

### The Value of Education

Tagged: [Newsletter](#) • [Apr](#) • 2010

**By:** Michael M. Adamczyk, Assistant Superintendent of Business Services, Troy School District and President of MSBO

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**By:** Dan Romzek, CPA, MA, CFO, Director of Finance & Operations, Davison Community Schools, and MSBO Board Member

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### MSBO Update April 2010

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**By:** David Martell, Executive Director, MSBO

[MSBO](#) 's Executive Director David Martell announces the April winner of the [MSBO](#) Annual Conference drawing; talks about the upcoming [MSBO](#) Board election and provides an overview of the Conference.

### Count Down to MSBO's Annual Conference and Exhibit Show

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I recently read an article that appeared in the November/December issue of DBusiness magazine by Lou Glazer entitled, "The Path to Prosperity. The article contained many interesting statistics about the value of education. This may not come as a surprise to many of us, but according to Mr. Glazer the characteristics of high prosperity states are a high proportion of adults who possess a four-year college degree. The article quotes Rich Karlgaard, the publisher of Forbes magazine, who says that the most valuable natural resource for the 21st Century is brains. Wherever smart people go, he says, robust economic activity will follow. So where does Michigan rank in this important category? Michigan ranks 34 out of 50 states in terms of four-year degree attainment.

Michigan enjoyed being a prosperous state for many years because the manufacturing industries in our state provided good paying jobs that required relatively low skill. We know that all that has changed, and today manufacturing makes up only about 10 percent of the total workforce in the United States. The way to prosperity is to focus on and attract those jobs that are knowledge based and require the attainment of a four-year degree. According to the article, "of the top 10 states in college attainment, nine are also in the top 12 in per-capita income." According to a table prepared by the Bureau of Business & Economic Research at the University of New Mexico from data provided by the U.S. Department of Commerce, Michigan has fallen from 20 to 37 in terms of per-capita income from 1990 to 2008. It is obvious to see why Michigan has been struggling with its economy when one reads this statistic.

Another interesting argument that was discussed in the article centered on taxes and the size of government. Mr. Glazer discussed the economic performance of states such as Alabama and points out that "the low-tax, anti-union, low-education attainment environment in the South was successful in attracting low-paying jobs in construction and manufacturing for a while, but as we're seeing today, that is not the way to build a sustainable, prosperous economy. Low taxes and labor costs are helpful, but they'll only take a state so far." So, what is important for a state to invest in to attract high quality talent that pays high wages that, in turn provides much needed revenues to the state treasury? The answer may lie in looking at those industries that have seen the most job growth over the last decade, which are health care and education. Both of these industries have the basic requisite of a four-year college degree.

I write about the importance of a four-year college degree because, as the article indicates, "the path to prosperity is the broad knowledge-based economy defined as industries where 30 percent or more of the employees have a four-year college degree." Attainment of the much needed college degree also, in my opinion, depends upon a strong system of public schools that provide the basis for students to succeed in college. We need strong schools that are capable of providing our students not only the basic skills, but also the advanced skills required to compete with students from other states and other countries. A solid educational base, beginning at kindergarten and continuing through twelfth grade and beyond, is a requirement for success in the corporate world. With a properly trained workforce, Michigan will be able to compete for jobs that will provide growth to the economy in the 21st Century. Let us all advocate for a strong educational system for all of Michigan's children.

## The Many Hats We Wear

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**By:** Dan Romzek, CPA, MA, CFO, Director of Finance & Operations, Davison Community Schools, and MSBO Board Member

In our roles as School Business Officials, we wear many hats in our day-to-day work lives. This is especially so in these times of economic uncertainties where we're all trying to do more with less staffing, less money, and more demands on our time. Michigan's economy continues to struggle and it doesn't appear that things are going to improve anytime soon. Most days I find myself pulled in so many directions at the same time that I'm wearing multiple hats at once. I rely on finely tuned time management and organizational skills to keep them all going and not let them bog me down. I have to switch hats many times throughout the day.

Our hats come in many shapes, sizes, styles, and colors in our roles as CFO's, accountants, tax advisers, facility directors, budget managers, energy managers, risk management specialists, counselors, procurement officers, food service directors, employee benefit specialists, construction administrators, integrated pest management officers, HIPAA compliance officers, personnel directors, AHERA compliance officers, Right to Know specialists, payroll specialists, grant coordinators, pupil accounting specialists, investment advisors, transportation directors, mediators, negotiators, teachers, and so many more. This doesn't even take in to consideration the many hats we wear in our personal lives!

In our bustling work lives, we find ourselves wearing many hats at one time. It is vital to our success in this business. The heavy workloads we carry require us to balance many hats at one time, to keep it all going. The way I see things, we have a choice in how we wear our hats. We can opt to let them weigh us down, causing us constant irritation and strain. This results in getting nothing done. Or, we can figure out a way to balance them all and wear them with style. We can work to make sure our hats fit properly and that they keep us moving forward. I choose the latter.

The annual [MSBO](#) conference is an excellent place to dust off a few of the hats you wear and get them refitted, or even pick up a new one. The annual conference offers dozens of high quality sessions across all areas of school business to provide vital new information on old areas of interest and provide some new topics. The legislative panel discussion on Wednesday will provide an interactive environment with our legislators. State Superintendent Mike Flanagan's remarks will provide insight into the ever changing school business climate. I am especially excited to hear the keynote speaker Dan Thurmon and his unique presentation on keeping a good balance in life.

I always come away from the conference with new information on old topics and fresh new ideas to take back to my district. The networking opportunities also provide excellent time to visit with colleagues across the state and share our stories. The few days away from the office attending the conference are always worthwhile and time well spent. The conference also provides great insight into the new hats we will wear in the coming months and years – sort of a preview of future hat styles!

I hope you'll take advantage of the excellent and affordable learning opportunities that the annual conference holds. You owe it to yourself and your many hats.

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As usual, this is our normal time for our final push to get those of you who are planning to attend the [MSBO Annual Conference](#), April 27 through April 29, in Grand Rapids to complete your registration!

The Conference offers many valuable sessions with great ideas that will more than pay for your attendance. Sessions focus on all levels of experience from those just starting out to veterans. Check out the conference brochure.

It is important that you register now so we can get an accurate count for meals and our clinic sessions. Register online or fill out a registration form (part of our conference brochure) and fax it to (517) 327-0768. If you have questions about scholarships or how to register online, please contact [Marte Cadwell](#).

From start to finish, this year's conference continues to offer the best professional development value available to Michigan school business officials.

This year's Keynote, Dan Thurmon, will close the conference. He teaches audiences how to manage the demands of their busy lives with increased focus and decisive action. Don't miss out on this inspirational keynote speaker. It will be a high energy and entertaining way to wrap up the Conference. You won't want to miss this.

We will see you in Grand Rapids.

## Spring into SafeSchools!

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For those of you who are looking for ways to make your school district's safety training and compliance methods easy, now is also a great time to "spring" into SafeSchools. Course quality and school expertise are two of the main reasons SafeSchools has grown to become America's leading provider of online safety training to school staff.

For courses such as Bloodborne Pathogens, which is commonly an annual training requirement for many employees, SafeSchools offers "Full" and "Refresher" course versions. When a course has a Full and Refresher version, the Full course is meant to be taken once, while the Refresher version should be assigned every year thereafter. SafeSchools Refresher courses are also updated annually to keep users engaged and motivated year after year. Using SafeSchools Refresher courses for annual training requirements is the perfect way to keep your staff focused and up-to-date on important safety topics.

SafeSchools also provides department-specific focusing on Business Services, Emergency Management, Environmental Services, Health Services, Nutrition Services, Risk Management, Student Services, and Transportation.

To learn more, log onto:<http://www.msbo.org/SafeSchools/index.shtml>. and download the department-specific flyer.

## Closing a district building: Simple guidelines to reduce risk

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In this challenging economic climate, many Michigan school districts must make difficult decisions in order to save money and balance their budgets. One method of reducing costs is to consolidate students into fewer schools and close unneeded buildings. When this decision is made, it is important for districts to take the following steps.

1. Notify your property/casualty provider that your district intends to close a building.
2. Give your property/casualty provider the following information:

Address of the vacant building;

Date of building closure;

The previous function/use of building;

Reason for vacancy (e.g. declining enrollment, building deficiencies, zoning issues, loss of tenant);

A photograph of the building from a front angle and if possible, an opposite corner angle from the rear of the structure;

Current status of property (e.g. for sale, for lease, plan to reoccupy, abandoned or no longer usable, or other reasons); and

Status of building services:

HVAC:	Disconnected	Turned off	Operating as normal
Plumbing:	Disconnected	Turned off	Operating as normal
Electrical:	Disconnected	Turned off	Operating as normal

3. Prepare and secure the premises:

If heat, water and electricity are left on in a vacant building, the structure should be inspected regularly and the thermostat should be set to no less than 55 degrees.

Available security systems should remain active.

If functioning, exterior lighting should be used at night.

Ask neighbors to be alert and notify the district if damage or any unusual activity appears to have taken place.

If the building will be rented or leased, notify your district's property/casualty provider so it can review the leasing contract and verify it contains a "hold harmless" agreement and that the district is named as an additional insured on the policy.

### Additional considerations

Is the property under construction or renovation?

Is the property being considered for other use?

Are repairs needed on the building and if so, will they be completed?

Is the building secure against unauthorized entry?

How frequently are security checks conducted on the property?

Are additional risks present (e.g. pool, playground, skate park, vehicle trails)?

### Questions?

Your district's property/casualty provider is the best resource for questions or concerns related to the process of closing school buildings.

The [MASB](#) -SEG Property/Casualty Pool was established in 1986 and is the largest self-insured education risk pool in the country, by total insured value. Members of the Pool are its owners and “shareholders,” and receive regular surplus distributions. Since its inception, the Pool has returned \$96 million in surplus funds. To learn more about the Pool, visit [www.setseg.org](http://www.setseg.org) or contact your SET SEG account executive by calling (800) 292-5421.

## Transportation Policy Changes May Create Change in District Liability

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Many school districts are in financial crisis and are forced to make difficult decisions to cut costs. Pupil transportation is one area that often is evaluated for potential cost savings.

Many districts have opted to eliminate transportation for sporting or club activities. With any change relating to pupil transportation, it is important to understand that the district's liability is often affected as well. It is critical to have a thorough understanding of the exposures in order to minimize potential liability.

Before implementing changes in transportation-related policies, districts should contact their property and liability company to ensure they are not adding more risk and increasing their liability with their intended transportation solution.

If a district is eliminating or altering transportation for sporting or club activities, but is finding and coordinating volunteer drivers, the district could be assuming the risk of those volunteer drivers and their actions while driving. Parental carpools should not be overseen or managed by the district, as it can increase the district's exposure. If bus transportation is eliminated, it is recommended that parents coordinate the carpooling.

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ASBO International and MetLife award 20 scholarships of \$2,000 for attendance to ASBO's Annual Meeting and Exhibits, which is September 24-27 at Disney's Coronado Springs Resort at Lake Buena Vista, Florida

Bridges to the Future Scholarship benefits include:

- Opportunity to attend the association's [Annual Meeting and Exhibits](#)

- Pre-conference workshop and networking luncheon at the annual meeting specifically for Bridges recipients

- Free access to ASBO's [Live Learning Center](#) that will capture more than 75 hours of professional development from the 2009 Annual Meeting.

Scholarship applicants must be a school business official who has been in the profession for five years or less and who is an ASBO International member at the time the scholarship application is submitted.

To download an application and brochure: <http://asbointl.org/index.asp?bid=7850>