



# 2014-2015 Annual Letter



What's a Leader to Do?  
The Times – Shifting Sand,  
Political Rhetoric, High Emotion

**INNOVATION**

**WISDOM PURPOSE**

**SUCCESSFUL**





Dear Colleagues,

This is my fifth annual letter to the membership. Over the years, I have thanked you for your extraordinary leadership and passion; noted the complexity of your work; and extolled your commitment to the children of New York State. You have a tremendous responsibility that comes with choosing to be a steward of our public schools and I liken your work to Stephen Covey's concepts of High Consideration and High Courage.

Given all of the dynamics swirling around testing, Annual Professional Performance Review (APPR) and the current political environment, educational leadership has never been more challenging. As I consider these factors, the question "What's a leader to do?" continues to resonate in my mind.

In his remarks to the membership last fall, Past President Neil O'Brien, Port Byron was prophetic in using the metaphor of a rock to symbolize the personal and professional struggles of superintendents in three ways:

- First, the rock symbolizes strength and that you, the superintendent, are the rock of your organization. Through all of the tumult, change, political rhetoric, you can be counted on to be there – solid and resilient for children, staff and community.
- Second, the rock is a symbol for being part of a foundation that includes you and your role in and with The Council. We are here to support you and we need your support to achieve our mission.
- Third, likening your work to Sisyphus in Greek mythology - you continue to put extraordinary efforts into implementing reform after reform, only to have the rules change and need to start again. It underscores the need for your strength and resilience.

Neil nailed it when he spoke about his metaphoric rocks. Throughout the trials and tribulations current and future, it is important to remind ourselves why we choose these challenging leadership roles and why they are important.

I have been teaching in the Leadership for Education Achievement Foundation's (LEAF, Inc.) Future Superintendents Academy for over six years. I am fortunate to teach one of the first classes in the program each year. Participants attend from all over New York State and usually do not know one another. I begin the first class with an ice breaker activity derived from Michael Fullan's work. I ask each participant to select a partner they do not know, introduce themselves, state their position and succinctly state their "moral purpose" – What drives them to be an educator? Why do they want to be a superintendent?

Inevitably, the responses are related to the following: to make a positive difference for all children; to promote equity for all children; to help create a child-centered organization; to work with teachers, parents and the community; to make a difference; to bring skills to help an organization get better; he/she has inspired me to explore this challenge; there is no more important work.

HEARING  
**TEAM**  
CONTRIBUTING  
SINCERITY



I am always moved by each class member's passion, commitment and sense of reality. Aspiring superintendents are your protégés. They are principals, directors and assistant superintendents. They are learning and challenging themselves as a result of the examples you set. They have watched you wrestle with tough issues, demonstrate compassion, courage and integrity, and they want to make a difference in the lives of children and communities the way you have.

I know how they feel. In 1976, I attended a session sponsored by American Association of School Administrators (AASA) at their national meeting in Atlantic City, NJ. In those days, it was always held in Atlantic City and my superintendent invited all of his assistant superintendents to attend. AASA Executive Director, Paul Salmon, and Indiana Superintendent, Rich Miller, conducted the session. When the session concluded there was no doubt in my mind I was going to become a superintendent. I wanted to make a difference, just like our Future Superintendent Academy members.

The Council's statement, *Public Education Matters* reminds us all of why we chose to be stewards of these great public institutions.

## Public Education

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Public Education is the backbone, heart, wisdom, beacon, and soul of a free and democratic society for every child.

### Public Education:

- Equalizes and expands opportunities for all children.
- Serves as a way out of poverty.
- Accepts the responsibility that every student graduates prepared for continued learning in college, a career and public service, and in citizenship and life.
- Provides intellectual capital to sustain national security and economic growth.
- Promotes, exemplifies, and protects constitutional ideals, democratic principles, and individual freedoms.

I became a superintendent in 1977. After taking the job and immersing myself in the many issues and circumstances in the school district, I found it was sometimes easy to forget why I took the job. I would often remind myself by visiting classrooms, sometimes teaching, and interacting with the children I served.

Given the current dynamics you are all wrestling with, I felt it would be appropriate to remind you all why leadership is important. We all know how critically important leadership is, but it is important to remind ourselves – it’s hard to be a leader.

Warren Bennis, in his book *On Becoming a Leader*, states:

“There are three basic reasons why leaders are important. First, they are responsible for effectiveness of organizations. The success or failure of all organizations rests on the quality of their decision makers... Second, the change and upheaval of the past years has left us with no place to hide. We need anchors and guides. The very best of our leaders serve in that way. They inspire us and restore our hope... Third, there is a pervasive national concern about the integrity of our institutions.”

To quote another phrase from Bennis, “Everything’s in motion.”

This is why Neil’s rock metaphor is so important to remember as you lead through these extremely challenging times. No excuses, no rationalization.

What is a leader to do? Let me suggest the following:

1. Always advocate for all kids all the time.
2. Be that dependable, resilient rock.
3. Know yourself and never lose focus of your moral purpose.<sup>1</sup>
4. Do not get caught up in the “thick of thin things.”<sup>2</sup>
5. Focus on what you can control.
6. Focus on continuous improvement.
7. Always strive for balance in your life.
8. Never forget how important your work is.
9. Always believe you can and always try to make a difference.
10. Above all, always, be the purveyor of hope.

That is why The Council and LEAF, Inc. are your leadership organizations. They provide a foundation of support so you can lead your school systems successfully and effectively.

## **Advocacy: An Opportunity to Lead – and a Responsibility**

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Speaking at the Board of Regents’ May “Learning Summit on Annual Professional Performance Review,” then President Neil O’Brien referred to The Council as both the smallest and largest organization called to present. He explained,

The smallest? Yes, we are roughly 700 district leaders... Compared to other organizations presenting today we are very small in membership and our state organization is similarly staffed in size. But, we are also the largest organization too. The decisions we make touch all facets of the educational spectrum: boards, parents, teachers and principals, and that interest group that seems to have been lost in the shuffle – the students... We are the ones who are held accountable to lead the institution and collaborate with everyone. It is our duty and in reality it is our calling.



# HONESTY

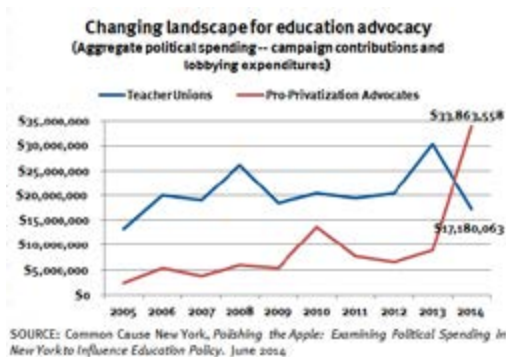
1. Fullan, Michael. *Leading in a Culture of Change*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2001. Print.
2. Covey, Stephen R. *The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People*. London: Simon & Schuster, 2005. Print.

We choose to lead because we want better schools, professionally engaged teachers and principals, and productive citizens for future generations.

The small size and large scope of The Council illuminates both our organization’s challenges and our responsibilities in seeking to lead state education policy back to a sounder course for the schoolchildren it aims to benefit. Advocating for The Council and its members has become more difficult and more necessary. The difficulty has several sources.

First, the tenor of debate has changed. In the past, meeting counterparts from other states, Council staff could draw comfort that at least we did not share their woes of coping with state leaders overtly hostile to public education. But speaking about expanding charter schools and revising teacher evaluations in a late re-election campaign appearance, Governor Andrew Cuomo said, “I believe these kinds of changes are probably the single best thing that I can do as governor that’s going to matter long-term to break what is in essence one of the only remaining public monopolies — and that’s what this is, it’s a public monopoly.” In the 2015 legislative session, the Governor expanded his agenda to advocate the creation of tax credits to benefit private schools and wealthy donors.

Second, there has been a change in the political landscape of education policymaking. According to Common Cause New York, total political spending by education privatization advocates has soared, to nearly \$35 million in 2014, after averaging around \$6.5 million per year for the nine years before. Over the same periods, teacher union spending averaged around \$20 million per year, and totaled \$17.2 million last year. In 2014, school privatization proponents more than doubled union spending on lobbying and also outmatched the unions in campaign contributions, giving heavily to Governor Cuomo and Republican State Senate candidates.





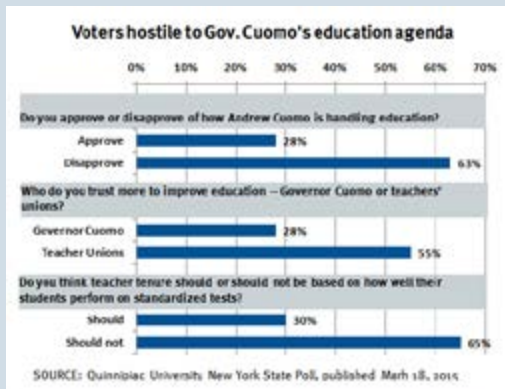
**FUNCTION** **COMMUNICATION**  
**INSPIRING ACHIEVE**



For school district leaders, the influence of the teacher unions in Albany swings back and forth, between blessing and curse. The unions have been important allies on school revenue issues and often adversaries on matters affecting costs and management authority. But opposing teacher unions does not make the privatization sector allies for superintendents. They champion charter schools and private school tax credits, initiatives that either directly or potentially divert funding from public schools. To the extent the privatization forces seek to influence teacher evaluation requirements and other operational policies, they do so with little grasp of the practical implications of whatever they advocate and no responsibility whatsoever for making it work.

The clash between the teacher unions and privatization advocates has had another effect. It dominates attention, reduces policy debates to “which side are you on” propositions, sacrifices nuance, and impels other education advocates toward picking one side or the other.

The changing landscape of campaign finance perhaps helps explain a third complication in advocacy: politicians who appear to act irrationally, contrary to their own self-interest. Two weeks before the state budget deadline a Quinnipiac University Poll revealed voters disapproving the Governor’s handling of education, trusting teacher unions more, and opposing use of student tests in making decisions about teachers, all by two-to-one margins. Yet the Governor persisted in his goals, and the Legislature assented in approving badly misguided changes in the teacher evaluation system.



Fourth, the issues have become more complex. When money issues are foremost, everyone can agree: more is better. The Council can illuminate broad issues affecting all schools and assist various segments of districts to put their best arguments forward. But taking positions on assessments, test refusals,

teacher evaluations, student data systems, and struggling school intervention is a more complicated undertaking.

Reports, statements and testimony issued by The Council nearly always repeat two general points, no matter what the specific subject:

- first, superintendents must do what policymakers should also do – balance what students need with what taxpayers and afford; and,
- second, superintendents are called to exercise the pivotal role in translating policies enacted for the whole state or nation into practices that can work for the communities they and policymakers serve.

With the mounting complexity of issues being dealt with by state and federal policymakers, it is more crucial than ever that the practical perspectives of superintendents be heard. But there is one more obstacle to asserting the clear and compelling leadership now so needed from The Council and its members: differing opinions.

Superintendents across New York hold disparate views on the leading issues of the present, including what should be done to improve teacher evaluations, to dispel discord over state assessments, to manage test opt-outs, or to move forward with the Common Core standards.



# LEADERSHIP

In a 2014 survey, The Council asked members a basic question, whether efforts to improve education over the past four years had moved schools in the right direction, wrong direction, or had little impact. Right direction led wrong – a surprising result given discord over state reform efforts, but only by a 47-39 percent margin, far from a resounding vote of confidence. Within regions there were divisions as well: in only two of 10 regions did more than 60 percent of superintendents endorse the leading opinion and those two regions disagreed on whether the right or wrong direction was being pursued.

Just by explaining divergent opinions among superintendents, The Council can help policymakers begin to grasp the complexities of the issues they are attempting to resolve. But those policymakers also want specific recommendations for a coherent course of action. Media sources expect such directness as well.

Time and effort are needed to forge internal consensus on complicated issues. Those resources are always limited. Sometimes a consensus Council position cannot be resolved in time to influence public policy debates. Achieving unanimous support for a position from roughly 700 members is not attainable.

There is a saying: “Either you try to make a difference, or you make a difference by not trying.” Governors, Legislators, Regents and their counterparts in Washington will formulate policies for schools to follow with or without input from individual superintendents and whether or not The Council advances recommendations on behalf of all superintendents. There are risks to stepping forward, but there are risks to holding back as well. Sometimes, maintaining the status quo with its familiar imperfections is not an option.

The Council’s mission is simple: **to help superintendents succeed on behalf of the children and communities they serve.** The rules and funding levels that state and federal authorities prescribe for schools help define the odds for success. The Council and its members have no choice but to attempt to influence policy debates.

Back in 2001, then President William Johnson referred to The Council as “the mouse that roared,” exercising influence beyond its size. We hope that remains so. But we know our influence is not what it needs to be, not given the mistakes in state policy and resulting discord that have hurt our schools and our students, and not given the practical expertise our members can apply to the work of putting those policies on a wiser course.

Assuring influence commensurate with our expertise starts with committing to try to make a difference – to engage in the work of advocacy, as local leaders and as members of The Council. That requires, most directly, that we continue to put

forth our sound ideas to policymakers and do more external work to influence the public debate with a coherent voice and unified message.

It also means providing a compelling public narrative for something and against something else. We must work to shape the debate, being more unified, believable and authoritative than our adversaries, drawing the public debate toward our perspective as leaders of the whole enterprise of public education.

The more unified we can be, the more impact we can have – the louder our roar. So the effort also requires committing to developing those unifying ideas, knowing that compromise is sometimes necessary and perfection is seldom possible.

Unity in message and effort will matter more than all else to empowering our organization to exert influence commensurate to the challenges of our schools and the expertise of our members.

## **Legal Services Provides Education and Support to Leaders**

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The Council also plays an active role in providing effective legal representation for superintendents. In-house legal services are provided directly from The Council and are considered the “first level.” These services include 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. We also have a model interim contract for superintendents who work on a per diem or short-term basis.

Level II Legal Services is a more comprehensive offering 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. Legal briefing workshops are offered throughout the year to provide timely and valuable legal information to members.

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



# INNOVATION MANAGEMENT GUIDANCE

We will again host legal featured presentations, skill building and Sunrise Café discussions at both our Fall Leadership Summit and Winter Institute to keep our members up-to-speed in the latest legal developments.

Finally, in connection with our Evaluation Work Group, a new Model Superintendents' Evaluation has been created. You can contact Jacinda "Jazz" Conboy, Esq. for a copy of this new tool or access it through the members-only section of The Council's website. Jazz is also available for presentations/trainings on the best way to use the Model Superintendent Evaluation.

## **LEAF, Inc. Offers Variety of Programming to Strengthen Leadership Skills and School District Teams**

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The Leadership for Educational Achievement Foundation, Inc. provides high-quality service and professional learning opportunities, in partnership with The Council, to support superintendent development and the development of school district leadership team members. Since LEAF, Inc.'s inception in 2006, the Foundation has established a solid reputation among professional development providers in the field of educational leadership.

LEAF is known for providing support to superintendents, assistant superintendents, district directors and building-level administrators.

Most recently, LEAF began offering consulting services, working directly with superintendents or other school leaders to provide experts to meet specific needs. In the past year, LEAF has provided consultants to facilitate retreats, offer mentoring/coaching, conduct building studies, and provide strategic and facilities planning.

In 2014, we revamped the LEAF Subscription Service and contracted with our Signature Partner WestEd (a public, nonprofit research, development, and service agency) to redesign and produce six issues of the subscription service. Some topics included: close reading, teacher motivation, special education and family engagement. Each issue also included recommended strategies for reading and using the material for professional development. The LEAF Subscription Service for Professional Learning will be offered again in 2015-2016 for a nominal fee.

The LEAF Board of Directors believes it is equally important to support our early career and Cabinet members. We continued to strengthen our program offerings through the Future Superintendents Academy, the Institutes for New Superintendents and those in their second and third year.

One of LEAF's most successful programs in 2014-2015 was the implementation of the Instructional Rounds project that was funded through a grant provided by NYS Education Department. Seven consultants and five BOCES partnered with LEAF, Inc. to provide training on Common Core and instructional rounds as a vehicle to improve teaching and learning. Leadership teams were trained on classroom observation protocols and on how to process the information gathered during an instructional rounds visit. Twenty-five school districts across the state participated in the project. This initiative will continue in the coming year for those regions interested in collaborating on the project.

In the summer of 2014, LEAF, Inc. received a planning grant to obtain information about the supports needed to successfully implement Common Core State Standards (CCSS) and begin to provide professional development and other forms of technical assistance to its member districts.

LEAF, Inc. recognized the need to go back to its members and ask more specific questions about their experiences implementing the standards. In March 2015, LEAF, Inc. and the US Education Delivery Institute conducted 25 focus groups with district leaders, school administrators, and teachers in several regions across New York State. Over the course of these focus groups we gathered feedback from over 180 stakeholders about the status and quality of CCSS implementation. On June 29, 2015, the LEAF Board of Directors met to discuss



a plan regarding what professional development offerings and services will be implemented in 2015-2016 to best support the needs that were identified.

On April 25, 2015, LEAF offered a one-day technology conference on the topic of “The Evolution of Teaching and Learning.” Participants heard from national speaker Eric Shenger of the International Center for Leadership in Education, Paul Facticeau, a development executive for Apple, Inc., Jeff Elliott, President/CEO, The Virtual High School, who facilitated a panel with three NYS superintendents, and Charles Szuberla, Assistant Commissioner, NYS Education Department, who provided an update on the Smart School Bond Act.

LEAF, Inc. continued our partnership with Signature Partner PLS 3rd Learning through 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 continuously adapts 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.

## **Statewide Events offer Choice, Value and Community**

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Every September and March, we convene thought leaders and experts to share, collaborate and make connections at our annual Fall Leadership Summit and Winter Institute & Lobby Day. Our annual events are designed to offer professional development, emphasize the “Community of Superintendents,” build leadership capacity and convey essential information.

Featuring three keynote sessions and 40 thematic sessions, the 2014 Fall Leadership Summit focused on the theme *Leading Transformative Education: Blended Learning with the Common Core*. John Couch, Vice President, Premier Platinum Partner Apple, Inc. opened the event while Steve Barkley, Vice President from Signature Partner PLS 3rd Learning presented closing ideas on the modern learner and how to build schools to accommodate them. The 2014 Fall Leadership Summit hosted record breaking registrations with 460 members attending and was sponsored by our Premier Diamond Partner Mosaic Associates Architects.

In March 2015, our opening Winter Institute keynote was Michael J. Petrilli, President of Thomas B. Fordham Institute. Our goal with inviting Michael Petrilli, though controversial, was based on the theme *A Global Perspective on Education: Many Voices; One Vision*. We invited him to allow our members a



**HONOR**  
**WISDOM PURPOSE**  
**SUCCESSFUL**

chance to hear from a thoughtful proponent of initiatives we have to confront. We also selected Mr. Petrilli as a spokesperson for views we typically oppose chiefly because he has shown a willingness to acknowledge opposing perspectives and sometimes reconsider his own.

By inviting a speaker to present at our events, it does not signal agreement with his or her views, nor does The Council, and LEAF, Inc. see these presentations as “guiding” our own discussions. We invite speakers such as the Commissioner of Education or Key Legislative Representatives because these sessions are typically heavily attended by members suggesting that they continue to find value in those exchanges. With the departure of Education Commissioner John King in late 2014, Dr. Merryl Tisch, Chancellor of the New York State Education Department presented the second keynote at the Winter Institute. We closed the event with New York State Senator John J. Flanagan prior to members attending lobby day. Attendance at the Winter Institute and Lobby Day remained steady at 375 members.



The Council and LEAF, Inc. view all of our encounters with event speakers, an opportunity for two-way communications – they get a chance to learn from our members, the leaders responsible for trying to make policy prescriptions work in actual schools and communities.

Make sure to join us for the 2015 Fall Leadership Summit *Leading with Courage: A Journey into the Hearts and Minds of Educators* hosted at the Saratoga Hilton and the Saratoga Springs City Center from September 27-29, 2015 in Saratoga Springs, NY. Keynote speakers include Dan O'Brien, Olympic Gold Medalist; the new Commissioner of Education MaryEllen Elia; and Jeremy Kingsley, a leadership expert. The 2016 Winter Institute & Lobby Day will be scheduled in Albany from March 6-8, 2016.

These annual events also play an important role with the revenue stream that supports The Council'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. These partnerships, a unique part of the strategic partnership program, also provide new opportunities and add value to our members.

This past year The Council and LEAF, Inc. engaged with 77 partnerships; companies and organizations who participated in the 2014-2015 Strategic Partnership Program. Each company / organization received an individualized, unique marketing plan that was implemented throughout the year included speaking, networking and exhibiting opportunities at both Council and LEAF, Inc. events.

In addition, we continued with our innovative partnerships with Forecast 5 and JASON Learning. Through this relationship, I was invited to be a board member on the national JASON Learning board.

We also received additional support from one of our Signature Partner New York Schools Insurance Reciprocal (NYSIR). They offered a one-time scholarship opportunity to our members to celebrate their 25<sup>th</sup> year anniversary. NYSIR will provide complimentary tuition and housing for five members of The Council to attend the 2015 Fall Leadership Summit.

## Finances and Infrastructure, An Important Part of the Story

For the past few years, The Council has invested a portion of our reserve money into our technology infrastructure. We continued this investment in 2014 with the development of our new marketing email tool powered by Informz. This new tool gave The Council and LEAF, Inc. staff access to a stronger branded and consistent messaging option in a more secure online environment. We also designed our Informz templates with the capability to render successfully on the various tools used by our members (computers, smart phones, and tablets) on a daily basis to keep them informed on-the-go easily.



The technology investment also included transitioning to a robust membership database giving members more flexibility and the ability for a secure peer networking through our online communities. Reducing the amount of paper mailings has been one benefit with using this new technology, saving money overall.

Future development includes responsive design formats for The Council's website at [www.nyscoss.org](http://www.nyscoss.org) making it mobile-friendly. This will ensure higher searchable rankings within various search engines like Google; who are rewarding websites that are fully-optimized for mobile platforms.

The Council also invested in our physical structure with the purchase of the building at 7 Elk Street. Simple renovations will be pursued in 2015-2016 to enable us to host smaller professional development programs in-house starting in fall 2015. This will give LEAF, Inc. savings on rental fees and higher food costs incurred at hotel venues. We will also rent available offices for additional revenue.

Each year, we continue to pursue aggressive cost containment and creativity in our search for new revenue sources. Over the past six months, staff has worked with a Planned Giving consultant to review the resources of The Council and LEAF, Inc. to see if we have the capabilities to move forward with the development of this type of new revenue source. Over the next six months, the consultant will survey the various groups of Council members including retired life members, executive committee members, House of Delegate members, and new and aspiring superintendents to see if they would participate in a planned giving program.

The Council and LEAF, Inc. will end this year with a combined profit, assuming the auditors concur with our actions. This will replenish the reserves balance that were depleted for technology infrastructure and buying 7 Elk Street. A balanced budget was presented for both associations for the 2015-2016 year. We will continue to explore opportunities to expand our services while reducing our costs overall.



## Leadership Matters

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Remember the following, which always provides inspiration for me:

“It is not the critic who counts; not the man who points out how the strong man stumbles, or where the doer of deeds could have done them better. The credit belongs to the man who is actually in the arena, whose face is marred by dust and sweat and blood; who strives valiantly; who errs, who comes short again and again, because there is no effort without error and shortcoming; but who does actually strive to do the deeds; who knows great enthusiasms, the great devotions; who spends himself in a worthy cause; who at the best knows in the end the triumph of high achievement, and who at the worst, if he fails, at least fails while daring greatly, so that his place shall never be with those cold and timid souls who neither know victory nor defeat.”

*Theodore Roosevelt*

*“The Man in the Arena” Speech at the Sorbonne, Paris, France*

*April 23, 1910*

As public school superintendents, our children, our democracy, and our future are our mission – and our responsibility.<sup>3</sup>

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



A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Robert J. Reidy, Jr." The signature is fluid and cursive.

Dr. Robert J. Reidy, Jr.  
Executive Director

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3. *Public Education Matters! Leadership, Leverage, and Learning. Publication.* Albany: New York State Council of School Superintendents, 2014. Print.

## Annual Awards and Scholarships

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### 2014 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 Mary Alice Price, former Superintendent from the Pittsford Central School District received The Council's highest honor for her exemplary standards of educational service and leadership. The 2014 Distinguished Services Award was sponsored by Signature Partner New York Schools Insurance Reciprocal (NYSIR).

### 2015 New York Superintendent of the Year Award



The 2015 New York State Superintendent of the Year was presented to James T. Langlois, District Superintendent of the Putnam/Northern Westchester Board of Cooperative Education Services (BOCES) at the 2015 Winter Institute. Dr. Langlois 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.

### 2015 Friend of The Council Award



John W. Sipple, Associate Professor of Sociology at Cornell University and Director of the New York Center for Rural Schools was selected to receive the 2015 Friend of The Council for his unrelenting and conscientious service to the superintendents and to the assistance and expertise he provided 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 2015 Friend of The Council award was presented at this year's Winter Institute and was sponsored by Premier Diamond Partner C&S Companies.

## Annual Awards and Scholarships, *con't*

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### 2015 Appreciation Awards



We recognized Colleen Taggerty, Superintendent, Olean with the 2015 Appreciation Award in recognition of her efforts on behalf of our organization and its initiatives. The 2015 award was presented at our Winter Institute and sponsored by Premier Silver Partner BCK - IBI Group.

### 2014 Raymond R. Delaney Memorial Scholarship



Congratulations to the 2014 Raymond R. Delaney Memorial scholarship winner Michael Weyrauch, Principal, Orleans Career and Technical Education Center. Michael was nominated and selected because of his creative, decisive and strategic leadership.

The Raymond R. Delaney Memorial Scholarship was inaugurated during the centennial year of The Council in honor of “100 Years of Educational Leadership” and in 1990 re-named the Raymond R. Delaney Annual Memorial Scholarship in memory of a past president of The Council. The Premier Diamond Partner Utica National Insurance Group sponsored this year’s scholarship valued at \$2,000.

### 2015 Dr. Mary Barter Scholarship for Women and Minorities



Nicole Schimpf, Director of Special Services, Valley Stream UFSD Thirty was selected as the recipient of the 2015 Dr. Mary Barter Scholarship for Women and Minorities at The Council’s 2015 Winter Institute. The scholarship was renamed in 2012 to honor Dr. Mary Barter as the first female president of The Council.

A scholarship is awarded in the amount of \$2,000 to promote and inspire women and/or minorities interested in the field of leadership each year.

## Strategic Partners 2014–2015

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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

Ferrara, Fiorenza, Larrison, Barrett & Reitz, P.C.

K12 *Insight*

New York Schools Insurance Reciprocal (NYSIR)

Northwest Evaluation Association (NWEA)

NYS Learns/PLS3rd Learning

WestEd

### 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

ECG Engineering, PC

HUNT Engineers, Architects, & Land Surveyors, PC

Mosaic Associates Architects

Planning Matters LLC

Renaissance Learning

SEI Design Group

Siemens Industry., Building Technologies Division

Tetra Tech Architects & Engineers

The Pike Company

Turner Construction Company

Utica National Insurance Group

### Premier Platinum Partners

Apple Inc.

Hawkins Delafield & Wood, LLP

Leonard Bus Sales, Inc.

VALIC

## Strategic Partners 2014–2015, *con't*

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### Premier Gold Partners

AXA Advisors

Clark Patterson Lee

eSpark Learning

Infinite Campus/  
Custom Computer Specialists, Inc.

Microsoft Corporation

My Learning Plan Inc.

New York State Financial  
Planning Network

Pupil Benefits Plan, Inc.

Welliver

The Futures HealthCore  
and Futures Education

Girvin & Ferlazzo, P.C.

Guercio & Guercio, LLP

Harris Beach, PLLC

Harter Secrest & Emery LLP

Highland Associates, LTD, Architecture,  
Engineering, Interior Design

IntraLogic Solutions

Keane & Beane, P.C.

Kideney Architects, P.C.

LaBella Associates, D.P.C.

Lend Lease (US) Construction Inc.

Mind Research Institute

New York State School  
Bus Contractors Association

Observer Tab, LLC

Right Reason Technologies

Rowland Reading Foundation

Scholastic, Inc.

School Aid Specialists, LLC  
school**tool**/Mindex Technologies, Inc.

SPIRAL International

SWBR Architects

Synthesis Architects, LLP

Teachscape

Triton Construction

Wendel

William Taylor Architects, PLLC

Young + Wright Architectural

### Premier Silver Partners

Ameresco Inc.

Arris Contracting Company, Inc.

BCK-IBI Group

Bernard P. Donegan, Inc.

Bernier, Carr & Associates

Bond Schoeneck & King

The Breakthrough Coach

Cannon Design

Capital Markets Advisors, LLC

Centris Group (IEP Direct/RTIm Direct)

ClearTrack 200/RTI Edge

College Board

CompassLearning

Discovery Education

Finger Lakes Technologies Group, Inc.





## 2014–2015 Officers & Executive Committee

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### Officers

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



**Maureen E. Donahue**  
President-Elect  
Southwestern



**Patricia Sullivan-Kriss**  
Vice President  
Hauppauge



**Laura Feijoo**  
Treasurer  
NYC Dept of  
Education



**Mary Beth R. Fiore**  
Past President  
Elmira Heights

### Executive Committee

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**Daniel T. Connor**  
Goshen (2015)



**Sharon L. Contreras**  
Syracuse (2016)



**Danielle DiMango**  
NYC District #25 (2016)



**Robert R. Ike**  
Palmyra-Macedon (2015)



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



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



**Ralph Marino, Jr.**  
Horseheads (2015)



**Kevin C. McGowan**  
Brighton (2016)



**Michael B. Wetherbee**  
Wayland-Cohocton (2016)

## House of Delegates 2014–2015

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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 Andrews, Windsor (2016)

### **Capital Region**

Jonathan Buhner, South Colonie (2016)

Lori S. Caplan, Watervliet (2016)

### **Cattaraugus-Allegany-Erie-Wyoming**

Kimberly Moritz, Randolph (2016)

Kimberly Mueller, Wellsville (2015)

### **Cayuga-Onondaga**

Michelle Brantner, Moravia (2015)

### **Champlain Valley**

Scott Osborne

Elizabethtown-Lewis (2016)

### **Delaware-Chenango-Madison-Otsego**

Jonathan R. Retz, Greene (2016)

### **Dutchess**

Michael Tierney, Dover (2016)

### **Eastern Suffolk**

Lois Favre Bridgehampton (2015)

Charles Russo, East Moriches (2016)

Susan A. Schnebel, Islip (2016)

### **Erie 1**

Jeffrey Rabey, Depew (2015)

### **Erie 2-Chautauqua-Cattaraugus**

Benjamin Spitzer

Chautauqua Lake (2015)

James Przepasniak, Lake Shore (2015)

### **Franklin-Essex-Hamilton**

Jane A. Collins, Salmon River (2015)

### **Genesee Valley**

Christopher Dailey, Batavia City (2015)

Kenneth J. Ellison, Pavilion (2016)

### **Greater Southern Tier**

James Frame, GST BOCES (2015)

Glenn Niles, Arkport (2016)

### **Hamilton-Fulton-Montgomery**

Michael Vanyo, Gloversville City (2016)

### **Herkimer-Fulton-Hamilton-Otsego**

F. Daniel Myers, Richfield Springs (2015)

### **Jefferson-Lewis**

Douglas E. Premo, South Lewis (2015)

### **Madison-Oneida**

Martha K. Group

Vernon-Verona-Sherrill (2015)

### **Monroe 1**

Michael Pero, Pittsford (2015)

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## **Monroe 2-Orleans**

Lesli Myers, Brockport (2016)

## **Nassau**

John Hogan, West Hempstead (2016)  
David S. Feller, North Merrick (2016)  
Phyllis S. Harrington, Oceanside (2015)

## **Oneida-Herkimer-Madison**

William Crankshaw, Remsen (2015)

## **Onondaga-Cortland-Madison**

Nancy Ruscio, Homer (2016)  
Craig Tice, Marcellus (2015)

## **Orange-Ulster**

Sean Michel, Chester (2015)

## **Orleans-Niagara**

Greg Woytila, North Tonawanda  
City (2016)

## **Oswego**

Robert R. Pritchard, Mexico (2015)

## **Otsego-Northern Catskill**

Peter N. Livshin, Milford (2015)

## **Putnam/North Westchester**

Edward R. Fuhrman, Jr.  
Croton-on-Hudson (2015)

## **Questar III**

Cheryl Nuciforo, Chatham (2015)  
Randall Squier, Coxsackie-Athens  
(2015)

## **Rockland**

Ileana Eckert, North Rockland (2016)

## **Southern Westchester**

Brenda W. Myers, Valhalla (2015)  
Walter Moran, Eastchester (2016)

## **St. Lawrence-Lewis**

Darin Saiff, Parishville-Hopkinton  
(2015)

## **Sullivan County**

Deborah Fox, Livingston Manor (2016)

## **Tompkins-Seneca-Tioga**

TBD (2016)

## **Ulster**

Deborah Haab, Highland (2015)

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

Patrick Dee, Lake George (2015)  
Michael N. Patton, South Glens Falls  
(2015)

## **Wayne-Finger Lakes**

Dawn Santiago-Marullo, Victor (2015)  
David Sholes, Red Creek (2016)

## **Western Suffolk BOCES**

Donald James, Commack (2016)

## **Big 5 School Districts**

Sharon Contreras, Syracuse City  
TBD, Buffalo City  
Dolores Esposito  
NYC Department  
of Education  
Bolgen Vargas  
Rochester City  
TBD, Yonkers City

## 2014–2015 Commissioner’s Advisory Council

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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-Chatauga, Orleans-Niagara, Cattaraugus-Allegany):**

Jeffrey R. Rabey, Depew

Alternate: Laura K. Chabe, Amherst

### **Central Western Region (Genesee Valley, Monroe 1, Monroe 2-Orleans, Wayne- Finger Lakes):**

Christopher Dailey, Batavia City

Alternate: Kenneth J. Ellison, Pavilion

### **Southern Tier Region (Broome-Delaware-Tioga, Delaware-Chenango-Madison-Otsego, Greater Southern Tier, Otsego-Northern Catskills):**

Jonathan R. Retz, Greene

Alternate: James R. Frame, Odessa-Montour

### **Central Region (Cayuga-Onondaga, Oswego, Onondaga-Cortland-Madison, Tompkins-Seneca-Tioga):**

Nancy S. Ruscio, Homer

Alternate: Michelle L. Brantner, Moravia

### **Mohawk Valley Region (Herkimer-Fulton-Hamilton, Madison-Oneida, Oneida-Herkimer- Madison):**

Martha Group, Sherrill City

Alternate: F. Daniel Myers, III; Richfield Springs

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

Rex A. Germer, Town of Webb

Alternate: Darin P. Saiff, Parishville- Hopkinton

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

Jane A. Collins, Salmon River

Alternate: Scott J. Osborne, Elizabethtown-Lewis

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**Capital District Region (Capital Region, Washington-Warren-Saratoga-Hamilton, Hamilton-Fulton-Montgomery, Questar III):**

Michael Vanyo, Gloversville City

Alternate: Michael N. Patton, South Glens Falls

**Mid-Hudson Region (Orange-Ulster, Dutchess, Ulster, Sullivan):**

Deborah L. Fox, Livingston Manor

Alternate: Deborah A. Haab, Highland

**Lower Hudson Region (Putnam-Northern Westchester, Rockland, Southern Westchester):**

Brenda W. Myers, Valhalla

Alternate: Edward r. Fuhrman, Croton-Harmon

**Nassau County Region:**

Phyllis S. Harrington, Oceanside

Alternate: Joseph S. Famularo, Bellmore

**Suffolk County Region:**

Susan A. Schnebel, Islip

Alternate: Lois R. Favre, Bridgehampton

**LEAF Board:**

Neil F. O'Brien, President

**Big 5 Schools:**

TBD, Buffalo City

Dolores Esposito, NYC Department of Education

Bolgen Vargas, Rochester City

Sharon L. Contreras, Syracuse City

TBD, Yonkers City

**Council Past Presidents:**

Mary Beth R. Fiore, Elmira Heights

Clark Godshall, Orleans-Niagara BOCES

Henry Grishman, Jericho

William Johnson, Rockville Centre

James T. Langlois, Putnam-Northern Westchester BOCES

L. Oliver Robinson, Shenendehowa

## Committee Chairs 2014–2015

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### **Athletics**

Co-Chairs: Maureen Donahue,  
Southwestern at Jamestown  
Mr. Jeffrey R. Rabey, Depew

### **Curriculum and Instruction**

Co-Chairs: William H. Johnson,  
Rockville Centre  
Dr. Lorna R. Lewis,  
Plainview-Old Bethpage

### **Assessment Sub-Committee**

Co-Chairs: Adele A. Bovard, Rochester  
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  
Charles S. Dedrick,  
Capital Region BOCES

### **Snapshot of the Superintendency**

Co-Chairs: Edward M. Fale,  
Valley Stream #24  
Robert R. Ike, Palmyra-Macedon

### **Member Service Committee**

Chair: William G. Heidenreich,  
Valley Stream Central

### **Wellness**

Chair: Kishore Kuncham,  
Freeport UFSD

### **Budget**

Chair: Maureen E. Donahue,  
Southwestern CSD at Jamestown

### **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  
Patricia Sullivan-Kriss,  
Hauppauge

### **Nominating**

Chair: Phyllis Harrington,  
Oceanside UFSD

*Committees by Appointment Only*

## Council and LEAF, Inc. Staff

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### 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.

### 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.



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### **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.

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## 2014–2015 LEAF, Inc. Officers



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



**Past President**  
Mary Alice Price  
Retired Superintendent



**Past President**  
Henry L. Grishman  
Superintendent  
*Jericho UFSD*



**Secretary/Treasurer**  
John E. Bierwirth  
Superintendent  
*Herricks UFSD*

## Board Members



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



**Laura Feijoo**  
NYC Department of  
Education



**Angela White**  
Assistant Superintendent,  
Ossining



**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.