



MASSACHUSETTS ADMINISTRATORS FOR SPECIAL EDUCATION



October 29, 2021 Virtual Conference

***Starting The New School Year Informed and Strengths-Based:
What Every Special Education Administrator and School Team Needs to
Know, Following an Unprecedented COVID-19 School Year***

**Featuring Presentations by Experts/Leaders in Education
and Special Education Law**



***Keeping One’s Balance during a
Time of Unparalleled Division, Controversy, and Complexity***

CONTEXT:

The New York Times on August 18 in its front page story noted the incredible stress that educators are under (The School Culture Wars: ‘You Have Brought Division to Us’ by [Sarah Mervosh](#) and [Giulia Heyward](#)). “From mask mandates to critical race theory and gender identity, educators are besieged. You are just trying to keep everything from collapsing,” one official said. And these additional stressors do not even consider the regular complexities of our day-to-day work.

SESSION FOCUS

While special educators have worked within stressful contexts for much of their careers, the current situation has been extraordinary in its complexity and volatility. In this session, Dr. John D’Auria will share insights and strategies on how to navigate these turbulent times and keep one’s balance and effectiveness in the days ahead.

PRESENTER:

John D’Auria, Ed.D., Senior Consultant, William James College, One Wells Avenue, Newton, MA 02459, 617-388-3026 (cell), @jdauria (twitter)



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***“In a time of turbulence and change, it is more true than ever that
knowledge is power”***

-John F. Kennedy

KEYNOTE PRESENTATION

Effectively Engaging Students and Families with Cultural Literacy Knowledge – Its Importance and Urgency

CONTENT:

Our education system continues to evolve in rapid ways as our student population becomes more diverse. The dynamics of our increasing globalized society add complexity to demands in communication, engagement, and relational capacity with multiple stakeholders, and especially with students and families as we begin the new school year. It is an educational imperative to chart a course of competency in cultural literacy for professional learning and our students.

SESSION FOCUS:

This keynote presentation will provide an enhanced understanding about the influence of culture in our practices for engagement and inspire participants to embark on an inspiring journey to increase their cultural literacy as educational leaders and school special education teams. Participants will experience insight and for some renewal through the affirmation of their own cultural experience, while broadening their cultural literacy skills to effectively engage leaders, teachers, students, and families under the common pursuit of high-quality education. This session will also provide strategies and techniques, to increase cultural literacy for participants to bring back to their school communities to expand the capacity for positive student outcomes and increased communication with student families.

KEYNOTE PRESENTER:

Dr. Bertha-Elena Rojas, Founder and CEO of Humanity Advanced, LLC. Former Manager of English Learners and Supplemental Supports in the Worcester Public Schools and Principal of the Academic Center for Transition (a substantially separate program for students with severe behavioral and social-emotional challenges). Clinical Neuropsychologist, Bilingual School Psychologist and Educator.

KEYNOTE CONTACT INFORMATION:

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Founder and CEO

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Special Education Leadership as We Emerge from a Pandemic

CONTEXT:

As we return to full time, in-person learning, school and district leaders see many challenges, many opportunities, and many successes ahead. Special education, more than ever, is seen as a key lever in supporting students and their families, and the new school year will provide a multitude of chances to “move the needle” for Massachusetts students with disabilities. What can we learn from the experience of the last school year, so that we can emerge from the pandemic stronger in our support of students with IEPs?

SESSION FOCUS:

This session will focus on guidance, regulations, and advisories to support positive student outcomes for students during the return to full in-person learning. The session will highlight strategies and techniques for realizing strengths-based actions to support students, families, teachers, and special education leaders.

PRESENTER:

Dr. Russell Johnston, Senior Associate Commissioner of The Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE), State Director of Special Education, former (MA) special education teacher, Special Education Administrator and Massachusetts School Superintendent



***Special Education Legal and Legislative Matters Matter:
Keeping Focused and Up-to-Date***

CONTEXT

Massachusetts school leaders have kept a strong vigil on supporting students with disabilities and staff during the pandemic. As we anticipate the return to in person learning from an unprecedented year, continued administrative focus on special education, the laws and services to students and support to staff will be ever more critical to special education leaders and school teams. Special Education laws, mandates, regulations and advisories are continually evolving to address student and school leadership needs in the new normal of school life.

SESSION FOCUS:

This session will highlight the current legal, legislative and advisories necessary in providing strength-based decision making during the challenges of return to full, in-person learning addressing student needs. The presentation will provide a discussion on special education “hot topics.” addressing learning loss, compensatory services and student evaluation requirements and a best practice approach for team decision making including a discussion on staff issues. Additionally, the session will highlight other legal special education state and federal topics which effect Massachusetts school districts with a view to strategies and techniques for supporting school special education leaders and teams. The session will provide highlights of current and sustained ASE Advocacy work regarding legal, legislative and regulatory efforts on behalf of special education administrators.

PRESENTER:

Paige Tobin, Esq., Murphy, Lamere and Murphy, PC, special education legal expert, counsel to Massachusetts school districts and consultant to ASE, ptobin@mlmlawfirm.com, 781-848-1850



It's All About the Data: Strengths-Based Special Education Evaluation Determinations to Produce Positive Student Outcomes

CONTEXT:

As schools begin the full in-person 2021-2022 school year, following an unprecedented time in school schedules and routines, determining student special education eligibility and specially designed instruction will be even more essential for school team decision-making. Data-driven evaluations are a strength-based and evidence-based model for special education school teams toward increasing positive outcomes for student achievement

SESSION FOCUS:

This presentation will discuss the current trends in data-driven special education evaluations to address eligibility for specially designed instruction, data-based current performance levels, progress monitoring and reporting, and other relevant eligibility for special education services. The presentation will highlight user-friendly and efficient strategies and techniques for school-based teams to address student needs for IEP development. Participants will gain up-to-date information in the following areas:

- ✓ Assessing student current levels of performance including observable and measurable goals and objectives, determining progress toward goals/objectives /benchmarks
- ✓ Best Practices for addressing:
 - o Provision of (student) services or disruption of services
 - o Capacity of students to access the provided services
 - o Standards for determining lack of progress and regression
 - o Communicating student needs /progress/services to parents/families
 - o Alignment with DESE

PRESENTER:

Allan S Blume, Ed. S., Educational Consultant, Associate Professor of Practice, Special Educator, jpallan1969@gmail.com

Allan Blume taught students with disabilities in public schools and educational collaboratives in Massachusetts for 18 years. He served for 23 years as an Associate Professor of Practice at Simmons University, Boston, where he taught courses that focused on laws and regulations of special education, IEP development, transition, inclusion, and special education administration.

He continues to consult to schools throughout Massachusetts regarding topics such as IEP writing strategies, federal and state special education regulations, disability awareness, special education process, inclusion, eligibility, Section 504, co-teaching as well as assisting school districts with the creation and editing of their District Curriculum Accommodation Plans.

See <https://allansblume.weebly.com/> for a complete list of Allan's consultations, topics, and resources.

Important Updates from the MA Department of Public Health Office of School Health Services

CONTEXT: The public health crisis (COVID-19 and variants) continues to be of significant concern. As Massachusetts schools return to in-person, full-time learning, it is essential that staff, students and families are informed and updated on current health and safety measures to ensure the well-being of all students in our public schools.

SESSION FOCUS: This presentation will provide information that is focused on updated safety protocols from the MA Department of Public Health for schools and students. The presentation will include highlighting their MASStart program, which serves youth with complex medical care needs, and the anticipated collaboration to provide skills training to school nurses in the coming years. The session will highlight strategies and techniques for school districts to ensure safe and healthy prevention and intervention protocols during COVID for all students and especially for students with special healthcare needs. Presenting with Ms. Robitaille will be a staff member from MASStart.

PRESENTER:

Karen Robitaille, MBA, MSN, RN, NCSN, Director of School Health Services, Division of Child/Adolescent Health and Reproductive Health, Massachusetts Department of Public Health

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Personal Webex room: <https://statema.webex.com/meet/Karen.Robitaille3>



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