



Erie County Association of School Boards

Vol. 4; Issue 5; January 2025

ADVOCACY ALLIANCE MONTHLY

YOUR MONTHLY UPDATE

Dear Friends,

With the holidays behind us and a new legislative session started, there are many bills being introduced. Sixteen people will head to Albany in February to meet with legislators during the NYSSBA Capital Conference. A request has been made to your school district's Legislative Team Representative to submit a letter from your district that I can include in our leave-behind materials. Team Reps will hear more about this at our Jan. 23rd meeting and letters will be due by Feb. 5th.

In Albany the team will meet with as many legislators as we can, and leave behind materials with all the local legislators. We also have scheduled meetings with Senator Shelly Mayer and Assemblyman Michael Benedetto. Each are Education Committee Chairs for their respective houses of the State Legislature.

The Legislative Team meets again on January 23rd and the meeting will begin with a presentation from our Diamond Sponsor, Black Passport Group. The sponsor is sending COO Jonathan Sullivan, to revise his presentation from the November Speedboarding event. Mr. Sullivan will go into a bit more detail about the organizations ability to help with school safety. At our local Winter Conferences with legislators, I have invited legislators to attend this meeting or send a representative.

As I write this letter, local weather specialists forecast chilly temperatures and snow. Don't worry. Spring is just a mere two months away. Until then, stay warm!

Yours in Advocacy,
~Jane

Take Note...

- ⇒ Sign up with NYSSBA for the Virtual Capital Conference, scheduled for February 7. Let Jane know if you register for this event by emailing her at jsullivan@e1b.org
- ⇒ Legislative Team Meeting-The next meeting is scheduled for Jan. 23, 2025, from 6:30-8:30 p.m. Diamond Sponsor Jonathan Sullivan from Black Passport Group is scheduled to give a presentation to the team.
- ⇒ Last Legislative Team Meeting is scheduled for March 20. Mark your calendar
- ⇒ Legislative Wrap-up Dinner is scheduled for May 22 at Creekside from 6-8 p.m. Be on the lookout for additional information.
- ⇒ Submit nominations for ECASB Awards. Nominations are accepted until March 3. Visit www.ecasb.org for more details.

Our 2024-2025 Diamond Sponsor



BLACK PASSPORT GROUP

GLOBAL INSIGHTS IN A CONNECTED WORLD

IN THE NEWS

Links to interesting readings

Capital Conference

Click on Links to go to the news source.

Local:

[Common Council chief of staff nominated to replace April Baskin in Erie County Legislature.](#) Buffalo News, Dec. 12

[Baskin made history, lasting impact as chair.](#) Buffalo News, Dec. 23

State:

[State Education Department Announces Nominees for 2025 U.S. Presidential Scholars Program.](#) SED Website, Dec. 19

Federal:

[Dems fear constitutional convention](#) New York Times via Buffalo News, Dec. 17



Plans for the Capital Conference are well underway. Capital Conference is a NYSSBA sponsored event and ECASB has been sending a group for many years. This year we have 16 people signed up. They are Erik Polkowski (Akron); Ed Schaefer (Cheektowaga); David Lowrey (ECASB, Erie 2 CC BOCES and NYSSBA Area One Director); Mary Jo Szucs (Holland); Heather Becker (Iroquois); Jane Sullivan (ECASB and Iroquois); Sabatino Cimito, Matt Chimera, Paul Spors, Karen Whitelaw, Lee-Ann Vogt, and Fred Floss (Ken-Ton); Kathleen Chiavetta (Erie 2 CC BOCES and Lake Shore); Dan Pacos and Mike Franey (Lake Shore); and Lorene Barulich (West Seneca). Beth Pyskaty from Starpoint will also join our group for some of our meetings.

Meetings are already scheduled with *Senators Shelly Mayer, Patrick Gallivan and Sean Ryan*; and *Assemblymembers Michael Benedetto and Paul Bologna*. I am in contact with the offices of *Senators April Baskin and Robert Ortt*, and *Assemblymembers Stephen Hawley, Angelo Morinello, Karen McMahon, Patrick Burke, William Conrad, David DiPietro and Patrick Chludzinski* to arrange for meetings.

The group will speak to local legislators to further explain the impact legislation has had on our local school districts and to reiterate the priorities laid out in our November Legislative Breakfast. Districts are asked to send letters speaking to the issues and impacts they have had on the district that we can place in the leave-behind materials. Letters are needed on school letter head by Feb. 5 to be included.

Our 2024—2025 Platinum Sponsors



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Winter Conference Report

Meeting Our Legislators Locally

ECASB had the opportunity to sit down with several of our local legislators in their local offices in December and January.

Scheduled meetings included *Assemblyman-Elect Paul Bologna*; *Assemblyman Patrick Burke's* Deputy Legislative Director, Riley Anderson; *Assemblywoman Karen McMahan's* Legislative Director Joseph Popiolkowski; *Senator Patrick Gallivan*; *Senator Sean Ryan's* Deputy Chief of Staff Gabrielle Harrington; *Assemblyman Jonathan Rivera with Chief of Staff Rebecca Castañeda*; and *Assemblyman William Conrad* with aide Peter Stuhlmiller.

In many of the meetings, ECASB members sharing in the conversations including Erik Polkowski (Akron), Scott Johnson (Sweet Home), Dennis Priore (Clarence), Sherry Steffans (Grand Island), Paula Leach (Holland), Karen Whitelaw (Ken-Ton), Mike Franey (Lake Shore) and James Bialasik (Springville).

Legislators and their staff members listened to the ECASB Priorities: Foundation Aid, Staffing Shortages, Zero Emission Bus Mandate and School Safety and Student Mental Health.

Legislators wanted to know more about regionalization and the banning of cell phones in school, asking for our

position on these issues. The ECASB Legislative Team discussed a neutral position on both issues, but stressed the importance of messaging that included no mandates that remove local control. This message was shared with each legislator and was received with complete understanding. Legislators were seemingly focused on the issue of cell phone use and the role of social media.

There is a strong sense that if cell phone use is limited during school hours, students will see improvement in socialization and testing scores. Sherry from Grand Island was quick to point out the lack of studies on the correlation and suggested legislation and monies be given to study the results from school districts who have practiced limiting cell phone use during school for the past three years. Legislators agreed that a study could help determine the extent of the correlation.

Ultimately, legislators agree there is not a one-size-fits-all fix to the issue. They agree something should be done, agreeing that the districts need to decide their approach to cell phone policy. The governor is carefully wording her thoughts so as not to use the word "ban." AM Conrad also agreed that, should a mandate be placed, it must come with financial support.

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BILL ALERT PAGE

ECASB uses Bill Track 50 for our bill tracking and advocacy needs. If you also have an interest in tracking bills, email Jane at JSullivan@e1b.org; she will set you up with an account umbrellaed under the ECASB Bill Track 50 subscription. Support is provided.

The 2024-2025 Legislative Session opened on January 8 and proposed bills are being introduced quickly. I encourage you to keep an eye out for bills on the issues that remain important to you and your district. Each Legislative Team Representative has been given a Bill Track 50 account, and anyone else who wishes to have one may request one from Jane by emailing jsullivan@e1b.org. You can also use <https://nyassembly.gov/leg/> to search for bills. Remember, all the bill numbers from the last session are null and bills must be reintroduced and numbered to be considered for this new 2-year session.

Here are a few new bills to help you get started with a search:

S01682-(Remote Learning)- This Bill would prohibits the use of remote or virtual learning as a form of punishment or disciplinary action; provides exceptions for failure to comply with COVID-19 health and safety protocols. There is no local sponsor and there is not a companion bill at this time.

A00250/S01371-(Equity in Education)- This bill establishes the "Education Equity Act" to provide language assistance services for parents and guardians of public school students whose primary language is not English. The bill requires school districts to create annual language assistance plans that assess language needs and develop strategies to support non-English speaking families. There are no local sponsors of either bill.

A01078-(Lunch requirement)-Enacts the "Drink Up Act"; requires every public school to offer water in a sealed bottled container as an additional drink option to any student during lunch at no cost to such student. There is no local sponsor or companion bill at this time.

A01041/S00840-(Migrant Student Aid) Relates to providing additional reimbursement to school districts for expenses incurred as a result of an influx of migrant students entering the schools of the districts; directs the governor to submit chapter amendments to the Aid to Localities budget. **Senator George Borrello** is a sponsor of the Senate bill.

A01049- (Equity in Hiring)- Requires school districts to have diversity, equity and inclusion officers to develop methods to diversify the personnel of the school district and to recommend changes to district policies and practices to reduce racial disparities in hiring school district employees, particularly teachers. There are no local sponsors.

A01274/S00835-(Civic Responsibility)-Establishes the "Purple Star School Program" to emphasize the importance of assisting military-connected students and to recognize the value of military service and civic responsibility. **Assemblyman Angelo Morinello** is a local sponsor of the Assembly bill.

Continue on next page

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Here are just a few additional bill numbers to bills I initial found interesting. I am sure I will highlight some of them in future newsletters. There are many more, and I am compiling a full list. These are just to get us started. Perhaps you are also interested in getting a head start and need a place to begin:

<i>A01052- HCSD Gaming</i>	<i>A01393-Passing School Bus</i>	<i>S01210-History Curriculum</i>
<i>A01054- BOE Nepotism</i>	<i>A01448-Capital Improvement</i>	<i>S01251-Violence Study</i>
<i>A01061- literacy</i>	<i>A01487-Vision Screening</i>	<i>S01269-Airway Device</i>
<i>A01080-Water Safety</i>	<i>A01538-Library Specialist</i>	<i>S01270-Opioid Training</i>
<i>A01087-Lunch Act</i>	<i>A01544-Lockdown Drills</i>	<i>S01272- Financial Education</i>
<i>A01088-Career Education</i>	<i>A01564-Bus Driver Training</i>	<i>S01310-Mental Health Services</i>
<i>A01106-Civic Education</i>	<i>A01624-Literacy</i>	<i>S01312- Social Workers</i>
<i>A01124-Financial Education</i>	<i>A01660- Mental Hygiene</i>	<i>S01325-Special Education</i>
<i>A01131-IEP Rules</i>	<i>A01666-Climate Instruction</i>	<i>S01349-Swimming Instruction</i>
<i>A01144-Full Day Kindergarten</i>	<i>S01089-Workplace readiness</i>	<i>S01474- Agriculture Instruction</i>
<i>A01186- Dyslexia Screening</i>	<i>S01111-Certification</i>	<i>S01495- PreK Transportation</i>
<i>A01208-Gun Violence Prevention</i>	<i>S01118-SRO</i>	<i>S01696- Transportation</i>
<i>A01230-LGBT Curriculum</i>	<i>S01120-Aid Formula Study</i>	<i>S01710- Apprenticeships</i>
<i>A01337- Financial Education</i>	<i>S01160- Diwali Holiday</i>	

You cannot legislate trust.