Throughout the Commonwealth, school financing is a hotly debated topic. After local funding from property taxes, the second largest source of revenue for school districts is Chapter 70 - the funding mechanism for public education in Massachusetts. The Chapter 70 program is the major program of state aid to public elementary and secondary schools. In addition to providing state aid to support school operations, it also establishes minimum spending requirements for each school district and minimum requirements for each municipality’s share of school costs.

In the meantime, questions abound about the impact of school budgeting on student performance, how schools can best advocate for local, state, and federal funding, and how schools can align themselves with stakeholders who can make optimal funding a reality. Involving purse holders who can help local schools realize their goals and funding needs.

The Education Reform Act of 1993 established a formula to distribute aid to school districts across the state. The purpose of this formula was to enable every school district to provide an amount of funding necessary to adequately educate its children. In recent years, this complicated and outdated formula has come under scrutiny by the legislature and is slated for an update during the next year. Read Roger Hatch's article, Chapter 70 Changes Bring a Simpler, More Equitable Aid Formula, to learn about the changes to the funding formula being contemplated at the state level.

At the local level, Principal Jan DeSantis and Teacher Judy Naylor share their belief that the “power of the purse is the collective effort of teams of people working toward shared goals linked directly to our strategic plan” in their jointly authored article, Involving Purseholders as Stakeholders in Strategic Planning. They posit that there are many purse holders who can help local schools realize their goals and funding needs.

Educators from higher education, Rosetta Marantz Cohen (Smith College), Joseph W. Check (University of Massachusetts, Boston), Stephen J. Nelson (Bridgewater State College) and Wilbur C. Rich (Wellesley College)
also offer their perspectives on school finance.

Ms. Cohen and Mr. Nelson speak to the need of reallocating resources directly to the student in the classroom and leveraging partnerships with local business and corporate leaders to help local school districts gain support of public education. Mr. Check, author of Dollars and Sense: Three Concepts for Success with Budgets, contends that there are three basic concepts for successful financial management to ensure administrative effectiveness and leadership. In The New Political Reality of School Finance in Massachusetts, Mr. Rich reminds us that the 2005 Hancock vs. Driscoll decision on the adequacy of school funding has undermined the ability of school advocates to make their case. He states that the “fact remains [that] some school are in fiscal crisis and others are merely limping along. They cannot get out of crisis without more state assistance.”

As you will read, this issue of Perspectives presents a broad picture on the theme of school financing representing many voices. Some of the voices will resonate with you and other voices will cause dissonance. Ultimately, the viewpoints create different perspectives which will continue the debate for how best to garner the financial support needed to sustain our Commonwealth’s public educational system.
The New Political Reality of School Finance in Massachusetts

By Wilbur C. Rich
Wellesley College

Would you rather be an airline CEO or a public school superintendent? Either career is not without its perils. Both airlines and school districts seem to be in a perpetual fiscal crisis. Both have sacrificed perks to cut cost and have been accused of underestimating service and maintenance costs. Neither seems to be able to control personnel cost, and their unions are demanding increased compensation and benefits. The big difference is that airlines are private companies competing with each other for the flying public whereas school districts are public organizations with only modest competition from charter, private, and parochial schools. Unlike airlines, bankruptcy is not an option schools have for managing their fiscal problems. Schools cannot expect the bankruptcy courts to settle their accounts and give them an opportunity to void union contracts and eliminate services. School districts are expected to cope and persevere regardless of the rising cost and declining revenue.

Current Funding Realities
Every year one or two of 496 school districts in Massachusetts find themselves on the critical list. Some districts barely survive, and others have to borrow to stay afloat, while some more affluent districts experience little or no monetary shortfall. Why? Obviously, districts do not exist in equal environments. They have different revenue prospects and expenditure obligations. Despite several types of state equalization formulas, these differences remain. The sources of this inequality problem are the complex funding process and disparate service requirements among districts.

School districts are obligated to comply with state law. There are guidelines about how revenue can be raised and used. The financial plight of the Massachusetts public schools can be partially traced to Proposition 2½, but the problems are deeper than this tax restriction. A more critical problem is the aging of the school funding advocacy political coalition. In Massachusetts there are three state aid coalitions: interest group led, town leadership led, and governor-brokered.

Despite research that shows that property tax discriminates against poor districts, it remains the principal source of school funding. In 2004 local governments provided 53.6% of the revenue, state government 39.8% and federal government’s share was 6.5%. The district’s own resources were constrained by Proposition 2½ limits on property tax increases. A University of Wisconsin study concluded that Massachusetts cut per pupil K-12 education aid more than any other state from 2002-2004. Passage of the 1980 law created override politics for local districts. Results of override voting in the state has been mixed. Wealthy communities have been more successful in overrides than middle class/working class ones. Wellesley is more likely to pass an override than Quincy.

The other element in the funding mismatch is the dramatic population shift in the state. Demographically the state is undergoing a profound racial and ethnic transformation. Urban areas such as Cambridge, Boston, Springfield, and Worcester have a growing percentage of minority students. Many of these students need special assistance that increases the curriculum and instruction costs.

If a way could be found to allocate more money to less affluent districts, would that create financial equality among school districts? Maybe. There is still a debate among economists about whether money alone will improve student performance. Like sociologists, some economists believe that socio-economic background plays a larger role in student performance than any other factor that increases spending. However, it is clear that money could reduce class size, create more compensatory education classes, and improve teacher retention and curriculum quality. Academics may debate the saliency of more funding, but the pressure on districts to improve student performance on standardized tests has rendered the old school funding coalition less effective.

The New Movers and Shakers
Massachusetts is undergoing economic transformations. The old manufacturing, shipping and garment industries have given way to the new movers (i.e. corporate leaders) in the Commonwealth economy. Higher education, bio-medical research, high-tech development, and financial services are now the prime job creators in the state. Accordingly, the composition of the economic elite is changing. Since there is an uneven distribution of these new industries in the state, the central and western part of the state have yet to benefit from the changes.

Although the white-collar work-
ers in these industries may be pro-public schools, they are not dependent on them. They can afford to send their children to private schools. They may support the idea of improved funding for public schools, but most of them live in wealthier suburbs where funding is not a problem. Nevertheless, the attitudes of leaders of these companies are important because their spending priorities shape investment thinking in the Commonwealth. Since they are the new stakeholders, state political leaders want these companies to expand and create more jobs. These new workers will have a variety of residential options. As real estate agents try to sell them properties in suburban communities, schools will be a part of the pitch.

These nascent property owners will be joining the suburban school coalition. School funding advocates must also accept the fact that there are differences in the quality of political support between inner and outer suburbs. The two sets of suburbs have grown further apart. More than just income and occupations explain these differences. Bedroom communities with highly mobile residents dominate wealthier suburbs like Wellesley, Weston and Lexington. Accordingly, there is less of a commitment to the community and its schools. Inner suburbs such as Quincy, Revere, and Chelsea include upper mobile former inner-city residents as well as working class residents who are public school dependent. State representatives who live in the inner-suburbs also have central city constituencies. Therefore they may have divided loyalties. Outer suburb state representatives are a part of a different suburban coalition of relatively successful school systems with some indifferent residents.

The emergence of these three separate coalitions, central cities, inner suburbs, and outer suburbs has changed the nature of decision making on Beacon Hill. Because their interests diverge legislative funding coalitions are less reliable. The prospects for constructing new unified city-suburban legislative coalitions depends on the public image of public schools in the Commonwealth. In addition, economic constraints have restricted the range of options available to state lawmakers. An inevitable correlate of this constraint is shortsightedness on the part of taxpayers and lawmakers.

What is at Stake?

In the long run, it is the future of the employability of the state’s workforce. In the short term, it is the fiscal instability of the public schools. Remember that education is the second largest public sector in the Commonwealth’s economy. Most of the $6.2 billion dollars that the state provides for education—from early education through higher education—is concentrated at the elementary and secondary levels. Following education reform in the mid-1990s, the state made considerable investments in K-12 education. During the recent fiscal crisis the state implemented a number of budget cuts to many areas of the budget, including education. Between 2002 and 2004 funding for Chapter 70, the primary source of state aid for K-12 education funding, was cut by 7% or $254 million. (After adjusting for inflation using the Consumer Price Index, or CPI-U, this represents an 11% or $417 million reduction.) The FY 2007 budget provides a $217 million or 7% increase over FY 2006. Accounting for inflation using the CPI-U, this amount is still $197 million below where it was in FY 2002. Furthermore, the measure of inflation identified in Chapter 70 as the best estimate of education cost changes (the Implicit Price Deflator for state and local government services), shows an even deeper cut; the FY 2007 amount is $491 million or 12% below the FY 2002 level. As a result of these budget cuts, school districts across the Commonwealth face myriad challenges when it comes to preparing students for the workforce. Relatively large urban centers such as Worcester and Springfield have serious fiscal problems and uneven student performance. For example, Boston’s $712.4 million budget for education in FY 2006 devoted 58.6% to instruction. Millions have been spent on student performance in these districts.

Hence there is a search for more financial resources. The money hunt is a problem for underperforming inner-city schools. It is not clear how these schools will benefit from any scheme that would equalize aid with the suburbs. Prospects for a statewide coalition will depend on how well the school advocates align themselves with the new elite. These elites are in the start-up and fortune-creating mode
and are unsure of themselves and their role in public affairs. However, some of their leaders are willing to contribute their expertise to public fundraising efforts. The task is to show them how the 1954 state weighted-funded formula can be used more creatively to improve the quality of workers available for their companies. This suggests that grant monies have a greater role to play in school finance.

**Strategic Planning and School Funding**

Private grant monies are only episodically available. Indeed some private foundations have agendas that might conflict with those of local school leaders. When a district embarks upon an innovating program, it puts itself in a better position to get foundation funding. This is also true for school-business partnerships. At best these private funding sources are short-term solutions.

Grants are not a good vehicle for funding routine school programs. State grant monies are available to districts that start innovative programs. In 2005, 20 districts applied for funds to extend the number of school days. They moved away from the six hours a day schedule and the 180 day school calendar. The state allocated $425,000 for the program. Schools that do well in the grant market are those who already have long-term plans.

In order to anticipate funding shortfalls, districts must plan strategically. Obviously a planning culture is better than a coping one. School advocates are usually the next fiscal year oriented. District leaders rarely plan ahead beyond five years. These attitudes reflect short-term horizons of school districts. Because local leaders cannot accurately predict property tax revenues and the amount of state support, they hedge their bets. Good planning requires anticipating student needs for the next five years. Accordingly, districts should match demographic forecasting with their history of teacher turnovers, success in override campaigns, rising cost of teaching materials and contingencies. They have to ask themselves: Who are these future students and what will be their needs? Who are the future teachers and what are facilities needs? Without this knowledge planning needs are just guesses.

School districts have traditionally searched for alternative ways to increase their resources. There seems to be no end to the advice offered to districts about how to do this. They range from establishing non-profit foundations, creating marketing strategies, more outreach, building a better website, creating a stronger alumni base and investing in more technology. Rainy day endowment funds are an excellent way to anticipate the fiscal problems. However, fundraising is often awkward and difficult to organize. Superintendents traditionally do not like to be put in the middle of an outside fundraising campaign or be in competition with other districts for corporate funding.

School districts with well thought out plans are usually in a better position to argue for additional funds. The public is more inclined to contribute to a new idea than to fund operating costs. They would like to fund something they can see and identify with. One of the problems with school districts in general is that they do not share successful fundraising methods with each other. There has been successful outside fundraising in other states that could be attempted in the Commonwealth. It is the superintendent’s responsibility to keep the board aware of these approaches.

**In Conclusion**

In 2005 the *Hancock v. Driscoll* decision the court found that the Commonwealth was making good progress in funding its schools. Massachusetts is one of the few states able to defend itself in a funding adequacy case. This decision has seriously undermined the ability of school advocates to make their case. Making “good progress” may not be enough in view of the looming financial crisis in our schools. It is also not a matter of whether the courts or the administrators on the ground agree on the definition of “adequacy.” The fact remains some schools are in fiscal crisis and other are merely limping along. They cannot get out of crisis without more state assistance. Finally, although there may never be a stable fiscal equilibrium for public schools, being efficient and prudent with taxpayer funds can only help improve the images of district leaders.

**Endnotes**

1 Maria Sacchetti “What the High Court’s Ruling Means” Boston Globe (February 16, 2005)4b.


3 Massachusetts Teacher Association publishes a guide for local associations attempting to override.

4 See Michael J. Monafo Enhancing the values of Public Education: Lessons from the Private Sector* Phi Delta Kappan*, Vol.87, No.9 (May, 2006) pp648-6453

5 Wilbur C. Rich is a Professor of Political Science at Wellesley College, where he teaches courses in American Presidential Politics, Urban Politics, Public Policy Analysis, The Politics of Urban Public Schools and The Politics of Minority Groups in the United States.
Legendary Green Bay Packers coach, Vince Lombardi, is said to have remarked that “winning is not the most important thing, it is the only thing.” In tough economic times educators, citizens, and politicians often act as though school funding is not the most important thing, but the only thing. Thankfully when confronted with public education’s true value, most citizens place funding below more altruistic goals: a vital tool in a democratic society, a Jeffersonian ideal to create educated citizens able to make informed decisions in order to have a functioning democracy and commonwealth, and a critical force to produce smart, intelligent, and trainable men and women for the workforce. Still, decisions about funding and budget management are carefully watched by taxpayers.

The Role of Funding in the Total School Program

What do we know, or at least think we know, about money and its role in schools? First, no matter how idealistically we may want to think that well-intentioned educators can make up in enthusiasm, creativity, and energy what they might lack in resources, the reality is otherwise. Making decisions about how to equitably provide school funding is crucial to the type of schools communities are able to afford. Jonathan Kozol has demonstrated that per capita student spending is a determinant of school quality, culture, and student performance. It also provides the capacity to hire the best trained teachers, clearly a major contributor to the level of student performance and attainment. To a large extent, money is decisive in the future opportunities students will be able to pursue and enjoy.

Many school districts have had to face a shrinking tax base with limited state and federal funding. They do not enjoy high-income citizens supporting a first-rate education for all their children. Educators have had to be careful in how funds are allocated, where resources are applied, and where savings can be found. Superintendents, principals, and teachers need to know the real factors that directly contribute to effective schools.

Suppose that class size does not really matter in terms of how students work and achieve, and how teachers teach. Some research evidence indicates that, at least for class size in the low twenties to thirty, investing precious resources to reduce class size does not provide appreciable gains in achievement. On the other hand, if the quality of the teaching staff in terms of their preparation, training, and experience makes a difference — as some preliminary studies at Ohio State University indicate — then placing resources into personnel and hiring budgets to attract the very best teachers would be a better use of available resources.

It is extraordinarily difficult for schools to have significant impact on state and federal funding of schools, with the exception of consortia and partnerships that have demonstrated the ability to influence public policy. There are also exceptions where sufficiently small states have groups of educators that make a difference. To a large extent, state and federal funding is going to remain status quo. However, when it comes to local funding and collaboration, school administrators, board members, and even teachers have key roles to play in convincing citizens and political leaders of the need to invest in their schools.

The arguments that receive attention and commitment to school funding range from the need for fully educated citizens in a democratic society to the practical realities of a more employable and trainable workforce. While there is a fair degree of mobility in twenty-first century American society, many students will remain in local schools in the communities of their upbringing. This underlies a strong idealistic notion that our children will lead our communities in the future. This is why the present generation works to maintain the institutions and values of American democracy for the future. These are legitimate reasons for key stakeholders to support the education of today’s students.
Educators as Advocates

Educators should not shrink from waging practical arguments about the educational preparation and background essential for those who will do the work of our society in the near and longer term: global warming, urban renewal, scientific and medical advances, health care and national security. A glaring example of the danger of falling behind is the fact that the United States annually produces approximately 65,000 engineers compared to roughly 450,000 produced in China. Without some change, many believe the United States will fall steadily behind in technological innovation, manufacturing expertise, and the expansion of knowledge and scientific exploration if we do not renew our commitment to education. Math and science education throughout K-12 curricula, but especially in the ever-transitional middle school years, is critical. As in the Sputnik era of the late 1950s, the United States faces challenges that only our schools are capable of meeting.

The case must be made to those holding the purse strings that short-changing education is a prescription for diminishing American strength in an increasingly global economy. Failure to address these challenges through better funding will result in the loss of our competitive edge. Those responsible for local budgets and tax policies will commit additional resources to our schools if they can see the clear connection to community needs, aspirations, and prospects.

Strategies for Success

Taking the time to develop relationships with local business and corporate leaders can help educators “make the case” for better schools. Such leaders have built-in credibility with community decision-makers, and can speak directly to a rationale for school funding. These relationships between schools, local businesses, and larger corporations can be strengthened through the development of internships, employment opportunities, and mentoring opportunities for their employees. Through collegiality and mutual interest—this is what we can do for you, this is what you can do for us—a common platform can be built for supporting public education.

Grants are one direct avenue to funding and an important way to seek support from federal and state agencies, as well as private sector sources. These sources of funding are staring schools in the face. Educators need to be creative in identifying innovative programs that can provide external sources of support. In applying for grants, schools must have a long-range plan in place that will sustain programs beyond the grant cycle. Otherwise schools fall into the cycle of short-term improvement while returning to the status quo in the long run. Grant proposals need to be well thought out to support important substantive initiatives, not simply designed to secure funding. Also, financial planning and management must be done up front to maintain the benefits of the grant well into the future. Lacking this planning and intent, the argument can be made that a grant should not be sought in the first place. Finally, schools must pursue grant projects with transparency for the benefit of the granting agency and the school’s constituents: teachers, parents, students, community, and school board members.

Strategic planning is an important tool to guide your schools’ future course, especially in terms of the allocation and use of resources. To be credible, strategic planning must be conducted wisely and with the best state-of-the-art demographic and research information. For example, one small town in exurban Massachusetts was experiencing an enormous boom in new housing starts. Figuring that young professionals starting families would purchase of many of these homes, one administrator began to ponder the impact of this changing demographic reality on the future capacity of the town’s schools. An analysis of the annual percentage increase in housing and a projection that the real estate and construction industries were likely to continue to boom in the future led to the conclusion that school enrollment might double or more in the next decade. This led to a strategic plan for building and expanding school facilities in accordance with the projected growth. Armed with this forethought and foresight, the town’s strategic plan did not sit on a shelf gathering dust. It will help the town’s schools assess their needs and address those needs in proactive, fiscally responsible ways.

Taking Charge

We are in an age of very tight resources for education, this despite the run of four or more “education Presidents.” In this climate, efforts to increase funding and ensure that stakeholders are able to make a difference are critical. These initiatives must hold promise to effect change in pedagogy, student learning, and achievement. Teachers are vital stakeholders in school reform. Without intelligent, well-educated, well-trained, prepared and motivated teachers, the best funded strategic, curricular, and leader-driven plans may fail. This came to the fore recently when the Barnstable Middle School addressed daily class scheduling from the standpoint of student learning and teacher planning, preparation, and delivery of instruction. The move was made to block scheduling without an increase in teaching staff.
tive leaders collaborated with teachers to increase class and course planning time dramatically (forty-five minutes to an hour per day). This involved no increase to the school budget, yet it has the potential to positively impact teacher morale, quality of instruction, and student achievement. This is an excellent example of “working smarter” within existing budgetary restraints to improve the way the business of schools is done.

More so than their for-profit counterparts, school districts are obligated to “work smarter” as good stewards of taxpayer monies. This means that creativity, the notion of “thinking outside the box,” is a must. Consider Rick Landau, the principal of a charter school in Providence, Rhode Island, who aspired to strengthen ties with parents to garner their support for his school program. Landau convinced a cellular phone company to donate cell phones to the school with unlimited service so teachers would enjoy free personal calls in return for two hours per week of calls to the homes of students. The teachers were more than happy to go above and beyond to promote home-school communication in exchange for having cell phones for their personal use. Landau’s goal of increasing school contact with parents was met and exceeded. In a sense he created a win-win-win situation: the school engaged the parents more fully, the teachers had an additional “benefit” of cell phone use, and the cellular phone company got publicity for its corporate contribution to education.

In the current climate of high stakes testing there is also a demand for increasing expenditures that offset the reallocation of budget monies from other pressing educational needs. But the “costs” are more than merely financial. We know that teachers experience the burden to teach to what is tested, creating a constraint on teaching style, learning style and pedagogy. How might we think smarter about this problem? Suppose we were to use instructional monies earmarked for textbooks to challenge teachers to design curricula that would address student success on standardized tests as well as the need to instill in our children a love for life-long learning. This would develop a teaching staff as a learning community that shares its wisdom in ways that enrich classrooms and student learning. If this could be accomplished with no increase in budget, it could be a win-win situation for teachers and students.

In Conclusion

More than creating additional expensive and wide-ranging administrative bureaucracies, these strategies are the way of the future in improving teaching and learning within limited means. The mantra for effective school reform should be “administrators administer, teachers teach, and students learn.” Each of these players has a role, and each role should not be grown beyond that which is effective and productive. This does not mean that administrators should be overworked and undervalued, but it does mean that they should hire and retain the very best teaching staff. At the same time, these school leaders must creatively craft and advocate for the financial resources that will enable quality education to be ensured.

In actuality, the issue is not so much about the gap between the money you have and the money you need, but how you cope with the funding support that exists. Money can ensure a high quality education, but only the most financially well-heeled communities can presume to fully fund schools at optimal levels. The majority of school districts will have to “work smarter” to affect changes that impact on the quality and caliber of teaching and learning. At the same time schools must champion the cause of equity in education. In the final analysis, this is the only way that the financial spigot assisting them will be opened more fully.

Stephen J. Nelson is an Assistant Professor of Educational Leadership at Bridgewater State College. He is the author of Leaders in the Crucible: The Moral Voice of College Presidents. Nelson is also a Senior Scholar at the Leadership Alliance at Brown University.
The Congressional Glossary defines “the power of the purse” as the constitutional power given our government to raise and spend money. The reality of recent years is that schools have received less and less money to fund more and more complicated programs. Schools that have worked to continue to move their programs forward have had to find alternative sources of funding. The challenge lies in identifying stakeholders who are purse-holders to advance and sustain our programs.

Purse-holders may not always understand the needs of public schools, but they may be willing to help. Purse-holders we have identified in Hamilton-Wenham include our local education foundation, our parent organization, private donors, grants, and local company incentive programs. Securing their support has been essential to our success, building both short and the long term partnerships committed to supporting our schools.

Start with a Strategic Plan

At the outset, the Hamilton-Wenham Regional Schools first engaged in a strategic planning process to redefine our vision and mission and create a comprehensive set of directions for district-wide and school-based initiatives over the next five-years. This plan focuses on nine themes:

- School Culture and Climate
- Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment
- Student Support Services: The Whole Child
- Personnel and Professional Development
- Facilities and Technology
- Community Relations and Communications
- Organizational Renewal
- Leadership, and Management
- Educational Funding

Involving community members in such a planning process assures their support in achieving the plan. There are several considerations to ensure success:

- include community members on your Strategic Planning committee
- use surveys of the broader community to collect data
- develop a plan with clear, well-defined, achievable goals
- share your strategic plan publicly and often.


Court the Purse-holders

People who are not in education don’t always “get” education. It is our responsibility to educate them about what we need and why. At the same time, we need to recognize the needs of the purse-holder’s organization, some of which might be unspoken. For example, some purse-holder’s members may be parents who want to stay connected with their child’s world by working on joint projects. It is our job as educators to voice what is needed, to demonstrate how the purse-holders can help, and then to work as a team to design a plan for success. By melding the two worlds of education and purse-holders together, a joint mission and vision can be created. Don’t think small. Express the vision, not a list of purchases to be made. Don’t limit your expectations; work together to reach for the big picture.

In Hamilton-Wenham, most purse-holders want to become involved because schools educate their children and are a major part of the foundation of our community. Start by examining the missions of your purse-holders and address them. Match your proposal to their goals. In doing this, the focus is not on funding but the importance of the common mission. This approach provides built-in rewards for the schools and satisfaction for the donor(s).

Targeted Goals

Make your proposals concrete and real, expressing a targeted goal rather than an amount of money.
Believe in your purse-holders’ capacity to take ownership of targeted goals and develop plans for fund-raising. Fund-raising is where purse-holder skills come in to play, energizing them to conduct successful projects.

Purse-holders become excited by projects of which they can grab hold and work toward success. Often, their enthusiasm/motivation to reach a targeted goal shortens the timeline for achieving that goal. In some cases “donors” within the group step forward to provide additional funding to see the goal accomplished early. Individuals may also ride on the coattails of an effective group project and support the initiative beyond its initial completion. A multi-year strategy is an excellent way to plug into this enthusiasm. For example, Hamilton-Wenham is currently working to install an electronic whiteboard in every classroom. It is unrealistic that this could be accomplished in one year, so we proposed a multi-year plan of 3-4 years.

**Celebrate the successes**

To promote purse-holder involvement, recognize their achievement. When purse-holders see the impact of their spending, they feel a sense of accomplishment about what they’ve done and pride in their organization. This can be done by demonstrating a finished project. This provides concrete understanding of how educational goals have been achieved. When possible, make it a student demonstration since student needs are what it’s all about. If the project is long-term, set benchmarks and celebrate the success of steps along the way. It has been our experience that incremental successes seem to be just as important as completed projects. It keeps the donor organization motivated and committed.

When possible, label purchases to recognize the donor. Each computer in our lab is marked with the name of the sponsoring organization and the year of the donation. A plaque on the wall recognizes donations in the library. This public recognition acknowledges not only partnership, but the key role partners play in public education.

**Communicate, Communicate, Communicate**

Get your message out and be sure to relate it to your strategic plan to exhibit the sound reasoning behind your requests. Also, since good two-way communication involves both the sending and receiving of messages, be sure you listen and acknowledge the purse-holder’s needs, thoughts and ideas. Effective communication builds trust.

Use all forms of media to recognize purse-holder projects. If your school publishes a newsletter and/or has a web site, use it to celebrate your partnerships and their successes. Consider local access cable channels, as well. It has been our experience that a thank you note from a group of students or a teacher who is the beneficiary of a project not only sends a powerful message of appreciation, it also touches the heart. These public and private forms of communication provide publicity for the organization and demonstrate the school’s appreciation for its social commitment. Such promotions can help the organization as it tries to retain and expand its membership which can in turn lead to increased contributions. Successful schools and purse-holders can become symbiotic in helping each other.

**In Conclusion**

Realizing the power of the purse requires flexibility in your thinking and approach. Be willing to think outside the box because the needs of the purse-holder may be somewhat different than your needs. In our experience, donors tend to like projects that are visible, creative and concrete. They seem to prefer projects that directly impact children. Know your donor’s needs and develop plans that match them.

Gifts and grants may not fund a total school program. You may still need to look beyond these purse-holders. Another role for purse-holders is to help you advocate for appropriate state and federal funding. In other words, the power of purse-holders may be multi-layered. Voices from many quarters speaking the same message to legislators make the communication louder.

Finally, develop strategies to maintain the purse-holder’s momentum. Don’t make project schedules too long-term. Recognize that members of groups change over time. Most parents in our middle school fund-raising groups are only with us for three years. These parents want their fund-raising work to impact their children now.

For Hamilton-Wenham, the power of the purse is the collaborative efforts of teams of people working toward shared goals linked directly to our strategic plan.

Janice DeSantis is a former President of MASCD and the principal of Miles River Middle School in the Hamilton-Wenham Regional School District. Judy Naylor serves as technology coordinator for Miles River Middle School.
Chapter 70 Changes Bring A Simpler, More Equitable Aid Formula

By Roger Hatch
Massachusetts Department of Education

At a February 2006 meeting in Milford, a group of school business officials gathered to hear about how the proposed new Chapter 70 state education aid formula would work. At the end of the twenty minute presentation, one of them raised his hand, expecting far more complicated stuff than this, and asked incredulously, “That’s it?”

The FY07 state budget implements some major changes to the Chapter 70 state education formula. It streamlines the calculation of the foundation budget—the Commonwealth’s measure of how much needs to be spent to provide an adequate education. It institutes a new method of measuring how much a community should pay for schools based upon its property wealth and income. For the first time, it defines exactly how much of each district’s foundation budget should be paid by the Commonwealth. Most importantly, it does all of this while keeping the calculations simple.

Why the Formula Is Changing

The public has much at stake in demanding fair school financing and can be counted on to point out perceived flaws in any state funding model.

When people cannot understand the calculations and they are not satisfied with the results, the word “inequitable” rolls easily off their tongues in passionate rhetoric. Over the past year in particular, the word was heard often in relation to Chapter 70. For example, Chelmsford taxpayers railed against how much aid the neighboring town of Westford ($2,279 per pupil in FY06) received—compared to their own $1,213 per pupil. Triton Regional ($2,326) saw adjacent Pentucket Regional’s $3,801 as cause for complaint. Canton ($911) looked enviously at next-door Sharon’s $1,796.

These and many other cases around the Commonwealth resulted in a grass-roots effort to change the formula in FY07. The legislature organized a “listening tour” to hear specific complaints about school funding and thoughtfully listened to the concerns of residents across the state. A rally on Boston Common on April 26th that attracted more than a thousand school officials, parents and students called further attention to the depth of feeling about this issue.

It is easy to complain when one limits the comparison to one’s own district versus the town next-door. “Inequitable” is easy to identify in isolation. What is hard is to find a solution that treats all 351 cities and towns fairly given their educational needs and ability to pay. Defining “equitable” is difficult and is a task that usually ends up on the desks of state officials.

To make the task even more daunting, when it comes to school finance, there are two particular types of equity. There is pupil equity: the quality of children’s education should not be limited by where they happen to live, which means that all districts must have sufficient resources for their schools. There is also taxpayer equity: the burden of paying for schools should be proportional to ability to pay. Poorer communities should receive more state aid than wealthy ones.

Pupil Equity: The “Foundation Budget”

The Education Reform Act of 1993 put into place a “foundation budget” for each Massachusetts school district. It defines the minimum amount that a district needs to spend in order to provide an adequate education. It reflects the additional costs associated with low-income, special education, limited-English, and vocational pupils.

In FY93, the last year before Education Reform was implemented, the baseline for Massachusetts school funding did not look good. Sixty percent of districts—both urban and rural—were spending below their foundation targets. Annual Chapter 70 aid increases succeeded at eliminating the problem. By fiscal year 2000 all districts had reached foundation spending levels even as those targets grew higher each year to reflect enroll-

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1 The DOE website contains a written description of the changes, plus a spreadsheet that contains the detail underlying every district’s calculations at http://finance1.doe.mass.edu/chapter70/chapter_07.html
ment change and inflation. Since 2000, that progress has been maintained—Chapter 70 funding has ensured that every district has the money to spend at or above its foundation budget level.

As a group, poor urban Massachusetts districts now spend more on schools than the wealthier suburbs. This is as it should be, for their needs—as reflected in their higher foundation budgets—are much greater. On the pupil equity front, Massachusetts is a success story. This was confirmed in 2005 when the Massachusetts Supreme Court found in favor of the Commonwealth in the Hancock v Driscoll school funding decision—one of the few such cases nationwide where the defendants have won.

One consequence of Hancock was the unwillingness of the legislature to tinker with the foundation budget while the case was in process. Now that the decision is in, serious consideration is being given to improving the calculation of the foundation budget so that it reflects current needs, not those from 1993 (which pre-dated state-imposed curriculum standards).

The FY07 state budget authorizes a significant structural change in the foundation budget which should help in analyzing how it can be improved. The statutory definition of the foundation includes eighteen separate functional categories. In FY07, the number has been consolidated to eleven. This simplifies the calculation, and even more importantly brings each category into alignment with the way that schools account for their spending. Unlike the past, it will now be possible to compare what the foundation budget says should be spent in specific categories, to what districts actually do spend. The comparison should help policymakers decide upon changes to the foundation budget in future years.

**Taxpayer Equity: An Elusive Concept**

Once districts’ foundation budgets are calculated, the goal of the Chapter 70 formula is to determine a fair mix of state and local money to fund them. For the most part, the “old” formula made an assumption that cities and towns could afford to pay what they spent the previous year out of property taxes, plus a share of the increased revenue they could raise under Proposition 2 ½ and other local sources. State aid covered the rest.

The old formula was designed to achieve pupil equity, and its design meant taxpayer equity was only a secondary goal. Chief among its problems were:

- It never fully articulated what the “ideal” mix of state and local money should be based upon community wealth. What a town was required to spend from local taxes in FY06 was largely a statistical artifact of how much the town had been paying in FY93.
- It started out using both community income and property value in the calculations, but there was no provision in the law to update these measures as communities changed over time.
- It was forbiddingly complex; few people had the patience to make it through its 35-column calculation.

### The “Aggregate Wealth” Method: A New Way of Defining Community Ability to Pay

Shortly after the Hancock decision, in the spring of 2005, the Massachusetts Department of Education was asked by a joint Ways and Means hearing to make recommendations on how the formula should be changed. The DOE recommendation was to use a new methodology for determining municipal ability to pay called “aggregate wealth.” The new approach avoids the complex ratios of past proposals, and keeps the calculation simple. It is called “aggregate” because it totals the value of all taxable property in a city or town and takes a fixed percentage of that total to be devoted to schools. Likewise, it totals all of the income reported by each municipality’s residents on state tax returns and takes a fixed percentage of that total for schools.

Governor Romney and many legislators and professional organizations approved of the proposal, and it was used to determine the aid calculations authorized by the FY07 state budget.

Three key policy decisions were needed in order to implement this very important methodological change.

The goal for the share of the $8.014 billion in FY07 foundation budget dollars that should be borne by local taxpayers was set at 59 percent, or $4.729 billion. This is a reduction from the 62.8 percent they were contributing in FY06—when no such goal existed.

Some communities are so wealthy that their initial targets are higher than their foundation budgets. Policymakers chose to set a limit of 82.5 percent of foundation to come from local taxes, meaning that at full phase-in 17.5 percent would come from state aid—a substantial increase in state dollars for many of the 95 communities that fall into this category.

How much of community ability to pay should be derived from property value and how much from income

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2 The old foundation budget categories did not conform to the DOE chart of accounts, which is the basis for how school districts account for and report their expenditures.

3 [http://finance1.doe.mass.edu/chapter70/formula05_1.html](http://finance1.doe.mass.edu/chapter70/formula05_1.html)
has been a contentious issue. Both are legitimate measures of community wealth. The complicated ratios used in past formulas could not make clear the dollar impact of either. A compromise was needed, and that is what the FY07 changes put in place: exactly 50 percent of the $4.7 billion statewide required contribution goal should come from property wealth, and 50 percent from income.

In any given year, there is only one combination of percentage factors that will satisfy all three of these policy goals. In FY07, .3383 percent of each municipality’s total property valuation and 1.631 percent of its total income yields the desired statewide result.

Now that the FY07 changes are in place, many are coming to the realization that the Chapter 70 can now be understood by the general public. The formula is a big improvement because:

- There is a stated “effort goal” which translates into every city or town’s “correct” mix of local and state funding to achieve its foundation budget funding level. This is the first time the Commonwealth has articulated such a goal, and the formula would provide for progress toward the goal each year.
- Because there is a clearly defined goal, the formula can be a tool to plan budgets several years into the future.
- The calculations are straightforward and readily understandable.

FY08 and Beyond

These changes were authorized for FY07 only, but there is a good chance that they will carry forward into the future. For that to happen much will depend upon whether they have the support of local officials, parents and taxpayers. These concerned citizens now have a new formula that is both simple and equitable. Their consideration and reasoned judgment is needed, and state officials would like to hear what they think.

Roger Hatch is the School Finance Programs Administrator for the Office of School Finance and District Support at the Massachusetts Department of Education.

MASCD has taken the lead in mobilizing fellow educators in support of H4157, legislation designed to professionalize the educator workforce and insure teacher and administrator quality. The Working Group for Educator Excellence, representing educators PK-16, businessmen, policymakers, the teachers’ unions and parents, has been working with legislators to enlist their support for this bill, which will be re-filed in the coming legislative session.

Achieving better results with students will require dramatically improving the educator workforce. H4157 will improve student achievement through more equitable distribution of resources across districts and clear standards, increased support and appropriate accountability for educators. With H4157, we can expect more consistent knowledge-based preparation programs, comprehensive induction, job-embedded professional development, improved supervision and evaluation, better retention of educators, incentives for hard to staff positions and career path options for teachers.

Isa Kaftal Zimmerman, Peter Badalament and Mary Forte Hayes represent MASCD on the Working Group. For more information on H4157, visit www.mascd.org.

Support Mounts for Educator Quality Bill

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For example, let us take a household which owns a $300 thousand home, and had income of $100,000. Its share from property is .3383% of $300,000 or $1,015. Its share from income is 1.6306% of $100,000 or $1,631. Its combined share of the town’s required local tax effort equals $2,646.
It’s All About the Teacher: Reallocation Resources Where They Make a Difference

By Rosetta Marantz Cohen
Smith College

It is one of the obvious and embarrassing truisms of American public education that rich districts produce high numbers of high-achieving students, while poor districts do not. Educational advocates and policy makers intent on closing the “achievement gap” have, for decades, developed a range of strategies for addressing that disparity: The first and most far-reaching of these are the funding equalization plans that gained momentum in the 1980s. Beginning with Texas, many states passed legislation to equalize state funding across districts, placing ceilings on the levels of tax revenues available to affluent districts and reallocating funds to low-income areas. By the mid-nineties, federal and state mandates had also established incentive programs for inner city teachers, intended to coax high quality college graduates into urban, disadvantaged schools by providing bonuses and special housing for top candidates. A wide range of compensatory education programs, funded by both state and federal monies, were also established throughout the 1990s and into the present decade. Measured over time, all these strategies seem to have had less positive impact on student performance than their sponsors had hoped they would. In our own state, the achievement gap between rich and poor continues to be a source of frustration and puzzlement.

Funding and Achievement

Even as advocates for poor, urban schools argue for increased funding, fiscal conservatives sound their perennial complaint: “Throwing money at schools solves no problems,” they say. “Compensatory programs don’t work as they should because money is too often ill-spent and squandered.” In some ways, given the track record of the last few decades, this is an argument that is hard to refute. As a liberal democrat and a champion of public education, I believe in the power of tax-dollars to improve education. But I am also deeply suspicious of the ways in which money gets spent in public schools; and specifically, in the choices that states and districts make when allocating resources for student achievement.

I believe that one of the critical reasons for the “achievement gap” is that states and districts place a disproportionate percentage of funds in the hands of individuals who have no direct impact on teaching and learning. This has become increasingly true over the last twenty years. A survey of national statistics on hiring within state districts, between 1960 and 1984, shows a 500 percent increase in curriculum specialists and instructional supervisors. During the same period, the overall proportion of teachers, among all professional school staff, fell from 70 percent to 52 percent. And of that 52 percent, only 43 percent were actual classroom teachers; the rest were special needs counselors, guidance staff, aides, and other personnel. In other industrialized countries with which we routinely compare our students’ achievement, the percentages are quite different: 60 to 80 percent of school personnel work directly with children in classrooms.

According to national census polls, the average school district hires one administrator for every fifty-five teachers, and in some states the ratio is far more dramatic. Illinois and Mississippi, for example, have teacher-to-administrator ratios of 33.4 to one. North Dakota, unbelievably, requires one administrator for every 17.7 teachers, a ratio that is far higher than most teacher-to-student ratios in American classrooms. Do higher administrator-teacher ratios yield higher student achievement? You can be certain they do not. Indeed, the contrary seems to be true. States with lower teacher to adminis-
trator ratios, like Vermont and Maine, have relatively high levels of student retention and achievement. Bureaucratic waste of this kind fuels the arguments of those who call for cutting budgets and reducing resources.

**Funding the Front Lines of Education**

The better answer to the question of how best to use budgetary resources is to allocate precious funds to the areas where they will have the greatest impact on students. Without a doubt, those areas are in the recruitment and support of outstanding teachers. Innumerable studies have shown that the single most powerful factor in raising student achievement is the quality and commitment of faculty. And yet relatively little is spent on factors that influence who gets hired and whether or not they stay in the field. Most districts in Massachusetts and elsewhere place recruitment of teachers as a fairly low priority, spending little if anything on advertising and active soliciting of candidates from the best teacher education programs. Job openings are too frequently posted late in the summer, and interviewing candidates happens in the most perfunctory way. Once teachers are hired, there is little effort to nurture and retain them. Most schools still give new teachers the most challenging classes; mentoring is uneven or non-existent in many schools—particularly in the most challenging ones. It goes without saying that teacher salaries in most states are not competitive with business and industry for comparably educated candidates, though most young people who have chosen the teaching profession are already reconciled to this fact. They are not reconciled, however, to the poor work environments and intractable disciplinary problems they encounter in many schools. The high teacher attrition rate in urban schools has far more to do with lack of support and nurture than with salaries and benefits. Federal and state bonus programs for outstanding teachers have little impact on retention when gifted young teachers are overwhelmed and unsupported. Teachers stay at their schools when they feel they are having an impact; they leave when they feel impotent and unsuccessful.

How can schools allocate resources most effectively to ensure student achievement? By prioritizing, in a conscious and direct way, the needs (both tangible and intangible) of its greatest resources: its most gifted teachers. That means providing pleasant, clean and attractive work environments for teachers, including quiet offices with telephones and computers in them. It means instituting disciplinary policies that protect teachers first and foremost, and that respect and acknowledge the judgment of teachers, removing chronically disruptive students from their classrooms and placing those students in alternative learning environments. It means empowering teachers in meaningful ways, by reducing class size, and by instituting sabbaticals and study fellowships for those who are engaging in meaningful intellectual projects.

**In Conclusion**

Some of these strategies cost money; some don’t. But if most districts cut two administrative positions in the central office, and if states reduced the bureaucratic bloat that is often so financially burdensome, more resources would certainly be available for implementing these ideas. Is it sound budgeting? Ask any parent in any district in the state: “Would you prefer to have an extra vice principal and associate superintendent; or would you prefer smaller classes and better qualified teachers for your child?” The answer is a no-brainer.

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Rosetta Marantz Cohen is a Professor, Department of Education and Child Study at Smith College. She is the author of *Teacher-Centered Schools: Reimagining Education Reform in the Twenty-First Century* (Scarecrow Press, 2003) and has authored and edited a variety of books and articles on school reform.
As we know, MASCD is viewed as a credible, valued and clear voice on educational issues. As President of MASCD, I am afforded opportunities to work with policy makers on issues affecting education. I can provide MASCD’s perspective on teaching, learning, and leading as well as ASCD’s position on educating the whole child, professional development, and high school reform.

Last March, Massachusetts received a National Governor’s Association (NGA) Center for Best Practices grant to convene an adolescent task force. Since April 2006, I have served as a member of the Mass. Department of Education’s Adolescent Literacy Task Force. The purpose of the task force is to assist the state in developing a statewide PreK-12 literacy plan. The final plan will be submitted to the State Board of Education for approval prior to the conclusion of the grant period in January 2007.

On September 28-29, 2006, as a member of the four member team representing the Massachusetts Adolescent Literacy Task Force, I attended the Middle Grades Literacy Forum in Phoenix, AZ. The two-day conference, sponsored by the National Governor’s Association Center for Best Practices with support from the U.S. Department of Education, had representatives from 30 states and featured national middle grades literacy researchers, state education and business leaders, and higher education. During the sessions, we learned about and were able engage in discussions with experts and colleagues from other states about:

- Current status of literacy performance across the states
- How middle grades literacy skills impact students’ abilities to succeed in high school, college, and the workplace
- Major findings about adolescent literacy and implications for state policymaking
- State strategies and model policies to support literacy improvement in grades four through nine
- Links between literacy and mathematics achievement
- Current research on teaching reading and writing to English Language Learners
- Effective approaches for training educators to meet the literacy needs of special education students
- Cumulative research about the most effective elements of adolescent writing instruction

As a state team we had the opportunity to share our draft policy plan to improve middle grades literacy, “Reading to Achieve: MA PreK-12 Literacy Plan,” with the experts and tap them for assistance. Ilene Berman, Program Director, NGA Center for Best Practices, stated that Massachusetts is once again a leader in its efforts to address closing the achievement gaps for Massachusetts students.

On behalf of MASCD, I would like to thank Cheryl Liebling, Director, Office of Reading, and Laurie Slobody, Mass. Department of Education’s Literacy Task Force Leaders and my Middle Grades Literacy Forum teammates Richard Santeusanio (NELMS), Deborah Spinelli (Assistant Superintendent, Stoughton Public Schools), and B. Ellen Holmes (MASC) for the opportunity to bring MASCD’s voice to the table at the state and national level as we develop and deliver a framework that focuses on literacy in 4th-9th grades to improve academic performance, close achievement gaps, and prepare students for success in high school and beyond.
New School Leaders Complete MASCD Licensure Program

Mary Forte Hayes
Executive Director, MASCD

The next generation of school leaders has had a solid grounding in instructional leadership in the MSSAA-Teachers21-MASCD Leadership Licensure Program (LLP). Since 2003, over 125 educators have met the requirements for licensure as principals/assistant principals or supervisors/directors, and the class of 2007 numbers forty-eight students. In this highly competitive program, students spend two weeks in the summer and one weekend a month learning about and immersed in effective instructional and organizational leadership. Classes are held at MSAA in Franklin. Jack Aherne, Shelley Chamberlain, John D’Auria, Manuel Fernandez, Patti Grenier, Ann Koufman, Matt King, Peg Mongiello, Audrey Seiffert, and Jim Walsh - Teachers21 instructors with years of experience as successful leaders—provide inspiration and solid grounding in school culture, inclusion and equity, curriculum leadership, supervision and evaluation, data analysis, community relations, school law, and myriad other topics. Candidates complete a 300 hour practicum and a professional portfolio which includes artifacts and reflections related to the Massachusetts Professional Standards for Administrators. The cohort model enables participants to develop important collegial skills and to benefit from the diverse backgrounds and perspectives represented in the group.

Applications are now being accepted for the class of 2008. There is a tuition discount for applications postmarked by January 31, 2007. A new LLP for superintendents will begin in 2007 at READS Collaborative in Middleboro. For more information on the LLP, visit www.mascd.org.

Class of 2006 Blue Cohort

Front row (seated, l. to r.) – Shirley Lundberg, Kerry Burke, Erica Pereira, Michelle McGlone, Deborah Gray, Sandra McFadden  Middle row (l. to r. – Patrick Phenix, Virginia Elliott, Julie Vincentsen, Elizabeth York, Dave Uminski, Jamel Adkins-Sharif, Dan Bauer  Back row (l. to r.) – Joe Tarmel, Steve Guditus, Matt Ricard, Sean Fleming, Peter Dannible  Missing from photo: Kimberly Heldmann, James Kelly, Brenda Moynihan, Mike Raposa

Class of 2006 Green Cohort

Front row (seated, l. to r.) – Jordana Harper-Ewert, Karin Johnson, Nixsa Mills, Alice Earle, Virginia Karen DeWitt, Grace Maneri  Middle row (l. to r. – Tracy Curley, Pat Keppler, Lynn Dadekian, Archie Beaton, Janet Casey, Marcia Pertuz  Back row (l. to r.) – Richie Smith, Greg Ranieri, Jamie Vitonis, Mike Donovan, Michael Hanley, Michael Roche. Missing from photo: Deanne Dixon, Mark Hurrie, John Martin
LLP Graduates Join Ranks of School Leaders

Class of 2006
Jamel Adkins-Sharif – Director, Martin Luther King Charter School of Excellence (Springfield); Dan Bauer – Assistant Principal, Beverly High School; Kerry Burke – Principal, Lee High School; Tracy Curley – Assistant Principal, Scituate High School; Deborah Gray – Assistant Housemaster, Austin Preparatory School (Reading); Karin Johnson – Dean of Students, Artleboro High School; John Martin – Assistant Principal, Mount Everett Regional High School (Sheffield); Michelle McGlone – Assistant Principal, Holbrook High School; Brenda Moynihan – Associate Headmaster, Taunton High School; Marcia Pertuz – Principal, William Stanley Elementary School (Waltham); Greg Ranieri – Business Department Head, Scituate High School; Matt Ricard – Assistant Dean of Students and Athletic Director, Nashoba Valley Technical High School (Westford); Richie Smith – Dean of Students, Tisbury School (Martha’s Vineyard); Joe Tumel – Assistant Principal, Lee High School; Dave Uminski – Assistant Principal, Oakmont Regional High School (Ashburnham); Elizabeth York – Assistant Principal, Middleboro High School (Middleboro)

Class of 2005
Tamatha Bibbo – Assistant Principal, Franklin High School; Phil Conrad – Assistant Principal, Hamilton-Wenham High School (South Hamilton); Jack Flood – Assistant Principal, Memorial Middle School (Fitchburg); Derek Folan – Assistant Principal, Franklin High School; Sean Gallagher – Assistant Principal, Beverly High School; Jeanne Hackney – District Special Education Administrator, Mahar Regional (Orange); Peter Light – Assistant Principal, Franklin High School; Sandra Nichol – Director of Secondary Math and Science, Hudson; Tim Payne – Co-Principal, Mount Greylock Regional High School (Williamstown); Sarah Shannon – Assistant Principal, Duxbury Middle School; John Sheehan – Principal, Randolph Community Middle School; Jeffrey Sperling – Dean of Students, Medfield High School

MASCD Convenes Task Force on High School Redesign

Educators, business representatives, policymakers, and legislators gathered on September 28 & 29 to kick off a high school redesign initiative sponsored by MASCD. Wayne and Annie Sweeney, consultants from Tomorrow’s Schools Today, led the two-day session using a leadership development tool for creating 21st Century Schools created by Microsoft’s Partners in Learning. Jeffrey Nellhaus, Deputy Commissioner, Massachusetts Department of Education, presented data on student performance and post-secondary education and shared details of the Department of Education’s work on high school reform focusing on college readiness.

MASCD and ASCD are committed to high schools that are significant in the lives of children and faculty. We advocate a systemic approach to high school reform driven by a vision of the innovative possibilities for faculty and student learning. MASCD believes that all stakeholders must partner together in a statewide coalition to articulate a plan for high school redesign that builds upon researched practices that yield results. Breaking Ranks II, the NEASC Accreditation Standards and various initiatives already underway throughout the state will inform the work of the task force. The two-day kickoff event, hosted by EDCO, was funded by Microsoft’s Partners in Learning, ASCD, and Massachusetts ASCD. MSSAA will host subsequent meetings of the task force. Contact Mary Forte Hayes, mfhayes@mascd.org if you are interested in learning more about the high school initiative.

We represent a growing coalition of like minded people whose constituents want all Massachusetts high schools to serve all children well. Together we will articulate the strategy we need to get there.

Dennis Richards
MASCD President-Elect
Superintendent
Falmouth Public Schools

Information about MASCD Institutes begins on Page 21.
For complete information and registration details, check the MASCD web site: www.mascd.org
Dollars and Sense: Three Concepts for Success with Budgets

Joseph W. Check
University of Massachusetts Boston

Introduction

Under reform, the role of school administrators has become increasingly complex. Superintendents, principals, and curriculum directors are asked to be not just instructional leaders but also morale builders, community outreach specialists, fund-raisers, and assessment specialists.

My doctoral-level leadership classes at the University of Massachusetts Boston typically include many present and future school administrators. In my experience, a critical administrative function that requires discussion, and that most principals are anxious about, is budget management. I approach this topic by dialoguing with my students about three basic, but often overlooked, concepts for successful financial management in education.

Rule One: If you’re not managing your people well, you’re mismanaging your budget.

For many businesses, costs like equipment, research, and advertising consume large chunks of the budget. Education is a people business, and the bulk of school funding — as much as 70-90% of the total budget — is in salaries and benefits for teachers, counselors, specialists, custodians, aides, and security.

There is a tendency to think of strict budget managers as tough minded, get-it-done types, and people-focused managers as somehow soft or touchy-feely. In fact, in education good people skills are a valuable financial asset, because most of the budget is tied up in people.

Issues like school culture, teacher morale, and professional development can properly be considered hard-core budget issues because they deal with management of the school’s largest financial asset. Similarly, scare tactics like pushing the union contract to the limit and daring teachers to file grievances represents poor financial management. To pick just one example: will young teachers want to build a career in a school or system that employs such tactics? If they don’t, what are the financial implications? It is much more costly to search for new teachers every year or two, particularly in critical shortage areas, than it is to retain and develop good hires over the first five years of their careers.

Rule Two: Understanding your budget better than central office does gives you an advantage.

School system budgets are complex public documents, often carefully constructed to conceal as much as they reveal. School-based budgets can be even more tricky, combining state, federal, local, public, and private funding, per-capita formula funding, discretionary funding, and mandatory expenditures in areas such as special education. Administrators must know the ins and outs of their budget, and know what questions to ask. Principals and other administrators can begin to get an initial grip on their budgets by asking two key questions:

How fixed is the school's staffing pattern and how was it determined? Perhaps there is a way to achieve some flexibility in staffing that represents a de-facto reallocation of budget to better meet school needs. Different school systems use different allocation formulas for personnel. Knowing the
history of how your school or department reached its current staffing pattern is essential. Often, positions were added under previous administrations that might need to be re-allocated, or new needs identified that require additional staff. If there are district-wide priority areas, is there a way your school can respond that will create an argument for an additional part or full-time position?

**Rule Three: You can increase your discretionary budget by leveraging partnerships.**

Every principal and supervisor/director I know would love to increase the amount of discretionary money in their budget, the amount that they control and can use for what they consider most important. How can this be done?

Educators are often told to model their behavior on business practice, to learn the lessons of the private sector and use them as guidelines for educational management. Given the seemingly endless series of ethical lapses and financial misjudgements of corporate leaders reported in the media lately, this advice should be taken with more than a grain of salt. However, there is one common business practice that can pay budget benefits for schools: the concept of leverage.

In the financial world, leverage can be broadly defined as “using given resources in such a way that the potential positive or negative outcome is magnified.” (Wikipedia) In business terms, leverage commonly involves borrowing money from one or more sources to use it in another way that will produce a return greater than the interest paid on the borrowed money.

In educational terms, a school can use non-tangible assets such as its mission in the community, goodwill, and its track record of success to put together school-based partnerships. Partnership assets may include some school-based funds; some outside or grant funds; advice, courses, and services from a university partner that places student teachers in the school; and resources from corporate partners (volunteer hours, equipment, supplies, tutoring). This mixture of resources can be targeted through a program to address high priority needs in the school or district, for example, improved MCAS math scores or better services for ELL students.

The key is that the school is leveraging assets it already possesses to attract additional resources, in the forms of money, people time, materials, and services. This entire mixture of resources, in the form of program partnerships, is then focused on a single problem or initiative that the school or district sees as a high priority.

**In Conclusion**

Used together, these three concepts can give administrators a strategic way to approach the financial side of their responsibilities. Rule One, “If you’re not managing your people well, you’re mismanaging your budget,” provides a way to think about budget issues in terms of overall instructional management and the importance of the human element. Rule Two, “Understanding your budget better than central office does gives you an advantage,” is really an encouragement to dig into your budget without fear, asking questions that will lead to a real understanding of how it is constructed and what the various funding streams are that come to your school or district. Rule Three, “You can increase your discretionary budget by leveraging partnerships,” offers an approach to fundraising that will also lead to community outreach and better ties to a variety of partners. These things can only benefit a school or district in the long run and increase administrative effectiveness and leadership.

Joseph W. Check is Department Chair for the Graduate College of Education at the University of Massachusetts Boston. He oversees the Leadership in Urban Schools Doctoral Program.
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Email mfhayes@mascd.org to check membership status before registering.

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Elisa Bieldeck McDonald, Teachers

Dudley-Charlton 8:15 am coffee & pastries; program 8:30 – 3:15 pm
One day $145/member, $170/non-member — both days $260/member, $310/non-member

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Elisa Beildeck MacDonald is an experienced classroom teacher, lead mentor, and trainer. She has worked at the middle and high school levels as a teacher of English, media, and theatre. She holds degrees in Critical and Creative Thinking and Psychology. Elisa has been highlighted in Middle Ground Magazine and featured in an instructional video for her teaching of media literacy. She is the co-author of a new teacher induction guide for principals.

Register using form on page 21.

Winter Institute 2007 — January 24 and February 14, 2007 — Registration Deadline Dec. 23

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Jenny Tsankova, Teachers

Dedham 8:15 am coffee & pastries; program 8:30 – 3:15 pm
Registration fee includes training, materials, coffee, pastries and lunch.

In this institute, teachers will extend and strengthen their conceptual and procedural understanding of key mathematical ideas. They will examine selected topics in number theory focusing on classes of numbers (even, odd, factors, multiples, methods for finding GCF and LCM, number bases) and will discuss difficulties students experience in the areas of rational numbers, such as division of fractions. Key algebraic ideas such as understanding of variables and equations and linear and simple exponential patterns will be explored through problem solutions and games. Participants will enrich their mathematical toolkit with new strategies and interesting ideas.

Jenny Tsankova has over 10 years of experience as a classroom teacher, college professor, and professional developer for K-12 teachers. Jenny has her doctorate in mathematics education and has authored numerous mathematics instructional and assessment materials. She has developed and implemented staff development programs for teachers and mentored teachers who are learning new approaches to the teaching of math. She is highly skilled at helping teachers diagnose the difficulties students may have with math and identify interventions that are developmentally appropriate. She is a frequent workshop presenter at national conferences.

Register using form on page 21.

March 27 & April 10 — Location TBA - Registration deadline March 6

Making Algebra Accessible to All Students
Faye Ruopp, Teachers

This institute is designed to explore the critical issue in mathematics education of making algebra accessible to all students. In particular, participants will examine the algebra curriculum and algebraic concepts outlined by the National Council of Teachers of Mathematics as they relate to the teaching of algebra in the middle and high school years. There will be a focus on: 1) instructional strategies that address student misconceptions, 2) the use of concrete materials and models to develop understanding, and 3) programmatic approaches that emphasize understanding algebraic thinking through meaningful contexts.

Faye Ruopp is a former secondary mathematics school teacher. She has also taught pre-service teachers in higher education preparation programs. Faye was a Senior Project Director at Education Development Center for twelve years, where she directed several National Science Foundation projects focused on the professional development of mathematics teachers K-12. While at EDC she also directed the development of a middle school mathematics curriculum, Impact Mathematics. Faye brings a broad knowledge base on differentiating instruction to teachers at all stages of their careers.

For more information on programs, go to www.mascd.org/calendar.
Streamlined Curriculum and Formative Assessment: Tools for Addressing the Achievement Gap

One-day Conference featuring Heidi Hayes Jacobs—March 15, 2007—Worcester

Prepare for the Conference with Additional District Seminars

These free seminars, facilitated by Fresh-Pond Education, will be hosted in districts across the state. Each seminar will include an overview of achievement gap strategies and resources, including online professional development courses for teachers and administrators. Participants will have an opportunity to sharpen their approach to reducing achievement gaps.

For information, email conferences@trespond.com

Event Sponsors

This one-day interactive conference will provide an in-depth examination of the key components of successful efforts to create coherent, streamlined curricula and effective approaches to formative assessment. Keynote speaker Heidi Hayes Jacobs will share her vision for the role curriculum alignment can play in improving teaching and learning, and the lessons she has learned from successful curriculum mapping efforts around the world.

Stubborn achievement gaps are among the most pressing problems in American education. Reducing gaps in the performance of different student sub-populations while improving teaching and learning for all students requires fresh perspectives, new tools, and better implementation at every level. Conference topics include:

- Benchmarking the dimensions of successful achievement gap initiatives
- Prioritizing essential standards
- Building your district formative assessment plan
- Assessment literacy 101
- Surveys of teacher and student work attitudes
- Online professional development resources

Discounted early registration is available for MASCD members and district groups who register online by January 15, 2007. Go to www.mascd.org.

We are now accepting submissions for prospective publication in the February 2007 issue of Perspectives, “Influence and Advocacy.” Deadline for submissions is December 22.

Interested authors are invited to submit a 1-2 paragraph proposal describing the intended focus of the article and how it addresses one or more of the focus questions, as well as a brief biographical statement, including the author’s related experience or expertise. Articles may range from 1000-1500 words and should: bring forth an essential question and the tensions and challenges within the topic, inform readers of new and useful ideas and/or practices, explore some of the obstacles, “forks in the road”/choice points, and questions that are raised in what you are trying to do to provoke, entice, and stimulate readers to continue the discussion beyond the article itself. Author’s Guidelines are sent upon acceptance of article proposals. Send all proposals or requests for a sample of the publication to: Walter McKenzie, MASCD Communications Director at wmckenzie@mascd.org.
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