

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Ms. Kathleen Duff, President
Director Career and Technical Education
Newton Public Schools

Ms. Julie Vincentsen, 1st Vice President
Principal
Hanscom Primary School (Hanscom AFB)

Ms. Elizabeth Garden, 2nd Vice President
Principal
Leroy E. Mayo Elementary School (Holden)

Mr. Phillip Conrad, 3rd Vice President
Principal
Andover High School

Dr. John Buckey, Principal
Nantucket High School

Mr. Thomas Cavanaugh, Dean of Students
Blue Hills Regional Tech School (Canton)

Mr. Paul Daigle
Retired Principal

Mr. Walter Henderson, Principal
Mattahunt Elementary School (Mattapan)

Ms. Leigh Joseph, Assistant Principal
Tantasqua Reg. Senior High School (Fiskdale)

Mr. Craig Juells, Principal
Medway Middle School

Mr. David Keim, Principal
Miller Elementary School (Holliston)

Ms. Ann Knell, Principal
Mattacheese Middle School (West Yarmouth)

Mr. Christopher LaBreck, Principal
Chocksett Middle School (Sterling)

Mr. Nathan Lamar, Acad Program Coordinator
Northeast Metro Reg. Voc. School (Wakefield)

Mr. Craig Martin, Executive Director
Bridge Boston Charter School (Dorchester)

Mr. Matthew Mattos, Headmaster
Taunton High School

Mr. Brian McCann, Principal
Joseph Case High School (Swansea)

Ms. Joanne Menard, Principal
Turners Falls High School (Montague)

Ms. Diana Myers-Pachla, Principal
Foxborough High School

Mr. John Quinn, Principal
Clara Barton Elementary School (Oxford)

Mr. Daniel Richards, Principal
Georgetown Middle/High School

Ms. Melanie Shaw, Pupil Services Admin
Bristol-Plymouth Reg. Voc Tech (Taunton)

Mr. Robert Silveira, Principal
Case Jr. High School (Swansea)

Ms. Eileen Sprague, Curriculum Supervisor
Jones Early Childhood Center (Stoughton)

Mr. Anthony Steele, Assistant Supt./Principal
Blackstone Valley RVTHS (Upton)

Mr. Mark Wood, Principal
Tantasqua Regional VTHS, (Fiskdale)

Ms. Kristy Yankee, Assistant Principal
Dedham High School



MASSACHUSETTS SCHOOL ADMINISTRATORS' ASSOCIATION

33 Forge Parkway • Franklin, MA 02038

P: 508-541-7997 • F: 508-541-9838 • E: msaa@msaa.net • www.msaa.net

May 12, 2020

Dear Joint Committee on Education,

We want to begin our written testimony by thanking the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) as a whole, and Commissioner Jeffrey C. Riley individually, on their leadership through these unprecedented times. Their communications and guidance to the field have been extensive, timely and supportive. In addition, DESE is doing an extraordinary job collaborating with the field through providing opportunities for our Association to preview guidance documents, for our Executive Director to speak with the Commissioner regularly for input and guidance, and for our Finance Committee to continue our face-to-face meetings in a virtual setting. DESE is clearly committed to having their response be closely connected to those 'on the ground' and for that we commend their efforts.

We also want to take this opportunity to thank the educators across the Commonwealth for their dedication to the children of Massachusetts. Not only are you rising to the occasion, you are going above and beyond, working incredibly long hours and doing all that you can to support our students and for that we are grateful. From delivering lunches, to planning lessons, to creating new systems to support remote learning, to creating videos to tell our students you miss them, to teaching virtually, you are the heart of our education system. Thank you for all you are doing. To the PK-12 administrators in the Commonwealth, we see from our weekly virtual meetings that, although you are fatigued, you are dedicated, passionate and are continuing to go the extra mile. Thank you for your leadership during these trying times. A thank you is also owed to the parents and caregivers for their partnership as without your support, remote learning would not be possible.

We appreciate this opportunity to let you know what our membership needs moving forward:

- Robust funding for mental health staffing is needed now (i.e. Adjustment Counselors, School Psychologists, Board Certified Behavior Analysts, Guidance Counselors, Nurses, Social Workers, and partnerships with mental health agencies in the community). Every child and staff member is currently experiencing trauma due to the COVID-19 pandemic. We must expect, when they return to school, that this trauma will impact them in their daily school experience. We needed more mental health staffing before this crisis; we are now in dire need.
- The Government of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts must work with our school communities to address the inequities that exist in regards to access to education for disadvantaged districts and students. Communities of means are able to provide devices such as iPads or Chromebooks for 100% of their students; disadvantaged communities can not do this. Communities of means are able to provide hot spots for the limited number of households who do not have access to the internet; disadvantaged communities can not do this. CARES Act funds from the Federal Government must be used to provide a 1:1 environment with internet access for all children in the Commonwealth.
- It is imperative that we have a coordinated plan for school re-opening to ensure that all districts are following a similar scheduling model. This would ensure that each district's faculty's children are in school at the same time they are working. We are looking for more detailed, consistent guidelines to provide stronger support to our school districts so that we may feel united in our efforts.
- All school districts will need additional funding and procurement support for Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) and other essential equipment such as temperature sensors, access to testing, and policy and protocol guidance for implementing measures to open school safely. This needs to be done in a timely fashion, prior to the start of the school year.
- Additional funding and support will also be needed for the transportation costs that will increase due to needing multiple shifts of busses in order to social distance. In addition, monitors will need to be hired to take temperatures before children enter the bus, if this is an action to be taken.
- We believe we must put a halt to the Massachusetts Comprehensive Assessment System (MCAS) for multiple years because of the inequity of access mentioned above, as well as the varying family situations which are creating inequalities of access to education regardless of socio-economic status. At the very least, adjustments need to be made to address the impact the MCAS scores reported will have on the accountability system.
- Requests from parents asking that their children be retained due to a loss of learning during the school closure are increasing. We ask the Legislature to partner with the Massachusetts Teachers Association, the Massachusetts School Administrators Association, the Massachusetts Association of School Superintendents, and the Massachusetts Association of School Committees to put out a joint statement regarding retention. While every retention decision needs to be made with the individual student in mind, a strong statement needs to be made that every effort will be made to address students' needs, employing differentiated instruction, as schools continue to enhance distance learning and as schools reopen buildings.

- Districts across the Commonwealth are struggling with how to do kindergarten screening in a remote learning world. This is a legislative mandate in 603 CMR 28.03.d. Lifting this mandate would ease a burden elementary principals are currently shouldering. Schools could be required instead to provide a plan for how they plan to assess students in September and October to meet the spirit of this Massachusetts General Law.
- DESE and the United States Department of Education have provided on-going guidance related to the Individuals with Disabilities Act (IDEA) and the provision of providing a Free and Appropriate Public Education (FAPE) during this time of closure. Since the initial closure of schools, the shift from maintaining skills for students with disabilities to demonstrating progress within the Individualized Education Program (IEP), may put district's at risk for additional or compensatory services if students demonstrate significant regression. Compensatory services may have additional financial impacts on districts. We ask that funding relief for in-district compensatory services be considered and that those students placed and funded in out of district placements be provided these services at the cost of the collaborative or private school.
- Educators across the Commonwealth are being bombarded with negative press, parent anger, and constant questions as to whether they are doing enough to earn their paychecks. It would be appreciated if the Massachusetts Government would write a Resolution supporting the educators of the Commonwealth and thanking them for their unwavering efforts during these unprecedented times. Having a Resolution read into the legislative record would be a strong, public stance that our Government supports the efforts of the educators across the Commonwealth. This small gesture will go a long way.

Respectfully Submitted on Behalf of the MSAA Board of Directors,

John Buckey
MSAA Past President
Principal, Nantucket High School

Philip Conrad
MSAA Third Vice President
Principal, Andover High School

Kathleen Duff
MSAA President
Director of CTE, Newton Public Schools

Bill Gaine
MSAA Executive Director

Elizabeth Garden
MSAA Second Vice President
Principal, Mayo Elementary School
Wachusett Regional School District

Ann Knell
MSAA Third Past President
Principal, Mattacheese Middle School
Dennis-Yarmouth Regional School District

Julie Vincentsen
MSAA First Vice President
Principal, Hanscom Primary School
Lincoln Public Schools

Mark Wood
MSAA Second Past President
Principal, Tantasqua Regional High School,
Technical Division