

Legislative Update



Boards must act to comply with new bullying law

In December, the governor signed Public Act 241 of 2011 changing how school districts address bullying within their districts. With its passage, school districts have to take action to make sure they comply with the law and even those that currently have a bullying policy need to take some steps to be in compliance.

First, the new law requires each board to adopt a policy prohibiting bullying by **June 5, 2012**. The law also requires that the board hold at least one public hearing on the proposed policy, but the meeting doesn't have to be separate from a regular board meeting. After adoption of the policy, the district is required to submit a copy of its policy to the Michigan Department of Education (MDE) within 30 days.

If a board currently has a policy that's in compliance with the new law, they don't have to adopt a new policy; however, they must submit a copy of that policy to the MDE by **Feb. 3, 2012** or they'll be required to hold a public hearing and adopt a new policy.

A policy adopted under the new law must include the following:

- A statement prohibiting bullying of a pupil.
- A statement prohibiting retaliation or false accusation against a target of bullying, a witness or another person with reliable information about an act of bullying.
- A provision indicating that all pupils are protected under the policy and that bullying is equally prohibited without

regard to its subject matter or motivating animus.

- The identification by job title of school officials responsible for ensuring that the policy is implemented.
- A statement describing how the policy is to be publicized.
- A procedure for providing

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Key Dates:

Feb. 3, 2012 - Districts with current policies already in compliance with the law must submit a copy to the MDE.

June 5, 2012 - Deadline for boards to adopt a policy prohibiting bullying.

30 Days Following Adoption - District must submit policy to the MDE.

Will public education be chartering a new course?

For almost two decades, proponents of charter school expansion have encouraged the elimination of the cap on university authorized charter schools. The cap, instituted in the '90s, limited university charter schools to 150. Changes made to the cap during Michigan's Race-to-the-Top application allowed for limited expansion of this number for high performing charter school authorizers and operators.

In December of 2011, the debate over raising that cap came to a close. Senate Bill 618 (PA 277 of 2011) was signed by Gov. Snyder on Dec. 20, 2011 to allow for an unlimited expansion of the number of university authorized charter schools in

Michigan without regard to quality or track record of success.

MASB has long supported the cap on charters and worked with legislators and others in the education community to keep the cap in place. There's no research or data based evidence to suggest that charter schools perform any better than community governed schools. Proponents speak of the virtues of successful charter schools, but what's not mentioned is that fact that many of these schools are on the Michigan Department of Education's Persistently Lowest Achieving (PLA) list. Of those schools identified as persistently low achieving, nearly one third of them are charter schools.

MASB members have expressed

concern about further interjection of for-profit management companies into public education. MASB also has concerns about the impact of a for-profit, private-sector mentality on a crucial public service. For example, *Education Week* reported that in Florida (a state with liberal charter laws), "What started as an educational movement has turned into one of the region's fastest-growing industries, backed by real-estate developers and promoted by politicians." Some management companies have used their financial leverage to render the governing boards irrelevant, further eroding oversight of public money.

Opponents of removing the cap were successful in getting several

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Media, business partnerships help elevate your district

Nominations accepted for Business and Media Honor Rolls

Now, perhaps more than ever, school districts need strong partners in the community to bolster their success. Businesses and local media are excellent partners for your district. Businesses can provide support in many ways, from financial or in-kind support for programs to offering job shadowing and internship opportunities for students.

Likewise, the media can play a large role in shaping public opinion about your schools, and can help you gain positive attention for your programs.

As we begin the new year, it's a good time to think about potential partnerships you can form to strengthen educational opportunities for students. MASB has two opportunities for you to recognize strong business and media partners through our Business and Media Honor Rolls.

Business Honor Roll

In its first year, the Business Honor Roll is a way for school districts to recognize and say "thanks" for the important contributions of their business partners. Businesses help schools in many ways:

- Supporting programs with in-kind

or financial support.

- Volunteering in schools and offering employees time off to volunteer.
- Hosting company tours or sponsoring field trips.
- Supporting extracurriculars.
- Offering internship and job-shadowing opportunities.
- Serving as a mentor or tutor.
- Delivering presentations to individual classes or assemblies.
- Buying ads in event programs.
- Donating to scholarship programs.

These are just a few of the many ways businesses support schools. There's no limit on your selections, so any business you nominate that you feel meets the criteria of support will be named to the Business Honor Roll.

As school districts face budget cuts, increased demands for accountability and a struggling economy, business partnerships will be critical to your success. Keep those partnerships strong by nominating your business partners to the Business Honor Roll.

Media Honor Roll

Now its fifth year, the Media Honor Roll recognizes fair and balanced reporting about our public schools. It

provides districts an opportunity to foster positive relationships with local media and to promote the fact that our public schools are quality places to educate children.

The Media Honor Roll recognizes media representatives in three categories: print, radio and television. Criteria for honorees include:

- Make the effort to get to know the superintendent, board president and district's mission and goals.
- Report school news in a manner that's fair, accurate and balanced.
- Give a high-profile position to good news about schools.
- Visit the schools.
- Maintain a policy of no surprises by sharing information with school representatives.

If you're working with a reporter who deserves recognition, submit a nomination form.

The deadline for both programs is **June 1, 2012**. Download [Business Honor Roll](#) and [Media Honor Roll](#) nomination materials.

For questions, contact Jennifer Rogers, jrogers@masb.org, 517.327.5908.

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notification to the parent or legal guardian of a victim of bullying and the parent or legal guardian of a perpetrator of bullying.

- A procedure for reporting an act of bullying.
- A procedure for prompt investigation of a report of a violation of the policy or a related complaint, identifying either the principal or a designee as the person responsible for the investigation.

- A procedure for each public school to document any prohibited incident that's reported and a procedure to report all verified incidents of bullying and the resulting consequences, including discipline and referrals, to the board of the school district or ISD on an annual basis.

There are additional non-required items in the statute centered on community involvement, staff training and educational programs for

parents and students that boards are encouraged to include in their policies.

Even the best policy won't prevent bullying unless there's a commitment from the community, the board and staff that bullying won't be tolerated. MASB will ensure that you have all the information needed to comply with the new law; your role is working to ensure that you have a policy in place that meets the requirements of the law and reflects the values of your community.