

**MSBA
Proposed Resolutions
October 2020**

Development of Distance-Learning Plan

The coronavirus pandemic upended classroom instruction in school districts and revealed both positives and shortcomings in our ability to do distance learning. What was implemented by necessity should now be improved by design. Distance learning should not just be the fallback in a crisis, but rather used to provide equitable learning opportunities to all Maine students regardless of their location. The Maine School Boards Association calls for a plan that addresses professional development for teachers; assessment of devices; high-quality connectivity in all parts of the state; development of online curriculum appropriate to age groups; and, intentional use of online learning to enhance curriculum and expand learning opportunities for all students. Funding for online learning should be part of the school funding formula. MSBA will actively participate in the development and implementation of such a plan.

Rationale

Our experience with distance learning when schools were required to shut down because of COVID and what we will learn as we reopen schools under hybrid models could help us make better use of technology to support instruction and broaden curriculum options for all students. Distance learning can supplement in-person instruction and also support subject areas where there is a teacher shortage. That coupled with increased broadband access is key to educational equity for Maine students.

Building Stronger Family Support for Education

The Maine School Boards Association believes greater involvement by parents or guardians in their child's education is essential to assure better outcomes for students. Parents or guardians who are not engaged in their child's early learning at home are less likely to be engaged when their child goes to school. Outreach to and support of those who care for children in the home are essential first steps in creating a successful partnership between caregivers and schools. The ultimate goal is to identify the needs of both adults and children in the household and connect them to appropriate services and learning opportunities.

Rationale

There is no question parental involvement improves educational outcomes for students, but not all parents know how to reach out or feel comfortable doing it. Many working parents and caregivers also have schedules that don't make school visits or teacher contacts easy. School Boards working with their administrators should facilitate that engagement, which supports better outcomes for children and adults and opens up opportunities for both.

Equity in Education

All students, regardless of their race, color, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, religion, ancestry, national origin or disability deserve equitable opportunities and support to learn in Maine's public schools. The Maine School Boards Association believes all district leaders should facilitate a self-examination and discussion around recognizing bias and stereotyping and adopt policies and practices that eliminate them.

Rationale

Bias exists sometimes in overt actions in our schools. There should be high aspirations for all students. There is a growing awareness that bias is often not recognized or acknowledged in our public schools. It will require an intentional process to change practices that lead to stereotypical behavior and help assure that all students have equal opportunity to succeed.

Board Meeting Remote Participation

The Maine School Boards Association believes what we have learned about remote participation in board meetings during the coronavirus pandemic supports a law change allowing such participation absent a health emergency. The technology is available to allow robust discussion on issues and real-time face-to-face deliberations not only with fellow board members, but with the public. MSBA supports introducing legislation in the 130th Legislature that would allow such meetings under the public records law, if the local School Board votes to adopt the practice.

Rationale

People's experience with remote participation in meetings during the pandemic has increased the public's comfort level with programs like Zoom and Google Meet. While we are not advocating that all meetings be remote, the option gives School Boards greater flexibility. If the legislation is successful, the decision to use this option should be a local one.