

### Communicating the Budget

Tagged: [Newsletter](#) • [Jan](#) • [2012](#)

**By:** Jeff P. Crouse, MSBO President, CFO, Chief Financial Officer, Charlevoix-Emmet ISD

With the Consensus Revenue Estimating Conference, the State of the State address and the [MSBO](#) Financial Strategies Conference behind us, it can only mean one thing... the "official" budget season is here.

### Bringing in the New

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**By:** Tamera Powers, CFO, Board Member, Director of Finance Kenowa Hills Public Schools

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### MSBO Update

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[MSBO](#) Executive Director David Martell and Associate Executive Director Scott Little discuss [MSBO](#) 's Facilities Benchmarking Survey and provide highlights on findings. Results of the survey can be found on [MSBO](#) 's website.

### MSBO Bus Purchasing Program Phase I Ends January 31, 2012

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### MSBO Scholarships Help You Pursue Your Education Goals

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#### Innovative Delivery of Non-Instructional Services Workshop Collaboration • Consolidation • Contracting •

#### Concessions

Tagged: [Newsletter](#) • [Jan](#) • [2012](#)

March 6, 2012 - 9:00 am- 4:00 pm

Mt. Pleasant Comfort Inn & Suites Hotel and Conference Center

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With the Consensus Revenue Estimating Conference, the State of the State address and the [MSBO](#) Financial Strategies Conference behind us, it can only mean one thing... the “official” budget season is here. While many of us have been working on budgets for months or even year round, now is the time the conversation about the budget begins to take place inside your district and in the public. Nothing can help you tell your message better than a budget communication plan. When it comes to communication, any professional will tell you it is always better to be proactive rather than reactive. You always want to tell your story before someone else tells it for you.

The first step to a good communication plan is to understand your financial situation. This is the part of the process we typically excel at as business officials, “crunching the numbers” as everyone likes to call it. The harder part is crafting the story that the numbers tell. The next task is to identify your various audiences and understand what is important to them and communicate that message in their “language.” The final considerations are when, where, and how to communicate the message.

It is important to understand that your budget message may have a different focus for different groups, so one chapter may not tell your entire story. You will have to tailor the message to the audience to accomplish what might be multiple objectives using simple, real world examples they can relate to.

Who are your audiences? The days of presenting your budget at an obscure budget hearing on a date in late June with two people in the audience are long gone in these times of big cuts and multiple interested stakeholders. The school board, parents, employees, legislators, taxpayers, media, district vendors, alumni, and even students now want to know and understand how budgets are designed. They want to know the decision points and assumptions and who is determining them. When districts are in a cutting mode stakeholders appear from everywhere, so preparing for them before your budget hearing can avert problems.

It is important to determine whether you are calling for action from legislators, media, or parents versus audiences who may just be looking for information like taxpayers or alumni. The message may be to request help or ideas from employees or parents. Whatever the focus or motive for communicating with various groups may be, you need to proactively plan for all of them. Never release a budget resolution to anyone without some sort of accompanying document to narrate the story, because if you don't the recipient will create the story.

The final part of the communication plan may be the most important of all. Creating a timeline or calendar for communication is essential to keeping control of the message. A schedule will help keep the various communications in order and completed on time. You should decide what you plan to communicate at each of the next 5 board meetings. A district should also consider when it plans to communicate with employees, who can help carry the message to others. Preparation and timing of press releases can again help craft the story for the media. The creation of white papers about situations can help if the district is looking to initiate legislative action to meet needs. A plan to release information to parents and students simultaneously to media will be well received by those groups, so they don't feel like they are the last to know.

One of the newer considerations is how to communicate the message. The best answer is likely a combination of efforts. Public meetings, employee meetings, mailings, websites, emails, Facebook, Skype, and Twitter may all have a place in your plan to reach your audience. Don't find yourself caught in the “way it's always been done,” because these are not the times of the past. The numbers are the numbers but they can't express the past or the future without the words of your communication plan.

## Bringing in the New

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**By:** Tamera Powers, CFO, Board Member, Director of Finance Kenowa Hills Public Schools

January 1st is a day we celebrate with friends and family to bring in the new. The K-12 environment has experienced many new changes, not only in Michigan but also throughout the U.S. Across the country there is a great concern that our children are not educationally prepared for their future. As data demonstrates the number of children who are not academically proficient, it is hard for anyone to debate the need for change. Carl Jung said, "If there is anything that we wish to change in the child, we should first examine it and see whether it is not something that could better be changed in ourselves." However as Arnold Bennett has said, "Any change, even a change for the better, is always accompanied by drawbacks and discomforts." The changes we are experiencing are affecting many districts, schools, offices, individuals and even the families of the individuals.

There are times when change brings about immediate pains that cause us to ask why. Charles Swindoll once said, "We cannot change our past. We cannot change the fact that people act in a certain way. We cannot change the inevitable. The only thing we can do is play on the one string we have, and that is our attitude." As we work for positive change in our districts, it is important that we have understanding for those affected by the changes but also keep a positive attitude to stay focused on increasing the quality of our students' education.

Hanging by my office door I have a quote to help keep me focused, "Be the change you want to see in the world." *Mahatma Gandhi* This is a great reminder for me to constantly see. As change is taking place around me, it helps me to stay focused on positive changes.

As I am blessed with the knowledge my life's experiences have provided me, there has been one prayer that continues to help me through life's journey: "God grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change, the courage to change the things I can, and the wisdom to know the difference." *Reinhold Niebuhr*

May 2012 be filled with an abundance of serenity, courage and wisdom for all the leaders who will have an impact on the new future education of our students.

## MSBO Bus Purchasing Program Phase I Ends January 31, 2012

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Phase one of this year's [MSBO](#) Bus Purchasing Program will conclude on January 31, 2012. But don't despair; starting this year [MSBO](#) is bidding the program twice each year with the next phase due to open for purchasing April 2 and continuing through July 31.

This strategy will hopefully better suit districts' circumstances and provide more accessibility to the program whenever a purchase decision is made.

Last year [MSBO](#) transitioned the Bus Purchase Program to a web based platform. All the features and benefits that Michigan districts have enjoyed since the program's inception 15 years ago remain, with significant additional functionality.

The program is now more user friendly than ever. Because the program is web based, all information you enter into the system will be saved. There is no need to worry about exiting and losing the data you have entered. When you return, you can resume where you left off. You can also access your bus specifications from last year and have those same specs reflect this year's pricing, eliminating the need to re-do your work from last year, saving even more time.

Additionally, dealers are now able to enter stock buses in the program to allow districts to compare those buses within the program and make a more informed decision.

### Getting Started

Go to <http://michigan.cooppurchase.com>. The bidding has been accomplished for you; all that is left is to "build" the bus desired and compare pricing from the bidding dealers. The program provides extensive flexibility and customization – there are over 275 options available, allowing you to customize your bus to fit your district's needs. It automatically keeps a running subtotal of all dealer prices as you select various options.

We've changed program platform, but the rigorous process to develop the bid remains the same. Each year in advance of the bid, a committee of experienced transportation directors reviews the program. The base specifications and options are analyzed and modified as needed. Bus dealers are also involved in the process to ensure the committee is aware of the newest developments in the school bus industry.

The goal of the committee is to provide a base specification that ensures an extremely high quality, safe bus. There are many districts that don't have the experience necessary in this area and they can be assured that if they order a bus from this program, it will be top quality.

It is not a sole source bid process. Districts can compare and choose among the dealers who represent International, Blue Bird, and Thomas/Freightliner.

The program offers an extensive help menu listing instructions, dealer contact information, base specifications and options. Conventional, Special Needs, Transit Rear Engine, Transit Front Engine, A-II, and BE style buses are all offered in the program. Further help is just a phone call away.

[MSBO](#) has continued to keep the administrative fee low at \$100 per bus, with a maximum of \$1,000 per district per year.

For questions or more information regarding the bus purchasing program, call Scott Little at 517.327.2582, or Pat Korloch at 517.327.5920.

## MSBO Scholarships Help You Pursue Your Education Goals

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[MSBO](#) offers two \$1,500 scholarships, which encourage and recognize individuals currently employed in school business who are improving their technical skills and competencies by pursuing an undergraduate or graduate degree.

The Mark & Kay Stebbins Scholarship recognizes individuals currently employed in school business who are improving their technical skills and competencies by pursuing a degree.

The Wally Piper Scholarship recognizes individuals currently employed in school business who are improving their technical skills and competencies by pursuing a graduate degree.

To be eligible for the Mark and Kay Stebbins or Wally Piper Scholarships, you must:

1. Be an active member of [MSBO](#) for at least 36 consecutive months before January 31 of the year in which the application is made.
2. Be employed on a full-time basis in a school business position for 36 consecutive months immediately prior to January 31 of the year in which the application is made.
3. Be recommended for the scholarship by the superintendent or chief school administrator under whom the applicant has served for the preceding 12 months.

Submit an [Application Form](#) to [MSBO](#) by January 31. Scholarship awards are determined by the [MSBO](#) Board of Directors and are presented at the [MSBO](#) Annual Conference.

## Take Advantage of MSBO's Annual Conference Early Bird Registration

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If you register and pay for the 2012 [MSBO](#) Annual Conference & Exhibit Show by Wednesday, February 1, 2012, you will receive Early Bird discounted rates and be entered for great prizes. This year's Conference will be held at [Cobo Center in Detroit](#). See the [Early Bird Registration form](#) or [online registration](#) for pricing. You may register for the full Conference, one-day Conference, Pre-Conferences and Tuesday certification classes at this time. When the clinic topics and speakers are confirmed, we will contact you to select and confirm your sessions, Pre-Conference and certification classes.

### Conference Registration Scholarships Available

The [MSBO](#) Board has authorized scholarships for members to attend the 2012 [MSBO](#) Conference and SET SEG has agreed to continue making a generous contribution for partial support of these scholarships. The scholarship covers the cost of registration for a full or one-day Conference registration. Scholarships do not include the Tuesday Pre-Conferences and Tuesday certification classes. There is a limit of one scholarship per district. Recipients are responsible for their own transportation and lodging. [MSBO](#) will notify you regarding the status of your scholarship application approximately one to two weeks after it is received.

**For the Early Bird registrants:** Fill out the registration form or register online.

**For Scholarship registrants:** you **cannot** register online. **You must fax the scholarship application and registration form together to [MSBO](#) at 517.327.0768.**

You can cancel your registration at any time up to two weeks prior to the Conference and pay only a \$25 processing fee. If you have questions about registration procedures, e-mail [Marte Cadwell](#) or call her at 517.327.5920.

**Hotel Reservations Now Open** – Our Conference host hotel is The Westin Book Cadillac, 1114 Washington Blvd, Detroit, MI and has conference rates of \$139 for a single/double room. For reservations call 888.627.7150 using the [MSBO](#) reservation code: "Michigan School Business Officials." Daily parking costs are \$10 for self-park/\$15 for valet per night (parking prices are subject to change).

## New Year's Safety Checklist

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As you return to school after a well-deserved holiday break, January is an ideal time for your custodial staff to review the following safety items. This checklist can help ensure that you're well prepared for the second half of the school year:

Take an inventory of hazardous substances and make sure they are clearly marked and out of reach of students.

Review your Material Safety Data Sheets - make sure they are current and complete for each building and area.

1. Check all the locks on external doors and windows.
2. Check exterior and interior walkways and entrances to be sure they are not slick and are easily passable.
3. Check all emergency exits to confirm they are functional and unobstructed from view.
4. Test all fire and smoke alarm systems to make sure that they are in proper working order.
5. Check that the heat is working correctly and that the air filters are clean.
6. Inspect ceilings for leakage.
7. Check all fire extinguishers to make sure they are in proper working order.
8. Check your HVAC systems to ensure they are all functioning accurately.

SafeSchools Training offers 50 Environmental Safety courses that provide in-depth coverage for many of the topics listed above and many of these courses are also available in Spanish or as Refresher courses. Here's to a safe and injury-free second half of the school year!

For more information about these and other SafeSchools Training courses, contact Deneen Hansen at [dhansen@msbo.org](mailto:dhansen@msbo.org), or email SafeSchools at [info@safeschools.com](mailto:info@safeschools.com).

## ASBO Recognizes Michigan School Districts

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In these economically challenging times, school districts need to demonstrate that their district is effectively and prudently managing funds. Since 1971, ASBO's Certificate of Excellence in Financial Reporting (COE) Program recognizes school systems for excellence in the preparation and issuance of their Comprehensive Annual Financial Reports (CAFR).

As of November 17, 2011, the following school districts received ASBO International's COE for the fiscal year ending 2010. Congratulations!

### **MICHIGAN**

Bloomfield Hills Schools  
Carmen-Ainsworth Community Schools  
Clarkston Community Schools  
Detroit Public Schools  
Farmington Public School District  
Forest Hills Public Schools  
Grand Blanc Community Schools  
L'Anse Creuse Public Schools  
Oakland Schools  
Ottawa Area Intermediate School District  
Portage Public Schools  
Port Huron Area School District  
Rockford Public Schools  
Saginaw Intermediate School District  
School District of the City of Saginaw  
South Lyon Community Schools  
Southfield Public Schools  
Traverse City Area Public Schools  
Troy School District  
Walled Lake Consolidated School District  
Wayne Westland Community Schools

## Celebrate Success! Deadline for MSBO Awards and Scholarships is January 31

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This is your opportunity to recognize the extraordinary contribution of employees and/or highlight innovative programming in your school district by nominating them for Michigan School Business Official's (MSBO ) School Business Official of the Year award or Meridian Award of Excellence.

The deadline is approaching for a number of MSBO awards. Don't miss this chance to recognize the extraordinary contribution of members to their school district community and to MSBO .

**The deadline for submission of all awards is January 31, 2012.** Details and criteria for the following awards can be found on MSBO 's website.

[School Business Official of the Year Award](#)

[Meridian Award of Excellence](#)

[Distinguished Service Award](#)

## Innovative Delivery of Non-Instructional Services Workshop Collaboration • Consolidation • Contracting • Concessions

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March 6, 2012 - 9:00 am- 4:00 pm

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It's hard not to consider the four "Cs" these days. Even though it sounds like a good idea, is it always beneficial? With many districts having implemented successful delivery options, the knowledge is out there and we're pulling it together in a one-day workshop!

Learn from a variety of legal and labor experts, as well as your peers' experiences in breakout sessions focused on business office, food and nutritional services, custodial/maintenance and transportation services in a collaborative, interactive setting.

Find out what analysis you'll need to prepare for your district and how to communicate it to both internal staff and your community. You'll walk away with a document that captures all of the breakout and group discussions and gives you direction as you assess your district's operations.

[Download the Agenda](#)

[Register Online](#)

**Hotel Information:** Overnight accommodations are NOT included in the registration fee. Reserve your room at the Mt. Pleasant Comfort Inn & Suites Hotel at 989.956.0462 until February 16, 2012. The Conference rate is \$89 single/double. Identify [MSBO](#) as the group you are with to receive the special rates.