

# COUNCILGRAM

THE NEWSLETTER OF THE NEW YORK STATE COUNCIL OF SCHOOL SUPERINTENDENTS

## End of Session Loose Ends

### *Legislature Leaves Unfinished Business*

**J**ust 45 days late, the Legislature passed the \$89.6 billion 2002-03 state budget.

Notwithstanding the state's precarious fiscal position, as with last year's budget, over \$500 million is available for "member-item" spending — the small grants in aid that are directed solely at the discretion of individual legislators or the Governor.

Arguing for their economic development impact in this fleeting recovery, the Executive was able to preserve tax cuts totaling nearly \$1 billion over 3 years, and the Legislature managed to add \$420 million in new school aid. However, to afford these spending decisions, the Governor and Legislature agreed to raid nearly all of the state's fund balances, borrow from dedicated funds, and appropriate unclaimed property belonging to NYS residents. In addition, they enacted increases in fees for everything from hunting licenses to cell phones. Finally, they upped their estimates of the state's economic growth next year to 3.8%, despite losing \$8 billion in tax receipts as a result of the

September 11th attacks.

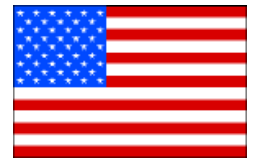
All told, these non-recurring revenues total between \$2 and \$4 billion, depending on who is doing the counting, raising concerns about how a sum approaching 10% of the state's general fund revenue will be replaced next year — in a non-election year.

The election year budget nevertheless has something for everyone. The increased spending in education is welcome, even as the tenuousness of the state's finances should leave districts wary as to whether this level of state spending can be maintained. Public employee unions secured an early retirement incentive as well as a new "55/25" initiative that would allow employees aged 55 with 25 years of service to retire without penalty. TRS estimates some 1,000 of their members would be eligible. The member-item money will allow legislators running in substantially redrawn districts to introduce themselves to their new constituents, and a gimmick to allow the Big 5 districts to borrow against funds they're

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**OVER 100 YEARS OF  
EDUCATIONAL LEADERSHIP**



**JUNE 2002  
VOLUME IV; ISSUE 10**

## Regents Meet Amid Test Controversy

### *Receive Report on Middle-Level Education*

#### **Test Controversy Continues**

**T**he State Board of Regents held its monthly meeting in Albany on June 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup>. The gathering came as the dust was still settling from the controversy over the Department's editing of literary passages included in Regents examinations. The practice drew universal condemnation, not just in New York State papers, but also in *U.S. News and World Report*, the *Wall Street*

*Journal*, and various nationally syndicated columns.

A day after the controversy broke into the open, the Commissioner ordered the practice stopped. At the Regents' meeting, several members of the Board observed that they and the Department needed to do a better job of explaining the tests. The Department committed to preparing documents for that purpose. This, in turn, sparked

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## NEW YORK STATE COUNCIL OF SCHOOL SUPERINTENDENTS

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already owed will provide a one-shot revenue against the cost of a 16% settlement of the United Federation of Teachers contract in NYC.

The week of June 10 was a momentous one for the New York City public schools. On Monday of that week, Mayor Bloomberg and the UFT announced agreement on the new contract, more than a year and half after the last contract expired. The same day, the Assembly passed sweeping reforms in City school governance, the Senate passed the bill on Tuesday and it was signed by Governor Pataki on Wednesday.

The governance bill authorizes the Mayor to appoint future Chancellors. It abolishes the central board of education and replaces it with a 13 member board comprised with a majority of mayoral appointees, including the Chancellor as chair. It also abolishes the 32 community school boards and authorizes a task force to recommend what should replace them. The bill did not change the powers and duties of the community superintendents. New York City now joins Boston, Chicago, Cleveland, and Detroit as big cities that have moved to mayoral control over schools.

The legislature adjourned with several pieces of unfinished business, in the education arena, none was more conspicuous (or unexpected) than the BOCES district superintendent salary cap.

The bill to authorize annual seven percent salary increases passed the Senate first, but was slightly amended by the Assembly before passage in that house. This had the effect of requiring

the Senate to start over and re-pass the bill in its amended form. Since the bill differed only in phrasing, not substance, from the bill that had passed, and since the Senate raised no objections to the Assembly's minor changes, passage of the amended version seemed assured.

However, as the scheduled last day of session was heading toward a close, rumors circulated that the bill was "in trouble" and the Senate adjourned without taking action. As this is written, both houses were planning to return the week of June 24 to clear up "unfinished business," providing an opportunity to continue to push for the bill.

In other end of session business, the Legislature passed bills to increase the unreserved fund balance that districts are permitted to retain and to postpone mandates concerning electrically operated partitions and automated external defibrillators.

Several school districts are currently being investigated by the Federal Department of Justice for potential problems with Medicaid claims going back to 1990. The investigations are not prompted by allegations of fraud, but rather concern that state guidelines did not parallel the federal statute and therefore any district that followed the state guidelines could be in jeopardy. Senator Schumer has held several press conferences on this issue because the outside exposure to schools could total as much as \$2 billion. NYSCOSS, ASBO and NYSSBA are working jointly with the Senator and with appropriate NYS officials to attempt to resolve this issue.

# NY TALKS

## Participants receive new 515 Palm Pilot

The Magellan Foundation has partnered with Palm, Inc. to provide all participants of the NY TALKS program with a Palm Pilot m515 handheld.

The state-of-the-art digital tool will be given to each registrant of NY TALKS at the July 28 Orientation Session, held simultaneously in Brooklyn and Syracuse. The Orientation Session will include training on the Palm 515. The device will then be used as a critical tool throughout the orientation and follow-up sessions, and is the participant's to keep.

The use of the Palm Pilot is to demonstrate to principals and superintendents how such digital tools can help streamline and enhance their management and leadership duties.

The 515, one of Palm's newest models, features:

- \* Color display
- \* 16 MB of memory, with ability to view photos and video clips, send e-mail and read Word, Excel and PowerPoint files.
- \* Expandability including a plug-in multimedia card and expansion cards to instantly add software, memory and backup capabilities.

Palm will include bonus software especially for NY TALKS participants:

- \* **Documents to Go by Data Viz**—Creates and edits Microsoft Word and Excel files,
- \* **PowerOne General Calculator** by Infinity Softworks,
- \* **ThoughtManager** by Hands High—an outlining tool,
- \* **Mobile DB** by HandMark—a database that links to common desktop files,
- \* **Thesaurus/Spellcheck** by DDH Software,
- \* **Pocket CU** by Class-



room Connect—a teaching standards course,  
 \* **PalmReader** by Palm, Inc.—an electronic book reader including *American Schools: The 100 Billion Dollar Challenge*; *12 Valuable Ways to Get the Most from Your Palm-powered Organizer*; and sample study guides.

\* **DropBook** by Palm, Inc.—a utility to make PalmReader eBooks.

For school leaders, the devices will also be loaded with full versions of the following Media-X Systems software:

- \* **eStandards**—a reference tool to quickly access the New York State learning standards, performance indicators and curriculum examples;
- \* **mVal**—performance appraisals to assist with teacher evaluations.
- \* **iNotice**—a tool to help identify student and staff excellence and monitor student behavior.

The Palms will also include demo software of ePrincipal, a school management and scheduling tool, and eTeacher, which assists in standards-based planning, assessment and reporting.

In addition to the Palm Pilots and the training, the Orientation Sessions will feature keynoters Michael Fullan, Alan November and Ian Jukes.

Sessions also include workshops, dialogues and hands-on learning, focusing on creatively funding technology; leading, teaching, and testing technology; student management; and curriculum management software.

NY TALKS attendees will also take part in a series of learning activities coordinated through SED's regional Leadership Academies.

It is not too late to sign up for NY TALKS by visiting [www.nytalks.org](http://www.nytalks.org).

### Council Issues Call for Fall Conference Presentations

The Council is putting out a call for presentations at Fall Conference 2002. Those interested in presenting are asked to send the following information.

- \* Title of presentation
- \* Name(s) of presenter(s)
- \* Brief description of content
- \* Audio-visual needs

Proposals should be sent to NYSCOSS Assistant Director Tina Hogle at [tina@nyscoss.org](mailto:tina@nyscoss.org), fax (518) 426-2229, or mail NYSCOSS, 7 Elk Street, Albany, NY 12207.

Proposals will be reviewed by the conference committee and selections made in late summer.

## New Superintendents Learn the Ropes

### *NYSCOSS, NYSED Prepare Beginning School Leaders*

**N**YSCOSS extends an invitation to superintendents who are new to the position or to New York State to attend the New Superintendents Conference.

Co-sponsored by the New York State Education Department and NYSCOSS, the conference opens Sunday, August 25 at the Crowne Plaza Hotel. The program begins with registration at noon, followed by lunch, presentations, round-table



The New York State Education Department

discussions, a reception and dinner.

On Monday, August 26 the program will resume at the State Education Department with registration at 8:30 a.m. Commissioner Richard P. Mills and Department staff will lead this portion of the program. The program concludes with a luncheon at the University Club.

For more information, please contact the Council offices at (518) 449-1063.

## Dr. David Gee Receives NYSAWA Award

### *Honored for Support of Aspiring Administrators*

**David E. Gee**, District Superintendent of Western Suffolk BOCES, received the Amy Bull Crist Award from the New York State Association for Women in Administration (NYSAWA) at its annual conference in Albany May 6. The award, named after the first female District Superintendent in New York State, is given to a district superintendent

who facilitates the NYSAWA mission.

Dr. Gee is considered a strong mentor who is generous with his education expertise. Past President of NYSCOSS, Dr. Gee is now a member of the Executive Committee of the American Association of School Administrators.

## Beni Receives Award from Lower Hudson Council

### *Distinguished Service to Education Recognized*

**T**he Lower Hudson Council of School Superintendents ended its school year with two special events. **Vincent T. Beni** received the Lower Hudson Council's Distinguished Service Award, given to superintendents who have made outstanding contributions to public education.

At the annual Scholastic Achievement Dinner, 17 scholarships were awarded to students in Dutchess, Putnam, Rockland and Westchester counties.

Thanks to the leadership of Michael J. Orifici, over \$40,000 was raised from corporate sponsors for the scholarships.

## Alliance Acts as Watchdog For Public Retirees

### *Past President Olcott Serves as Council Liaison*

**N**YSCOSS Past President and retired life member **Richard Olcott** continues to serve the Council as liaison to the Alliance of Retired Public Employees.

At its May meeting, the Alliance scrutinized legislation which might affect superintendent retirees or school districts.

### In Memoriam

**John H. Bishop**, a school administrator who retired after 35 years of service, died April 15 in South Carolina.

Condolences may be sent to his wife, Jean Bishop, 400 Lowndes Drive, Spartanburg, SC 29307-2512.

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## Superintendencies

### ADIRONDACK CSD

Charles H. Bohlen, Jr., District Supt. \$88,000-\$100,000  
 Jefferson-Lewis BOCES Enr: 1,693  
 20104 State Route 3 Reply by:  
 Watertown, NY 13601 6/29/02

### EDMESTON CSD

Marie Warchol, District Supt. \$85,000-\$95,000  
 Otsego-Northern Catskills BOCES Enr: 600  
 Frank W. Cyr Center Reply by:  
 Stamford, NY 12167 7/1/02

### FREDONIA CSD

Richard G. Timbs, District Supt. \$115,000-\$125,000  
 Erie 2-Chautauqua-Cattaraugus BOCES Enr: 1,950  
 8685 Erie Road Reply by:  
 Angola, NY 14006 8/9/02

### GALWAY CSD

Gerald Carozza, District Supt. \$110,000-\$120,000  
 Wash.-Saratoga-Warren-Ham.-Essex BOCES Enr: 1,250  
 10 La Crosse Street Reply by:  
 Hudson Falls, NY 12839-1415 8/1/02

### GENESEE VALLEY BOCES

Lorry Whipple Mid \$120,000s  
 Wayne-Finger Lakes BOCES Enr: N/A  
 Eisenhower Building, 131 Drumlin Ct. Reply by:  
 Newark, NY 14513-1862 7/10/02

### GLOVERSVILLE CTIY SD

Geoffrey H. Davis, District Supt. \$100,000  
 Hamilton-Fulton-Montgomery BOCES Enr: 3,144  
 25 West Main Street, Suite One Reply by:  
 Johnstown, NY 12095 7/12/02

### GRAND ISLAND CSD

Vincent Coppola \$115,000-\$125,000  
 Western NY Educational Service Council Enr: 3,200  
 SUNY at Buffalo, Baldy Hall, Room 222 Reply by:  
 Buffalo, NY 14620-1000 8/9/02

### HOLLAND PATENT CSD

William Silky/Suzanne Gilmour \$95,000-\$120,000  
 Castallo & Silky Consultants Enr: 1,900  
 P.O. Box 100 Reply by:  
 Syracuse, NY 13215 5/24/02

### HOPEVALE UFSD

Donald A. Ogilvie, District Supt. \$85,000-\$90,000  
 Erie I BOCES Enr: 130  
 355 Harlem Road Reply by:  
 West Seneca, NY 14224 8/9/02

### MOHAWK CSD

Doug Johnson \$85,000-\$95,000  
 NYS School Boards Association Enr: 1,045  
 24 Central Hill Drive Reply by:  
 Latham, NY 12110 ASAP

### NEWFANE CSD

Mrs. Carole Kolbe, District Clerk \$Competitive  
 Newfane CSD Enr: 2,200  
 6048 Godfrey Road Reply by:  
 Burt, NY 14028 5/28/02

### ONONDAGA-CORTLAND-MADISON BOCES

Alan Pole, District Supt. \$128,625  
 Delaware-Chenango-Mad-Otsego BOCES Enr: N/A  
 6678 County Road 32 Reply by:  
 Norwich, NY 13815-3554 8/9/02

### WAPPINGERS CSD

Mary Grunow \$Competitive  
 Dutchess County BOCES Enr: 12,000  
 5 BOCES Road Reply by:  
 Poughkeepsie, NY 12601 8/1/02



### Out-of-State Opportunities (Contact NYSCOSS For Further Information)

**Superintendent:** Ridgewood SD, Bergen County, IL. Enr: 5,200. By: 7/1/02. \$Highly competitive.

**Superintendent:** Smyth County School Division, Southwestern Virginia. Enr: 5,100. By: 9/24/02. Not less than \$90,000.

**Superintendent:** Milton-Union Exempted Village School District, Milton, OH. Enr: 1,900. By: 6/28/02. \$Negotiable.

**Superintendent:** Chippewa Hills School District, Remus, MI. Enr: 2,554. By: 7/19/02. \$Competitive.

**Superintendent:** Onaway Area Community Schools, Onaway, MI. Enr: 882. By: 6/28/02. Not less than \$80,000.

**Superintendent:** Orchard View Schools, Muskegon, MI. Enr: 2,696. By: 6/26/02. \$Competitive.

## Other NYS Administrative Positions (Contact District For Further Information)

**High School Principal:** Newark CSD. Enr: 900 (HS).  
By: 6/28/02. \$75,000-\$90,000.

**Elementary Principal:** Shenendehowa CSD. Enr: 525.  
By: ASAP. \$Competitive.

**Elementary Principal:** Hunter-Tannersville CSD.  
Enr: 250. By: 8/1/02. \$70,000-\$75,000.

**Assistant Superintendent** for Management Services:  
Otsego-Northern Catskills BOCES. Enr: N/A. By: 7/1/02.  
\$80,000-\$85,000.

**Director of Career and Technical Services:** Orleans-  
Niagara BOCES. Enr: N/A. By: ASAP. \$90,000.

**High School Principal:** Brewster CSD. Enr: 3,555.  
By 6/15/02. \$110,000-\$130,000.

**High School Principal:** Mount Markham CSD.  
Enr: 1,600. By: 7/1/02. \$Competitive.

**Assistant Superintendent** for Administration and  
Personnel: Webster CSD. Enr: N/A. By: 7/8/02.  
\$Competitive.

**Assistant Middle School Principal:** Webster CSD.  
Enr: N/A. By: 7/8/02. \$Per contract.

**Elementary Principal:** Corning-Painted Post CSD.  
Enr: 5,900. Reply by: 8/9/02. \$75,000-\$90,000.

**Assistant Principal, Secondary:** Corning-Painted Post  
CSD. Enr: 5,900. By: 7/19/02. \$65,000-\$80,000.

**Intermediate Principal (4-6):** Union Springs CSD.  
Enr: N/A. By 7/19/02. \$55,000-\$65,000.

**Elementary Principal:** Niskayuna CSD. Enr: 390.  
By: ASAP. \$Based on experience.



## Retirements

**Betsey Hardeman ... Greenburgh-Graham 8/31/02**

**J. Briggs McAndrews ..... Niskayuna CSD 6/30/02**

## Chief School Officer Appointments

**Kevin Baughman ..... Niskayuna CSD 8/1/02**  
*Superintendent of Hudson Falls CSD*

**Glenn R. Bellinger ..... Salmon River CSD 7/1/02**  
*Superintendent of Oppenheim-Ephratah CSD*

**Gary Bixhorn ..... Eastern Suffolk BOCES 7/1/02**  
*Associate Superintendent at the BOCES*

**Vincent Coppola ..... I., Grand Island CSD 7/1/02**

**Terrance Dougherty ..... Hancock CSD 7/1/02**  
*High School Principal at Groton CSD*

**Keith Eddinger ..... Marcus Whitman CSD 7/1/02**  
*Middle School Principal in the district*

**Maureen Goodwin ..... A., Groton CSD 3/25/02**  
*Assistant Superintendent in the district*

**John R. Gratto ..... Ballston Spa CSD 8/1/02**  
*Superintendent of Brittonkill CSD*

**Geoffrey Hicks ..... Sweet Home CSD 7/1/02**  
*Middle School Principal in the district*

**Dennis Johnson ..... Hammond CSD 7/1/02**  
*Principal in Lake Placid CSD*

**Michelle M. Kavanaugh .... Plattsburgh City 7/8/02**  
*Assistant Superintendent in Lockport City*

**Arnold Kaye ..... Whitesboro CSD 7/1/02**  
*Superintendent of Chester CSD*

**Michael C. LaFever ..... South Country CSD 7/1/02**  
*Superintendent at Ellicottville CSD*

**Noel McStay ..... I., East Hampton UFSD 8/1/02**

**Joanne Marien ..... Somers CSD 7/1/02**  
*Assistant Superintendent in the district*

**John G. Metallo ..... Middleburgh CSD 7/1/02**  
*Principal in Albany City School District*

**Mark P. Mondanaro ..... LaFayette CSD 8/1/02**  
*Area I Director of Secondary Education at Syracuse City*

**Robert J. Moorhead ..... I., Mohawk CSD 7/1/02**  
*Also Superintendent at Herkimer CSD*

**Charles Pegan ..... I., Fredonia CSD 7/1/02**

**Mary Alice Price ..... Pittsford CSD 9/1/02**  
*Superintendent of Churchville-Chili CSD*

**Joseph Sever, Jr. .... I., Deposit CSD 5/28/02**

**Ronald L. Smalls ... So. Westchester BOCES 7/1/02**  
*Superintendent at Hawthorne-Cedar Knolls UFSD*

**Charles Strand ..... I., Randolph CSD 7/1/02**  
*Guidance Counselor in the district*

**Cosimo Tangorra .... Oppenheim-Ephratah 7/1/02**  
*Principal in the district*

**Frederick Wille ..... Bloomfield CSD 6/3/02**  
*Assistant Superintendent in Iroquois CSD*

**Mychael Willon ..... Owego Apalachin CSD 7/1/02**  
*From Cherry Hill, NJ*

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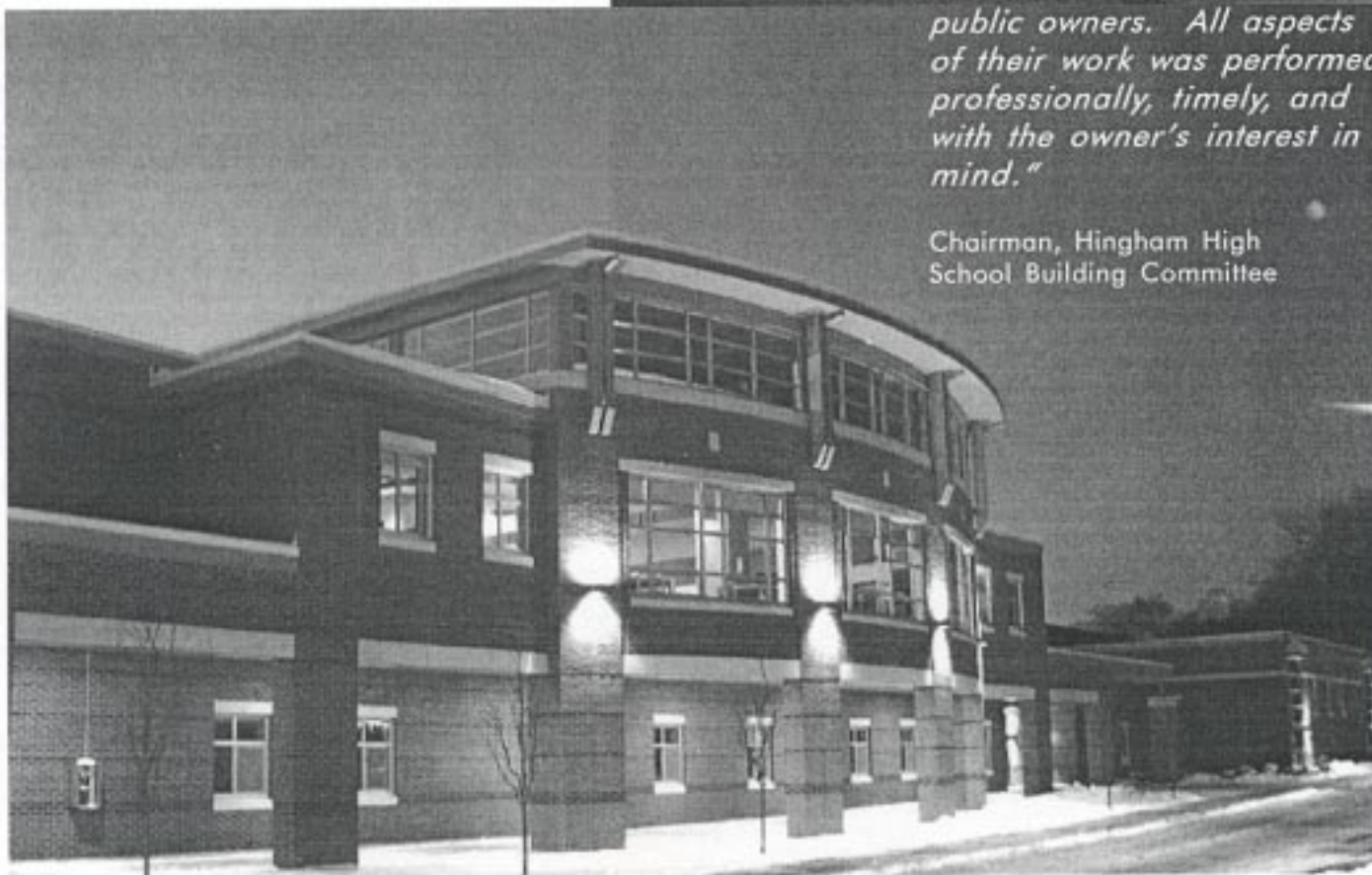
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## IDEA: Poll Shows Powerful Public Backing

### *AASA Finds 60% Would Vote Legislator Out for Non-Support*

**A**ASA is set to release a poll showing that nearly 60% of Americans would be inclined to vote against a Member of Congress who fails to vote for mandatory full funding of IDEA.

A huge 84% do not want to see educational opportunities for non-disabled students denied, because of high-cost special education programs being pitted against funding for the rest of the school budget.

AASA members are urged to lobby their federal legislators during their visits to home districts on weekends throughout the summer. Remind lawmakers of their 27-year-old commitment to fund the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act at 40%, not the current 17% level. Make clear how

this shortfall is causing special education to eat into your regular operating budget, especially in these tight financial times.

AASA has learned GOP leaders in the House may stall action on the IDEA bill, as a way of stopping the mandatory funding. The leaders know the votes exist on the House floor to pass mandatory full funding, so they are attempting to bottle up IDEA in the House Education Committee.

This tactic makes immediate pressure from constituents even more crucial. Members are asked to notify House GOP leaders that they ignore mandatory full IDEA funding at their peril.



## Discover Card Award Winners Announced

### *Scholarship Program Honors Nine New York Juniors*

**N**ine outstanding high school juniors from around New York State were honored with Discover Card Tribute Award Scholarships worth \$2,500 each. The program, a collaborative project of Discover Card and AASA, provides nearly \$1.5 million in scholarships nationwide each year.

New York State winners were selected from a pool of nearly 7,500 applicants. Students must maintain a minimum 2.75 GPA to qualify, and must demonstrate accomplishments in community service, obstacles overcome, leadership or special talents.

New York State winners for 2002 are:

\* Amy Esposito, Mohanasen High School

- \* Claire Friedman, Hunter College High School
- \* Jannatul Ferdous, Frederick Douglass Academy
- \* Michael Moosmueller, Ward Melville High School
- \* Kristen Lewis, Hoosic Valley Junior Senior High School
- \* Gary Novak, Walter Panas High School
- \* Chrystine Kusick, Stillwater High School
- \* Sherri Brown, Commack High School
- \* Erin Rudd, South Jefferson Central

The winners will go on to compete for nine national scholarships of \$25,000. NYSCOSS coordinated the state panel of judges, representing the school and business sectors, as well as the community.



## Council Invites AASA Delegate Applications

### *Members Needed to Help Shape Organization's Advocacy*

**N**YSCOSS members interested in serving on the 2003 AASA Delegate Assembly must apply immediately.

The Assembly meets Thursday, February 20, 2003 in New Orleans, LA. Members discuss and

vote on the organization's agenda of legislative priorities for the upcoming year.

Fax a letter of interest to the Council, (518) 426-2229. Only active AASA members may apply.

## New Education Law Presents Challenges

### *Education Department Fails to Clarify Confusing Provisions*

**T**he No Child Left Behind Act, which Congress and the President enacted earlier this year, creates complex new requirements, which school leaders must implement next fall, but for which there is little guidance at this point from Washington.

AASA says the program's rigid assessment and accountability provisions may have an

immediate impact on the way districts do business. The most pressing matter relates to schools that are designated as "in need of improvement" under the existing Title I program.

If such a school is in its second year of improvement, parents of "eligible" low-income, low-performing children must be given, by the first day of school next fall: the achievement scores of all schools in the district; the number of certified and non-certified teachers, as well as the number of those teaching outside their area of expertise in each school; a list of eligible outside providers of "supplemental services," which the eligible child in an "in need of improvement" school can receive upon request. The providers list will be compiled by your state department.

The law directs districts to use up to 20% of their Title I basic grant money for two activities: transporting these children to the public school of their choice and paying for supplemental services from providers approved by the state. Schools must also divert 10% for professional development "that directly addresses the problems that

led to identification for improvement."

A Supplemental Services Conference conducted by the U.S. Department of Education June 13 raised more questions than it answered and left many participants confused, according to AASA.

Queried about the nuts and bolts of implementing the new program, ED officials repeatedly told participants to keep their questions broad, since the meeting was intended only as an overview.

Education Secretary Rod Paige, traveling with the President May 8, pledged to issue mid-summer guidance, not on assessment and accountability, but on school choice and supplemental services.

"We are going to work as partners with the states and school districts at every step of the implementation process," Secretary Paige said. "We understand that providing choice and supplemental services—including tutoring and after-school help—may present a management challenge for school districts. But these are the children who need it most. They have waited long enough. We can't get hung up on process."

For the latest developments on the new law, go to [www.aasa.org](http://www.aasa.org) and click on the "Issues and Insights" link.



President George W. Bush with Education Secretary Rod Paige

#### **REAP Applications Coming In**

The Education Department reports that about half of the rural districts eligible for Rural Education Achievement Program funds have applied.

Deadline for filing is July 9. Rural districts should apply as soon as possible to avoid being caught in a last-minute stampede.

These funds must be spent on activities that support instruction and/or teacher improvement only. Non-instructional expenditures are strictly prohibited.

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further complaints from test critics, to the effect that the problem is not poor explanation of policy, but bad policy.

The controversy refused to die and legislative hearings were cited as a real possibility, most likely next fall. Assembly Education Committee Chair Steve Sanders said that any hearings would address not just the quality of the tests, but also their effect on students.

On the other hand, during the week of the Regents meetings, *The Princeton Review* released its rankings of state testing programs and placed New York third, only slightly behind North Carolina and Texas. New York received an A on test quality, a B+ on the program's openness to public scrutiny, and B's on alignment to the state's curriculum standards and on overall test/accountability policy.

### **Movement on Middle-Level Education**

**T**he Regents received a report summing up the middle-level education forums conducted by the Department this spring. More than 2,700 people representing over 500 districts participated in the 11 forums. Two themes emerged during discussion at the Regents meeting. First, there is a need to balance academics and "positive youth development" and that the need for emphasis on the latter has probably grown in recent years. Second, implementation of middle-level improvement strategies in the past has been hindered by disparate conceptions of what constitutes the middle-level. Views are likely to vary from district to district based on school-grade configurations.

To SED, "middle-level" means grades 5 through 8 but staff acknowledged that regulations tend to divide the universe between K-6 and 7-12.

As next steps, the Department envisions further information gathering through additional regional meetings and a new state advisory council, identifying demonstration schools, disseminating best practices, promoting interagency collaboration and parent involvement to support youth development and reviewing applicable regulations.

### **Annual Report on the Status of the Schools**

**T**he Regents approved their annual report to the Governor and the Legislature on the status of the schools, commonly known as the "655 report", as it was initiated by Chapter 655 of the Laws of 1987. The report combines a mix of good news that is relatively new and bad news that is regrettably all too familiar.

On the positive side: on four of the five Regents examinations required for high school graduation, substantially more students scored 55 or higher than took the exam in 1996-97; and since 1996 the percentage of high school graduates earning Regents diplomas increased from 40 to 50 percent.

Discouraging, however, are the persistent gaps in achievement between poor and minority children and their more affluent peers and in resources among the schools that serve them.

For example, in middle level math only 23 percent of New York City students met standards compared to 68 percent in the most advantaged districts. The

report notes that, often, gaps in achievement are paralleled by gaps in resources. One third of middle level math teachers in New York City are not certified in math, compared to only five percent in the advantaged districts. Finally, the report observes that gaps also afflict poor rural districts: students in advantaged districts are substantially more likely to perform with distinction on Regents exams, for example.

Public schools are sometimes criticized as unaccountable. It is doubtful, however, that any other enterprise publishes as much data on its successes and shortcomings. The 655 report is just one example. The report is widely distributed. It should be printed and in districts in a month or two.

### **Nominations Sought for Distinguished Service Award**

**N**YSCOSS is calling for nominations for the 2002 Distinguished Service Award, the Council's highest honor.

Nominations should be submitted to Distinguished Service Committee Chairman David E. Gee, District Superintendent of Western Suffolk BOCES.

Members who retired within the past five years are eligible for this prestigious award. Retirement must be before July 1, 2002.

Nominees should have exemplified commitment to education. The Distinguished Service Award will be presented at Fall Conference 2002.

# CALENDAR

## 2002

Harvard Academy  
July 21-24 ..... Cambridge, MA

New Superintendents' Program  
August 25-26..... Albany

Fall Conference  
October 6-8 ..... Rochester

Mid-Winter Conference  
January 12-14 ..... Albany



**Fall Conference Golf Tournament**  
*Saturday, October 5, 2002*  
*Shadow Pines Golf Club*