



Newsletter for December 2023

What's new



Notes from your Executive Director, Joanne Allen

Upcoming Meetings

Remember, MeASBO will be on “hiatus” with in person meetings until March 1 when we will be hosted by the MidCoast School of Technology in Rockland. Our agenda will include “How to Prepare for Your Audit” presented by the RHR Smith team and, an Accounting Handbook presentation from Ida Batista, MDOE.

Sadly, our first “Lunch and Learn” on December 19 had to be cancelled due to power and internet outages caused by the December 18th storm. However, we do have two more scheduled for the winter. If you support a Career and Technical Education (CTE) Center or Region or, your school unit pays an assessment to a CTE Center or Region, you won't want to miss the January 24th “Lunch and Learn” as Ida Batista of MDOE will be overviewing the CTE Funding Model. A reminder notice, with the Zoom link will be sent to all members in early January. February's session is still being finalized; stay tuned for details in the January newsletter.

Speaking of professional development, 36% of our members responded to the Professional Development Committee survey. In survey speak, 36% is a great response percentage! The *survey has not been closed* so for any member that didn't have an opportunity to respond and would like to, please do so. If you need the link resent to you, just let [me](#) know.

Remember, you can always check the calendar on the [MeASBO website](#) to see what's coming up for professional development opportunities. And don't forget to mark your calendar for [Tri-State](#) from May 22nd through May 24th – Maine is the host state this year and we look forward to seeing all of our Maine members there!

Legislative Update

The second session of the 131st legislature begins on Wednesday, January 3, with public hearings beginning to be scheduled the following week. [Joanne](#) will be analyzing bills of interest to MeASBO members and posting those analyses, with the public hearing date, on our [website's](#) "Member Center", under the "Legislative Information" menu. Those postings will be announced via a Forum message. If you see a bill that you are passionate about, submit testimony or contact your Legislator (list of legislators by member available under the "Legislative Information" menu of our website). Remember, as a 501(c)3, MeASBO cannot take a position on a bill for the organization however, [Joanne](#) can assist you with the most effective way to submit information to your legislator on behalf of *your* SAU.

Paid Family and Medical Leave law update

by Stacie Field, RSU 16 and MeASBO Legislative Committee member:

As many of you know, language in the State of Maine 2024-2025 Biennial Budget bill created an Expanded Paid Family and Medical Leave law, which will impact the budgets of school departments for the FY 2025 fiscal year.

In addition to the fiscal impact of the law, there are increased administrative requirements and penalties for non-compliance:

- Employers will be required to post notice, provided and/or approved by the Department of Labor (DOL).
- Written notice that is also approved by DOL, to each employee, in at least four languages, will also be required.
- The fee for non-compliance is a civil penalty of \$50 per employee for the first violation, and \$150 per employee for all subsequent violations.

Also of note, the 1% rate is only effective until January 2028; there currently is no cap in the language therefore, there could be undetermined increases in future years.

As directed by the law, the Maine Department of Labor will begin formal rulemaking in early in 2024; public comment is an integral part of the rulemaking process and an opportunity for school units to bring to light the costs to their district. Due to its 501(c)3 status, MeASBO cannot take a position on this law as an organization on behalf of its members. MeASBO can collect data that can be used by individual members in comments to the rulemaking process. Members may provide the projected cost for their district to [Joanne](#) for compilation as soon as they have the information available. Please also include your employee count to demonstrate the number of individuals to whom this tax applies. Joanne will post rulemaking information to the MeASBO "Member Center/Legislative Information" link as it becomes available for members wishing to submit public comment.

In advance of the rulemaking process, DOL will be hosting listening sessions in regard to this law as follows:

- January 25, 2024 from 5:30pm-7pm
- February 1, 2024 from 5:30pm-7pm
- February 12, 2024 from 5:30pm-7pm
- February 28, 2024 from 5:30pm-7pm

Registration for these sessions will be updated [here](#).

For those who would like to read the full text of the law, it begins on page 319 of [this document](#).

School Funding Study

The final EPS briefing from MDOE to the Education Committee was held on December 5. The meeting included an in-depth discussion of the Special Education EPS model. The Education Committee showed concern that, due to the consideration of actual expenditures in the model, the model does not consider the adequacy and effectiveness of services provided. Basing funding on expenditures also contradicts the purpose of EPS which is to ensure equity. Given that many school units are experiencing staffing shortages at this time, expenditures used in the calculation subsidy are certainly understated and therefore, exacerbate these issues. The Committee is also very interested in encouraging MaineCare billing in order to support state funding; underutilization of MaineCare results in lack of revenue realized to school units as there is only so much state funding available for subsidy therefore, all other revenue streams should be maximized to reduce taxpayer burden. Other discussion during this meeting focused on the need to change the metric for determining disadvantaged student population in the EPS model due to the difficulty in obtaining the data needed to support the current metric. The Committee also requested more information on transportation funding, particularly how CTE transportation is supported.

The meeting was live streamed on the Education Committee [website](#) and can be viewed by anyone wanting more detail. Any materials provided to the Committee during these briefings may be found [here](#), as well as on our website under “Member Center/School Finance”. MDOE will be presenting a report of recommendations for adjustments to the EPS model during early January.

The Task Force to Study the Creation of a Comprehensive Career and Technical Education System by Sherry Moody, Midcoast School of Technology and MeASBO Legislative Committee member

The December 14 meeting began with an executive summary of the three previous meetings of the Task Force, a report created by Legislative Analysts Steve Langlin and Hillary Risler. The Task Force met for a total of four times and made a series of recommendations as noted in the Executive Summary.

The first two committee recommendations included: 1. Supporting the work of ongoing career and technical education (CTE) (18 members in favor) and 2. supporting and expanding existing CTE centers and regions statewide (16 in favor).

The third recommendation was to create a pilot project for a comprehensive four-year high school. 9 members of the task force supported the recommendation but the committee needed 11 members to support this recommendation in order to pass. Several committee members later changed their votes during the ensuing discussion. Ultimately this recommendation did not pass (10 opposed to 6 in favor). Task force members that opposed the pilot project did so due to the cost factor and the needs in the existing CTE schools that need to be addressed. Some members felt that great strides have been made in the last few years in CTE and that the project might sidetrack current efforts.

Although most task force members agree the concept of a four-year high school is a good one, the timing is not right. The task force also recommended the Legislature continue to find ways to fund and expand current CTE programming, increase exposure for 9th and 10th grade students, and look at expanding the dual high school credit option for students. Julie Kenney, current CTE Director at Bath Regional Technical Center, discussed the potential for negative impacts, including loss of students which equates to funding loss and/or loss of teaching staff.

All Task Force materials may be found [here](#).

Public Preschool Expansion Commission

[Public Law 2023, chapter 477 \(LD 1799\)](#) created a commission to study the expansion of public preschool, and early care and education. The meetings have provided an overview from MDOE regarding current status and strategies for increasing access, and how programs are currently supported in the EPS model. Input from the Governor's Office and community providers has also been presented. Public comment was also solicited via a formal process and the Commission is looking at other state models. The final report is being drafted for publication in early January and recommendations include:

- Provide incentives and increase funding for start-up programs
- Increase flexibility in early childhood staff credentialing
- Facilitate partnerships between schools/community programs/other agencies
- Direct DHHS and MDOE to review/examine/better align all rules and regulations impacting child care and early childhood learning

Materials from the Commission meetings are posted [here](#). Livestream of the Commission meetings may be found [here](#).

News and Upcoming Events from Our Partners



Education Organization Leadership Group

MeASBO is currently represented in the education leadership group convened by MDOE. The group includes leaders from MSMA, MSSA, MSBA, MPA, MEA, MADSEC, MCLA (Maine Curriculum Leaders), and MACTE (Maine Association of CTE Directors).

The December 7th meeting provided lots of good information. A summary of this meeting was sent to all MeASBO members after the meeting and included: a reminder to invoice for ESSER CRRSA funds prior to December 30, an update on FY 2024/2025 ED 279s, Legislative update, Revolving Renovation Fund and Major Capital Improvement rating cycle update, and more. If you would like the summary resent to you, please contact [Joanne](#).

Remember, the main purpose of the Education Organization Leadership group is to provide an opportunity to bring concerns, questions, requests, and ideas to MDOE leadership. If you have a question, or a topic that you would like brought to the attention of MDOE, please contact [Joanne](#).

Daily clippings of interest:

[Continuing resolution secures federal education funds through Feb. 2](#)

[Biden-Harris Administration Announces Partnership to Distribute Free COVID-19 Tests to Schools Across the Country](#)

[5 Factors to Consider with Electric School Buses](#)

[New Ed Dept deadlines revealed for regulations including Title IX, Section 504](#)

[Bus Contracts: The Pros and Cons for School Districts Outsourcing Transportation](#)

[2023 Making the Grade – How Fair is School Funding in Your State](#)

[How to help employees deal with the demands of the ‘holiday spirit’](#)

New Hampshire Association of School Business Officials

The Northern New England Facility Masters Conference will be returning to Portsmouth New Hampshire High School on February 28 and 29, 2024 to once again offer

professional development opportunities for school facility managers and staff. Check this [link](#) for more information.

Maine Department of Education

Federal Fiscal Programs Office Hours:

Jan 25, 2024 10:00 AM

Feb 29, 2024 10:00 AM

Mar 28, 2024 10:00 AM

Register [Here](#)

State Board of Education

The annual presentation of the Commissioner’s Recommended Funding Level is scheduled for Wednesday, January 10. The meeting agenda is available [here](#). While this meeting won’t provide preliminary FY 2024-2025 subsidy amounts by school unit, it will provide the mill expectation and other information that can assist business managers with budget preparation.

Maine Department of Labor

[Upcoming SafetyWorks! classes](#)

Paid Family and Medical Leave Listening Sessions:

- January 25, 2024 from 5:30pm-7pm
- February 1, 2024 from 5:30pm-7pm
- February 12, 2024 from 5:30pm-7pm
- February 28, 2024 from 5:30pm-7pm

Please stay tuned for additional details about registration and other information about the session on this [webpage](#).

Last but certainly not least.....

The MeASBO Board of Directors would like to congratulate Terry Gauvin on her retirement as of the end of December. Terry joined the Biddeford School Department in 1997 and was quickly promoted to Business Manager in 2000. In addition to successfully managing the demands of the business manager role, Terry also attended the University of New England to complete her BA degree...no small feat while working full time!

Terry has been a strong supporter of MeASBO and we will miss seeing her smiling face at our meetings but truly wish her every enjoyment in her retirement. Congratulations, Terry!

