"Data-driven is the stupidest term in education."

If you’ve heard me speak at a conference or school or district meeting, you may have heard me use that phrase before. I say it often when working with educators because I know it’s a sure way to get the audience’s attention.

If I am speaking to a group comprising mainly of teachers, that statement is usually greeted with applause (after they look at their administrators to see their response). If I am in a room full of administrators, the response is often shock and concerned looks. Both groups sincerely want to do what is right for their students, but when I say that “data-driven is the stupidest term in education,” what each hears can be very different. With either type of crowd, my hope is that the jolting statement helps us all recalibrate our focus and reminds us of our true purpose in education: opening doors for those we serve. After all, no one who ever dreamed of being a teacher did so imagining just how meaningful and exciting it would be to test kids! (I hope you can hear the sarcasm in that last sentence!)

When I denounce the term data-driven, the first challenge that comes in response is usually, “Are you saying data is not important?”

Not at all; in fact, this whole chapter is focused on the importance of data evidence and how it is crucial to serving students. But we should be driven by students, not data.

I struggle with the word data in education because of the disconnect between what it actually means and how the education system tends to wield it. CONT / 2
### SUPERINTENDENT VACANCIES

**Location:** Fort Plain CSD  
Fort Plain, NY  
**Salary:** Open

**Location:** Red Hook CSD  
Red Hook, NY  
**Salary:** App. $185 – 225,000

**Location:** East Moriches UFSD  
East Moriches, NY  
**Salary:** Open

**Location:** Dunkirk City SD  
Dunkirk, NY  
**Salary:** Open

**Location:** Kenmore-Town of Tonawanda UFSD  
Kenmore, NY  
**Salary:** $185,000

**Location:** Carthage CSD  
Carthage, NY  
**Salary:** Minimum of $150,000

### OTHER VACANCIES

**Elementary School Principal**  
Location: Binghamton City SD  
Binghamton, NY  
**Salary:** Category II

**Assistant Superintendent for Finance**  
Location: Pawling CSD  
Pawling, NY  
**Salary:** Open

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### EVIDENCE-INFORMED...

**CON'T FROM / 1**

Here is the Merriam-Webster definition of data:

> *factual information (such as measurements or statistics) used as a basis for reasoning, discussion, or calculation.*

Here is what many teachers hear or feel when the word is used: letters and numbers.

As shared in *The Innovator’s Mindset*, when we are data-driven, we take the most human profession, teaching, and reduce it to simply letters and numbers. There is something inherently wrong with this approach because when teachers are driven by test scores, the students themselves get lost in the process.

Talking about summative and formative assessment moves the conversation in a slightly better direction, but what if we shifted our focus and our practice to be learner-driven and evidence-informed? With relationships at the core of what we do and learner-driven, evidence-informed practices, education improves dramatically for teachers, administrators, and, most importantly, for students.

### Why Use the Word Evidence over Data?

The words evidence and data have similar definitions, but the way they are often perceived in the world of education is significantly different. Evidence seems to encompass much more than letters and numbers. It helps us not only look for things that can be measured but also things that can’t be measured, things that have an impact on students’ learning experiences. Evidence can include tests or assignments. It also includes ideas and thinking shared in portfolios, self-assessments, interactions in the hallways, concerts, sporting events, fine arts performances, internships and exhibits, and anything else that highlights and demonstrates learning and growth. We fail to tell the whole story of a learner when we focus on a narrow view of success in education in the all-mighty pursuit of scores.

Elements of education that are not solely academic receive less attention because they are harder to record and measure, but does that make them less valuable? No; in fact, I would argue that the things that are difficult to quantify are at least as valuable to our students’ long-term success as any grade they will ever receive. Attention to both social-emotional and academic skills acknowledges that we are multifaceted beings. My ability to write this book, for example, is due in large part to literacy skills I learned in school. Those skills were easily assessed by tests. But the way I tell a story or give a presentation has a direct connection to the opportunities I had to participate in drama and fine arts as a student, where the things I learned were far more subjective in nature. My point is that focusing on learner-driven, evidence-informed practices does not mean we forgo either “academic” or “non-academic” learning; it means that all of these experiences are important to our students’ success.

For those who cling to tradition and scream, “But the real world demands grades!” I have to ask: Does it? Really? Maybe that was true in an earlier era. Maybe. But that certainly isn’t the case today. In the 2013 CNET article, *Google: GPAs are Worthless* (Want to guess where this article is going based on the title?), Laszlo Bock, former senior vice president of People Operations at Google, said, “GPAs are worthless as a criteria for hiring, and test scores are worthless.” He went on to say, “Google famously used to ask everyone for a transcript and GPAs and test scores, but we don’t anymore, unless you’re just a few years out of school. We found that they don’t predict anything.”

Here’s what the company is doing instead:

Google is now tending toward something called “behavioral interviewing.” This seems to involve actually wondering what you’re really like and how you really live, think, and act.

Explained Bock: “The interesting thing about the behavioral interview is that when you ask somebody to speak to their own experience, and you drill into that, you get two kinds of information. One is you get to see how they actually interacted in a real-world
situation, and the valuable ‘meta’ information you get about the candidate is a sense of what they consider to be difficult.”

. . . Google now knows what it really needs. Said Bock: “You want people who like figuring out stuff where there is no obvious answer.”

Many of the skills that organizations are asking for go beyond what academics can provide. If you look at the “2022 Skills Outlook” provided by the World Economic Forum, many of the skills that are growing in importance are extremely hard to label with a grade.

If you are reading this book, it is very likely that you are involved in education. Think about your first job at a school: How much do you believe your high school or college transcripts played a part in whether you received that job? As a principal who hired teachers and support staff, GPAs never factored into my decision. I was often surprised by the fact that many excellent educators did poorly in school. These teachers, in particular, seemed to “get” the students who struggle because they were those kids. I also learned that a high GPA didn’t guarantee that candidate would make a great teacher. I can almost guarantee that you have encountered a teacher who did well in school as a student (academically) but struggled to teach. So many factors beyond academic achievement have an impact on a person’s ability to teach students. In the same way, grades cannot be the final measure of our students’ potential or success.

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THE COUNCIL’S COMMISSIONER’S ADVISORY COUNCIL REPRESENTATIVES ANNOUNCED
By Rina Greco, Executive Assistant, The Council

The 2019-2020 Commissioner’s Advisory Council (C.A.C.) representatives and alternates for each of The Council’s geographic regions have been announced. Each representative will serve a full year term. The first meeting was held at the Fall Leadership Summit this past September. C.A.C. members meet with the Commissioner of Education and other State Education Department leadership to exchange ideas and discuss current education topics on the following meeting dates: January 17, 2020; April 24, 2020 and July 1, 2020. This past November’s C.A.C. meeting was canceled due to changes in leadership at the State Education Department.

2019-2020 Commissioner’s Advisory Council Representatives:
I. Western Region (Erie I, Erie2-Chautauqua-Cattaraugus, Orleans-Niagara, Cattaraugus-Allegany-Erie-Wyoming):
Representative: Kimberly Moritz, Springville-Griffith Institute [Erie 2-Chautauqua-Cattaraugus]
Alternate: Michael Cornell, Hamburg [Erie 1]

II. Central Western Region (Genesee Valley, Monroe 1, Monroe 2-Orleans, Wayne-Finger Lakes):
Representative: Kelly Houck, Dundee [Wayne-Finger Lakes]
Alternate: Matthew Cook, Newark [Wayne-Finger Lakes]

III. Southern Tier Region (Broome-Delaware-Tioga, Delaware-Chenango-Madison-Otsego, Greater Southern Tier, Otsego-Northern Catskills):
Representative: William Crankshaw, Cooperstown [Otsego-Northern Catskills]
Alternate: Robert Mackey, Unadilla Valley [Delaware-Chenango-Madison-Otsego]

IV. Central Region (Cayuga-Onondaga, CiTi (Oswego), Onondaga-Cortland-Madison, Tompkins-Seneca-Tioga):
Representative: James Froio, Jordan-Elbridge [Cayuga-Onondaga]
Alternate: Stephen Parker Zielinski, South Seneca [Tompkins-Seneca-Tioga]

THE COUNCIL OUTLOOK
CONNECTING THE SCHOOL LEADERSHIP COMMUNITY

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V. Mohawk Valley Region (Herkimer-Fulton-Hamilton-Otsego, Madison-Oneida, Oneida-Herkimer-Madison):  
Representative: Ronald Wheelock, Suquoit Valley [Oneida-Herkimer-Madison]  
Alternate: Charles Chafee, Waterville [Oneida-Herkimer-Madison]

VI. Ontario Region (Jefferson-Lewis-Hamilton-Herkimer-Oneida, St. Lawrence-Lewis):  
Representative: Lauren French, Gouverneur [St. Lawrence-Lewis]  
Alternate: Barbara Case, General Brown [Jefferson-Lewis-Hamilton-Herkimer-Oneida]

VII. North Country Region (Champlain Valley Educational Services, Franklin-Essex-Hamilton):  
Representative: Daniel Mannix, Beekmantown [Champlain Valley Educational Services]  
Alternate: Jerry Griffin, Malone [Franklin-Essex-Hamilton]

Representative: Richard Ruberti, Wheelerville [Hamilton-Fulton-Montgomery]  
Alternate: Paul Jenkins, Glens Falls City [Washington-Warren-Saratoga-Hamilton]

IX. Mid-Hudson Region (Dutchess, Orange-Ulster, Sullivan, Ulster County):  
Representative: Brian Monahan, Minisink Valley [Orange-Ulster]  
Alternate: John Evans, Roscoe [Sullivan County]

X. Lower Hudson Region (Putnam-Northern Westchester, Rockland, Southern Westchester):  
Representative: Lisa Brady, Dobbs Ferry [Southern Westchester]  
Alternate: Edward Kliszus, Port Chester-Rye [Southern Westchester]

XI. Nassau County Region:  
Representative: Nicholas Stirling, Valley Stream #30  
Alternate: Laura Seinfeld, Oyster Bay-East Norwich

XII. Suffolk County Region:  
Representative: Bernadette Burns, West Islip [Eastern Suffolk BOCES]  
Alternate: Ronald Masera, Center Moriches [Eastern Suffolk BOCES]

LEAF Board President: Laura Feijoo, New Rochelle City

Big 5 Schools: TBD, Buffalo City; TBD, New York City; TBD, Rochester City; Jaime Alicea, Syracuse City; Edwin Quezada, Yonkers City

Active Council Past Presidents: Maureen Donahue, Southwestern; Clark Godshall, Orleans-Niagara BOCES; Henry Grishman, Jericho; William Johnson, Rockville Centre; Lorna Lewis, Plainview-Old Bethpage; Neil O’Brien, Port Byron; L. Oliver Robinson, Shenendehowa

UPDATES TO THE COUNCIL’S HOUSE OF DELEGATES

By Rina Greco, Executive Assistant, The Council

There are several updates since the publication of the November article announcing this year’s House of Delegate members. The Council welcomes the following delegate members and their alternates:

Delaware-Chenango-Madison-Otsego
Robert Mackey, Unadilla Valley (2nd term, 2020)  
Alternate: Jason Thompson, Delhi

Ulster County
Paul Padalino, Kingston City (Unexpired term, 2021)  
Alternate: Lisa Wiles, Ellenville
CONNECTING THE SCHOOL LEADERSHIP COMMUNITY

OUTLOOK FOR THE 2020 LEGISLATIVE SESSION

By Robert Lowry, Deputy Director, The Council

State government has its rhythms. Every year the Legislature convenes in January. Within the first month, the Governor proposes a budget. A budget is enacted. The end of each session brings a rush of action on bills, some good, some bad, too often more the latter. Every even year, all Assembly and Senate seats are on the ballot in November, and every fourth year, candidates for Governor and other statewide offices contest those positions.

But every budget and every election cycle manage to be different, and 2020 will have some facets no one has experienced in decades, if ever.

Politics

In the 2018, Democrats won control of the State Senate for only the third time in more than half a century. The prior two occasions were ended by the ensuing election. This time could be more lasting—the Democrats hold a commanding 40 to 23 seat majority and Republican incumbents have been retiring or seeking other offices.

In the space of just two weeks, five Republican State Senators announced that they will not seek reelection in 2020: Betty Little (Glens Falls), George Amedore (Schenectady), Michael Ranzenhofer (Williamsville), Joseph Robach (Rochester), and Richard Funke (Fairport). Senator Little’s district, occupying the northeastern corner of the state, should remain in Republican hands, but those now held by Senators Amedore and Funke were won by Democrats in 2012. In 2018, Senators Ranzenhofer and Robach retained their seats with their smallest victory margins since first being elected.

More incumbent Senators may still withdraw. The period for circulating and filing candidate petitions runs from February 25 to April 2.

Another Republican seat will be vacated sooner. Less than a year into his first term as a Senator, Robert Antonacci of Syracuse, sought and won a State Supreme Court judgeship. The race to succeed him will be competitive. Mr. Antonacci won the seat by 51% to 49% a year ago. His Democratic opponent, John Mannion, has announced that he will run again.

Finally, two current Republican Senators, Chris Jacobs and Robert Ortt, have announced plans to seek the Western New York Congressional seat vacated by the resignation of Representative Chris Collins on October 1.

It is up to Governor Andrew Cuomo to decide whether and when to call special elections to fill the vacant U.S. House and State Senate seats. He has not done so as of this writing (early December). A possibility would be to schedule one or both for April 28, the date of the state’s presidential primary. With a far more competitive, attention-drawing contest on the Democratic side, turnout on that date would favor Democratic candidates in the special elections. This has led Republicans to threaten a lawsuit, if the Governor does pick that date.

In a special election, Senators Ortt and Jacobs would not have to give up their current positions to seek the U.S. House seat. Veteran Democratic Assemblyman Sean Ryan has announced plans to seek Jacobs’s Senate position. If Jacobs is elected to the House, Ryan would be a strong candidate to win the seat for Democrats. Through his Assembly position, he now represents approximately 40% of the Senate district’s population.

If Democrats do retain the Senate majority after the 2020 election, they will be in position to control the drawing of district boundaries after the next Census—the first time in decades that they would have that opportunity. Control over re-districting would further strengthen their position for the long-term.

Now holding 107 out of 150 seats, the Assembly’s Democratic majority is secure. But several veteran members face primary challenges from younger and more liberal opponents, including current and former Education Committee Chairs Michael Benedetto and Catherine Nolan. With primaries for the State Legislature and U.S. House scheduled for June 23, legislative leaders designed a session calendar set to roughly three weeks earlier than in past years—on June 2—to allow incumbents time to return to their districts and campaign.

Finances

Between now and the primaries, current Democratic lawmakers will have to resolve more difficult state budget challenges than any since Governor Cuomo’s first year.

Unbudgeted growth in Medicaid spending has caused the state’s projected structural deficit for 2020-21 to grow from $4.1 billion estimated in the Budget Division’s first quarter financial plan update, to $6.1 billion in the mid-year update it released in late November. The new deficit forecast equates to 5.5% of projected expenditures—less than the 10% structural deficit inherited by Governor Cuomo, but well above the 3% to 3.9% range that had prevailed during his subsequent tenure.

The fiscal outlook presents at least two challenges. First, the state constitution requires Governors to propose balanced budgets—Governor Cuomo will have to outline a plan to eliminate the deficit. Second, he has sought to limit CON'T / 7

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overall state spending to 2% annual growth and, even with cuts, Medicaid growth alone could consume most of the spending within that target, not leaving much for School Aid or any other area.

The Budget Division forecast anticipates a $1.1 billion, 4.0% increase in School Aid, based on a cap tying School Aid increases to a 10-year average of growth in statewide personal income. In practice, the Governor has treated the cap as a ceiling and a floor, and has sometimes proposed School Aid increases greater than his own cap. But again, for 2020-21, the overall budget outlook is the most challenging since his first year.

Assembly Speaker Carl Heastie said his chamber’s preference would be to deal with the deficit primarily by raising revenues, including increased taxes on the wealthy. Speaking for her colleagues, Senate Majority Leader Andrea Stewart-Cousins was more circumspect. She said, “Our first fallback isn’t, ‘let’s raise taxes.’” Given his frequent and fervid warnings about the potential devastation threatened by the $10,000 federal cap on state and local tax deductions, there are strong reasons to doubt Governor Cuomo would accede to a large tax increase on the highest income individuals.

With the prospect of a disappointing budget (or worse) and primary challenges to incumbents from the left, a concern is that Democratic lawmakers will feel pressure to approve an even higher than typical quotient of bills imposing new mandates upon school districts in the end of session rush.

One bright spot is that the economy seems poised to avoid a recession for another year and current year tax receipts have so far exceeded the Budget Division’s forecasts in both the enacted budget financial plan and first quarter update. The mid-year update made no changes in projected tax receipts, so any growth might reduce predicted deficits.

State constitution prescribes that the legislature is to convene on the first Wednesday following the first Monday in January—January 8 this year. The constitutional deadline for the Governor to unveil his executive budget is the second Tuesday thereafter—January 21. But the Governor could release his budget proposal before the deadline, as he did a year ago.

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## Retirements

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Jeffrey Black</td>
<td>12/19</td>
<td>Prattsburgh CSD</td>
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<td>Philip D’Angelo</td>
<td>12/19</td>
<td>Millbrook CSD</td>
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<td>David Davison</td>
<td>12/19</td>
<td>Westfield CSD</td>
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<td>Mary Beth Fiore</td>
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<td>Elmira Heights CSD</td>
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<td>Katy Graves</td>
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<td>Sag Harbor UFSD</td>
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<tr>
<td>Douglas Huntley</td>
<td>1/20</td>
<td>Queensbury UFSD</td>
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<tr>
<td>Thomas O’Brien</td>
<td>1/20</td>
<td>Roxbury CSD</td>
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<tr>
<td>Maria Rice</td>
<td>12/19</td>
<td>New Paltz CSD</td>
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<tr>
<td>Jacklin Starks</td>
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## Interims

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<tr>
<td>Amy Goodman</td>
<td>12/19</td>
<td>Tuckahoe UFSD</td>
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<tr>
<td>Debra Jackson</td>
<td>1/20</td>
<td>Garrison UFSD</td>
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<tr>
<td>Laura Mitchell</td>
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<td>Millbrook CSD</td>
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## New Superintendents

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<tr>
<td>Elizabeth Ashton</td>
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<td>Jeff Bennett</td>
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<td>Roxbury CSD</td>
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<tr>
<td>Dale Breault</td>
<td>1/20</td>
<td>Franklin-Essex-Hamilton BOCES</td>
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<td>Michael Cipolla</td>
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<tr>
<td>Michael Gill</td>
<td>1/20</td>
<td>Canastota CSD</td>
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<tr>
<td>Jason Mitchell</td>
<td>1/20</td>
<td>Madison CSD</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ryan Pacatte</td>
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<td>Avon CSD</td>
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## Queensbury Ribbon Cutting for Legacy 2020 Capital Project

In early November, the Queensbury School District unveiled its $40 million Legacy 2020 Capital Project. Designed by Signature Partner CSArch, the work focused mainly at Queensbury High School where three specific areas were created for arts, humanities and STEM. They also added a 16,000-square foot media center and altered the front of the building to make a community room and space for student services.

In addition, they replaced windows and renovated classrooms with new technology and new moveable furniture. The project included design input from the community, including students, parents, residents, educators and business officials. It has become a showpiece and inspired other districts with its design elements and ideas for gathering community engagement.

The Council wanted to thank CSArch and Doug Huntley, Queensbury, and his school district team for hosting a tour of the new project for attendees of the 2019 Fall Leadership Summit in Saratoga Springs this past September.

## Did You Hear?


Congratulations to Lesli Myers-Small, Brockport, for being chosen by the Board of Regents to be the next Assistant Commissioner for the Office of Innovation and School Reform at the State Education Dept. Lesli was a recipient of the Appreciation Award at THE COUNCIL’S 2019 Winter Institute this past year.  

CONT / 9
Kudos to Luvelle Brown, Ithaca, and the students and staff at Ithaca High School which was ranked #48 for STEM education in the nation by Newsweek in this link: https://www.newsweek.com/americas-best-stem-high-schools-2020

The U.S. Department of Education has named Manhasset Secondary School a 2019 National Blue Ribbon School of Excellence. It is one of just 312 public and 50 private schools in the nation to receive the honor this year. The National Blue Ribbon Schools Program recognizes public and private elementary, middle and high schools based on their overall academic excellence or their progress in closing achievement gaps among student subgroups.

Vincent Butera, Manhasset, and Manhasset Secondary School Principal Dean Schlanger will represent Manhasset at a future awards ceremony in Washington, D.C., to celebrate the school’s hard-earned achievements.

Larry Spring, Schenectady, was one of a dozen superintendents who spoke at the American Heart Association’s recent Scientific Sessions to help chart a definitive course of action to eliminate vaping in schools.

From the Middletown Record: “Ulster BOCES Electrical Construction & Maintenance students had the opportunity to take a field trip to Kingston Design Connection’s 2019 Showhouse. Recently, their classmates John Auer, from the Onteora Central School District, and Andrew Westervelt, from the Kingston City School District, were invited to be part of the redesign of the home, which is listed on the National Historic Register.” Check out photos here: https://www.recordonline.com/news/20191127/boces-students-are-part-of-historic-home-redesign

Congratulations to Eudes S. Budhai, Westbury, for being nationally recognized as a Mover and Shaker by District Administration Magazine for his outstanding leadership, vision and initiatives.
With the help of restorative practices, a Long Island high school is looking at alternatives to suspensions and having students work with a mental health interventionist to help them address the stress and anger that would lead them to make destructive decisions.

Instead of punishing students, the school looks for non-punitive ways to address problems and calm tense situations that have the potential to jeopardize school safety.

“We also have a ‘room to breathe’ in our high school,” Lorna Lewis, Plainview-Old Bethpage. “Students can go there when they are free to destress with low light smoothing music and aromas. Students get to relax and calm down when they need it.”

Plainview-Old Bethpage joins other schools across New York State which are embracing restorative practices as one of the ways to change school climate and culture while creating a community where everyone feels respected and safe.

Educational leaders worry about repeatedly suspending students who end up missing school, getting behind in classwork, dropping out and entering in the school-to-prison pipeline.

According to the New York State Educational Conference Board, restorative practices are characterized by principles that emphasize the importance of positive relationships as central to building community and use processes that restore relationships when harm has occurred. This is a proactive approach versus reacting to conflict in what may be considered more “traditional” punitive ways.

Educators have success stories about how restorative practices kept students in school, improved school climate, culture and safety and helped troubled students have a bright future.

Teaching Empathy

“You can’t force this because it’s so related to school culture,” said Lori DeCarlo, Randolph Academy, who recently spoke at our 2019 Fall Leadership Summit on the topic. “The nature of restorative practices is voluntary.”

DeCarlo said it starts with teaching empathy and talking about feelings and how people respond to them and develops into creating meaningful relationships in the school which must be a safe place to share. “It’s good for all, not just the kids,” she said. “It’s about building community and creating an empathetic, peaceful environment for all.”

For starters, she said it is important for school officials to understand students’ lives outside of school. She shared success stories in which students were facing suspension were given a chance to participate in restorative practices. “In one case, a student was the first person to graduate high school in his family and one went on to college where he is now,” she said.

Changing school culture doesn’t happen overnight but requires three to five years to be fully and effectively implemented, she added.

Leading with Love

To implement restorative practices, Luvelle Brown, Ithaca, said his district has adopted what he calls “a culture of love” to lead to “a culture of excellence,” which has led to powerful results.

Before this transformation began, Brown said the district had thousands of referrals and hundreds of suspensions for troubling behavior. Once school officials decided to build a restorative community, they first started to shift the language away from using terms such as “discipline” and “bad” when defining students’ actions. Then they agreed to create a “reflect and return” approach in which students weren’t always suspended for disruptions but were sent to a safe space to reflect and meditate on what their actions caused and write about it. Sometimes they met with counselors too. If students were willing to restore their community after the disruption, they were sent back to class with no suspension. However, there is an option to hold a suspension in abeyance for a certain number of days if the student failed to try to restore community.

Brown calls it “Leading with Love,” and uses the following words to have a positive result: patient, truthful, kind, forgiving, trusting, dedicated, unselfish and humble. This message is closely tied together with social-emotional learning and culturally responsive practices. In the past two years, Brown has taken this impactful message of restoring community to dozens of different states. Recently, he presented it to the Virginia School Boards Association and Virginia Association of School Superintendents.

Restorative practices don’t just produce good feelings but positive educational results, including higher graduation rates and enrollments in AP and accelerated courses and reading rates and a reduction in discipline referrals over six years, he said.

Brown also shared a story about a young man with special needs and struggling with school who was in trouble and nearly suspended. Instead, the district opted to
use restorative practices and held his suspension in abeyance for a few days and he underwent efforts to restore the community.

“He became a model student in his senior year of high school doing well in classes and basketball,” Brown said. “After that, he went to college and is still there today.”

Part of a Continuum of Mental Health Services

Larry Spring, Schenectady, said restorative practices started in his district when he arrived in 2012 and they have slowly adopted them to reduce the number of suspensions and to keep students from dropping out and going to prison. There are fewer fights and less referrals for suspension, Spring said.

“Restorative practices are a part of a continuum of mental health services,” he said adding that 80% of students getting into trouble have some mental or behavioral health issue.

Spring said restorative practices are one of eight evidence-based treatments his district uses to help students and creates trust and empathy in the school environment.

At Schenectady High School, students participate in community building circles on regular Circle Up Days to improve school climate and culture. Students discuss topics including, race, school safety, school culture, self-care and mental health.

Helping Schools Help Students

At our Premier Silver Partner Peaceful Schools, Jessie Owen and Jamie Cook conduct regular trainings about restorative practices at New York State schools.

“Social media is making students more and more disconnected and restorative practices are a way to reconnect because they teach students how to listen and speak to each other in person instead of the internet,” Cook said.

Owen said restorative practices help improve school culture and climate because students and teachers feel connected when something happens there is a foundation and there is something to restore it back to.

Their trainings teach everyone how to be proactive and make connections as well as reactive to have students take accountability for their actions.

They have gone into schools where people are completely against the use of restorative practices and after three days of trainings, they have come to embrace them and have changed their point of view and have become believers.

Connection also helps students overcome chronic stress and trauma and their training takes a trauma-informed approach. “Hurt people, hurt people,” Owen said. “People start to heal the moment they feel heard. It gives them the opportunity to validate their concerns and feelings.”

Here is a sample of the restorative questions they use in their training:
- What happened?
- What were you thinking at the time?
- What have you thought about since?
- Who has been affected by what you have done? In what way?
- What do you think you need to do to make things right?

Susan Villani, a senior program associate at our Signature Partner WestEd, and her colleague Su Henry, created a toolkit on restorative practices for administrators and teachers four years ago. Villani piloted it and there has been a positive response to it from school leaders, classroom teachers, and students.

“It’s not just administrators who use restorative practices; it’s a mindset for the whole school. It starts by building community in classrooms” she said. “When teachers use restorative practices, there are fewer office referrals, and that frees up time for administrators to be able to use restorative practices with students they see.”

From students’ perspectives, community building circles help them get to know their peers and their teachers. Once a teacher begins doing restorative circles, students often look for it, find it helpful and ask for it. As a result, students get to know each other more deeply, stand up for each other, and work to build that community, Villani said.

At first, some teachers think that they don’t have time for restorative practices because they only have a classroom period to teach their content. But when asked if they have the whole classroom period for instruction, many say that student disruptions frequently interfere with their teaching. After trying restorative practices, teachers often report that it gives them more time for instruction because students are ready to learn, Villani said.

“Restorative practices build a caring and trusting environment, which is a prerequisite for learning,” she said.

Safe schools come from a combination of efforts and more than the physical elements like cameras, windows, and vestibules, which were in place in Newtown and in Parkland, Lewis said.

She continued, “But the bottom line is, if you have a disenfranchised student, then nobody is safe. Until we are emotionally safe, nobody is safe. And so, yes, you can spend a lot of money on physical buildings and locking down and ‘hardening’—and I hate the term—but the idea of hardening your buildings—but we’ve got to soften the heart before we attend to hardening buildings.”
**FINANCIAL LEADERSHIP WORKSHOP**  
January 23, 2020 / 8:30 am – 3 pm  
Capital Region BOCES, 900 Watervliet-Shaker Road, Albany

**REGISTER TODAY!**  
[HTTP://BIT.LY/FINANCIALLEADERS2020ALB](HTTP://BIT.LY/FINANCIALLEADERS2020ALB)  
This event, in partnership with Capital Region BOCES, will feature interactive discussions on school funding transparency; special education fiscal planning, capital projects and long-range planning. This program will also provide an opportunity for attendees to meet colleagues from around the state and discuss critical financial leadership issues.

- **Behind the Numbers: A Closer Look at Foundation Aid and School Funding Transparency**  
  Presented by Joseph P. Dragone, Ph.D., Senior Executive Office, Capital Region BOCES
- **It’s Not About the Money…It’s About the Money!**  
  Presented by Scott Payne, District Superintendent, Cattaraugus-Allegany-Erie-Wyoming BOCES & Kelly Zimmerman, Elementary Principal & Director of Special Education, Pine Valley CSD
- **Long-Range Financial Analysis**  
  Presented by Rick Timbs, CEO & President, R.G. Timbs, Inc.
- **Capital Project Planning**  
  Presented by BBS Architects, Landscape Architects, and Engineers

$199 per person includes breakfast, break & lunch and all program materials. Aidable through Capital Region BOCES.

There is a small room block at the Hilton Garden Inn Albany Airport, located at 800 Albany Shaker Road, Albany, NY 12211 at the rate of $130/night. Call 518.464.6666 and reference group code C25.

Questions? Contact Vren Banks, Director of LEAF, Inc. at 518.694.4875 or email vren@nyscoss.org.
BOCES PARTNER TO SUPPORT DISTRICTS WITH NEXT GENERATION ELA AND MATH STANDARDS

By Michael J. Doughty, recently appointed Assistant Superintendent for the Northeastern Regional Information Center

Moving more than 700 school districts to embrace new learning standards in just a few years isn’t an easy task. But New York State school districts have had an ally in The Partnership, an innovative model for sharing resources that aims to make the Next Generation ELA and Mathematics Learning Standards rollout go as smoothly as possible.

Spearheaded by Anita Murphy and Dan White, district superintendents from Capital Region BOCES and Monroe 1 BOCES respectively, The Partnership is a collaborative network composed of several BOCES from across New York State and the Syracuse City School District.

In addition to hosting meetings across the state to help introduce the new standards and present roadmaps for the BOCES within the network, The Partnership has developed a curated library of resources related to the Next Gen standards and made them available to all school districts through its website, https://www.thepartnership-ny.org/.

“The goal is to create a level playing field — so that all districts have access to rigorous, standards-aligned curriculum and professional development, whether big or small,” explained Mike Doughty, Assistant Superintendent for the Northeastern Regional Information Center.

Doughty and his colleagues have worked to curate a vast library of materials, including PowerPoint presentations, handouts, spreadsheets and videos, that are helping districts across the state to roll out the Next Generation standards.

In addition to providing resources organized by the sequential phases of the rollout, Doughty shares video interviews with educators that offer a glimpse of what the rollout looks like in individual districts. In one video, elementary school principal Lauren Crisman describes how she used tools provided by The Partnership to walk her teachers through prioritizing standards and drafting teaching points.

Using The Partnership’s model, Crisman said, helped her develop buy-in among her teachers. “They can see where this is going and how it applies to the classroom,” Crisman said of her teachers, adding, “We got everything prioritized in one afternoon.”

As the rollout of the Next Generation Learning Standards continues, Doughty hopes The Partnership will continue to be a valued tool for educators across the state, who can both contribute to and learn from the network’s library of resources.

“As we move forward, we will continue to welcome input from educators so that we can see what’s working and share that knowledge and expertise widely,” Doughty explained.

Educators who would like to contribute professional development materials to The Partnership are encouraged to get in touch. To be added to The Partnership’s library, materials must have a direct connection to the Next Generation English Language Arts and Mathematics Standards and the roadmap, and must be applicable to a variety of districts. The Partnership also prioritizes materials that support cultural responsiveness, and equity and access for all students, including English language learners and students with disabilities. Material submissions can be directed to partnership.questions@neric.org.
Recently school districts were notified by New York State Education Department (NYSED) that there would be changes to the 2020 building condition survey and visual inspection schedule, fondly referred to as the BCS report. Historically school districts statewide would engage their architectural firms to conduct these surveys and then begin planning their capital projects in the following five years, based on their BCS findings.

This effort was an enormous resource commitment on the part of architectural and engineering firms across our state. Subsequently, capital project planning and construction tended to take place almost simultaneously statewide as a result of the BCS, which in turn committed sometimes scarce construction resources concurrently. This five-year cycle of ebbs and flows has repeated itself until recently.

Under the new statute, BCS reports will now take place on a staggered schedule as assigned by the Commissioner in calendar years 2020 through 2024, and every five years on that same five-year cycle every year after based on criteria identified by NYSED. This new statute is a welcome change for the way school districts implement their facility planning strategies.

One benefit to this change will be that limited architectural, engineering and construction resources will be more evenly allocated over a five-year period, versus a one-time statewide event every five years.

The staggered BCS schedule will complement the way school districts are becoming more creative in their approach to facility planning relating to capital projects. A common theme recently has been the ability for school districts to leverage alternative strategies such as energy performance projects (EPPs) while undertaking capital projects in their facility planning approach.

EPPs are a way to implement energy saving technologies districtwide such as LED lighting and lighting controls, HVAC work, building envelope work as well as building automation strategies. They come with an annual energy savings guarantee and have no burden on taxpayers.

Capital project dollars are precious and limited. Actual construction costs with built in contingencies can be negatively affected by things like labor shortages and material cost increases that eat away at capital project budgets and potentially reduce capital project scope. This has led school districts to manage two projects that complement each other (a capital project and an energy performance project) simultaneously allowing them to undertake more work on their BCS report without any negative scope impact or taxpayer dollars.

In some cases, school districts can wipe out a potential tax impact on a capital project and offset that with an EPP using the energy savings. Leveraging an EPP with a capital project also reduces a districts’ energy consumption and reduces their carbon footprint. With the welcome change of staggered BCS reporting, school districts can now employ a complementary capital project and EPP approach as a strategy that can capture additional scope items, decrease or offset taxpayer impact and finally, reduce the energy consumption and carbon footprint of school districts across the state.

C&S Companies is a Signature Partner of The Council and have earned a solid reputation for quality construction management and engineering services for New York State K-12 schools. They provide a wide variety of services including construction management, engineering, architecture, planning, environmental, and technology solutions. For more information about this article contact Andrea Weare Orlando at 315.720.0425 or aweareorlando@cscos.com. You can also go to www.cscos.com for more information about C&S Companies, Inc.
MONDAY MORNING KEYNOTE – THE COUNCIL’S IGNITE SESSIONS

Monday, March 2, 2020 / 9 – 10:30 a.m.
ENLIGHTEN US, BUT MAKE IT QUICK!

Sponsored by Premier Silver Partner Clevr

Learn from The Council’s Ignite Session presenters at these new fast-paced, 10-minute presentations during the Winter Institute. This new format debuted at the 2019 Fall Leadership Summit to rave reviews and in March will include:

GLOBAL TRAVEL: ESSENTIAL FOR SUPERINTENDENTS AND STUDENTS
ANGELINA MALONEY, SUPERINTENDENT, BRUNSWICK CSD
Every district has a mission statement and most of them have a line about preparing students to live in a global society. Are we really living up to our mission statement? What part of your program provides meaningful hands-on global learning? Come learn about how international travel has changed my school, my students and my perspective on education by exploring new cultures, learning about the American identity through intercultural experience and opening the world through education.

REACHING STUDENTS WHO REFUSE TO GO TO SCHOOL
STEVE RAPPLEYEA, ASSISTANT SUPERINTENDENT, LAKELAND CSD
The Lakeland CSD uses protocols for home visits for students who are clinically impaired, so called “school refusal” students. We have a set of procedures for going to a students’ home, encouraging attendance, and very importantly, providing clinical supports once students are in school. Learn more about how Lakeland effectively uses these protocols to keep students in school.

MENTAL HEALTH: A COLLECTIVE PRIORITY AND RESPONSIBILITY
VINCE BUTERA, MANHASSET UFSD
After speaking and hearing from thousands of students and adults, it was evident that the mental health of our students needed to be a priority. This session will describe the steps one district has taken to strengthen mental health for students, faculty, and staff by first raising awareness and developing an understanding of mental health and then by leveraging the collective wisdom within the organization and community.

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