President's Corner

There's an Amelia Earhart quote I'm inspired by, which reads in part, "The most difficult thing is the decision to act, the rest is merely tenacity. You can do anything you decide to do."

Like many of my school board colleagues, I like to keep thoughts like this in mind as we all gear up for the next school year, and for the related challenges the coming year likely will bring. They serve as helpful reminders for me when I encounter new hurdles that at first may seem daunting -- but that also sometimes present new opportunities.

This issue of "The MABE Scoop" features various MABE member offerings we have coming up for you this year. Not least among them is MABE Annual Conference 2022, to take place Oct. 6-8 at The Westin Annapolis. We also share a legal alert on the Supreme Court's recent decision on Kennedy v. Bremerton School District; an interview with Worcester County school board member (and former superintendent of schools) Jon Andes, Ed.D.; links to recently launched educational equity resources and upcoming Board Service Academies on central issues tied to your school board work; recent headlines you'll want to know of, and more.

With sincere gratitude for all you do each day,

~ Ginny McGraw (Charles County)
MABE President

School Board Member Q&A:
A Conversation with Jon Andes, Ed.D. (Worcester County)

Q: Aside from COVID-19, is there a specific factor you'd say has influenced your service as a school board member more than any other?
A: Public education provided me with a bridge to life. High-quality public education is the bridge to a better life. In our school system, I strive to help build and sustain a public education bridge to make sure each student succeeds in school and in life.

Q: You've addressed audiences ranging from regional to global. What would you say is the #1 communication skill school board members should develop to be as successful as possible in their work?
A: The most critical communication skill is the ability to faithfully listen and promote understanding.

Q: What's your all-time favorite movie, and why?
A: My favorite contemporary movie is "Invictus." The movie demonstrates the critical importance and power of leadership in bringing together a diverse group of people at a critical historical moment to rebuild a nation.

An education professional of the highest caliber, Dr. Jon Andes is a school-based leader; an assistant professor at Salisbury University; an international speaker; and a school board member representative of MABE; he represents District 3 of the Worcester County Board of Education.

Jon also has served as a social studies teacher and coach; as superintendent of schools for Worcester County for 16 years; and -- until July 1 of this year -- as executive director of ESMEC. We've been fortunate at MABE that Jon has been actively involved in MABE's Blueprint Implementation and Legislative Committees, and also has participated in several MABE Annual Conferences through the years.

We caught up with Jon to get his thoughts on his operating philosophy as a school board member during such turbulent times, what he views as the most important communication skill for school board members ... and a secret fact about his background his school board colleagues would never guess.

Q: School board members continue to face fairly rocky terrain. Can you share any thoughts or best practices you use as a school board member that help you navigate today's turbulent climate?
A: As board members, we need to listen; ask the right questions; listen to the responses; consider all aspects; and modify or accept policies that assure student and staff safety, and that create a supportive learning climate that promotes student achievement for each student.

Q: What's an interesting fact that would surprise your school board colleagues to learn about you?
A: I play the great highland Scottish bagpipes.

Q: What reading is on your night table?
A: Why We're Polarized, by Ezra Klein

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Continued
Q: What quality or trait do you think best serves new, incoming school board members today?
A: Patience

Q: Word about school board members deciding to leave their respective posts continues to make headlines. Can you share why you decided to serve in this capacity?
A: Public schools are one of the few places in America where each day a very diverse group of people come together to learn, grow, and develop as people. Public education gave me the opportunity to succeed in life. I strive through service to give back to our community that has given so much to my family.

Q: As a former superintendent and current school board member, what do you see as MABE's greatest strengths?
A: MABE's uniqueness is the synergy of purpose as the advocate for public education, building the capacity in each board member to best serve our communities.

Educational Equity Progress

An important reminder: Maryland law makes school boards responsible for the creation of educational policies designed “to provide quality education and equal educational opportunity for all children,” and boards also are directed to seek ways to “promote the interests of the schools” within their systems.

To this end, MABE’s Educational Equity Committee in late May launched our inaugural "Leading for Educational Equity Through School Board Governance" workbook, designed to support Maryland school boards in crafting related policy, and to equip school board members with the information, scenarios, and relevant resources they need to best carry out their work in this important realm. You can find a recent, related opinion piece about this ongoing project by our strategic partner Newsela here. If you have not already received your hard copy of the workbook, please check with your board assistant or email tfeith@mabe.org. You are welcome to order additional copies of the workbook for your peers. You’ll also want to mark your calendars and register for our "Governing for Equity" Board Service Academy on Sept. 8.

MABE Annual Conference 2022 | October 6-8 |

Registration for MABE Annual Conference 2022 has officially launched! Our Conference Program Committee is putting the finishing touches on what promises to be a dynamic and timely agenda, ranging from workshops on safety, productive public input and the Blueprint for Maryland's Future, to funding, college and career readiness, and an engaging student board member panel.

Keynote speakers include Bill de la Cruz, a mediator and former local school board member and president, who has been guiding groups through the process of personal transformation for 30 years, and Daniel E. Walker, Ph.D., a public speaker in the areas of education and community empowerment who is an acclaimed philanthropist, filmmaker, and social entrepreneur.

More details to come shortly! In the meantime, you can register here. Don't forget to also book your room at The Westin Annapolis to receive MABE's discounted rate.

"I've attended seven consecutive MABE Annual Conferences. Inevitably, I glean practical solutions applicable to a current challenge facing my district. I look forward to building relationships with my Maryland school board colleagues every year."

~ Pamela L. Cousins
President, Calvert County Board of Education

University of Maryland, Baltimore County (UMBC) President Dr. Freeman Hrabowski, III will be presented with MABE's distinguished Excellence in Education Award during MABE's 2022 Annual Conference. In keeping with MABE's vision to serve as a champion for excellence in public education, Dr. Hrabowski will be honored in recognition of his exemplary leadership and service in the public education realm.

At the request of the Maryland State Board of Education and Maryland State Department of Education, local school board members have been participating in a series of roundtables, offering their perspective on ways the State Board can help school systems improve collaboration on major projects. Two prime examples are formulating a multi-year strategic plan for the Blueprint for Maryland's Future, and strengthening Maryland's public education system. To date, school board representatives from nine Maryland counties and Baltimore City have participated. The final roundtable is scheduled for July 14.

Anne Smith, an executive assistant with more than 15 years of executive-level support experience, joined MABE in mid-June as our new Executive Assistant. Most recently, Anne worked as Executive Secretary for the York Jewish Community Center in Pennsylvania, then as a paralegal and administrative assistant for the Annapolis-based Sinclair Prosser Gasior law firm. She can be reached at Ph: (443) 603-0392. Welcome, Anne!

On June 27th the Supreme Court handed down its ruling in the Kennedy v. Bremerton School District case, which asked whether a public school employee praying during school sports activities was protected speech, and if so, is the employee’s public school employer permitted to prohibit prayer to avoid violating the Establishment Clause?

The Supreme Court’s 6-3 opinion in favor of the public school employee held that “the free exercise and free speech clauses of the First Amendment protect an individual engaging in a personal religious observance from government reprisal; [and] the Constitution neither mandates nor permits the government to suppress such religious expression.” The court’s ruling is notable in that it overturned decades of precedent when it comes to the separation of church and state in a school setting. Please visit this related summary by MABE Director of Legal & Policy Services Debra Yerg Daniel for a breakdown of this case and landmark ruling; how to apply the ruling moving forward; and relevant, existing provisions in Maryland law.

For further information, contact Debra Yerg Daniel, Ph: (443) 603-0391.

Trivia:

By 1900, 31 states required school attendance for students aged 8-14. Eighteen years later, students were required in every state to complete elementary school (source; American Board).

Decades prior to this, in 1870, America’s first Black public high school -- Paul Laurence Dunbar High in Washington, D.C. -- welcomed its first students.

Sizable Savings on Prescription Drug Costs

As the Rx price climb continues, school systems and county governments face the daunting trifecta of inflation, COVID-19 expenses, and growing budget demands.

An innovative partnership between MABE and Keenan Pharmacy Services, MABE’s new cost-saving service -- the MABE PHARMACY PURCHASING COLLABORATIVE -- can save school systems and counties 10% to 30% on their prescription program costs.

MABE PHARMACY PURCHASING COLLABORATIVE

For further information on this innovative program, contact Milt Nagel at Ph: (443) 603-0385.

Upcoming Trainings:

Be sure to check out our list of upcoming 2022 Board Service Academies and other professional development opportunities.

MABE Member Benefits

We encourage you to visit the MABE Member Benefits & Solutions booklet for helpful details on MABE's professional development services, publications, insurance offerings and much more -- all geared toward helping you with your important work.
SCHOOL BOARD HEADLINES:

New York Times (4/23)
How to make school board culture wars even worse

NPR (5/31)
Progressives take a leaf out of the conservative playbook to target school boards

Southern Maryland Chronicle (5/14)
Student member of the Calvert County Board of Education sworn in

NottinghamMD.com (7/3)
Perry Hall High School senior sworn in as 2022-2023 student member of Baltimore County Board of Education

SCHOOL SAFETY-RELATED ISSUES:

AP (6/13)
Ohio governor to sign bill allowing armed school employees

Los Angeles Times (6/17)
Op-Ed: As a gun-owning former teacher, I can tell you: Arming teachers will only amplify our woes

The Hill (5/26)
Texas mass shooting cynically exploited to advance war on public schooling

Washington Post (5/31)
Baltimore plans to sue 'ghost gun' part maker as state law takes effect

POLICY, LEGAL & LEGISLATIVE NEWS:

POLITICO (5/9)
Will Brown vs. Board of Ed be next to fall?

Ballotpedia
What the Supreme Court’s June 21 Carson v. Makin ruling means for public education

Forbes (5/6)
How a rarely discussed Supreme Court case could upend education

Forbes (5/4)
Protecting public education funds from for-profit charter schools

Axios (6/27)
Supreme Court says public school officials can pray openly

Washington Post (6/29)
Vital education issues the Supreme Court could revisit

The 74 (5/19)
Analysis: How Medicaid can help schools support students’ mental health

DATA & ANALYSES:

Newsweek (5/17)
Majority in U.S. don't want legal status to block K-12 Education: Poli

The 74 (4/25)
Analysis: New Politics-of Education poll shows Americans think schools are important and need to be fixed. That, not culture wars, must inform the next election