

report of the resolutions committee

The members of the Resolutions Committee met on June 29, 2021 to consider resolutions proposed by member districts and the MASC Board of Directors for consideration at the 2021 Annual Meeting of the Association. Members present were: Andrea Wadsworth, Chair, Lee; Ellen Holmes, Ashburnham Westminster Reg.; Deborah Davis, Northeast Metro Voc. Tech.; Jennifer Storm, Ashburnham Westminster Reg.; Stacey Rizzo, Revere; Beverly Hugo, Framingham; Irene Feliciano-Sims, Holyoke; William Fonseca, East Longmeadow; Paul Schlichtman, Arlington; Margaret Hughes, Narragansett Reg.; Mildred Lefebvre, Holyoke; Robert Swartz, Gardner; Lynn Ryan, Assabet Valley Voc. Tech.

The following resolutions were moved forward by the Resolutions Committee and approved by the Board of Directors.

RESOLUTION 1: DEDICATED FUNDING FOR SCHOOL-BASED CLINICS AND SERVICES

(Sponsored by the Framingham School Committee)

WHEREAS there are several overall benefits associated with a coordinated school health program including improved student performance, decreased risky behaviors, reduced drop-out rates, less absenteeism, and support teacher teamwork; and

WHEREAS school-based health centers represent cost-effective investments of public resources by reducing inappropriate emergency room use, reducing Medicaid expenditures, preventing mental health issues and suicide attempts, and reducing hospitalizations; and

WHEREAS there is a significant increase in healthcare access by students who used school-based health centers;

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that MASC support proposals that would establish dedicated funding for school-based physical health and mental health clinics and services.

RATIONALE: Maintaining physical, social, and emotional wellness in students translates into establishing an optimal learning environment and sets students up for future excellent health standards, in addition to decreasing absences and school discipline referrals, reduction in Medicaid expenditures, reduced inappropriate emergency room use, decreased pregnancies, and increased overall physical and mental health.

RESOLUTION 2: HOMEWORK GAP and WIFI/INTERNET ACCESS

(Sponsored by the MASC Board of Directors)

WHEREAS “the homework gap” is a widely known and documented aspect of the “digital divide” by which students without access to reliable high speed broadband internet at home fall behind their peers academically; and

WHEREAS remote and hybrid learning models exposed the homework gap phenomenon and compounded the deeper learning gap dilemma whereby students without reliable, high speed broadband internet access are unable to engage in meaningful digital learning activities; and

WHEREAS the students who are most likely not to have access to reliable high speed broadband internet are already chronically and systemically underserved, such as low income, minority, and/or rural students making this a critical equity issue; and

WHEREAS Massachusetts Public School Districts continue to invest in digitally rich curriculum materials which provide students with authentic learning opportunities coupled with real work skill development which prepares our students for a digitally rich global economy, the need for reliable high speed broadband internet access will only become more necessary for the students of Massachusetts Public Schools to fully access their curriculum;

BE IT RESOLVED that the Massachusetts Association of School Committees file for and support legislation which seeks to provide free broadband internet to all K-12 students in Massachusetts.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that MASC support Federal initiatives and legislation to improve national high speed broadband internet infrastructure, expansion the FCCs E-rate Program to include homes of K-12 students, or any other steps to expand free access to reliable high speed broadband to the students of our nation.

RESOLUTION 3: IDEA FULL FUNDING ACT

(Sponsored by the MASC Board of Directors)

WHEREAS it is the legal responsibility for public schools to provide a free and appropriate education for all students in the least restrictive environment; and

WHEREAS the cost to educate students with disabilities who qualify for special education services can be an extraordinary burden on the finances of our public schools, impacting the resources available to all students; and

WHEREAS federal funding through IDEA is currently only providing approximately 15% of the extra cost to educate students receiving special education services, far less than the 40% promised in IDEA; and

WHEREAS the IDEA Full Funding Act had been proposed to fully fund IDEA through an incremental, seven-year increase in funding which had both bipartisan and bicameral support;

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the Massachusetts Association of School Committees calls upon the Massachusetts Congressional delegation to reintroduce and promote the passage of the IDEA Full Funding Act.

RESOLUTION 4: RECESS

(Sponsored by the MASC Board of Directors)

WHEREAS due to regulations promulgated by the Massachusetts Education Reform Act of 1993 which excluded recess from time on learning calculations and the federal No Child Left Behind Act which tied funding and local control of schools to standardized test scores, recess in many Massachusetts Elementary Schools has been diminished or eliminated to provide more time for academics; and

WHEREAS the CDC and the Society of Health and Physical Educators have jointly stated that all students should be given at least 20 minutes of recess daily; and

WHEREAS research provided by the US Department of Health and Human Services has shown the benefits of recess to include improved social and emotional development, improved memory, attention and concentration, reductions in disruptive behavior in class and increased levels of physical activity;

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the Massachusetts Association of School Committees support legislation (current bills: S.383, H.695) calling for at least 20 minutes of uninterrupted, supervised, safe, and unstructured free-play recess per day which cannot be excluded from structured learning time requirements and may not increase the total number of hours required in the school year for Massachusetts elementary school students.

RESOLUTION 5: ZERO-TOLERANCE POLICIES

(Sponsored by the MASC Board of Directors)

WHEREAS "Zero-Tolerance" policies and harsh school discipline policies have been shown by the United State Department of Education's Office for Civil Rights to have a disproportionately negative impact on students of color, students with disabilities, and students who identify as LGBTQ+; and WHEREAS the US Department of Justice and the US Department of Education have jointly called for public elementary and secondary schools to meet their obligation under Federal law to administer student discipline without discrimination on the basis of race color or national origin and urged in guidance for public schools to find alternatives to "zero-tolerance" and harsh discipline policies; and

WHEREAS the majority of suspensions in Massachusetts public schools do not involve violent, criminal or drug related incidents; and

WHEREAS students who have been suspended are three times more likely to be "pushed out" or "drop out" of school and these students are 3.5 times more likely to be arrested than students who complete high school;

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the Massachusetts Association of School Committees call upon the Legislature to enact or amend legislation (current bills: S.344, H.664) to encourage the use of restorative, therapeutic and educational approaches to incidents whenever possible over the use of "zero-tolerance" policies in order to provide students the best chance to remain in the public school systems of the Commonwealth.

RESOLUTION 6: ALTERNATIVE TO MCAS

(Sponsored by the MASC Board of Directors)

WHEREAS the Massachusetts Association of Schools has taken a firm position opposing high stakes testing; and

WHEREAS MCAS testing is considered a "high stakes" test because it is used to determine students' eligibility to graduate from school regardless of their academic standing in school; and

WHEREAS other states, universities and colleges have shown that project based assessments, authentic assessments, portfolios and other tools can provide students with the opportunities to demonstrate academic achievement as an alternative to "high stakes" testing;

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the Massachusetts Association of School Committees call upon the Legislature to establish a commission to research and analyze alternative means for students to demonstrate academic achievement which can be used to satisfy graduation requirements for individual students and accountability standards for Massachusetts Public Schools and School Districts.

(Current Bills: S.293, H.612)

RESOLUTION 7: SCHOOL COMMITTEES AND RECEIVERSHIP

(Submitted by the MASC Board of Directors)

WHEREAS state receivership includes all powers of the superintendent and school committee (see ((3)) below)

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the Massachusetts Association of School Committees file for and support legislation which seeks to preserve the authority of the elected body, the school committee, as provided in MGL Ch. 69, Sec. 1K by deleting the words "and school committee" as noted and by inserting the following: "Nothing in this section shall permit the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education or the Commissioner to remove the authority of the school committee."

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that MASC support local initiatives and legislation to restore school committee oversight of the superintendent and/or receiver, including but not limited to goal setting, performance review, and the evaluation process.

RATIONALE:

- Receivership is an equity issue which can be seen in the types of districts that are taken into receivership (high population Latino communities and economically disadvantaged); and
- Receivership strips away the voices of the community that elected school committee members in their communities, this resolution gives the power back to the board; and
- There are no clearly set guidelines on the measures which need to be taken for districts to get back local control with no clear timeframe on the expectation that DESE will turn around a district.

RESOLUTION 8: ELECTRIC SCHOOL BUSES

(Sponsored by the MASC Resolutions Committee)

WHEREAS transitioning to electric-powered school buses would reduce the level of greenhouse gas emissions and limit the health risks from fumes; and

WHEREAS Congress has been deliberating on strategies to address global warming, including incentivizing low and zero-emission motor vehicles, including school buses; and

WHEREAS advocates for the environment across the country have called for the expenditure of \$30 billion dollars over two years to replace at least half of the nation's school bus fleets with zero-emission electric buses;

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that MASC petition Congress to appropriate \$30 billion dollars for improving the electrical supply infrastructure, and providing electric buses and charging stations.

RESOLUTION 9: PROHIBITING THE USE OF NATIVE AMERICAN MASCOTS

(Sponsored by the MASC Board of Directors)

WHEREAS the Massachusetts Association of School Committees passed a resolution last year resolving that all school districts in the Commonwealth should guarantee that racist practices be eradicated, and diversity, equity and inclusion be embedded and practiced for our students, families, faculty and staff; and

WHEREAS the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights called for an end to the use of Native American images and team names by non-Native schools in 2001, stating that "the stereotyping of any racial, ethnic, religious or other groups when promoted by our public educational institutions, teach all students that stereotyping of minority groups is acceptable, a dangerous lesson in a diverse society;" and

WHEREAS the American Psychological Association called for the immediate retirement of Native American mascots, logos and nicknames back in 2005, citing research showing that the use of Native American mascots (a) undermines the educational experiences of members of all communities; (b) creates a racially hostile learning environment for all students; (c) has a negative impact on the self-esteem of American Indian children; and (d) undermines the ability of American Indian Nations to portray accurate and respectful images of their culture;

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the Massachusetts Association of School Committees support legislation calling for regulations prohibiting public schools from using an athletic team name, logo, or mascot which names, refers to, represents, or is associated with Native Americans, including aspects of Native American cultures and specific Native American tribes.*

Current Bill: S.294

*Regulations would not prohibit a Native American tribe, as identified by the Commission on Indian Affairs, located within the boundaries of the Commonwealth, from choosing to use a Native-related name or logo for a sports team comprised of its tribal members, including a tribal school or intramural league, or from that tribal nation giving explicit consent for a school to use their particular tribal name.