



# 2013-2014 Annual Letter



**Hope and Transformation:**  
Telling Your District Story Consistently,  
Factually, and Passionately



July 2014

Dear Colleagues,

Thank you for the extraordinary leadership, commitment and passion you bring to your work every day. The children and communities of New York State are fortunate to have you as their advocate, bringing a message of hope for every child.

Every year the complexity of the challenges of your work seem to compound. In her inaugural message last fall, Council President Mary Beth Fiore, Elmira Heights, referenced several of these challenges: the new assessment system, political rhetoric assailing the integrity of public education and resources being diminished at a time when we need them more than ever. She proceeded to state:

**“The leadership and courage of superintendents across this state, above all else, will serve as a beacon of hope and will fortify and shape our tomorrow as we transform our educational practices and create opportunities for deeper and more meaningful learning.”**

Superintendents must continue to be that beacon of hope for our children. Think about it – if not us then who? Who will be champions for our kids? Who will provide stewardship for our public schools?

All one has to do is pause and take inventory: our state and national leaders are eroding the local democratic process by both their actions and inactions. Political leaders chide public education in New York State for being too costly and underachieving, yet they continually refuse to provide meaningful mandate relief or change laws that are not aligned to the Reform, and they saddle local school districts with huge, non-negotiable financial obligations and/or processes. The result of this inaction has been the loss of tens of thousands of jobs, loss of countless educational opportunities for children, unprecedented cost-shifting to local communities, and archaic laws and regulations which inhibit true reform.

**“This is a high courage moment for all of us. We must tell our story consistently, factually, passionately, and respectfully.”**

**How will you share your story?**

On a personal note, it is difficult to recall from my more than four decades of experience in public education a time when I have been more frustrated and angered by the political process. As a school superintendent, I spent over three decades providing support for children at the highest level possible while advocating for the resources necessary to ensure that principals and teachers had what they needed to deliver that support.

In the latter part of my career, I felt like all we had built was being dismantled brick by brick. I was following the rules, balancing the needs of our children with community expectations and their ability to support a reasonable budget; all while responding to the State Education Department initiatives/unfunded mandates, trying to make the necessary systemic change in my school district, doing so without significant mandate or regulatory relief. The idea that public schools can continue to survive and

provide all children in New York State with an appropriate level of education under these circumstances is delusional.

Our message is a simple one – fund your laws or change your laws. Provide public schools with the appropriate resources and flexibility required and needed to support and educate every child regardless of zip code. Total formula state aid to public school districts for 2013-2014 is still below 2008-2009 levels.

It is also hard to accept that at a time when state government claims budget surpluses are on the horizon, it has yet to restore over \$1 billion taken from school districts during the recession through the Gap Elimination Adjustment and remains far behind in phasing in Foundation Aid. Restoring these funds to our students and their schools should have been made a higher priority in the budget. It was not, and our students will continue to suffer the consequences.

We are grateful to the Assembly and Senate for their efforts to increase state aid to public schools in the new state budget. The \$1.1 billion increase in regular School Aid exceeds what either house put forward in their individual budget plans.

Beyond financial issues, controversies over state education reforms have produced an unprecedented level of discord in our schools, which has been well documented.

Examining recent political action raises even greater concerns and challenges for school leaders. School districts have the most transparent and democratic budgeting process of any public entity in New York State. The process includes public hearings and a public vote. Many districts go well beyond the legal requirements by involving community members and staff in the development process.

Throughout the years, school superintendents and school boards have consciously balanced the needs of their school system with the ability of their taxpayers to support schools. As evidenced by the fact that over the past five years, school districts have held spending increases to an average of two percent per year in budgets they asked voters to approve. This was achieved in spite of implementing two monumental state initiatives at once; Common Core learning standards and a new educator evaluation procedure. In addition to absorbing ongoing increases in health insurance, state teacher retirement system contributions, fuel costs, et cetera; the cost of doing business continues to rise.



As communities strive to provide children with the best education possible, our state continues to impose their will on local communities not trusting, or at the very least not believing, that local communities have the ability to govern, make tough choices, or self-regulate.

Two years ago, the tax cap was introduced and its supporters pledged significant mandate relief. Some original proponents acknowledged that the cap could not work without meaningful mandate relief. To this day, the mandate relief pledge remains unfulfilled. As a result, many districts throughout the state are being suffocated fiscally. School district voters can no longer control their own destiny. Even those communities that have traditionally sought to self-fund good schools are no longer able to provide adequate resources, even if a majority of the community agrees.

Supporters of the tax cap would argue there is an override process requiring a 60 percent majority. I would argue the override provision is undemocratic, violating the one man, one vote premise. Should a no vote outweigh a yes vote?

Other tax cap supporters would compare New York to Massachusetts. This is not an apple to apple comparison. School districts in Massachusetts are able to increase their budgets by 2.5 percent annually without a public vote.

For these reasons and more, you must keep telling your stories to lawmakers. Since they have chosen to shrink local control by imposing their will on local government without the requisite mandate relief, they are now more accountable than ever for what is happening to our schools. As superintendent, you are publically held accountable for your actions, or inactions, every day. Our policy makers must likewise be held accountable for their actions and inactions.

**This is a high courage moment for all of us. We must tell our story consistently, factually, passionately, and respectfully.**

**We must keep the hope alive and we must do everything within our power to keep that hope burning bright for every child.**

### **Council Collaborations; Working Together to Tell Our Story**

The challenges facing public education are enormous and cannot be overcome by an individual or organization working alone. Today more than ever, we need the strength of each member working together and wherever possible we must find common ground with our fellow state education organizations.

The Educational Conference Board (ECB) has had a rebirth under the leadership of retired school superintendent John Yagielski. John has brought focus and purpose to our work. Together we have crafted unified position papers on the Common Core, Tax Freeze, and Financing Public Education in New York State. In addition, we have held press conferences and editorial board meetings advancing our positions.

The strength of unity among THE COUNCIL and our allies is an integral part of advancing public education policy in the state. Our combined strengths and access points have helped to make us a considerable political force for New York's schools. In addition, unity with other statewide groups staves off attempts to divide the educational community on key policy issues, making our efforts that much more powerful.

### **Envisioning Paper Provides Strong Statement of Hope for Public Education**

Thank you to the many members who committed their time and contributed to the envisioning paper over the past two years. A special thanks to Jere Hochman, Bedford, for his dedication to the project and chairing the effort. The Envisioning document represents a strong statement on behalf of public education providing us with strong principles to guide our mission as leaders and stewards of public education.



...CONSISTENTLY

# ...PASSIONATELY

The following excerpt addresses the question – Why now?

The goal of the Regents' Reform Agenda – improve learning for all students in New York State - has strong support in the education community. In October 2013, the New York State Education Conference Board (ECB) reaffirmed this support in a document titled *Common Ground for the Common Core: Let's Get it Right – Move the Common Core Back on Track*.

Although the goal has been embraced by many educators, the rushed and problematic implementation of the reform has contributed significantly to the emotional tide of discontent sweeping New York State.

Superintendents bring urgency to the implementation of educational reform every day in every corner of the state. However, we know that urgency does not absolve us from approaching the challenge in a systemic way. Quick fixes which only address today's issues will not last; whereas systems developed from research with a focus on identifying the root cause of problems will.

This call to action emphasizes a systemic approach, the removal of artificial barriers to success, and presents a vision for public education every child deserves.

We must reclaim our obligation to every child, to society, and to the future.

## The Story of State Aid and the New York State Budget

This year was very different from past years. A late surge in advocacy by many people and many groups won a larger than expected increase in state school aid – an amount \$100 million greater than either house of the Legislature had proposed individually, and \$500 million greater than the Governor's original proposal. But the route to that result was abnormally tortuous.

Governor Andrew Cuomo's first year in office was marked by turmoil: he was obliged to close an inherited \$10 billion state budget deficit. He won approval of an onerous property tax cap and distracted attention from the harm of his school finance proposals by attacking superintendent compensation. But over the two years that followed, he wrestled honestly with many of the state's problems. For example: he won a tax reform package that generated revenue which enabled increases in School Aid; he proposed School Aid increases greater than a growth cap he had championed; he gained adoption of a "Tier VI" pension reform that will deliver long-term cost relief to school and municipalities; and he proposed a mechanism to enable those entities to achieve shorter-term relief from pension costs.



With that backdrop, the Governor's choices in 2014 were a disappointment. Despite emerging state surpluses, he proposed a Gap Elimination Adjustment reduction so limited it would have set a pace to keep that aid penalty going for at least five more years. In budget negotiations, he signaled support for charter school funding and private school tax credits. He proposed compounding the onerous impact of the tax cap by offering election season rebate checks to voters – if school districts stayed within their tax cap. While doing this, he maintained a steady rhetoric against the inefficiencies of the “education establishment.”

These actions speak more of a short-term focus on electoral politics than concern for the long-term welfare of public schools we witnessed in the two years prior.

The emergence of greater attentiveness to private school and charter school financing was a new twist in the 2014-2015 state budget cycle. Commitments to those priorities, combined with promises of funding universal full-day prekindergarten in New York City, would threaten the state's capacity to adequately fund regular School Aid.

...THOUGHTFULLY

Because of the initial neglect of public school concerns, this year brought about more consternation than in past state budget fights. Schools were feeling the squeeze effect of five straight years of the GEA and the third year of the property tax cap. This left many superintendents with no choice but to propose cutting essential educational programs, teaching positions, and vital student services. Superintendents simply had to say “Enough!”

And so we did, and so did many allies, and the result was far better than where we started.

An added wrinkle to increasing state aid was the considerable number of education policy initiatives negotiated within the budget. This year's budget process brought us a new property tax “freeze” which will further enhance the property tax cap and force districts to find greater shared services, a \$2 billion education technology bond act that was not requested by any educational entity, a universal prekindergarten program that seems structured to discourage universal participation by districts, revisions to state standardized testing requirements, restrictions on the use and storage of student data, and even a new member of the Board of Regents.

Many of these actions, while not ill-intended or particularly poor ideas, would have benefited from far greater debate and development. We were forced to weigh in on these issues in the context of meeting our members' financial needs. Some of these actions will likely need to be revisited. Worth touting, our biggest victory this year as an organization was a \$1.1 billion dollar increase in state aid to school districts, including \$600 million in reduction to the GEA. This is especially notable in the face of much smaller initial proposals by the Governor, Assembly and Senate. It took a considerable amount of demonstrated outrage by our Advocacy team, our members and our allies to accomplish this, but we believe our collective actions had a profound positive impact on the budgets of countless districts.

Despite this year's larger than expected aid increase and the more positive economic outlook, we know our members are still suffering the effects of the GEA, rising mandate costs, and increased regulatory demands. As our annual financial survey report found, we are still *Not Out of The Woods*. Communicating this has been the dominant focus of our advocacy for the past year, and will continue.

## Regents Reform Measures

Another advocacy issue that we found ourselves embroiled in last year was the popular outrage over the standardized testing, teacher evaluations, Common Core learning modules, and student data privacy. Any person who picked up a newspaper in the last year was exposed to the conflict surrounding these topics.

We testified before the New York State Senate and Assembly Education Committees in the fall regarding all of these issues. We advised that an overwhelming majority of superintendents believe the Common Core Learning Standards will improve the quality of education in their schools and that many see the new Annual Professional Performance Review requirements as improving classroom observations. We stressed, however, that rushed implementation of both initiatives contributed to an unprecedented level of discord over state education policy. We called for the state to defer any major new initiatives to enable districts to refine implementation of what is already required. We asked for a “roadmap” to assist schools in planning for changes in state policies and recommended steps to reduce the tension over testing, including shortening state assessments, disclosing more test questions, and reducing APPR-driven testing. We also offered recommendations to strengthen protection of student privacy while protecting the ability to maintain data uses that both schools and families rely on and that have operated without controversy for years.

In January, Council staff and approximately 30 superintendents from across the state met with the Board of Regents. This meeting was requested by Chancellor Merryl H. Tisch after a discussion related to reform implementation. The meeting allowed an opportunity for those superintendents present to tell their story and describe directly to members of the Board the challenges they face and concerns related to implementation.

The Education Committee Chairs, Senator John Flanagan and Assemblymember Catherine Nolan took our concerns to heart when coming to agreements with the Governor in the budget. They did not restrict district use of student data in longstanding practices and they did not interject into district instruction; Senator Flanagan even gave credit to the Educational Conference Board (the organization of seven major statewide education organizations, including THE COUNCIL) in his report on these issues.

In February, THE COUNCIL joined with other statewide groups to testify before the Governor’s Common Core Implementation Panel, which also included a superintendent. The results of the Panel’s report were ultimately very similar to legislation put forth by the Senate and Assembly and addressed concerns expressed by THE COUNCIL.

Further, THE COUNCIL also weighed in to the Regents Reform Work Group in February, during their review of steps that could be taken to alleviate pressure on districts in implementing the measures SED had put forth. Our comments to the Regents Work Group resulted in several actions which will assist superintendents in their administration of these SED programs, namely the release of significantly more test questions, a commitment to providing greater understanding of the standards to educators and parents, and reducing the focus on testing in favor of increasing focus on instruction.

While the Legislature and the Governor ultimately codified their own version of education reform measures, many of the steps they chose to take (and those they chose not to) were driven in part by the efforts of THE COUNCIL both directly and via our work at the administrative level.



## Council Legal Services Support Superintendents

THE COUNCIL also played an active role in providing effective legal representation for superintendent leaders. In-house legal services are provided directly from THE COUNCIL and are considered the “first level.” These services include, but are not limited to, contract reviews and renewals, contract negotiations, general questions and retirement issues.

We represent new superintendents even before they join THE COUNCIL as members. We offer a model contract that serves as a base for negotiating new agreements or a way to evaluate a current contract. The model contract was revised and updated last year to reflect the changing economic times and changes in the law. We also have a model interim contract for superintendents who work on a per diem or short-term basis.

We also offer Level II Legal Services which provides direct legal representation in litigation or legal proceedings. In addition, subscribers to Level II Legal Services receive an enhanced retirement benefit including a consultation with a financial planner and quarterly newsletters regarding retirement and financial planning issues.

Beyond representation, our legal service department prepares legal publications and articles to update superintendents on the latest court cases and regulatory changes, including monthly articles prepared for our *Councilgram* newsletter. We also hold legal briefing workshops that provide timely and valuable legal information to members.

Our General Counsel evaluates legal issues for individual superintendents. In addition, our General Counsel evaluates legal issues and takes appropriate steps when a particular issue also has greater application to the superintendency.

This year, we are offering our Legal Briefings in at least four locations across the state. We will also continue to host legal featured presentations, skill building and Sunrise Café discussions at both our Fall Leadership Summit and Winter Institute.

Finally, in connection with our Evaluation Work Group, we have led a year long process to create a new Model Superintendents’ Evaluation. The focus of the process is to create a document that is less burdensome and more reflective of the current climate regarding evaluations. We look forward to presenting the Model Superintendents’ Evaluation next year.

## Leadership for Educational Achievement Foundation, Inc. Brings High Quality Professional Learning

LEAF, Inc. provides high quality professional learning, in partnership with THE COUNCIL, to support superintendent development and the development of school district leadership team members. By offering programs that are cost-effective, research-based and responsive to changing expectations for school leaders, the Foundation has established a solid reputation among professional development providers in the field of educational leadership.

When LEAF was incorporated in 2006, school leadership development traditionally focused on the superintendency, as did LEAF’s program offerings for aspiring, new and veteran superintendents. In the wake of changing accountability measures and constant reform initiatives, a well-trained, high-caliber leadership team is essential in supporting the superintendent in the district. LEAF has evolved with and in response to this leadership model by offering programs to support assistant superintendents, district directors and building-level administrators. Most recently, LEAF has begun offering consulting services, working directly with superintendents or other school leaders to provide experts to meet specific needs.

The LEAF Board clearly defined Core Values for the Foundation at their Retreat in July 2013. We are mindful of these as we implement professional development across New York State.

### Core Values

- Offer professional development and services that add value to the work of educational leaders and district teams that ultimately impact student success.
- Offer opportunities that are researched-based, responsive to changes in expectations, timely, relevant, and affordable.
- Remain cognizant of trends in education and offer opportunities on emergent and critical topics and issues as identified at the local, state and national level.
- Promote the development of problem-solving skills and adaptability to help our members respond to the ever changing issues and expectations.



In an effort to offer professional development that impacts student success, LEAF, Inc. worked with the School Administrators Association of NYS and New York State United Teachers (NYSUT) Learning Trust to implement three, one-day workshops across New York State on Common Core for district teams. In addition, we worked with six BOCES across the state to provide a second year of the Supporting and Sustaining Instructional Leadership program which focused on how to continue to implement the annual professional performance review (APPR) and to work more effectively with school principals as instructional leaders. We offered the *LEAF Subscription Service* for a second year; a vehicle to support superintendents interested in providing opportunities for the ongoing development of their leadership teams.

The LEAF Board of Directors believes it is equally important to support our early career and Cabinet members. We have continued to strengthen our program offerings through the Future Superintendents Academy, the Institutes for New Superintendents and those in their second and third year. We also continue to offer pre-conferences and an annual spring conference with our Cabinet members in mind.

LEAF also developed partnerships with other organizations so that we can reach a greater audience and provide the necessary support to educators.



On April 29-30, 2014, there was a full crowd in attendance for the *Leading and Learning: Rigor and Relevance for All*, jointly presented by LEAF and Learning Forward New York. Over 130 participants heard from speakers such as Dr. John Cronin from the Kingsbury Center; Jim Warford from the International Center for Leadership in Education; and from national speaker, Dr. Harvey Silver. One of the highlights of the event, however, was the panel of three superintendents who provided their perspectives and reflections on Common Core implementation.

LEAF, Inc. has also been working for several months with PLS 3rd Learning as we begin to implement on-line professional development for our members. In spring 2014, LEAF went on-line with the *LEAF Institute for Blended and Online Learning* which was designed to prepare and support district leaders and teachers in the successful delivery of new online learning modalities in K-12 settings. To learn more about the Leaf Institute for Blended and Online Learning, visit [LEAFInstitute.org](http://LEAFInstitute.org).

LEAF will continue to adapt to the changing education environment by providing resources and programs for school leaders to develop the leadership skills necessary to serve New York's school children.

### **Conference Program Changes Improve Members' Experience**

Continuous improvement is a way of life at THE COUNCIL. We want our members to engage with us so we can make a positive difference in their professional lives. Our conferences have been designed to offer professional development, emphasize the "Community of Superintendents," build leadership capacity and convey essential information. One tool that we use to ask members' opinions is through online surveys for feedback on professional development ideas, membership services, technology choices and financial solvency.

After every Winter Institute and Fall Leadership Summit, we also survey members for their opinion about what they liked and didn't like and ideas for improvement allowing us to make appropriate changes to design, registration fees and content of each event.

This past year we moved the Winter Institute to downtown Albany so members could connect with legislative members and state education department leaders, attend the conference, and participate in lobby day easily. Positive feedback resulted in THE COUNCIL again hosting our Winter Institute in downtown Albany until 2017. The 2015 Winter Institute and Lobby Day is scheduled for March 8-10, 2015 at the Hilton Albany.

For the 2014-2015 conference years, we are also instituting several changes that were recommended and voted on by the membership and approved by the Executive Committee.

We are incorporating a new conference committee that will be chaired each year by the President-Elect. This coming year that chairperson is Maureen Donahue from Southwestern. The committee met at the Summer Leadership Retreat in July, and will look for volunteers from our general membership, and possibly strategic partners, once a structure and goals are developed. Current committee members include volunteers from our House of Delegates.

We have also moved both the Fall Leadership Summit and Winter Institute under the direction of the Leadership for Educational Achievement Foundation, Inc. so that all professional development follows LEAF, Inc. guidelines to ensure quality programming and includes financial savings for our organization.

In addition, members will no longer have to pay meal packages through hotel room costs, resulting in a lower total cost of hotel rooms each night. These food fees will be incorporated into registration fees at a lower rate. The Executive Committee also approved a new cancellation policy to ensure that all members are treated fairly and to offset expenses incurred by THE COUNCIL and LEAF, Inc. on your behalf.

Make sure to join us for the 2014 Fall Leadership Summit *Leading Transformative Education: Blended Learning with the Common Core* hosted at The Saratoga Hilton and the Saratoga Springs City Center from September 21 - 23, 2014 in Saratoga Springs, NY. Keynote Speakers include: John Couch, Vice President of Education, Apple, Inc; Education Commissioner Dr. John B. King, Jr.; and Steve Barkley, Education Consultant and Vice President, 3rd Learning.

### **Specialty Partnerships Add Value for Members and The Council**

Conferences also play an important role with the revenue stream that supports THE COUNCIL and LEAF, Inc.'s programs and services. They allow our Strategic Partners to access broader audiences and ensure that the marketing opportunities selected by sponsors justify their substantial investments. Specialty partnerships, a unique part of the strategic partnership program, also provide new opportunities and add value to our members.

THE COUNCIL, along with the New York State School Business Officials (NYSASBO), developed a partnership with Forecast5 in 2013-2014 to bring data analytics and business intelligence technology to New York school district administrators. Forecast5 uses public data sources to provide powerful analytic tools that help New York State school superintendents gain insight and drive key financial and strategic decisions. The Forecast5 platform includes cloud-based business intelligence software, interactive visuals and a collaborative analytics engine.

Forecast5 launched 5Sight during the 2013 Fall Leadership Summit and launched 5Share, a unique business collaboration platform, to New York school superintendents at the 2014 Winter Institute.

Members also heard from Eleanor Smalley, Chief Operating Officer of JASON Learning, and keynote speaker Dr. Bob Ballard at our 2014 Winter Institute announcing a formalized strategic partnership with THE COUNCIL and several BOCES across the state. Through this alliance, a substantial discount is available for every district in New York. Any interested district may purchase access to JASON's online platform, which houses six robust STEM curricula at a discounted rate. Nassau and Monroe #1 BOCES provided JASON's professional development sessions this past spring.

You can learn more about these two innovative partnerships at [www.nyscoss.org](http://www.nyscoss.org).



## Technology Increases Opportunities for Members

Part of THE COUNCIL's long term plan is to maximize the use of technology in all Council operations and services to improve member support, communication and internal operations.

This past year we introduced a mobile app at all three conferences to give members access to conference scheduling, speaker information, presentation materials, exhibit hall contacts, and up-to-the-minute alerts.

THE COUNCIL's Career Center was also created as an online resource for members to make employment connections nationwide and provide a learning center where individuals can post resumes and access career development videos. The career center now has over 100 resumes of persons seeking new positions; a complimentary service for members. This year alone, the Career Center has listed over 125 educational positions that were available in New York State along with many others across the country.

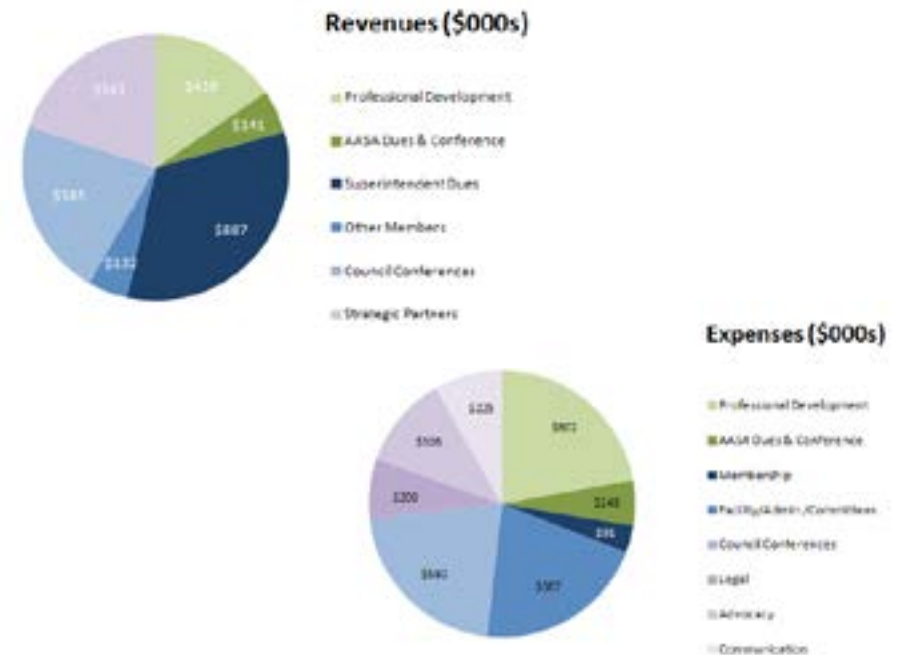
We also launched our new listserv tool that organizes Council updates and articles more effectively. This new tool is consistent with Council and LEAF, Inc. branding and helps us provide information to members more pointedly and effectively.

The Executive Committee, in an effort to maximize technology, also approved the development of a new cloud-based database tool to manage THE COUNCIL and LEAF, Inc. purchasing websites and member information. This tool will also create a private place where committees and members can work with another.

## Financial Progress Matches Changes in Council/LEAF Operations

Five years ago, THE COUNCIL was given policy direction through a strategic business plan that contained a number of ideas for the future. These ideas included reinforcing the value in Council membership, identifying and pursuing new revenues, and continuing cost containment strategies, among several other items. Those ideas have been carried forward today.

First, we continue to add value for our members through improved technology. As shared above, we offered online membership renewal, conference apps, improved online program registration, and an online career center. In the coming months, the new online social community and listserv will also give members engagement opportunities in a secure online environment. The new database software is less expensive to operate and will provide advanced options to manage the ever changing technology landscape.



THE COUNCIL also continues to pursue an aggressive cost containment agenda and be creative in our search for new revenue sources. By partnering with Forecast5 and JASON Learning, THE COUNCIL has been able to diversify revenue streams; since we receive a small percentage of income from each partnership.

We also monitor and trim costs in daily business transactions where needed. All of these factors have contributed to THE COUNCIL and LEAF, Inc. being able to end the year with a combined profit, assuming the auditors concur with our actions. THE COUNCIL and LEAF, Inc. have presented a balanced 2014-2015 budget and we will continue to explore opportunities to expand our membership services while reducing our costs overall.

## Conclusion

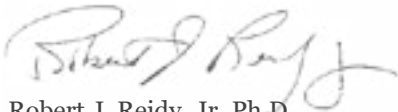
This insight contained in our envisioning report embodies what it means to be a superintendent in New York State in 2014: challenges abound; every year seems more difficult than the last; we are truly being asked every day to do more with less, and to provide a world class education to our students no matter our limited resources.

**We meet these challenges, moving forward and providing exemplary leadership along the way. It is up to us, the education leaders of the state, to resolve the mess, to truly lead.**

While we face unprecedented obstacles, we are facing them head-on. Individually and collectively, we are working to force change on the system and hold our officials to the execution of their duties, as we are held to ours. As leaders, we know it is up to us to demand the system our students, teachers, and communities deserve.

Thank you for all that you do for the children of New York State.

Sincerely,



Robert J. Reidy, Jr., Ph.D.  
Executive Director

## ANNUAL AWARDS

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### 2013 Distinguished Service Award

The Distinguished Service Award is given in recognition of that one individual who has shown exemplary commitment to public education. Retired Life Member Alan D. Pole, former District Superintendent from the Delaware-Chenango-Madison-Oneida BOCES received THE COUNCIL'S highest honor for his exemplary standards of educational service and leadership. The 2013 Distinguished Services Award was sponsored by Signature Partner New York Schools Insurance Reciprocal (NYSIR).

### 2014 New York Superintendent of the Year Award

The 2014 New York State Superintendent of the Year was presented to Clark J. Godshall, District Superintendent of the Orleans/Niagara Board of Cooperative Education Services (BOCES) at the 2014 Winter Institute. Dr. Godshall was also eligible to compete for the National Superintendent of the Year, presented by the American Association of School Administrators (AASA) at their annual conference in February. The award pays tribute to the talent and vision of the men and women who lead our nation's public schools.

### 2014 Friend of The Council Award

New York Schools Insurance Reciprocal, a Signature Partner of THE COUNCIL was selected to receive the 2014 Friend of THE COUNCIL for their unrelenting and conscientious service to the superintendents in their regions and to the assistance and expertise they provide to THE COUNCIL. This award is given every year in recognition of a non-member's contribution to THE COUNCIL and in the field of education. The 2014 Friend of THE COUNCIL award was presented at this year's Winter Institute.

### 2014 Appreciation Awards

We recognized Michael Ford, Superintendent, Phelps-Clifton Springs with the 2014 Appreciation Award in recognition of his efforts on behalf of our organization and its initiatives. The 2014 award was presented at our Winter Institute and sponsored by Premier Silver Partner BCK - IBI Group.

## STRATEGIC PARTNERS 2013–2014

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**The New York State Council of School Superintendents recognizes the following organizations for their support of The Council, our mission and our members:**

### Signature Partners

ECG Engineering, PC  
Ferrara, Fiorenza, Larrison, Barrett & Reitz, P.C.  
*K12 Insight*  
New York Schools Insurance Reciprocal (*NYSIR*)  
Northwest Evaluation Association (NWEA)  
NYLearns/PLS 3rd Learning  
Teq

### Premier Diamond Partners

Ashley McGraw Architects, D.P.C.  
C&S Companies  
Campus Construction Management Group, Inc.  
Core BTS, Inc.  
CSArch Architecture/Engineering/Construction Management  
HUNT Engineers, Architects, & Land Surveyors, PC  
Mosaic Associates Architects  
The Pike Company  
Planning Matters LLC  
SEI Design Group  
Siemens Industry., Building Technologies Division  
Tetra Tech Architects & Engineers  
Turner Construction Company  
Utica National Insurance Group

### Premier Platinum Partners

Cannon Design  
VALIC

## STRATEGIC PARTNERS 2013–2014

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### Premier Gold Partners

Ameresco Inc.  
Apple Inc.  
Centris Group (IEP Direct/RTIm Direct)  
Clark Patterson Lee  
Hawkins Delafield & Wood, LLP  
Leonard Bus Sales, Inc.  
Microsoft Corporation  
My Learning Plan Inc.  
New York State  
Financial Planning Network  
Pupil Benefits Plan, Inc.  
Renaissance Learning  
Teachscape  
Welliver McGuire Inc.

### Premier Silver Partners

ACHIEVE3000  
Advanced Academics  
AXA Advisors  
BCK-IBI Group  
Bernard P. Donegan, Inc.  
Bernier, Carr & Associates  
Bold Systems, LLC  
ClearTrack 200/RTI Edge  
College Board  
CompassLearning  
Discovery Education  
EagleView Technologies  
Engrade, Inc.  
eSchoolData, LLC

eSpark Learning  
Finger Lakes Technologies Group, Inc.  
The Futures HealthCore and Futures Education  
Global Connect  
Goldstein, Ackerhalt & Pletcher, LLP  
Harris Beach, PLLC  
Harter Secrest & Emery LLP  
Infinite Campus/Custom Computer Specialists, Inc.  
IntraLogic Solutions  
Kideney Architects, P.C.  
King + King Architects LLP  
LaBella Associates, P.C.  
Lend Lease (US) Construction Inc.  
Math and Movement  
Michael Schilale Architects, LLP  
Mind Research Institute  
Observer Tab, LLC  
Right Reason Technologies  
Rowland Reading Foundation  
School Aid Specialists, LLC  
school**tool**/Mindex Technologies, Inc.  
Scientific Learning Corporation  
SPIRAL International  
SWBR Architects  
Synthesis Architects, LLP  
Triton Construction Company LLC  
Verizon Wireless  
Wendel  
William Taylor Architects, PLLC  
Young + Wright Architectural

## 2013–2014 OFFICERS



Mary Beth R. Fiore  
President  
*Elmira Heights*



Neil F. O'Brien  
President-Elect  
*Port Byron*



Maureen E. Donahue  
Vice President  
*Southwestern*



Patricia Sullivan-Kriss  
Treasurer  
*Hauppauge*



James T. Langlois  
Past President  
*Putnam-No.  
Westchester BOCES*



Robert J. Reidy, Jr.  
Executive Director

## Executive Committee



Daniel T. Connor  
*Goshen (2015)*



Corliss C. Kaiser  
*Fayetteville-Manlius  
(2015)*



Sharon L. Contreras  
*Syracuse (2014)*



Lorna R. Lewis  
*Plainview-Old  
Bethpage (2015)*



Laura Feijoo  
*NYC Dept of  
Education (2014)*



Ralph Marino, Jr.  
*Horseheads (2015)*



Douglas W. Huntley  
*Queensbury (2014)*



Cosimo Tangorra, Jr.  
*Central Valley (2015)*

## HOUSE OF DELEGATES 2013–2014

The House of Delegates (HOD) is the policy making body of THE COUNCIL and consists of 58 active superintendents of school districts. Membership consists of THE COUNCIL'S Executive Committee, delegates elected from each of the BOCES geographical units, plus one delegate from each of the big five cities.

The HOD meets three times per Council year and holds its regular meetings at the Fall Leadership Summit, the Winter Institute and in the spring.

### Broome-Delaware-Tioga

Jason A. Andrews  
*Windsor*

### Capital Region

Jonathan W. Buhner  
*South Colonie*  
Lynn A. Macan  
*Cobleskill-Richmondville*

### Cattaraugus-Allegany-Erie-Wyoming

Kimberly A. Mueller  
*Wellsville*  
Colleen M. Taggerty  
*Olean City SD*

### Cayuga-Onondaga

Michelle L. Brantner  
*Moravia*

### Champlain Valley

Bonnie Finnerty  
*Schroon Lake*

### Delaware-Chenango-Madison-Otsego

Richard Hughes  
*Otselic Valley CSD*

### Dutchess

Greer Rychcik  
*Hyde Park*

### Eastern Suffolk

Lois R. Favre  
*Bridgehampton*  
Charles Russo  
*East Moriches UFSD*  
Susan A. Schnebel  
*Islip UFSD*

### Erie 1

Laura Chabe  
*Amherst*  
Jeffrey Rabey  
*Depew*

### Erie 2-Chautauqua-Cattaraugus

James E. Przepasniak  
*Lake Shore*  
Benjamin B. Spitzer  
*Chautauqua Lake*

### Franklin-Essex-Hamilton

Jane A. Collins  
*Salmon River*

### Genesee Valley

Christopher Dailey  
*Batavia City*  
Michael Wetherbee  
*Wayland-Cohocton CSD*

### Greater Southern Tier

James Frame  
*Odessa-Montour*  
Chad Groff  
*Jasper-Troupsburg*

### Hamilton-Fulton-Montgomery

Michael Vanyo  
*Gloversville City*

### Herkimer-Fulton-Hamilton-Otsego

John W. Banek  
*West Canada Valley*

### Jefferson-Lewis

Douglas Premo  
*South Lewis CSD*

### Madison-Oneida

Martha K. Group  
*Vernon-Verona-Sherrill*

### Monroe 1

Kevin C. McGowan  
*Brighton CSD*

## HOUSE OF DELEGATES 2013–2014

### Monroe 2-Orleans

Lesli Myers  
*Brockport*

### Nassau

Maureen Bright  
*Hicksville UFSD*  
David S. Feller  
*North Merrick UFSD*  
Phyllis Harrington  
*Oyster Bay-  
E. Norwich UFSD*

### Oneida-Herkimer- Madison

Matthew Reilly  
*Clinton*

### Onondaga- Cortland-Madison

Nancy S. Ruscio  
*Homer*  
Craig J. Tice  
*Marcellus*

### Orange-Ulster

Daniel T. Connor  
*Goshen CSD*

### Orleans-Niagara

Roger J. Klatt  
*Barker CSD*

### Oswego

Robert Pritchard  
*Mexico CSD*

### Otsego-Northern Catskill

Peter N. Livshin  
*Milford CSD*

### Putnam/ N. Westchester

Thomas J. Manko  
*Mahopac CSD*

### Questar III

Cheryl Nuciforo  
*Chatham*

Randall Squier  
*Coxsackie-Athens*

### Rockland

Kenneth Mitchell  
*South Orangetown*

### Southern Westchester

Christopher Clouet  
*White Plains City SD*  
Brenda W. Myers  
*Valhalla UFSD*

### St. Lawrence-Lewis

Susan E. Todd  
*Heuvelton CSD*

### Sullivan County

Deborah L. Fox  
*Livingston Manor*

### Tompkins- Seneca-Tioga

James Abrams  
*Groton*

### Ulster

TBA

### Washington- Saratoga-Warren- Hamilton-Essex

Patrick Dee  
*Lake George*

Michael N. Patton  
*South Glens Falls*

### Wayne-Finger Lakes

David G. Sholes  
*Red Creek CSD*

Dawn A.  
Santiago-Marullo  
*Victor*

### Western Suffolk

Patricia E. Godek  
*North Babylon*

### Big 5 School Districts

Pamela Brown  
*Buffalo City*  
Sharon Contreras  
*Syracuse City SD*  
Dolores Esposito  
*NYC Department  
of Education*

Bernard Pierorazio  
*Yonkers City SD*

Bolgen Vargas  
*Rochester City SD*

## 2013–2014 COMMISSIONER'S ADVISORY COUNCIL

During the Fall Leadership Summit meeting of the House of Delegates, members of the Commissioner's Advisory Council (CAC) are selected. Membership on the CAC remains within the BOCES geographical region. The BOCES are split into 13 regions, in addition to New York City. It also includes Executive Committee Members, the President of LEAF, Inc., and Council Past Presidents.

The CAC meets three to four times per year to share ideas with the Commissioner of Education. Agendas are developed between the Executive Director of THE COUNCIL and the Deputy Commissioner of Education and approved by the Commissioner. The purpose of these meetings is for the members of the CAC to share their ideas with the Commissioner and vice versa. Members include:

### Western Region

(Erie I, Erie2-Chatauqua, Orleans-Niagara, Cattaraugus-Allegany):  
Benjamin B. Spitzer, *Chautauqua Lake* Alternate: Sean Michel, *Chester*

### Central Western Region

(Genesee Valley, Monroe 1, Monroe 2-Orleans, Wayne- Finger Lakes):  
Kevin C. McGowan, *Brighton* Alternate: Lesli Myers, *Brockport*

### Southern Tier Region

(Steuben-Allegany, Broome-Delaware-Tioga, Otsego-Northern Catskills, Schuyler-Chemung-Tioga, Delaware-Chenango):  
Peter N. Livshin, *Milford* Alternate: Richard Hughes, *Otselic Valley*

### Central Region

(Cayuga-Onondaga, Oswego, Onondaga-Cortland-Madison, Tompkins-Seneca-Tioga):  
Craig J. Tice, *Marcellus* Alternate: Nancy Ruscio, *Homer*

### Mohawk Valley Region

(Herkimer-Fulton-Hamilton, Madison-Oneida, Oneida-Herkimer- Madison):  
Martha Group, *Sherrill City* Alternate: TBA

### Ontario Region (St. Lawrence-Lewis, Jefferson-Lewis-Hamilton):

Susan E. Todd, *Heuvelton* Alternate: Darin Saiff, *Parishville-Hopkinton*

### North Country Region (Franklin-Essex-Hamilton, Clinton-Essex):

Bonnie Finnerty, *Schroon Lake* Alternate: Jane A. Collins, *Salmon River*

## 2013–2014 COMMISSIONER’S ADVISORY COUNCIL

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**Capital District Region** (Capital Region, Washington-Warren-Saratoga-Hamilton, Hamilton-Fulton-Montgomery, Questar III):  
Patrick Michel, *Hamilton-Fulton-Montgomery BOCES*  
Alternate: Patrick Dee, *Lake George*

**Mid-Hudson Region** (Orange-Ulster, Dutchess, Ulster, Sullivan):  
Deborah L. Fox, *Livingston Manor* Alternate: Sean Michel, *Chester*

**Lower Hudson Region**  
(Putnam-Northern Westchester, Rockland, Southern Westchester):  
Kenneth Mitchell, *South Orangetown* Alternate: Thomas J. Manko, *Mahopac*

**Nassau County Region:**  
David Feller, *North Merrick* Alternate: Phyllis Harrington, *Oceanside*

**Suffolk County Region:**  
Susan A. Schnebel, *Islip* Alternate: Charles Russo, *East Moriches*

**LEAF Board:**  
Mary Alice Price, President

**Big 5 Schools:**  
Pamela C. Brown, *Buffalo City*  
Dolores Esposito, *NYC Department of Education*  
Bolgen Vargas, *Rochester City*  
Sharon L. Contreras, *Syracuse City*

**Western Region**  
(Erie I, Erie2-Chatauqua, Orleans-Niagara, Cattaraugus-Allegany):  
Benjamin B. Spitzer, *Chautauqua Lake* Alternate: Sean Michel, *Chester*

**Council Past Presidents:**  
Clark Godshall, *Orleans-Niagara BOCES*  
Henry Grishman, *Jericho*  
James T. Langlois, *Putnam-Northern Westchester BOCES*  
William Johnson, *Rockville Centre*  
L. Oliver Robinson, *Shenendehowa*

## COMMITTEE CHAIRS 2013-2014

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**Athletics**  
Co-Chairs: Maureen Donahue, *Southwestern at Jamestown*  
and Jeffrey R. Rabey, *Depew*

**Curriculum and Instruction**  
Co-Chairs: William H. Johnson, *Rockville Centre*  
and Lorna R. Lewis, *Plainview-Old Bethpage*

**Assessment Sub-Committee**  
Co-Chairs: Adele A. Bovard, *Webster* and John E. Bierwirth, *Herricks*

**Special Ed Sub-Committee**  
Chair: Kathryn Wegman, *Marion*

**Cabinet**  
Chair: Angela R. White, *Ossining*

**Mary Barter Scholarship for Minorities and Women**  
Chair: Colleen M. Taggerty, *Olean City*

**Legislative – Federal**  
Co-Chairs: Mary Beth R. Fiore, *Elmira Heights*  
and Charles S. Dedrick, *Capital Region BOCES*

**Snapshot of the Superintendency**  
Co-Chairs: Edward M. Fale, *Valley Stream #24*  
and Robert R. Ike, *Palmyra-Macedon*

**Wellness / TBD**

**Budget\***  
Chair: Mary Beth R. Fiore, *Elmira Heights*

**Constitution and By-Laws/Resolutions\***  
Chair: Michael Vanyo, *Gloversville City*

**Distinguished Service\***  
Chair: William H. Johnson, *Rockville Centre*

**Ethics\***  
Chair: Douglas W. Huntley, *Queensbury*

**Finance and Investment\***  
Chair: Robert J. Reidy, Jr., Executive Director

**Legislative – State\***  
Co-Chairs: Neil F. O’Brien, *Port Byron*  
and Patricia Sullivan-Kriss, *Hauppauge*

**Nominating\***  
Daniel T. Connor, *Goshen*

\* Committees by Appointment Only



## Council and LEAF, Inc. Staff

### Executive Office

**Robert J. Reidy, Jr.**  
Executive Director



Contact Bob regarding the overall operation of THE COUNCIL, governance structure and policy questions. Bob is also available for professional advice and counsel, regional presentations, visits to your BOCES region and opportunities for involvement with THE COUNCIL.

### Venerina T. Greco

Executive Assistant to Executive Director  
[rina@nyscoss.org](mailto:rina@nyscoss.org)  
Direct Telephone Number:  
(518) 694.4876



Rina provides administrative support and management of the Executive Office and the General Counsel. She is also the liaison to THE COUNCIL's Executive Committee and House of Delegates governance groups. Contact Rina if you have questions or need to request a meeting/call with Robert Reidy, Jr. or Jacinda Conboy, Esq.

### Advocacy / Legal Team

**Jacinda H. Conboy, Esq.**  
General Counsel  
[jacinda@nyscoss.org](mailto:jacinda@nyscoss.org)



Jacinda (a/k/a "Jazz") is primarily responsible for negotiating superintendent's employment contracts and providing legal advice and assistance to our members. In addition, Jazz regularly designs legal seminars and provides presentations on legal educational issues to members. Contact Jazz if you have contract questions, are interested in Level II Legal Services or need retirement services.

### Robert N. Lowry, Jr.

Deputy Director for Advocacy,  
Research & Communications  
[boblowry@nyscoss.org](mailto:boblowry@nyscoss.org)  
Direct Telephone Number:  
(518) 694.4879



Bob directs THE COUNCIL's advocacy activities and serves as our principal contact with the news media. Working with Terry Pratt and Council leaders, he advocates for superintendent concerns with the Governor's Office, State Legislature, Board of Regents, and the State Education Department and other state agencies. He is the principal author of many Council policy reports and is recognized as one of the state's leading experts in school finance. Contact Bob regarding policy decisions, school finance, and general media inquiries.

### Terrance N. Pratt, Esq

Assistant Director for  
Government Relations  
[terry@nyscoss.org](mailto:terry@nyscoss.org)  
Direct Telephone Number:  
(518) 694.4874



Terry is THE COUNCIL's principal lobbyist. He works alongside Bob Lowry in advocating on behalf of THE COUNCIL before New York State Government. Terry is responsible for communicating the important positions of THE COUNCIL directly to lawmakers in Albany and Washington and serves as a liaison for Council members to their elected representatives. Terry also serves as one of THE COUNCIL's attorneys, handling select legal matters for the organization.

## Council and LEAF, Inc. Staff

### Membership Team

**Melanie M. Seiden**  
Membership Services Associate  
[melanie@nyscoss.org](mailto:melanie@nyscoss.org)  
Direct Telephone Number:  
(518) 694.4877



Melanie provides direct support to our members by answering membership questions including member online access; assisting with membership purchases, transfers and renewals. Also contact Melanie with registration questions for Council and LEAF, Inc. programs including conference registration. She is also available to answer questions or concerns regarding invoices for membership and event registration.

### Kelley Pratt

Administrative Assistant  
[kpratt@nyscoss.org](mailto:kpratt@nyscoss.org)  
Direct Telephone Number:  
(518) 694.4878



Kelley provides direct service to our members serving as the primary contact for general inquiries, career center postings, and database updates while answering and directing calls. She also purchases supplies and works as our vendor liaison for all office equipment. She assists all staff members with a variety of administrative projects including mail house coordination, but primarily supports the membership department on a day-to-day basis.

### Finance / Communications / Operations Team

**Dena A. Gauthier**  
Senior Graphic Designer  
[dena@nyscoss.org](mailto:dena@nyscoss.org)  
Direct Telephone Number:  
(518)694.4886



Dena plays a vital role in interpreting and managing our brand identity throughout all Council and LEAF, Inc. printed and online communication materials. She designs and manages the production of all publications, provides design support for THE COUNCIL and LEAF website, and manages printing and design consultants. Contact Dena with questions regarding the production of communication materials.

### Deidre G. Hungerford

Assistant Director  
for Business Development  
[deidre@nyscoss.org](mailto:deidre@nyscoss.org)  
Direct Telephone Number:  
(518) 694.4885



Deidre manages our Strategic Partnership Program, coordinates the Legal Briefing Workshops, awards, scholarships and annual golf tournament. Deidre also manages and creates the exhibit hall at our two annual conferences each year. Contact Deidre if you are interested in supporting THE COUNCIL or exhibiting.

## Council and LEAF, Inc. Staff

### Deborah N. Orsini

Associate Director for Finance and Human Resources  
[deborah@nyscoss.org](mailto:deborah@nyscoss.org)  
Direct Telephone Number:  
(518) 694.4882



You can contact Deb with questions regarding budget development, financial forecasting, human resources, building management and general Council operations.

### Theresa A. Wutzer

Associate Director / Director of Marketing & Communications  
[theresa@nyscoss.org](mailto:theresa@nyscoss.org)  
Direct Telephone Number:  
(518) 694.4884



Contact Theresa regarding the Fall Leadership Summit and Winter Institute planning and implementation. She is responsible for developing new technology initiatives; advancing our social media presence; and managing our website. Also, she oversees our communication plan, including writing major publications and articles and serving as the editor of our *Councilgram* newsletter.

## LEAF, Inc. Professional Development Team

### Vreneli G. Banks

Assistant Director for Professional Development  
[vren@nyscoss.org](mailto:vren@nyscoss.org)  
Direct Telephone Number:  
(518) 694.4875



Vren is responsible for various professional development programs through LEAF, Inc. such as the Aspiring Superintendents Workshop, New Superintendents Institute,

2<sup>nd</sup> & 3<sup>rd</sup> Year Superintendents Institute, Leadership for Student Achievement, Cabinet Conference and the LEAF, Inc./NYS ASCD Annual Conference. She also maintains the Superintendents and Cabinet Level Resource Bank and provides editorial support for the LEAF, Inc. website and for the monthly *Councilgram*.

### Kelly O. Masline

Senior Associate Director and Director of LEAF, Inc.  
[kelly@nyscoss.org](mailto:kelly@nyscoss.org)  
Direct Telephone Number:  
(518) 694.4880



Contact Kelly about professional development initiatives for THE COUNCIL and LEAF, Inc. She works closely with the LEAF, Inc. Board of Directors to provide professional development to school leaders and district leadership team members by offering opportunities that are relevant and affordable. She also manages grant initiatives.

### Nancy E. Wengert

LEAF, Inc. Program Associate  
[nwengert@nyscoss.org](mailto:nwengert@nyscoss.org)  
Direct Telephone Number:  
(518) 694.4872



Nancy coordinates and promotes LEAF's Customized Consulting Services for school districts statewide. LEAF, Inc. offers services such as district consulting, regional retreats and customized professional development. Nancy also handles the logistical planning and coordination for the Future Superintendents' Academy sessions; a year long program.

## Leadership for Educational Achievement Foundation, Inc.

### 2013–2014 LEAF, Inc. Officers

#### President

Mary Alice Price  
Retired Superintendent

#### Vice President

Neil F. O'Brien  
Superintendent  
*Port Byron CSD*

#### Secretary/Treasurer

John E. Bierwirth  
Superintendent  
*Herricks UFSD*

#### Past President

Henry L. Grishman  
Superintendent  
*Jericho UFSD*

### Board Members

**Charles S. Dedrick**  
District Superintendent  
*Capital Region BOCES*

**Laura Feijoo**  
NYC Department of Education

**Kevin McGuire**  
Retired Superintendent

**Deborah Shea**  
Assistant Superintendent  
*Niskayuna*

#### Director

Kelly O. Masline  
Senior Associate Director  
NYS Council of School Superintendents

#### Ex-Officio Board Member

Robert J. Reidy, Jr.  
Executive Director  
NYS Council of School Superintendents



*The mission of LEAF, Inc. is to be the premier organization offering comprehensive professional development to ensure the success of educational leaders and the students they serve through opportunities that are excellent in quality, pertinent in focus, and readily accessible to all.*



7 Elk Street, Albany, NY 12207  
Phone: 518/449-1063  
Fax: 518/426-2229

[www.nyscoss.org](http://www.nyscoss.org)

The New York State Council of School Superintendents is a professional and advocacy organization with over a century of service to school superintendents in New York State. THE COUNCIL provides its more than 800 members with numerous professional development opportunities, publications and personal services, while advocating for public education and the superintendency.