systems helped improve air quality and have reduced chemical consumption.

Another big contributor to the green cleaning movement was the use of chemical dispensing systems. Before their use, employees would have to measure or eyeball the amount of chemical they mixed with water.

meet these criteria, schools must meet specifications for land use, water and energy efficiency, and indoor air quality. These new innovations have higher up-front costs but lead to greater savings through long-term energy efficiency, water conservation and air quality.

When evaluating how cleaning and maintaining schools have changed over the past 20 years, it's important to consider what has been driving these changes. The importance of human health and

The importance of human health and sustainability has been a huge movement within the past 10 to 15 years. A large portion of the population is becoming more health-conscious and aware of the human impact on the environment. This has dictated the direction in how schools are cleaned, maintained and designed.

Chemical dispensing systems have provided an alternative where chemicals are being mixed at the right dilution ratios, thereby minimizing chemical waste, over-use and exposure.

Microfiber cloths and mops have also helped contribute to healthier cleaning standards by decreasing the cross-contamination of germs.

The last component the green cleaning movement has impacted has been the design of schools. With the growing involvement of USGBC's Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED), more schools are being built or remodeled to meet higher energy-efficiency and environmental standards. To

sustainability has been a huge movement within the past 10 to 15 years. A large portion of the population is becoming more health-conscious and aware of the human impact on the environment. This has dictated the direction in how schools are cleaned, maintained and designed.

It is also important to note that greener schools bring increased cost savings that have helped school districts manage their budgets in a more efficient manner. While these changes have made great strides over the past 20 years, they have not fully reached their potential and will continue to improve as time progresses.

— *By Leo Bifulco, president of Benchmark Cleaning & Supply*

'You have to give your clients/customers what they need. As a business manager who are your clients and customers? It's the citizens.'

— **Michael Kucsma,**
when at Westbrook School Dept. (Summer 2008)



'Trying to predict the future is tough. The only courses I flunked in college were mind-reading and fortune-telling and in this job you have to do a lot of both.'

— **Jim Oikle,**
Brunswick School Department

No Child Left Behind

More evidence of federal control of local education came from the hand of President George W. Bush and the late Sen. Edward Kennedy (D-MA) in the form of No Child Left Behind.

The Act requires states to develop assessments in basic skills. To receive federal school funding, states must give assessments of basic skills to all students at select grade levels. NCLB expanded the federal role in public education through annual testing, annual academic progress, report cards, teacher qualifications, and funding changes.

'I think some of the federal money is too restrictive as to how you can use it and too prescriptive. Especially No Child Left Behind, whose punitive parts don't help anybody... I don't think certain tests should be the criteria for assessing the effectiveness of schools. To me, socio-economics plays a major role in student achievement and school success and achievement that is directly related to parental influence. So to compare schools based on student achievement is not fair. But we do it.'

— **Lester Young,**
now-retired from Brewer School Dept.

'We need to be aware of what the needs are, but don't put into law those requirements in states who absolutely can't meet them... Utah has an Indian reservation that is five hours from nowhere and has no electricity.'
— **then-Commissioner Susan Gendron (Fall 2003)**

Outsourcing: In some cases it equals big savings

One of the nooks and crannies school business officials have been investigating for hidden savings is outsourcing. Be it transportation, food service, custodial care, grounds maintenance — even human resources — more and more districts are dipping their toes in the water.

Custodial

Outsourcing custodial services at schools may not be prevalent, but districts that do so are reporting some significant savings.

“We were able to save taxpayers about \$100,000 a year. We would have to add almost three more custodians to cover the cleaning for that building. The cost was too much for our budget compared to what we could get the contractor to do.”

— Gretchen Gardner,
Brewer School Department (Fall 2011)

“It’s a big win. Given the size of the high school — and a rough estimate of 20,000 square feet per custodian, which is the general standard — the cost of six custodians would be \$230,000 to \$240,000 a year, not counting the other oversight issues. This contract came in at about \$180,000 and that’s counting the weekend stuff which is far more expensive using your own people.”

— Dan O’Shea,
Yarmouth School Department

“Because we saved \$200,000 a year at the Gorham School Department when we started, we’re outsourcing half our custodial work at Thornton Academy.”

— Paul Roney,
facilities director, Thornton Academy



Transportation:

Approximately 60 Maine public school districts — that’s 597 of 2,079 — subcontracted their transportation services in 2010 and that number appears to be growing. The subject evokes raves, nays and cautions among the state’s school business officials and the bus services themselves.

“Outsourcing works great for us... We’re not worried about worker’s com and other benefits. Liability is not our concern, either. The one thing we do to help them out is buy their diesel because we don’t pay sales tax.”

— Alan Kochis,
Bangor School Department

“It means fewer employees for us to manage. It has been a cost savings. The third benefit is that we don’t have to keep up a fleet of buses and worry about bus replacements.”

— Dean Flanagan,
then at the Lewiston School
Department



“I will unequivocally say, in the transportation department it works out better having professional transportation people run the system.”

— Emil Genest, assistant superintendent,
the Hampden School District

Continued on next page



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Food service (Winter 2011-12)

“ You can’t have a cookie-cutter operation. We have 140 school clients and 140 individual contracts. You can’t ask for the gold-star service with pauper’s pockets. You have to match up the program with the reality and then put the best program on the table.”

— Ray Mulligan, president of Flik

Grounds maintenance (Fall 2012)

“ They’ve exceeded our expectations. I can’t tell you how glad I am that they were in place when I got here... The misconception is that if you’re outsourcing, you have no say in how the operation works. It should be, like in any business, a partnership ...”

— Michael Limanni,
Dover (N.H.) School Department

A case for revising Maine’s referendums

Continued from page 8

budget and set tax rates for all purposes.

- Wyoming — districts levy 25 mills for operation-budget increases that are handled through local district boards; no voter approval necessary.⁽¹⁾

Throughout my research, I came across the issues of voter privacy and “stacking the deck.”

School-district budget meetings tend to be poorly attended as people do not want to be seen as unsupportive of education, just as they would not go to their town meeting and vote against their fire department.

I also found cases of school employees who are residents, come out in force to support a budget that supports their own interests.

While I was working at School Union #29 (Mechanic Falls, Minot and Poland), many times paper ballots were called for at the Minot Town Meeting for school articles. I was told it was because some parents felt their children would be targeted in school if the parent voted against the school articles.

While employed by the Jay School Department, our process was referendum voting as that was the town’s process.

The difference from our current referendum process was that each cost center was an individual article and if one cost center was voted down we still had the successful articles to continue school operations.

At a recent MeASBO meeting, a straw poll revealed many systems have experienced multiple votes to pass a budget. SAD #9’s Kris Pottle was the winner (or loser) with five referendum votes to pass her budget.

RSU #73 had three votes one year, costing each town \$950. Costs included printing ballots, salaries and benefits for poll workers, as well as breakfast, lunch and dinner to feed the work-

Special education (Fall 2012)

“ There are companies that do special ed... If you bring in a company like that, you get to be part of their network. Sending students out of the district costs \$36,000 to \$40,000 instead of \$15,000 to \$16,000.”

— Michael Limanni,
Dover (N.H.) School Department

Human resources (Summer 2011)

For many school business officials 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 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.

“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,” said Adam Hanson, business office supervisor for the Auburn School Department.

ers as the polls were open from 8 a.m. until 8 p.m.

However, that did not include the school’s cost of lost employee productivity. This is not the most effective and efficient way for all parties, as it is the taxpayer who continues to fund meetings and each referendum until a successful budget is passed.

When a referendum vote is the deciding factor to pass a school budget, a simple “yes” or “no” choice cannot be the only voice a taxpayer is given.

Although a district budget meeting is the preferred method to obtain immediate feedback, as well as knowing your budget is set by the end of the evening, it is not the ideal method for all voters. The evening chosen may not work for all voters and there is no option for absentee voting.

Therefore, I would propose schools operate like towns and cities and hold informational meetings, rather than a district budget meeting, followed by the required referendum where each article is presented separately to the taxpayers for a vote. More people may attend an informational meeting if they know they will not be asked to cast a vote as they do at a district budget meeting.

Taxpayers need to know they have a way to be heard, and a revised referendum process would give voters the opportunity to be heard on each article. It would also give school systems the necessary feedback to let them know what areas of the budget were not supported the first time around.

Revisions could be made on the cost centers voters did not approve, while allowing schools to carry on with operations in areas that were supported.

Our work is dependent on getting our budget approved, and getting it approved early. The current process does not serve the best interest of anyone — staff, students, or taxpayer — and we have used it long enough to demonstrate its ineffectiveness.

I would like to bring forward some meaningful discussion regarding the possibility of a revised referendum process. I welcome thoughts and comments from the membership. Please e-mail me at sfield@rsu73.org. •••

(1) Source — U.S. Department of Education

2014-15 MeASBO leadership



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Sue Lambert, Fairfield



MeASBO meetings

March 6 — Elks Lodge, Augusta.

May 1 (rescheduled From June 5) — Place TBA.

Tri-State ASBO Conference

May 20-22 — Downtown Holiday Inn, Portland.

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MeASBO encourages all of its members to participate in the publication. It welcomes their thoughts and opinions.

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