

COUNCILGRAM

The Newsletter of The New York State Council of School Superintendents Volume V; Issue 3 November 2011

The New Communications and Public Engagement Imperative

By Deborah Bush-Suflita, Senior Program Manager,
Capital Region BOCES Communications Service

New York's new property tax levy cap promises to inject unprecedented levels of challenge and controversy into the development of next year's school budgets.

Misinformation and confusion swirl around this new piece of legislation, but two things are certain: It's a game changer for public education, and it's bound to force still deeper cuts in popular programs and services.

What can or should superintendents be doing *now* to better prepare for the storm of controversy just around the bend?

Start by recognizing that it is the job of public school leaders to explain how the cap will affect their school districts. It is not the media's job to tell your story; it is yours.

We already know the tax cap will not affect all districts the same – which is part of the whole equity concern. But if bad news is on the horizon in your district, it's best to "inoculate" your public *now* to the difficult conversations straight ahead.

Now is the time to clear up myths and misinformation circulating around the new tax cap. This is not a partisan exercise; it is about arming people with an overview of this new legislation and its real world impacts, so they aren't caught off guard when your school budget discussions get underway or when tax bills arrive next year. Words *do* matter. Make the intricacies of this new legislation clear and avoid language that can mislead your public.

For example, the new law has been referred to as "2 percent tax cap," but the law itself does *not* limit how much the tax levy can actually increase under a proposed budget. My advice has also been to stop calling it a TWO percent cap since your official "tax levy limit" is likely to be a different number and will vary considerably from one district to the next.

School leaders also have the challenge of explaining that the tax cap law doesn't really cap anyone's actual tax *bill*. The law applies solely to the school tax levy. You know this, but does your public?

And of course the consequences of a defeated budget are now much more severe for districts. As it now stands, there can be NO increase in the school tax levy without voter approval. This is the *real* cap. Be clear about the new consequences of a defeated budget. This is not "being negative" or acting like "Chicken Little." It is about telling the truth so your constituents understand they can trust you to explain how the rules have changed—and why the stakes have become a whole lot higher for public schools.

Communicating about the new tax cap and how it will impact your budget development process is the first hurdle. Navigating increasingly polarized communities will be the next one.

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Realistically, many school leaders will be under intense pressure from constituents who will demand—and maybe mobilize—to make sure the district stays within its “tax levy limit.”

At the same time expect pressure from constituents who will plead—and maybe mobilize—to save valued programs, services and jobs by invoking what Governor Cuomo has called the law’s “built-in relief valve.”

The writing is on the wall. Expect this year’s school budget meetings to be crowded – and plan accordingly.

New Strategies for Constructive Public Engagement

Ariana Huffington of *The Huffington Post* maintains that people do not want to simply consume information anymore, they want to participate. “Recognizing that impulse is the future of journalism,” Huffington says.

I would add that recognizing the public’s desire to participate is also the future of school public relations.

It may take a leap of faith to let the public in on the important and difficult decisions in public education – such as conversations about what to keep and what to cut in terrible fiscal times, school closings, merger discussions, and the dizzying array of evolving reform initiatives on the horizon. Yet there is simply no effective way to keep the public out—and why would we want to?

In today’s world the old-school model of decide-announce-defend is a recipe for revolt. School leaders can take the time to get early input, or they can spend a whole lot of time managing 11th hour opposition. The first approach builds credibility; the second one burns it.

In recent years, the communications team at Capital Region BOCES has been helping school districts roll out

new models for public engagement designed to foster civil conversations about pressing problems – and opportunities – in increasingly polarized communities.

Last year our BOCES’ communications staff facilitated 23 community conversations in nine school districts. Three of our districts won Golden Achievement Awards from the National School Public Relations Association for their public engagement work. Broadalbin-Perth (2010) and Guilderland (2011) won awards for community engagement around difficult budget choices and Schalmont (2011) won for its public engagement efforts leading to the closing of two elementary schools.

In these and other initiatives, our communications staff has looked to two nationally-respected organizations to inform our approach and infuse research-based practices into public engagement activities: Public Agenda (www.publicagenda.org) and the National Coalition for Dialogue and Deliberation (www.ncdd.org).

According to NCDD, organizations leading effective public engagement meetings should:

1. Use neutral facilitators and ground rules to create a safe atmosphere for honest, productive discussions.
2. Frame the issue, questions and discussion materials in a balanced and accurate manner.
3. Have citizens on all sides of the issue talk to each other, face-to-face, in multiple small groups.
4. Use the input and outcomes generated to inform the decision-making process.

Time and again we have witnessed how authentic public engagement can transform conflict and identify

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common ground for moving ahead constructively on critical issues in our schools.

Something powerful happens when you break people with widely divergent viewpoints into small groups to talk about issues they care about. People naturally tend to be more thoughtful and respectful when they are sitting around a table talking to each other instead of pontificating at a microphone.

Admittedly, even the small-group discussions can sometimes get a little tense, but that's okay. These are tense times. A lot is at stake. We have to expect people will be passionate about issues affecting their children, their tax dollars and their jobs. Still, the small group format, with carefully framed discussion materials and a skilled facilitator, provides a much better structure in which to manage those passions and perspectives.

Public engagement, done well, gives citizens the language for talking about difficult issues constructively. The benefits are significant:

- It fosters a better understanding of complex issues – across multiple perspectives.
- It helps your public move beyond “wishful thinking” to weigh the pros and cons of various courses of action.

- It helps identify areas of common ground (and also areas where disagreements exist and conversations might need to continue).
- It results in better solutions that are more likely to be implemented.
- It fosters trust and more productive relationships, leading to improved civic capacity for problem-solving going forward.

Raising the Bar on Communications

It is important to think about public engagement as an ongoing process – not a once-and-done event. The conversation can – and must – develop and grow on district information channels. There is a cost to doing good communications; but there is a far greater cost when you turn that job over to your critics who are more than happy to fill the information void.

This is all part

and parcel of districts' accepting greater responsibility for being the first and best source of information about what is happening in their classrooms and their boardrooms.

In fact, a March 2011 Brookings Institute study confirms Americans want more coverage of the real work of their public schools. And not just about who won last night's varsity football game or the “news lite” litany of upcoming events and announcements. No, Americans say they want substantive information and insights

on the critical issues shaping our public education system. Specifically: teacher performance, student achievement, education reform efforts, the scope of what gets taught and why, and of course school finances. As the authors of the study put it, “There is an imperative to improve both education journalism and the ways in which schools communicate directly to parents, students and citizens.”

The good news in all of this is that technology has democratized the news business. In today's world, schools have the ability to break their own news, build their own social networks and grow their public's knowledge and ability to move ahead constructively and collaboratively on important issues.

Why in the world would we choose to rely on indirect and filtered communication channels (e.g., reporters and critics) when we now have the power to reach our communities using direct and unfiltered communication channels to tell our own stories with passion, impact and authority?

As Abraham Lincoln figured out during his tumultuous presidency, “Public sentiment is everything. With public sentiment, nothing can fail; without it, nothing can succeed.”

We are facing some daunting challenges in public education. Getting serious about communications and public engagement may well be the best hope we have for navigating the sea change and controversy just around the bend.

School leaders also have the challenge of explaining that the tax cap law doesn't really cap anyone's actual tax bill. The law applies solely to the school tax levy. You know this, but does your public?





Recent Decision in Student First Amendment Speech

By Jacinda H. Conboy, Esq., General Counsel

In the last two months the U.S. Supreme Court denied review of three First Amendment cases regarding student speech:

Defoe v. Spiva; *Ochshorn v. Ithaca*; and *Doninger v. Niehoff*.

Defoe from the Sixth Circuit (MI, OH, KY, TN) involved a case in which the school district banned the display of the Confederate flag in school. The Sixth Circuit held that the school district's ban did not violate students' free speech rights because the display of the Confederate flag met the requirement of a "substantial disruption" in the school environment as set forth in *Tinker v. Des Moines Independent Community School District*, 393 U.S. 503 (1969).

The Court found that the school officials had sufficient evidence from which to believe that permitting the Confederate flag displays would result in a substantial disruption or material interference with the school environment. Interestingly in *Tinker*, the Supreme Court held that the wearing of arm bands in school did not "materially and substantially interfere with the requirements of appropriate discipline in the operations of the school." In *Defoe*, however, the school showed that due to the racial tension at the school the display of the Confederate flag would be substantially disruptive.

Ochshorn from the Second Circuit (NY, CT) involved a case in which the school district prohibited students from publishing an article in a school sponsored newspaper that featured stick figures in various sexual positions intended to mock the school health program. After the students were prohibited from printing the article in the school sponsored newspaper they attempted to run the article in an independent student newspaper to be distributed on school grounds; the school also prohibited the distribution of the independent student paper on school grounds.

The Second Circuit in *Ochshorn* held that the school district had properly prohibited the article in reliance on two different Supreme Court Decisions, *Bethel School District No. 403 v. Fraser*, 478 U.S. 675, 683 (1986) which provides wide discretion to schools to prohibit speech that is "lewd, indecent or offensive," and *Hazelwood School District v. Kuhlmeier*, 484 U.S. 260, 273 (1988) which permits schools to censor school-sponsored speech in ways "reasonably related to legitimate pedagogical concerns."

In another Second Circuit decision, *Doninger v. Niehoff*, the school district disqualified a student from running for Se-

nior Class Secretary after she posted a vulgar and misleading message about the supposed cancellation of an upcoming school event on an independently operated, publicly accessible blog. The Court held that the blog post created a foreseeable risk of substantial disruption at the school.

In this case the Court reviewed the *Fraser* standard regarding lewd, indecent or offensive speech (as applied in *Ochshorn*) and the *Tinker* "substantial disruption" standard (as applied in *Defoe*). The nuance in this case was that the blog was "off-campus speech."

The Court ultimately applied a standard set forth in *Wisniewski v. Bd. of Educ.* (another Second Circuit case in which the Supreme Court denied review) where the Court held that a student's off-campus internet transmission to 15 friends which depicted an icon that called for the killing of his teacher could create "a foreseeable risk of substantial disruption within a school" and in such circumstances the off-campus speech does not necessarily insulate the student from school discipline.

The Court in *Doninger* ultimately held that it was reasonably foreseeable that the off-campus blog was purposely designed to come onto campus and for fellow students to read and respond to the blog. The blog was deemed to "foreseeably create a risk of substantial disruption within the school environment." Ultimately, the Court held that the disqualification of the student from running for Senior Class Secretary did not violate her First Amendment rights.

While the familiar language of *Tinker* still applies and students do not "shed their constitutional rights to freedom of speech or expression at the schoolhouse gate," Courts have repeatedly recognized the rights of school officials to limit student speech that is substantially disruptive, vulgar, offensive, and that encourages illegal drug use. As always, if you are facing a First Amendment challenge, please consult with your school attorneys for guidance.



Unprecedented Times Calls for Unprecedented Actions

by Kyle McCauley Belokopitsky, Esq., Assistant Director for Government Relations

After three years of state aid reductions or freezes, and the imposition of a burdensome property tax cap, THE COUNCIL has taken decisive action. In these difficult fiscal times, we have entered into an unprecedented coalition of business, local government and educational organizations, under the name “Let New York Work: A Common Agenda for the Common Good.”

On November 1, 2011 our advocacy team, led by Executive Director Robert J. Reidy, Jr., presented the mandate relief agenda along with the other 10 coalition partners at a joint press conference. This effort consisted of six key measures that will provide relief from mandates, in attempt to preserve what’s most important - our children’s education.

The other partners are the New York State School Boards Association, the New York State Conference of Mayors, the Associated General Contractors of New York State (AGC), the Business Council of New York State, Inc. (BCNYS), Lawsuit Reform Alliance of New York (LRANY), National Federation of Independent Business (NFIB), New York Farm Bureau (NYFB), New York State Association of Realtors (NYSAR), Unshackle Upstate (UU), the Westchester County Association (WCA).

The mandate relief items proposed are:

- **Make the pension system predictable and affordable** – introduce a new Tier VI that would encompass both a reduced defined benefit plan and a new defined contribution plan.
- **Redefine compulsory arbitration** – define the ability to pay; prohibit consideration of non-compensation issues; limit access to binding arbitration; and add transparency to the arbitration process.
- **Reduce the costs of construction on public/private projects** – support alternative project delivery methods like design build; increase the Wicks Law threshold; enact the Public Construction Savings Act; and amend the Scaffold Law.
- **Freeze step increases when contracts expire** – if a contract expires, freeze the salary step increase until a new contract is entered into by amending the Tri-borough Law.
- **Establish minimum health insurance contribution levels for employees and retirees** – employers cover no more than 85

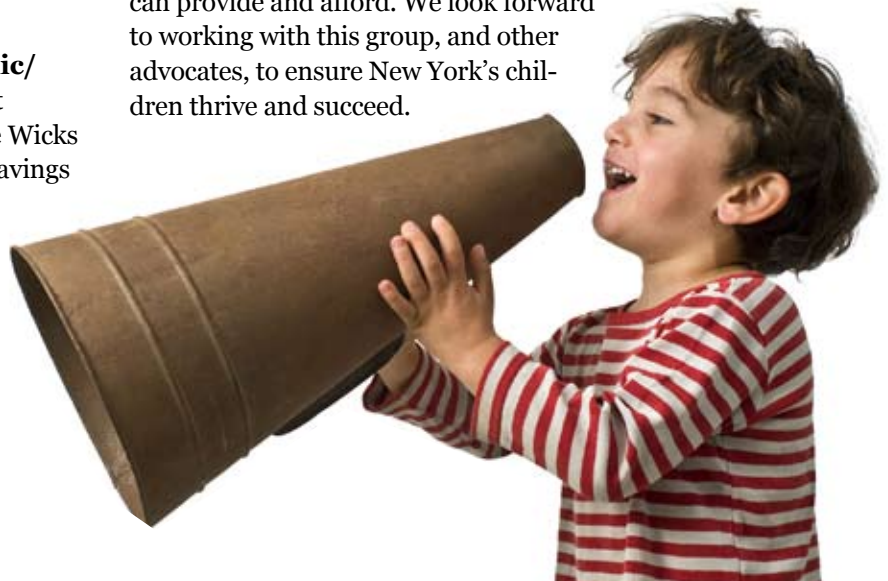
percent of a single healthcare premium or 75 percent of a healthcare premium for families or retirees.

- **Prohibit new unfunded mandates** – no future unfunded mandates; enact the Unfunded Mandate Reform Act authorizing the Governor to annually propose a mandate relief plan which the Legislature would be required to either accept or reject in total within 30 days; and require a three-fifths majority in both the Assembly and Senate to add any new unfunded mandates.

Bob Reidy said, “This is not the first tough year for schools. We have had three years of state aid cuts and freezes. With the prospect of operating under a tax cap it is imperative schools get help to preserve services for children. Immediate and significant mandate relief is necessary to maintain quality services for all children.”

The coalition partners took different positions on the tax cap in the last legislative session and will not agree on every issue going forward. Additional state aid must also be part of what the state does to help schools balance future financial challenges. The state’s poorest districts were capped by circumstances before they were capped by law. They just cannot ask local residents for tax increases big enough to offset aid losses and benefit increases. Any mandate relief, no matter how substantial, won’t help soon enough.

Importantly, the “Let NY Work” agenda is only a small part of our advocacy initiative. THE COUNCIL’S full 2012 Legislative Agenda is in development. Thank you for your input into this agenda over the past year. As always, we will continue to focus on the learning our students need and demand within the confines of the resources our taxpayers can provide and afford. We look forward to working with this group, and other advocates, to ensure New York’s children thrive and succeed.



Member News

Congratulations to **Oliver Blaise**, retired superintendent, on the completion of his 62nd marathon and completion of his goal to run one in all 50 states. He competed in the Maui Marathon on September 18, 2011 and completed the Prairie Fire Marathon in Wichita, KS on October 9, 2011.

Oliver started running marathons in 1989 in New Jersey. At the time he said “I thought that I might not ever run another one but it has been very satisfying, as well as a great contributor to a healthy lifestyle, that has kept me on the road all of these years.”

His next goal is to complete a marathon on every continent. To date, Oliver has completed four of the seven continents including North America, Antarctica, Europe and Asia.



The Board of Education for the **Berkshire Union Free School District** has ratified a new teacher contract. The agreement was approved at the October 6th district School Board meeting. The school district primarily serves youth who reside at the Berkshire Farm Center’s residential campus.

The school district is keeping its eye on the leading edge of finance reform and with the new agreement is replacing the traditional step-salary schedule for teachers with an end-of-the year salary adjustment (provided the school district is financially able), which will become a part of the base salary moving forward.

“We needed to recruit highly skilled teachers who are certified in both special education and in specific content areas,” said **Bruce Potter, superintendent of Berkshire**. “Having teachers who are dually certified is a premium for the school and the students.” With that in mind, the new contract calls for an additional \$2,000 annual stipend for teachers with dual certifications.

Berkshire UFSD is a Special Act Public School that does not receive state aid or funding from the area tax base. They receive their funding by charging tuition to schools or counties for educational services, depending on how the student was referred and placed at the facility.

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Member News

Dr. Mary Barter Scholarship for Women and Minorities – Applications Available

THE COUNCIL renamed the Pathways to Leadership Scholarship for Minorities and Women to the Dr. Mary Barter Scholarship for Women and Minorities to honor the first female president of THE COUNCIL. The scholarship was created under Dr. Barter's direction and leadership in 1988 to promote and inspire women and minorities to pursue the field of educational administration.

THE COUNCIL serves as underwriter and award two scholarships in the amount of \$2,000 at the Winter Institute each year. Nominations of aspiring leaders are made by superintendents and college and university faculty. The Dr. Mary Barter Scholarship for Women and Minorities Committee (formerly the Pathways to Leadership Committee) selects the winners of both scholarships. Guidelines were mailed to all members the week of November 7, 2011. Nominations forms must be submitted to Council offices by Friday, December 2, 2011. The deadline for all application materials from nominees is Friday, January 2, 2012. Completed applications will be screened by the Dr. Mary Barter Committee in February, 2012. Nomination forms can found on-line at www.nyscoss.org.

In Memoriam

Frank Carasiti, retired superintendent serving Suffolk schools, died on September 17 at the age of 78. Frank began his career teaching sixth grade in Rocky Point in 1957. Six years later, he was appointed superintendent of the district, where he presided for the next 27 years. As a tribute to the educator, the district named the elementary school after him.

After his retirement from Rocky Point, Frank took interim superintendencies in Hampton Bays, Greenport, Eastport, Middle Country, East Quogue, Port Jefferson, and Three Village schools. His interim with Three Village schools ended up lasting five years. His last interim post was in Harborsfield in 2008.

In addition to daughter Michelle Morin, Frank is survived by his second wife, Vanessa, of Wading River; their daughter, Catherine Carasiti, 27, of Wading River; five other children from his first marriage to Nancy Atkinson of Berlin, Conn.: David, Peter, Kevin, Keith, and Timothy; 17 grandchildren, and a great grandchild.

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Principal Evaluation in New York State:

Certification Requirements, Research and the LEAF Training Model

By Robert McClure, Superintendent-In-Residence, The Council and Kelly Masline, Director of LEAF, Inc.



Districts are required to implement a new Annual Professional Performance Review (APPR) for teachers and principals starting in the 2011-2012 school year. Each district will have to locally negotiate the APPR procedures and ensure that the provisions under section 3012-c of Education Law section and Section 100.2 (o) of Commissioner's Regulations are being implemented. THE COUNCIL and LEAF, Inc. continue to receive questions about what districts are required to do in order to satisfy the training and certification requirements.

We hope that the following information will answer some questions and assist districts as they move forward with their APPR plans.

Certification

There has been a lot of confusion related to how an evaluator is certified. According to the Commissioner's Regulations 30-2.9, "The governing body of each school district and BOCES shall ensure that evaluators have appropriate training before conducting an evaluation under this section. The governing body shall also ensure that any lead evaluator has been certified by such governing body as a qualified lead evaluator before conducting and/or completing a teacher's or principal's evaluation in accordance with the requirements of this Subpart, except as otherwise provided in this subdivision."

THE COUNCIL/LEAF, NYSED, BOCES or any other organization providing training cannot certify individuals. This means that all training that leads towards certification is to be determined locally.

Therefore, a district can select from a number of training models as follows:

- Participate in National, State or locally sponsored workshops such as those offered by LEAF, Inc.;
- Collaborate regionally through BOCES;
- Contract with consultants/experts to provide training (rubric or non-rubric vendors);
- Design your own in-house training programs; and/or
- Develop a blended model.

Regardless of the training that a district selects, we recommend that the information presented is research-based, multi-dimensional (workshops, webinars, readings, simulations, case studies, guided skills practice, conferences, etc.), is incorporated into your culture, includes high quality professional learning opportunities provided by outside consultants, and uses in-house and regional expertise.

There is also some degree of confusion with regard to the rubrics to be used as part of the evaluation process. SED has published a number of approved rubrics and districts must select from the lists of rubrics or apply for a variance. New rubrics are periodically added to the approved lists so we advise districts to check the SED website regularly. It is also important to note that the "rubric" is only one part of the evaluation. We encourage districts to ensure that the evaluation system they design is aligned to the standards (NYS Teaching Standards for teachers and the 2008 ISLLC Leadership Standards for principals), is evidence-based and focused on teaching and learning.


The Nine Training Requirements

According to the Commissioner's regulations (30-2.9) the substance of the training needs to cover nine training elements. The training requirements include:


1. NYS Teaching Standards and their related elements, performance indicators, and the Leadership Standards and their related functions (ISLLC 2008), as applicable;
2. Evidence-based observation techniques that are grounded in research;

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3. Application and use of the student growth percentile model and the value-added growth model;
4. Application and use of the State-approved teacher/principal rubric(s);
5. Application and use of any assessment tools that the school district or BOCES utilizes to evaluate its classroom teachers or building principals (e.g. portfolios, surveys, school improvement goals);
6. Application and use of any State-approved locally selected measures of student achievement you intend to use;
7. Use of the Statewide Instructional Reporting System;
8. Scoring methodology used by the department and/or your district; and
9. Specific considerations in evaluating teachers and principals of English language learners and students with disabilities.

*** Other: While not listed as a training component, districts will need to ensure inter-rater reliability for both their teacher and principal evaluation systems.

Why Focus on the Principalship

Most would agree that we need an evaluation system to ensure consistency, to provide a sound process and to ensure the research and best practice on effective leadership is applied.

Research shows that there is, in fact, a substantial relationship between (school) leadership and student achievement. The average effect size (expressed as a correlation) is .25 and it has been proven that principals can have a profound effect on the achievement of students in their

schools according to *School Leadership That Works: From Research to Results* by Marzano, McNulty & Waters (2005).

Leithwood, et. al., in their book *How Leadership Influences Student Learning* (2004), states that leadership is second only to classroom instruction among all factors that influence student outcomes; leadership effects are usually largest where and when they are needed most; and principals and superintendents are being admonished to be “instructional leaders” without much clarity about what that means.

Dr. Joseph Murphy of Vanderbilt University has been presenting workshops on the principal evaluation in collaboration with LEAF, Inc. He shares the following ideas related to school leadership including:

1. Leadership matters.
2. In difficult times, leadership matters even more.
3. In periods of significant organizational transition, leadership is the major controllable factor in explaining organizational performance.
4. Instructionally-focused and change-oriented leadership are especially effective frames for education.
5. Team leadership seems to offer promise for enhancing organizational performance.
6. Assessment provides a strategic leverage point for strengthening leadership.

For those negotiating the evaluation process, we suggest

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starting by agreeing to the “purpose” and “design elements” for your principal evaluation system; and identifying the strengths and weaknesses of your current principal evaluation system.

LEAF, Inc. was one of the partners working with the New York State Education Department on the development of a Cohesive Leadership System (CLS) that was funded through the Wallace Foundation between 2008-2010. One of the components of the CLS was the development of design elements for an evaluation system for school leaders. A Statewide advisory group met regularly over two years and conducted over 30 focus group sessions with superintendents and principals leading to the development of the following design elements for use in developing a comprehensive principal evaluation system:

- Based on state and national standards (ISLLC, 2008);
- Based on research, best practice, and experiential learning;
- Focused on the advancement of learning;
- Should include indicators of student, teacher, and leader growth;
- Evidence-based;
- Flexible;
- Based on multiple measures;
- Sensitive to the diversity and the context of the school and district;
- Clear and explicit;
- Fair and reasonable;
- A shared responsibility between the supervisor and the leader being evaluated;
- Include formative and summative assessments
- Promote collaboration, ongoing communication/ feedback, and trust between the supervisor and the leader being evaluated;
- Lead to professional growth and development of the leader being evaluated;
- Promote learning for all students; and
- Confidential.

There is no question that an effective principal has an impact on student performance. We encourage those evaluating principals to consider keeping it as simple as possible. An effective evaluation system must identify where you are going (goals or expected school improvement outcomes), how you plan to get there (Leverage points), and what evidence you will collect to demonstrate reaching goals/expected outcomes.



LEAF Network Training Series

LEAF, Inc. will continue to offer training opportunities throughout the coming school year that will collectively address each of the nine required elements specified in the new regulations. Sessions will include rich opportunities for participant sharing, reflection and practice, in addition to providing a wide variety of suggested activities for districts to incorporate into their leadership practice back home.

LEAF sessions will be offered through a variety of venues including regional workshops, webinars, and at conferences. A complete schedule of our Network Training Series will be shared with all superintendents in early December.

For more information, please contact Kelly Masline, Senior Associate Director of THE COUNCIL and Director of LEAF, Inc. (kelly@nycoss.org) or Dr. Robert McClure, Superintendent-in-Residence at mccclure@nycoss.org.

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THE COUNCIL'S 2012 Legal Briefing



Surviving the Superintendency: Tips from Legal Experts



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Thursday, January 26, 2012
Presented with Premier Silver
Partner Harris Beach, PLLC

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Registration Materials Available On-line

The Council Moving Forward with Technology Initiative

By Theresa A. Wutzer, Associate Director, The Council

THE COUNCIL is embarking on what is, at least to Council staff, a daring transition to a new website, *Councilgram* newsletter and new membership software. This transition feels daring, in part, because we are endeavoring to enhance and augment on-line services to our members in these difficult economic times. It also requires a dedicated governance team and staff that are not afraid to plunge head first into new territory.

Over the past two years, THE COUNCIL staff, Executive Committee and House of Delegates have worked on a technology initiative to review and upgrade our technology systems to serve our members efficiently and to create new services and educational opportunities. Through this process, we developed a technology vision statement, created a plan and engaged a firm to assist us with our technology needs analysis (in which many of you took part) using an on-line technology survey and face-to-face focus groups. We are now moving to the next stage in this plan, again with Spiral Design Studio, on the design and implementation of these communication initiatives.

Our staff is hard at work: building new web pages; redesigning the *Councilgram* newsletter; and converting data into a new membership system. At the same time, these same staff members are continuing to provide the same level of service and resources, you have come to expect from membership within THE COUNCIL.

The transition to the new website, *Councilgram* newsletter, and new membership software will occur over a period of several months in 2012. We are committed to delivering these new tools and resources that will:

- Empower you to manage your Council membership on-line – from changing your title to updating your address.
- Provide you with the tools to track your professional development.
- Enhance our Superintendents' Resource Bank; allowing 24-hour, 7-days-a-week access and a new search option.
- Create for you a private community, where members can engage with each other.
- Enable THE COUNCIL to mobilize our stakeholders with a new legislative action center.

Over the next several months, you will notice changes to these primary communication tools. We will continue to keep you informed as we move forward introducing to you to our new tools. Throughout this time, we welcome your questions and suggestions. Please contact theresa@nyscoss.org with your feedback.



Interim Superintendents

Richard J. Burns, 08/11
East Hampton UFSD

Amber Dixon, 09/11
Buffalo City SD

Richard Marsh, 09/11
Wantagh UFSD

Thomas McGowan, 09/11
Greenwich CSD

Jerome F. Melvin, 09/11
Central Square CSD

Elizabeth Smith, 09/11
Ravena-Coeymans-Selkirk CSD

Shared Superintendent/Interim

Beverly Ouderkirk, 07/11
Brushton-Moira CSD

Beverly Ouderkirk, 07/11
St. Regis Falls CSD

Appointments

Sharon Huff
Superintendent of Schools
07/11, Yorkshire-Pioneer CSD
*Superintendent of Schools at
Cleveland Hill UFSD*

James J. Montesano
Superintendent of Schools
06/11, Nyack UFSD
*Superintendent of Schools
in New Jersey*

Daniel A. Teplesky
Superintendent of Schools
08/11, Monticello CSD
*Superintendent of Schools at
Ravena-Coeymans-Selkirk CSD*

New Superintendents

Michelle T. Bradley
Superintendent of Schools
10/11, Lockport City SD
*Assistant Superintendent
for Learning Assessment
at Lockport City SD*

Joseph DioGuardi
Superintendent of Schools
07/11, Addison CSD
*Business Administrator
at Addison CSD*

Kelly Fallon
Superintendent of Schools
09/11, Half Hollow Hills CSD
*Deputy Superintendent at
Half Hollow Hills CSD*

Bonnie Finnerty
Superintendent of Schools
07/11, Schroon Lake CSD
*Middle School Principal at
Oswego City SD*

Joan Frisicano
Superintendent of Schools
07/11, Oysterponds UFSD
*Interim Superintendent, Principal
and Director of Special Education
at Oysterponds UFSD*

Paul Jenkins
Superintendent of Schools
07/11, Glens Falls City SD
*Assistant Superintendent at
Glens Falls City SD*

Bruce Karam
Superintendent of Schools
09/11, Utica City SD
*Director of Secondary Education
at Utica City SD*

Jeffrey M. Evoy
Superintendent of Schools
10/11, Medina CSD
*Elementary Principal and Director
of Curriculum at Pembroke CSD*

Michael Patton
Superintendent of Schools
07/11, South Glens Falls CSD
*High School Principal at
Queensbury UFSD*

Retirements

Terry Carbone, 10/11
Lockport City SD

Robert Greenberg, 06/11
Long Beach City SD

Ronald Smalls, 12/11
Greenburgh CSD No. Seven

James Williams, 09/11
Buffalo City SD

Council Membership Renewal

We hope you will consider rejoining THE COUNCIL and encourage you to take advantage of our programs and services. For more detailed benefits information, go to <http://www.nyscoss.org/pdf/upload/membershipbro2011.pdf>. You can also find out about our Legal Level 2 services. New Superintendents should always contact THE COUNCIL's legal support with respect to your contract.

THE COUNCIL will no longer extend membership services to superintendents and assistant superintendents who have not paid their dues as of January 1, 2012. Unfortunately, if you are not a paid COUNCIL member you will no longer be eligible for legal services, legislative support, listserv updates, the Councilgram newsletter, or have access to the Superintendents Resource Bank. In addition, if you participate in our professional development opportunities, including the Fall Leadership Summit and Winter Institute, you will be required to pay the non-member rate. Please contact Karen Dooley, Membership Services Coordinator, at Karen@nyscoss.org or Joanna Douglas, Administrative Assistant, at Joanna@nyscoss.org with questions regarding your membership.

Vacancies

Akron CSD

Student Enrollment1,600
Salary Up to \$160,000
Vincent J. Coppola
WNYESC
SUNY @ Buffalo
222 Baldy Hall
Buffalo, NY 14260-1000
716-645-2932
debrabri@buffalo.edu
Reply By: 12/9/11

Averill Park CSD

Student Enrollment 3,300
Salary \$155-\$170,000
Alan D. Pole
C/O Castallo & Silky
4514 Whistler Circle
Manlius, NY 13104
315.692.4615
polead@yahoo.com
Reply By: 1/6/12

Burnt Hills-Ballston Lake

Student Enrollment 3,300
Salary \$Competitive
Charles S. Dedrick
Michele Handzel, Esq.
Capital Region BOCES
900 Watervliet-Shaker Road
Albany, NY 12205
518-862-4901
ryamin@gw.neric.org
Reply By: 12/30/11

Gloversville Enlarged SD

Student Enrollment 3,200
Salary \$125-\$140,000
Patrick Michel
HFM BOCES
2755 State Highway 67
Johnstown, NY 12095
518-736-4300
pmichel@hfmboces.org
Reply By: 11/28/11

Hannibal CSD

Student Enrollment1,500
Salary \$130-\$148,000
William D. Silky
Lucy Martin
Castallo & Silky
P.O. Box 15100
Syracuse, New York 13215
315.492.4474
WDSilky@aol.com
Reply By: 1/6/12

Oxford ACA & CS

Student Enrollment 840
Salary \$110-\$130,000
William Tammaro
DCMO BOCES
6678 County Rd #32
Norwich, NY 13815
607-335-1233
tammarow@dcmoboces.com
Reply By: 11/30/11



UPCOMING EVENTS

**The Council's 2012
Winter Institute
and Lobby Day**
March 4-6, 2012
Albany, NY



Fall Leadership Summit
September 23-25, 2012
Saratoga Springs, NY

2011-2012

LEAF, Inc. Programs:

New Superintendents Institute
January 20, 2012
March 4, 2012

**2nd & 3rd Year
Superintendents**
March 4, 2012
Albany, NY

**Aspiring Superintendents
Program**
December 1, 2011
Albany, NY



Reminder:
...Contact THE COUNCIL for legal services
with contract negotiations and contract
review at (518)449-1063.

“Drop the Damn Fork”

by Dr. John Gratto, Superintendent, Sag Harbor UFSD

As a Superintendent of Schools, there is rarely a time that you are not “on.” Ours is a demanding profession requiring us to continually be mentally alert and physically fit as we plan actions to strengthen our school systems and be responsive to Boards of Education, parents, and our communities. The ability to successfully carry out our challenging roles is enhanced when we are in good shape and impeded when we are logy or lethargic.

For many people the first step to getting in shape is to lose weight. In September of 2011, *USA Today* ran a story about Jean Nidetch, the now 87-year-old founder of Weight Watchers. If you want to know the secret of the success of Weight Watchers and how you can reach your desired weight, then read and re-read this sentence. “Though she has slowed a bit from her younger years, Nidetch is still feisty as ever, and is blunt when she boils down her advice to dieters: “Drop the damn fork!” she says.”

I remember feeding my children when they were infants. After awhile they were full and would spit out the last mouthful of food. We need to be more like children and simply stop eating when we have had enough instead of eating recreationally.

Here is some more advice that may help you along the journey of getting to the weight you want and into the shape you want to be in:

- 1. Set a goal.** School administrators are typically driven by goals. You set goals to get your Bachelors and Masters Degrees (or higher) and it worked. You set goals to proceed through the administrative ranks and to improve your schools. You made plans and followed them. The accomplishment of losing weight and getting in shape can follow the same goal-setting process.
- 2. Give yourself reasonable time.** I am always amused when I see the product Slim-Fast. It epitomizes our culture’s desire for instantaneous results from little or no effort. That won’t happen when it comes to weight loss and getting in shape. Did anyone get “Overweight-Fast?” A goal is a dream with a date on it. Set a goal for the weight you want to be a year from now and then make a plan to get there in 12 monthly steps just like you made plans to achieve other significant goals.
- 3. Exercise.** Putting down the damn fork is a good idea. But your plan to lose weight and get in shape will be greatly expedited if you find some exercises that you like and do them regularly. Walking is a good start and almost anyone can do it. (Get clearance from a doctor before starting on an exercise plan). Find an exercise that is fun for you and do it consistently. Whatever you like, just do it and do it over and over again because our sedentary jobs work against us being in shape. We must make the time to exercise.

So, if you want to have the fitness and vitality to carry out your important position, then “Drop the damn fork,” set some reasonable fitness goals, and add exercise into the mix to achieve your goals!



Council Awards – Accepting Nominations

Friend of The Council Award

The Friend of THE COUNCIL Award is given annually in recognition of a non-member's contribution to THE COUNCIL and the field of education.

It is awarded to an individual who is:

- Actively involved in education and is active with THE COUNCIL.
- Recognized by superintendents as a person/organization who contributes time for the purpose of improving public education.

It is awarded at the Winter Institute and this year is sponsored by our Premier Platinum Partner CSArch Architecture/Engineering/Construction Management.

To nominate someone for either of these awards, please send a letter to the Distinguished Service Chair, Dr. William Johnson c/o THE COUNCIL, 7 Elk Street, Third Floor, Albany, NY 12207 by December 2, 2011 or e-mail deidre@nyscoss.org with your recommendation.

Appreciation Award

THE COUNCIL'S Appreciation Award was established to recognize an active member's efforts on behalf of THE COUNCIL and its initiatives. Individuals can be nominated by a colleague or someone in the field of education. The award is presented each year during the Winter Institute. This year's award is sponsored by our Premier Silver Partner Bearsch Compeau Knudson Architects & Engineers PC.

The award is given to an active Council member who:

- Volunteers time on behalf of THE COUNCIL (e.g., offers workshops, participates actively on a committee, etc.)
- Has been active with a number of activities over a number of years.
- Is recognized in the field of education as an educational leader (e.g., by colleagues, in his/her community, by THE COUNCIL).
- Is nominated by a colleague or THE COUNCIL.



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Contact: Joann Kudrewicz, R.N.



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Albany, NY 12207

Clark Patterson Lee
DESIGN PROFESSIONALS



Thank you to our Newsletter Underwriters

2012 WINTER INSTITUTE AND LOBBY DAY!

Developing A World-class Education
System in a New Economic Reality

March 4 – 6, 2012

The Desmond Hotel and Conference Center, Albany, NY

Invest your time on behalf of your school districts at the 2012 Winter
Institute and Lobby Day!

- Listen to Marc S. Tucker, President and Chief Executive Officer from the National Center on Education and the Economy on steps to take to improve education without increasing your bottom line.
- Meet with Dr. John B. King, Jr., Commissioner of Education on Monday morning. Hear from Charlotte Danielson about assessing effective teaching practices.
- Understand how the Governor's budget will impact your school district. Learn more about available APPR training.
- Advocate on behalf of your district during Lobby Day on Tuesday.

SAVE
THE
DATE!

