

Newsletter for January 2025

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Mark your Calendars for Lunch N' Learns

Grab your lunch and escape the winter doldrums by participating in these upcoming Lunch N' Learns. Remember, all Lunch N' Learns begin at noon.

Thursday, January 23rd: “Managing Your Time and Tasks” will be offered by Northern Light's StrengthenMe Program may be accessed at this link:

<https://us06web.zoom.us/j/82625093609?pwd=AzmNx63LAE8ajPxWG2auyX9ESZ9X6S.1>

Thursday, February 6th: Adult Education Funding with Kelley Heath of MDOE's Adult Ed program. A Zoom link will be sent via the list serve prior to the event.

Thursday, February 13th: What you Need to Know about the Costs of School Safety with MDOE's School Safety Center Team. A Zoom link will be sent via the list serve prior to the event.

Other MeASBO Professional Development Opportunities:

In person meetings

February 28, 2025 Our February 28 meeting will showcase the Maine Bureau of Labor Standards, discussing wage and hour information pertinent to Maine schools and MePERS will address all of your questions and, maybe provide a sneak preview of the new employer portal. If

you have specific questions for either of these agencies, please send them to [Joanne](#) just as soon as possible to give the presenters time to prepare their responses.

This meeting will be held at the Senator Inn in Augusta and is graciously sponsored by



The Bank of YES! <https://www.machiassavings.bank/>

Please register using this [form](#) by Friday, February 7.

April 4, 2025 Our April 4 meeting will include our annual meeting requirements of electing new board members, as well as professional development offerings to include changes to Uniform Grant Guidance from Tyler Backus of RHR Smith. This meeting will be sponsored by TD Bank and held at Keeley's Banquet Center in Portland. The registration form for the meeting will be available in late February/early March.

Tri State May 21-23, 2025 Details are being finalized for the 33rd annual Tri State Conference to be held in Whitefield, New Hampshire. Mark your calendar and keep an eye on this website for registration and other information: <https://www.tristateasbo.org/>

Regional Groups

As a supplement to our regular quarterly meetings and Lunch N' Learns, MeASBO is supporting regional groups in an effort to help ensure that individual region professional development needs are met. Four regional groups are currently collaborating and scheduling meetings, in Penquis, Western Maine, Kennebec, and Hancock.

The **Penquis Regional Group** has upcoming meetings on March 21, and May 30 at United Technologies Center in Bangor, from 9:00 AM to 12 PM. For more information regarding the Penquis meetings, reach out to [Barbara Grindle](#), RSU 34.

The **Western Maine Regional Group**, led by [Jennifer Pooler](#), RSU 58, met in early January, with 6 school units represented. The discussion was robust, covering PFML, financial software, transportation of students and staff, school closure, year-end tax document processing, and much more. The group plans to meet on a monthly basis, with the next meeting on February 13 at Auburn Hall. Please reach out to [Jennifer](#) for more information if you would like to participate in this meeting.

If you are unsure to which region your school unit belongs, reach out to [Joanne](#). If you feel there's a need more focused networking and professional development in your area, opportunities for regional coordinators are currently available in Aroostook, Washington,

Midcoast, Cumberland, and York regions. If you are interested in coordinating your region or, would like to partner with another region, please reach out to [Joanne](#) for ideas and information.

Software User Groups

Does your school unit utilize “**Infinite Visions**”? Is your team looking for shortcuts, tips, and answers? Reach out to [Jamie Youngblood](#) at Hermon Schools. Jamie and her team have been using the product since 2021 and have been frequently provided guidance to other school units and would be happy to help you!

A number of schools have migrated or are in the process of migrating to **AptaFund**. A support group for users began last month and is up and running with meetings every two or three weeks - generally on a Wednesday at 10 AM. We meet via Zoom for about an hour each meeting. If you are interested in joining our group, please email Sherry Moody at: smoody@mcst8.org

State Legislative Update

The 132nd session of the legislature is off to a bit of a slow start, with the deadline for submission of proposed bills being later than usual this year. Committees have been participating in orientation sessions and one public hearing has already been scheduled regarding MePERS rulemaking for January 21 at 2:00 pm in front of the Labor Committee. The proposed rule can be found on our [website's](#) main page under the “Recent News” heading. Bills are being printed and a list of bills that would be of interest to members is posted under the “Recent News” section of our [website](#). If you are aware of a bill that you feel would be of interest to MeASBO members but hasn't been included on this list, please reach out to [Joanne](#). This list will be updated frequently as more bills are printed and public hearings scheduled.

2025-2026 Membership Update

As many school unit members are in the process of creating budgets for next fiscal year, MeASBO's Board of Directors met to discuss next year's school unit membership dues and has approved an annual membership dues increase of 5% for individual school unit memberships and district memberships. This will equal \$262 and \$525, respectively, for the 2025-2026 fiscal year. Vendor memberships for next year have not undergone Board review at this time; an update will be provided to vendor members as soon as that review has taken place.

Vendor Feature: *Understanding Your Electricity Bill: How to Make Informed Energy Decisions and Budget Appropriately* By [Lauren Grey](#), Senior Energy Services Advisor



[Competitive Energy Services](#) (CES) wishes MeASBO Members a Happy New Year!

We hope 2025 is off to a great start! With the beginning of the new year and budgeting top of mind for many districts, we wanted to share some information for understanding your electricity rates and changes to come in 2025.

Supply vs. Delivery: Breaking Down Your Bill

Understanding the components of your electricity bill is essential for making informed energy decisions and budgeting appropriately. The two main components of your bill are *supply* and *delivery* charges, and while they both contribute to your overall cost, they cover different aspects of service.

Supply charges are associated with the cost of electricity generation and the charges on your bill will reflect the actual amount of electricity consumed. Supply rates are influenced by fluctuating market conditions and school districts have the option of choosing between the standard offer supply or a third-party supply contract.

Delivery charges cover the cost associated with the distribution of electricity to your school district, as well as fees associated with regional transmission costs. Delivery rates are regulated by the [Maine Public Utilities Commission \(PUC\)](#) and help maintain the electrical grid and ensure reliable power delivery. Delivery rates are generally fixed on a yearly basis but will vary

depending on your district's utility provider.

Standard Offer vs. Competitive Supply: Choosing the Right Option for your District

Near the end of each calendar year, the Maine PUC issues a Request for Proposals (RFP) to solicit bids from electricity suppliers for the following year. The standard offer rate is the default supply options for schools and all electricity customers in Maine. Standard offer rates will vary depending on the utility district and account rate class, which can affect the price your district pays for electricity. Current and historic standard offer rates can be found on the Maine PUC website [here](#).

Alternatively, due to Maine's deregulated energy market, school districts have the option to procure their electricity through a third-party supplier rather than defaulting to the standard offer rate. Electricity suppliers will offer a custom rate based on your district's specific usage profile and offer more contracting options than the standard supply. Districts often benefit from tailored contracting options to support a wholistic approach to sustainability goals and to plan for budgeting purposes. One of the benefits of competitive supply is that schools can customize the term length, market timing, and the cost components included in the contract to meet their specific needs.

Delivery Rates: How Rates are Established and Where to Find them

Delivery rates are established each year based on actual costs for transmission and distribution from the previous year. This is done through a deferred accounting model, which helps utility providers recover the costs associated with infrastructure maintenance and grid reliability. Recently, increases in costs related to storm damage and solar development have led to higher delivery charges across all utility districts in Maine for 2025.

For schools looking to budget for delivery costs, we recommend reviewing the current delivery rates published on your utility district's website. Keep in mind that delivery rates vary by account rate class, and the majority of costs are not in \$/kwh but rather fixed monthly charges, so it's important to understand your account classification prior to budgeting. While delivery rates are non-negotiable, understanding the process and origin of the delivery rate components can help districts manage costs where possible, anticipate future costs, and allocate funds more effectively.

Although delivery charges are fixed, Maine schools can still take proactive steps to reduce their overall energy costs. Here are some strategies to consider:

Efficiency Upgrades: Investing in lighting upgrades, HVAC systems, and insulation can lower energy consumption and result in savings. Efficiency Maine offers rebates for various efficiency upgrades. Additionally, through the direct pay provision of the [Inflation Reduction Act](#), qualifying renewable and electrification projects implemented by a district can receive a tax credit for the purchase. Both funding sources are subject to change over time and you can access the most up to date incentives by going to the [Efficiency Maine](#) or the [IRA](#) website.

Solar Programs: Schools can take advantage of the [Maine Net Energy Billing Program](#) by participating in qualifying renewable energy projects, either onsite or offsite. This program offers the opportunity for schools to receive a discount on their electricity bill by subscribing to an eligible renewable energy project. To maximize savings, districts are encouraged to seek expert guidance before enrolling. For more program specific details, visit the [Maine PUC](#) website.

Seeking additional support?

If you have any questions or want more personalized advice on managing your school's energy costs, please feel free to reach out. We're here to help you navigate the changing rates and explore opportunities to reduce your electricity expenses. For a free consultation, contact [Lauren Grey](#), Senior Energy Advisor at Competitive Energy Services, by emailing <mailto:lgrey@competitive-energy.com>

Article Reference Links:

MainePUC Standard Offer Link:

<https://www.maine.gov/mpuc/regulated-utilities/electricity/standard-offer-rates>

Efficiency Maine Link:

<https://www.energymaine.com/at-work/education/>

IRA Website Link:

<https://www.whitehouse.gov/cleanenergy/directpay/>

MainePUC NEB Link:

<https://www.maine.gov/mpuc/regulated-utilities/electricity/neb>

News and Upcoming Events from Our Partners



ASSOCIATION OF
SCHOOL BUSINESS OFFICIALS
INTERNATIONAL

A recent podcast of *School Business Insider* is titled: “Navigating GASB 101: Compensated Absences Simplified”. Listen [here](#).

Federal Congressional Updates

Social Security Fairness Act

The Act, signed into law on January 5, repeals two Social Security provisions affecting public service professionals: the Windfall Elimination Provision (WEP) and the Government Pension Offset (GPO). The GPO affects the spousal benefits of individuals who work as federal, state, or local government employees if the job isn't covered by Social Security; benefits are reduced by two-thirds if the surviving spouse also collects a government pension. The WEP reduces Social Security benefits of an individual who also receives a public pension from a job not covered by Social Security. (For many educators, the WEP comes into play if they work part-time or during the summer in jobs covered by Social Security, but receive reduced benefits when they retire simply because they are collecting a public pension, even though they paid into the system long enough to receive full benefits.)

Maine Department of Education

Federal Fiscal Programs Updates to Federal Fiscal Office Hours:

To ensure office hours remain purposeful and meaningful; the team is transitioning to quarterly office hours. The 2025 dates are: January 23, 2025; April 24, 2025; July 24, 2025; October 23, 2025 - All begin at 10:00 AM Previous registrations for any of these dates remain valid so there is no need to re-register. If you haven't registered, you may do so [here](#).

School Facilities

The Governor's Commission on School Construction began meeting in November, 2024. Please see this [website](#) to review discussions to date, view the meeting schedule, submit a comment for consideration by the Commission, and much more information. MeASBO's representative on the Commission is Hollis Cobb, Business Manager for the Gorham School Department. Reach out to [Hollis](#) if you would like more specific information that is not readily available on the website.

School Finance

Preliminary FY 2025-2026 ED 279s will be published by the School Finance Team prior to the statutory deadline of February 1. Per information provided to the State Board of Education by Commissioner Makin on January 8, an additional \$108 million will be directed towards maintaining the 55% state share of the total cost of education. The mill expectation will be set at 6.1, reflecting a decrease from the current year.

When available, detailed information for FY 2025-2026 funding will be posted here:

<https://www.maine.gov/doe/funding/gpa/eps/resources>

Upcoming School Finance office hours are scheduled for Tuesday, January 21 and, Tuesday, February 18 at 10:00 AM. You may access the session via the [MDOE Calendar](#).

FY 2025-2026 Budget Reminders:

As you begin to build your budgets for next school year, a couple of things to remember:

- 1) Unallocated fund balance carryover returns to 5% of the previous fiscal year's budget. The statutory language may be found 20-A M.R.S. §15689-A (6)
- 2) MDOE will be providing an adjustment for increasing hourly personnel to meet the minimum hourly wage requirement set forth in 20-A M.R.S. §4016 for the 2025-2026 year only.

School Safety Center

Save-the-Date for Maine School Safety & Transportation Conference, March 10-12 at the Samoset Resort in Rockport. This event will bring together educators, transportation professionals, safety experts, and policymakers to discuss and explore innovative strategies, best practices, and emerging technologies to improve school safety and transportation systems. For more information: <https://www.maine.gov/doe/safety>

Maine Department of Labor

Upcoming Wage & Hour Compliance classes designed for human resource or benefits professionals, accountants, business owners, managers, or payroll supervisors. Labor laws can be complex. This seminar covers wage and hour laws, including minimum wage, overtime, youth employment, severance pay, equal pay, rest breaks, leave requirements (earned paid leave, family

medical leave, family sick leave and leave for victims of violence). This class addresses commonly asked labor-related questions.

- ✓ January 22, 2025: 9:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m. Joseph L. Ferris Community Center, 318 Wilson Street, Brewer
- ✓ February 5, 2025: 9:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m. Rockland Career Center, 91 Camden Street, Suite 201, Rockland
- ✓ February 12, 2025: 9:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m. Freeport Community Library, 10 Library Drive, Freeport
- ✓ February 19, 2025: 9:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m. Lewiston Career Center, 5 Mollison Way, Lewiston

Register and browse more SafetyWorks! classes:

www.safetyworksmaine.gov/training/scheduled_classes/register.shtml

Maine Loves Public Schools

The Maine Loves Public Schools Initiative celebrates school communities by sharing stories to promote positive public engagement with Maine’s public schools. These great stories are shared across a variety of platforms; please give them a look and if you have a story you wish to share, go to the “Get Involved” link at <https://www.maine lovespublicschools.org/>

New Hampshire Association of School Business Officials

Annually, NH ASBO organizes the Northern New England Facilities Masters Conference and Maine members are very much welcome to attend. This year’s conference will be February 26-27 in Salem, NH. For more information and to register: <https://nhasbo.org/page/FacilityConference>



[Two ACA-Related Bills Signed into Law](#) – Vita Companies

[Where could tariffs hit school budgets?](#) – K-12 Dive

[1,600+ More Electric School Buses Coming to U.S. Districts](#) – School Bus Fleet

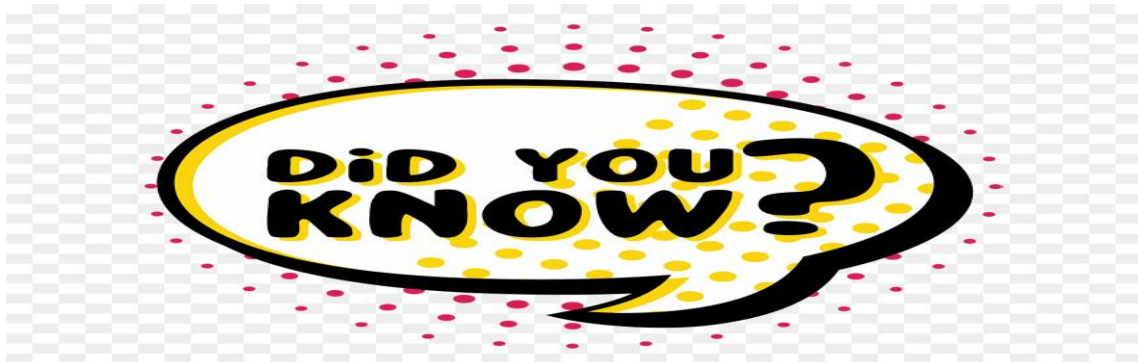
[Education Department withdraws proposed Title IX athletics rule](#) – K-12 Dive

[6 trends that will shape K-12 in 2025](#) – K-12 Dive

[Federal judge strikes down Biden administration's Title IX rule nationwide](#) – K-12 Dive

[PowerSchool data breach possibly exposed student, staff data](#) – K-12 Dive

[2025 Trend to Watch: School Bus Safety](#) – School Bus Fleet



The Tri State Committee has two vacancies!

Would you like to help organize and execute this annual event? Maine needs to add two members to the Tri State Committee. This is a great opportunity to network with peers from not only your home state but New Hampshire and Vermont as well. If you'd like more information, reach out to [Joanne](#) and she will connect you with a current committee member for more details.