

Member Spotlight

Mary King, CPA, MBA, SFO

Mary King is a passionate advocate of world-class education. She has been Chief Operating Officer for the North Kingstown School Department for six years, but her path to the role was unusual.

King started her career as a secretary working her way through night school. She earned a bachelor's in accounting with a goal of eventually earning a CPA license. After graduating, she worked in public accounting for four years, passed the CPA exam on the first try, and then moved on to corporate accounting and finance.

"I have worked in various types of businesses, from major corporations, to a small nonprofit, a quasi-governmental agency, and even a small casino before entering the world of school business," King explains.

King is proud of her school district. The 11th largest district in Rhode Island, North Kingstown is well known for providing excellent education, top-notch athletic teams, and high-quality career and technical experiences. The school district serves 3,900 students in nine schools: one high school, two middle schools, five elementary schools, and an alternative school program.

King's biggest challenge in her tenure at North Kingstown is one that's familiar to all school business officials: funding. "The responsibilities and requirements get larger every day while funding continues to shrink," King says.

As a school entity in Rhode Island, North Kingstown does not have taxing authority. The district is at the mercy of town taxpayer funds and state education funding which have seen a dramatic downturn over the past eight years.

Her advice to other school business officials who may have similar experiences is to not get frustrated. "Understand that your part in the success of your district is in your control. Funding, laws and statutes, and the many other issues that we face day to day may not be in our control, but doing the very best you can with what you have available to you is what should get you to work every day," she says. "Our contributions, sometimes behind the scenes, are critical to the success of the district, right alongside students, teachers, support staff, and everyone involved with the district."

One resource that has been beneficial to King as she has worked to advocate for her district is her ASBO International membership. "I am particularly complementary of both the SFO designation, which I hold, as well as the opportunity for our district to be recognized by the Meritorious Budget Award process. Our district has achieved this goal for three years in a row, and we are hoping for a fourth thanks to the hard work of our district controller."

King says the Meritorious Budget Award checklist and guidelines have provided a wealth of knowledge in a format that can be conveyed to stakeholders and used for future planning. “It has made our budget very transparent and informative,” she says.