



**MASSACHUSETTS ADMINISTRATORS FOR  
SPECIAL EDUCATION**  
*in collaboration with*  
**MASSACHUSETTS ASSOCIATION OF APPROVED  
SPECIAL EDUCATION SCHOOLS**

**June 8, 2023 Virtual Conference**

ASE and MAAPS

Statewide Special Education Conference

**The State of the State: Presentations, by state leaders and experts on  
Timely and Important Special Education Leadership and Student Needs**

**From the Lens of a Special Education Attorney:**

Legal and Legislative Update

**FOCUS:**

This session will focus on school and special education legal issues including highlights for strategies and techniques for schools to:

- Improve Positive Student Outcomes
- Increase special education team decision-making
- Improve Family and Student Engagement

The session will also spotlight federal decisions for special education and the effects on Massachusetts schools and students.



**Paige Tobin, Esq. Murphy, Lamere and Murphy**

Legal special education expert, legal workshop presenter and counsel to public school districts and consultant to ASE

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**Safe and Supportive Schools:**

Multi-tiered Wellness and Safety Promotion, Prevention, and Intervention Efforts

**FOCUS:**

Department (DESE) leaders will share information, examples of current practices, and resources and guidance available that can help foster safe and supportive learning environments for all students, staff and families. The focus will be on initiatives related to social emotional learning, mental and behavioral health, and wellbeing, as well as on emergency management planning and threat assessment efforts.



Presenters: Chris Pond, DESE's Behavioral and Mental Health Specialist  
Anne Gilligan, DESE's Safe and Healthy Schools Coordinator

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**From the Lens of the Child Advocate:  
Special Education and At-Risk Students**

**FOCUS:**

Maria Mossaides, Director of the Office of the Child Advocate (OCA), will **lend perspective on needs of Massachusetts children and OCA recommendations to the legislature including strategies and techniques** for effective collaboration between special education and at-risk students, including those in protective care and those who are impacted by hospital placement shortages. Participants will better understand the place of special education within the landscape of current systems of support, and suggestions to promote positive outcomes for all students.



**Maria Mossaides**, Director, The Office of the Child Advocate. The OCA's mission is to ensure that children receive appropriate, timely and quality state services, with a particular focus on ensuring that the Commonwealth's most vulnerable and at-risk children have the opportunity to thrive.

Contact information: [childadvocate@mass.gov](mailto:childadvocate@mass.gov)

**From the Lens of the MA Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE):  
Meeting the Needs of Massachusetts Students with Disabilities**

**FOCUS:**

This session will focus on the importance and critical need for equitable, inclusive, and accessible education for Massachusetts students with disabilities and DESE priorities including a discussion on strategies and techniques for school districts to proactively increase capacity for equitable and accessible education for Massachusetts school age students. The discussion will highlight leadership and team practices, across the continuum of special education services, to improve student outcomes.



**Dr. Russell Johnston, Ph.D.**, Deputy Commissioner and State Director of Special Education, The Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, former; MA Superintendent of Schools, Special Education Director, special education teacher

Contact information: [russell.johnston@state.ma.us](mailto:russell.johnston@state.ma.us)

**From the Lens of the Mass Budget and Policy Institute:  
The K-12 Massachusetts Budget**

**FOCUS:** MBPC will present a discussion on the K-12 Massachusetts Budget, its challenges, opportunities and overall effects for education and special education in Massachusetts. Highlights of changes in the budget and anticipated budget challenges for school districts will be shared as well as highlights of effects of the pandemic on the education budget. Strategies and techniques for advocacy on school-based finances will be shared including a focus on the new state government education/fiscal priorities.



*Colin Jones*, Senior Policy Analyst, Mass Budget and Policy Center, focusing on early and K-12 education policy and finance.

Contact Information: [cjones@massbudget.org](mailto:cjones@massbudget.org)

**From the Lens of the Massachusetts Bureau of Special Education Appeals (BSEA):  
Taking the Mystique Out of the Hearing, Settlement Agreement, Mediation and Facilitated IEP  
Processes- Focusing on Positive Outcomes for Students and School Districts**

**FOCUS:**

This session will focus on the state of the Massachusetts BSEA Hearings, Settlement Agreements, Mediations and Facilitated IEP processes, highlighting the trends in Massachusetts for each process, the intersection of the PRS process and BSEA processes, the intersection of the DESE Advisories and Guidance documents with the BSEA processes, including a discussion on the cases referred to BSEA for each process, including the common types of parental concerns and the effects of the pandemic on Hearings and Mediations. The session will also highlight strategies and techniques for school districts to achieve positive outcomes when participating in each of the BSEA Administrative Law processes.

*Reece Erlichman*, Director, Bureau of Special Education Appeals

*Myrto Flessas*, Coordinator of Mediation and Facilitation, Bureau of Special Education Appeals

Contact Information: BSEA 781-397-4750

**“Start where you are. Use what you have. Do what you can.”**

-Arthur Ashe