

News & Notes

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www.saanys.org

Smart Schools Referendum Passes

On November 4, the Smart Schools Bond Act of 2014 was passed by voters by a margin of 62 to 38. Later that same week, at a meeting in Saratoga Springs, Commissioner King told reporters that he did not have a timeline for the distribution of two billion dollars (\$2,000,000,000) to provide access to classroom technology and high-speed internet connectivity to equalize opportunities for children to learn, to add classroom space and to expand high-quality pre-kindergarten programs, to replace classroom trailers with permanent instructional space, and to install high-tech smart security features in schools. On October 9, the SAANYS government relations committee met with the governor’s office to discuss the procedures that need to be completed by school districts in order to access their Smart Schools allocation. The committee learned that necessary forms and procedures are not yet developed, and remain unavailable as of the time of this writing (November 7). However, the governor’s representatives indicated that the funds would remain available for at least 2014-15, 2015-16, and 2016-17.

School District Allocations

Each school district will receive a pro-rata share of the referendum funds commensurate with their relative allocation of state aid. The projects will be fully state funded and there will be no local contribution required of the school district. Each school district currently knows its allocation, and the allocations are posted on Governor Cuomo’s website: <http://www.governor.ny.gov/smart-schools-ny>.

Uses of Smart School Funds

Funds received through the bond act may be used for capital projects related to educational technology equipment, including but not limited to, interactive whiteboards; computer servers; tablet, desktop, and laptop computers; high-speed broadband or wireless internet connectivity for schools and communities; capital projects to construct, enhance, or modernize educational facilities to accommodate pre-kindergarten programs and provide instructional space to replace transportable classroom units; and capital projects to install high-tech security features in school buildings and on campuses.

Requirements to Receive a Smart School Grant

In order to receive a Smart Schools Grant, each school district must complete a Smart School Investment Plan describing how the bond act funds would be used. The format and content of the required investment plan is not yet available.

The investment plan is required to be developed in consultation with parents, teachers, students, community

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SAANYS Welcomes New Unit:

– REGION 4 –

Greenburgh Central School District
Administrators Organization

New York’s Leading Education Groups Outline Need for \$1.9 Billion State Aid Increase in 2015-16



Educational Conference Board says with an improved fiscal condition, New York State can help schools ‘turn the corner’ after tough years.




ECB organizations, including SAANYS, join together at a press conference in Albany to highlight successes of our public schools, advocate for support for our children, and present its report: “Turning the Corner: With an improved fiscal condition, New York can lead the way for sustainable educational progress.” SAANYS Director of Government Relations Jim Viola is pictured at the podium.

New York’s major statewide education organizations issued a report on November 13, outlining the need for a \$1.9 billion state aid increase for schools in the upcoming state budget, to continue current services and make progress on a number of critical new initiatives.

The organizations comprise the New York State Educational Conference Board (ECB), and together represent parents, classroom teachers, school-related professionals, school business officials, school building and program administrators, superintendents, and school boards.

The ECB report is titled “Turning the Corner: With

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Awards Program

SAANYS is proud to honor many exceptional New York State administrators with an annual awards program. This program was established to recognize educators who demonstrate outstanding leadership skills and have made exceptional contributions to the educational process.

For a complete list of the awards and criteria, as well as nomination forms, go to www.saanys.org/newsroom/criteria.asp.

For additional information, contact Susan Jaronski at SJaronski@saanys.org.

**Application Deadline:
January 31, 2015**

LEGAL BRIEFS

SAANYS Enters the Fight to Save Tenure



The concepts of tenure and seniority-based layoffs (commonly referred to as “last-in, first out” or “LIFO” statutes) have always been controversial, and critics often voice their concerns loudly, but to little avail. Then the landscape seemingly changed this past summer, when a trial court in California determined that its state tenure and seniority-based layoff statutes were unconstitutional as they negatively impacted students in lower income districts, often heavily populated by minorities, at a greater rate than students in affluent areas. This case, *Vergara v. State of California*, is currently on appeal, but has started a wildfire of attacks against tenure and seniority that quickly reached New York.

In the wake of *Vergara*, two cases, backed by public interest groups, were filed in New York challenging the state tenure and seniority laws. *Daids v. State of New York* was commenced in Richmond County Supreme Court and *Wright v. State of New York* was brought in Albany County Supreme Court. The two cases were consolidated into a single action in Richmond County Supreme Court. Both cases challenge the constitutionality of New York’s various statutes dealing with tenure, seniority, and APPR, on the basis that they allow for the retention of “ineffective teachers,” thereby denying students the “sound basic education” provided under the New York State Constitution.

These actions only named the State Education Department, Commissioner King, and the Board of Regents as defendants, leaving the very individuals protected

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Executive Viewpoint

Kevin S. Casey, Executive Director

In Defense of Tenure

By now most of you are probably aware that the secretive Partnership for Educational Justice (hereinafter “Partnership”), fronted by former CNN News Anchor Campbell Brown, has filed a lawsuit seeking to have tenure and seniority laws in New York State declared unconstitutional (see tenure story on page 1). It is alleged that these laws deny many children the sound basic education to which they are constitutionally entitled. It has been widely reported that this lawsuit is being funded by hedge fund managers and charter school proponents, although

the Partnership declines to reveal the individuals and/or entities that are providing its funding. Nevertheless, Campbell Brown is married to Don Senor, a former official in the Bush White House who is now a hedge fund manager. He served on the board of directors of StudentsFirstNY, a pro-charter school group founded by Michelle Rhee. Further, Brown herself serves on the board of directors of the Success Academy, a large New York City network of charter schools. The Success Academy website describes Brown as “...a passionate advocate for school choice and

education reform.” The chair of the Success Academy Board of Directors is Daniel S. Loeb, CEO of a twelve billion dollar hedge fund, and co-founder, with Michelle Rhee, of StudentsFirstNY. I am willing to bet the Partnership does not engage in bake sales to raise its money.

I can’t help but think that the causal link between tenure and student achievement will be difficult for plaintiffs to establish. Wealthy, high-achieving districts have the same tenure and seniority laws as low-achieving districts, so how can the tenure laws be the source of the differences in student achievement? What about poverty? What about disengaged families or massive program and staffing cuts? Why does *Education Week’s* Quality

Counts study consistently find New York’s education system among the top three in the nation, along with Maryland and Massachusetts, two other states with strong teacher tenure laws? As pointed out by Law Professor Erwin Chemerinsky, if the plaintiffs were correct, states without strong tenure protections – such

SAANYS alone is bearing the burden of protecting administrative tenure and seniority rights in this litigation. There is no other organization representing administrators in New York State that has done likewise.

as Texas, Alabama, and Mississippi – should be flourishing. They are not. Further, plaintiffs do not acknowledge that tenure is merely due process, or that the legislature recently put strict limits on hearing duration, or that the APPR provides an accelerated dismissal process for those educators deemed ineffective by

the evaluation system. To plaintiffs, these are inconvenient truths. The teacher tenure and seniority laws under attack by the hedge fund charter school proponents are the same laws that are the source of tenure and seniority rights for a variety of administrative titles in New York State. In order to represent the interests of administrators, and on behalf of representative members, SAANYS has entered this lawsuit. SAANYS alone is bearing the burden of protecting administrative tenure and seniority rights in this litigation. There is no other organization representing administrators in New York State that has done likewise. It will be a long and difficult undertaking, but necessary to fulfill our obligation to our members. We will not sit on the sidelines while our fate is decided by others. ■

Smart Schools Referendum Passes...

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members, and other stakeholders. Currently, there is no definition or guidance to clearly depict what is meant by “consultation.” Requirements are in place to permit nonpublic students limited access to technology through this program, beginning in 2014-15. Upon request, students enrolled in nonpublic schools must be provided access, at no charge, to Smart Schools classroom technology. The loan procedures are expected to be similar to those that are currently

in place for loaning instructional computer hardware to nonpublic students. The extent to which nonpublic students may access technology is also capped, and may not exceed \$250 multiplied by the nonpublic school enrollment. Finally, officials at SED have indicated that charter schools may also access Smart Schools funding through school districts. The formula and procedure for this sub-distribution is currently unavailable.

Each school district’s Investment Plan must be reviewed and approved by the three-member Smart Schools Review Board:

- John King, Jr. – Commissioner of Education
- Robert Megna – State Budget Director
- Nancy Zimpher – Chancellor of the State University of New York

More specific information regarding permissible uses of the funds is needed by school districts for the development of investment plans. For example, a determination has not been reached regarding the use of such

funds to pay for current and in-progress projects. For this reason, if your school district has such projects, you should identify, record, and track such costs. Clarification is also needed regarding any “strings” that may be attached to such funds, and standards that must be addressed. For example, Governor Cuomo’s Smart Schools Commission notes that “President Obama’s ConnectED initiative aims for schools to gain access to broadband speeds of at least 100 Mbps, along with a high-speed wireless network in every building.” ■



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News & Notes

School Administrators Association of New York State

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Getting a Jump on the Legislative Season

With a growing number of issues to address during the 2014-15 legislative session, SAANYS and the other members of the New York State Educational Conference Board (ECB)* have together, begun to meet with legislative offices and the Division of the Budget to present background information and legislative priorities. Based on a careful analysis of projected school district costs and revenue flows, the ECB organizations have individually and collectively recommended a total state aid increase of \$1.9 billion for 2015-16. (See story starting on page 1.)

In order to maintain current programs and services for students in 2015-16, a state aid increase of \$1.2 billion is necessary. This increase will address additional costs such as employee salaries, health benefits, pension costs, and Consumer Price Index growth. But, the status quo includes a 30,000 reduction of classroom teachers and a proportionately greater reduction of school administrators than of teachers. Class sizes have increased; educational opportunities and student support services have decreased.

Currently, 343 school districts still do not receive the level of aid this year that they received in 2008-09. The Foundation Aid formula that was designed to provide adequate and equitable support to schools is underfunded by \$4.7 billion. **The Gap Elimination Adjustment (GEA) that was intended as a short-term mechanism to balance the state budget, still diverts \$1 billion from schools.** These considerations need to be weighed against a \$4.8 billion surplus for the current year and a projection of surpluses through 2018.

Funding is needed to accelerate the end of the GEA and increase Foundation Aid funding in a balanced manner that benefits all school districts. Additional funding is needed to support teachers and school administrators

to successfully implement common core instruction; to provide better funding and reimbursement (BOCES and Special Services Aids) for career and technical education; to streamline pre-kindergarten funding into a single more cohesive program that is equitably available throughout the state; to meet the needs of English language learners; and to address influxes of unaccompanied minors in a timely manner.

The upcoming legislative session promises to be especially busy in terms of funding, program, and professional issues. SAANYS will continue to work with ECB organizations, as well as with partners in the NYS School Administrators Consortium (New York City, Yonkers, and Buffalo); in addition to using SAANYS' own government relations committee for large-scale lobby days.

**The NYS Educational Conference Board includes the following member organizations: Conference of the Big 5 School Districts, NYS Association of School Business Officials, NYS Congress of Parents and Teachers, Inc., NYS Council of School Superintendents, NYS United Teachers, and School Administrators Association of NYS. ■*



For more information regarding the SAANYS legislative agenda, the New York State Board of Regents, the Educational Conference Board, or other government relations concerns, contact James Viola, SAANYS director of government relations, at JViola@saanys.org.

New York's Leading Education Groups Outline Need for \$1.9 Billion State Aid Increase in 2015-16...

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an improved fiscal condition, New York can lead the way for sustainable educational progress.” It cites the state’s improved fiscal outlook, aided by recent financial settlements, in advocating for investments in education.

The report comes after a period of years in which state aid has been reduced, flat, or otherwise inadequate, to help schools continue essential services while also adapting to state-mandated education reforms. A little more than \$1 billion in state funding remains withheld from schools through the Gap Elimination Adjustment (GEA); and phase-in of the state’s Foundation Aid formula has been stalled since 2008-09.

The ECB Report Includes Three Recommendations

- First, the state aid increase in the 2015 state budget should fund the continuation of current school programs and services, recognizing limitations on the ability to fund those costs created by the tax cap.
- Second, the state should accelerate a plan to end the Gap Elimination Adjustment and return to a functioning Foundation Aid formula.
- Third, an overall state aid increase of \$1.9 billion would help school districts make meaningful progress on new initiatives – including teaching, training, and curriculum development, to meet world-class standards; expanding access to career and technical education programs; and allowing districts to continue to develop and grow pre-kindergarten programs.

“We believe that this year can be a turning point after a series of tough years for schools,” ECB Chair John Yagielski said. “The state’s fiscal health puts it into a position to help schools make up some of the ground lost to the cuts of recent years. This thoughtful proposal is designed to help school districts move forward by funding the services that families and communities count on every day, investing in new initiatives, and


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Congratulations Retiring Members

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SPECIAL EDUCATION SERIES - COURSE 2
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This online course will help you better understand how to provide all students with a Free and Appropriate Public Education (FAPE) in the Least Restrictive Environment (LRE), and properly address complex issues related to discipline and due process. Viewers will gain a deeper understanding of the legal parameters for determining whether or not student behavior is a manifestation of a student's disability, the student discipline and other options available for addressing improper student conduct, key steps to ensure that IEPs are being properly implemented, and obligations related to child find.

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January 30, 2015 **Half Day Conference**

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8:00am - 1:00pm
Plainview Holiday Inn
Plainview, NY

Keynote Speaker:
Jacob S. Feldman, Esq.

Agenda:

- 8:00-8:30** Coffee/Registration
- 8:30 - 8:45** Welcome/Overview
- 8:45 - 10:00** David Nash/Karen Siris
Keynote: Developing a Bullet Proof IEP
Jacob Feldman, Esq.
- 10:00 - 10:30** Breakfast/Networking Break
- 10:30 - 11:30** Panel Discussion:
Best Practices in IEPs
Debra Kienke, Anne McGinnis, Cara Riebe, Ellen Levine
- 11:30 - 12:00** Case Study and/or Video
Scenario with Small Group
Discussions
- 12:00 - 12:45** Next Steps/Bringing It
All Together
- 12:45 - 1:00** Q & A

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January 27, 2015

4:30pm - 6:00pm
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Go to www.highered.nysed.gov/tcert/fagpd.htm for complete information on requirements.

Search Your Site

saanys.org

Find regional events throughout the year at saanys.org/events.



For information on any SAANYS professional development event, contact Karen Bronson at KBronson@saanys.org.

What a conference! Record breaking attendance and fabulous feedback from attendees is already getting us excited about planning next year’s event. The combination of an absolutely beautiful facility on a perfect fall weekend in the Adirondacks, combined with a strong and varied program of keynotes and workshops, resulted in what SAANYS hopes will be a model for the future.

SAANYS was so fortunate that Bill Daggett could step in for Deb DeLisle at the last moment. The fact that Daggett has worked closely with the assistant secretary, made it a seamless and coherent change, that was well received by attendees, who found the information and data presented to be both sobering and motivational. Todd Whitaker had us laughing every time we heard a comment that was in our “wish I could really say that” file in our roles as education leaders.

With all of the stress that has come with change, getting together to laugh is as important as getting together to learn. And finally, it is unlikely that we will ever hear “Amazing Grace” again, without thinking about how a study of this moving classic would resonate with students and be so aligned with standards based learning.

BRENTWOOD

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9am to 3pm

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For me, the heart and soul of the conference was the twelve practitioner workshops presented by our members. I had the opportunity to stop into each and every one, and was so impressed by the level of preparation and quality of the presentations. In one room, we heard the story of a district’s journey with data – how bringing all staff into the process and providing learning opportunities to support, not only interpretation, but use of data to improve student learning, actually happened over time. So much to learn from these real life experiences! In another room, a discussion about how to use PE, health, and FACS curriculum as a pathway to Common Core was in progress, with a great example of how to use body mass index as a starting point for a lesson that hit both literacy and math standards. The necessity to understand how behavior impacts academics, was the topic in a third session, while the characteristics of a growth mindset left attendees anxious to read the book in a fourth.

A popular buzz phrase right now in PD is “The answer is in the room.” From Ed Camps, to Google Camps (I am writing this from the train I am taking to attend the SAANYS/NYSCATE Google Camp in Long Island!), to NYSED Network Team Trainings, this phrase is rising to the top as a mantra, that reminds us to tap into the collective learning and experience all around us. The rapid changes we have all experienced over the past few years has made us all learners, with stories to tell and experiences to share. The outstanding event at the Sagamore provided the perfect setting for just that! Get ready to tell your story, because we are going to ROCK Rochester in 2015! ■

Integration, Data-Driven Decisions, and Where to Begin: From Zero to Hero

Opinion piece by Scott B. Crowder, CEO, Educational Vistas, Inc.

We have been talking about bringing it all together for the greater good and informed decision making for a long time now. We all know we need to do it... but how? If it were easy, we would have done it already. But, it’s not. It is a difficult task that may only be accomplished by creating and following a proven process.

Most NYS school districts have between six and eight major “intermediate” database management systems, plus one of the six leading Student Management Systems (SMS). These individual programs communicate between each other to varying degrees, from completely disconnected and isolated, to “live” connectivity. Where you and your district are with these electronic relationships will determine the relative ease or difficulty in moving from the status quo to the land of integration, with the promise of one-button report production, data-on-demand, no data duplication, powerful analytic tools, and milk and honey!

Let’s start at the beginning. It is said that “if you don’t know where you’re going, then any road will take you there.” This is where planning and process comes into play. There are two ways to move forward. Either self-audit or partner with someone who specializes in this kind of work. Hint: It is hard to be a prophet in your own land.

Once the review process is complete and a report of all criteria necessary to begin has been created, then and only then, will you know where all the bodies are buried. This is critical to a successful data integration project. Next, the end-result must be clearly identified. What does the end product need to do, and what mandatory reports must it contain? These are but a couple of attributes that you will include as part of your district data warehouse. Using this end-to-beginning analysis process will now allow you to flow chart the project with great detail.

If you treat the SMS as the “mother of all databases,” and once data integrity, accuracy, and completeness is confirmed, then an action plan may be established. Rate each database by level of overall importance, and start at the top – allocate funds, build a team, create a schedule, and start the work. This will take between one and three years to complete. It is time and money well-spent! ■

“All the world is a laboratory to the inquiring mind.”
– Martin H. Fischer

Regional Events

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DETAILS AT
SAANYS.ORG/EVENTS.

REGION 10 NEGOTIATION WORKSHOP

January 8
4:30 pm - 6:00 pm
light refreshments

Sharkey’s Restaurant
Liverpool

SAANYS General Counsel Arthur Scheuerman will present on “The Art of Negotiations in an Ever Demanding Work Place.”

RSVP: Tony Cardamone, tcardamone@bville.org

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REGION 5 LEARN FROM THE EXPERTS: NEGOTIATING DURING DIFFICULT TIMES

SAVE THE DATE!

January 13
5:00 pm - 7:00pm
Location TBD
light refreshments

Come join our annual professional learning event! Our panel of experts have the expertise and experience of preparing for negotiations and sitting at the table. They will present and answer your questions on all things related to negotiations including:

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- Merit Pay
- Non-monetary Compensation
- Benefits
- APPR, PIP, and Appeals
- Non-negotiables and Give Backs
- Q&A

Our panel of experts includes a SAANYS legal counsel, lead negotiator, labor relations specialist, and building administrator.

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REGION 11 2015 AWARDS CEREMONY

SAVE THE DATE!

April 21
5:00 pm
Reception and Appetizers
5:45 pm
Awards Program

Midvale Country Club
2387 Baird Road
Penfield

LEGAL BRIEFS

A Message From
Jennifer Carlson,
SAANYS Counsel
JCarlson@saanys.org



SAANYS Enters the Fight to Save Tenure...

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under the statutes without a voice. Accordingly, NYSUT, UFT, the City of New York, and several individual teachers, petitioned the court to become defendants and are now named parties. Interestingly, neither of the lawsuits mentioned the fact that school administrators are also bound by the same laws that are being challenged. A finding that teacher tenure and/or the seniority and recall statutes are unconstitutional would mean that school administrators would also lose the rights to tenure and seniority-based layoffs. Therefore, on behalf of representative members, SAANYS has also intervened in this important litigation and

is actively defending the rights of all administrators to earn the due process protections afforded under these statutes. SAANYS and all of the other defendants have filed motions to dismiss the litigations and, under the current scheduling order, will have oral argument as to why the cases need to be dismissed in mid-January 2015.

Prior to the decision in *Vergara*, changes to tenure and seniority systems throughout the United States came primarily through legislative action within each individual state. Given the complexity of public education, courts throughout the country have recognized that such

matters remain best left to the people’s elected representatives. This is because the courts are ill-equipped to resolve the social, political and economic issues, and resulting controversies surrounding public education. The legal term for concepts such as this is “political question” and it is one of the basis used by SAANYS in its motion to defeat these meritless lawsuits. As any faithful reader of *News & Notes* over the years has learned, New York’s legislature is continuously revising the education law surrounding the retention of qualified teachers and administrators. In the past five years, SAANYS has provided its members with continuous updates on changes made by the legislature on topics such as the APPR system and Section 3020-a hearings.

Additionally, the lawsuits fail to connect the state to the implementation of the statutes, as ultimately it is the local school boards who have the power to grant or deny tenure, bring about disciplinary

hearings to tenured educators, and implement layoffs. In the past twelve years, the New York State Court of Appeals has rejected other attempts to strike down these and other education law statutes on constitutional grounds, because of the very same defects in the pleadings.

Furthermore, the plaintiffs have no standing to bring the lawsuits. With the exception of one plaintiff


in *Wright*, no other plaintiff in either action even alleges their child has been instructed by an ineffective teacher, thereby precluding any alleged injury. Additionally, not one plaintiff is in the “zone of interest” of the challenged statutes. Specifically, the legislative history and case law surrounding each of the challenged statutes clearly states that the purpose of the statutes in question is to protect

educators, not students or their parents.

SAANYS supports the concept of tenure and the current system of managing layoffs for all educators, not just administrators, and will continue to vigorously defend these rights. Without these rights, educators will be subject to the political whims of their employing districts and will be forced to make the difficult choice between self-preservation and what is educationally correct. While SAANYS is confident that our members will continue to put the needs of students above their own, SAANYS has no intention of having its members placed in such a position without a fight. Keep an eye on upcoming issues of *News & Notes* for updates on this important litigation as they arise, and feel free to contact the SAANYS Legal Department if you have any questions. ■

SAANYS has filed a motion to dismiss the litigations and will have oral argument as to why the cases need to be dismissed in mid-January 2015.

Contract Settlements



NOTICE: Please send copies of your unit’s settlements in the event that SAANYS did not negotiate the contract. This information is important and is helpful to fellow SAANYS members.

Wantagh Supervisors Association, Region 2

The Wantagh Supervisors Association was represented at the bargaining table by members Chris Widmann and Marie Pischchio. They were joined by SAANYS General Counsel Art Scheuermann.

The stipend for supervisors was increased from \$8,000 by \$750 for each year of the four-year contract, totaling \$3,000 or 37.5 percent. In addition, the negotiating team obtained additional compensation for members, including \$200 per college level/dual enrollment program, and 1.25 percent increases to the pre-existing stipend for coordinating Advanced Placement, SAT, and PSAT programs. All unit members will receive an increase in evening and/or weekend pay to \$20.00 per evening or weekend event. The dollar amount for in-service training and conferences has increased by \$500. Sick leave payout upon retirement is now subject to deposit into a non-elective IRC 403b account.


In exchange, the unit agreed to work one additional day at the end of the school year. The unit also agreed to remove a position, the director of special education, from the bargaining unit because the district could not recruit desired candidates given the salary restriction. In exchange for giving up this position, the unit is guaranteed a four-year no-layoff provision for bargaining unit members.

Arlington Administrators Association, Region 4

The Arlington Administrators Association was represented at the bargaining table by members Paul Fanuele and Eric Schetter, with assistance from other unit members. They consulted with SAANYS General Counsel Art Scheuermann.

In order to correct previous step increase anomalies, a new step (13) was added to the schedule. Members will receive a 3 percent salary increase in the first year. After the first year, unit members agreed not to move on step for the next three years of this four-year contract, in exchange for a 2 percent increase to the salary schedule. In addition, the negotiating team added three new longevity steps at 18 years, 30 years,

continued on page 8



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\$85 annually provides a simple will, power of attorney, health care proxy, living will, and unlimited advice via telephone. Enrollees will also receive certificates good for two free hour-long office consultations with a local referral attorney. For services beyond this package, discounted rates apply.

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New York’s Leading Education Groups Outline Need for \$1.9 Billion State Aid Increase in 2015-16...

continued from page 3

recommitting to a functioning state aid plan.”

“We can’t yield any more ground,” Yagielski added. “Every child in New York State is counting on us.”

The report recounts the toll that the cuts of recent budget cycles have taken on New York’s schools. For example:

- The education workforce has shrunk by more than 30,000 in the last six years.
- **More than half – 51 percent – of the state’s schools are receiving less state aid in the current year than they did in 2008-09.**
- The amount of aid being diverted from schools through the Gap Elimination Adjustment is \$1.036 billion in the current year.
- Foundation Aid to schools is \$4.7 billion below the full phase-in of the formula that was first introduced in 2007.

Despite diminished resources, schools have worked hard to adapt to a series of state education reforms, including increased academic standards. They are also addressing a variety of challenges without sufficient support from the state or federal government, including providing services and educational programming for the recent influx of unaccompanied minors, many of whom have intense needs.

In the paper, ECB members look to the future and reaffirm their support for a school aid formula that is based on adequacy, equity, predictability, flexibility, and transparency. For most of the last two decades, New York has not had a state aid formula that has operated as intended, without either artificial limits on increases, or freezes, or reductions in aid. School districts deserve an unencumbered aid formula that operates as intended each year.

“Enacting the recommendations in this report – providing adequate and equitable aid and committing to a long-term funding system that provides schools needed stability and predictability, is the path to real and lasting progress,” the report concludes. “This is imperative for our children today, and will have a tremendous impact on their ability to successfully respond to the challenges they will face tomorrow.”

The New York State Educational Conference Board is comprised of the Conference of Big 5 School Districts; NYS Association of School Business Officials; NYS

Council of School Superintendents; New York State PTA; NYS School Boards Association; New York State United Teachers, and the School Administrators Association of NYS.

Leaders of ECB Member Organizations Comment on the Report

“The recommendations being advanced by ECB are prudent and will promote educational equity and improved educational results. Students will be the true beneficiaries of the recommended actions,” said SAANYS Executive Director Kevin Casey.

“The Conference of Big 5 School Districts represents the high need urban poor. These localities are fiscally constrained and the success of their schools is dependent upon New York State providing adequate resources to enable them to deliver high quality programs and services. State support is critical if we are to afford all students an opportunity to succeed in meeting the higher standards,” said Conference of Big 5 School Districts Executive Director Georgia M. Ascitutto.

“School officials have demonstrated they are good stewards of public resources during the economic downturn. They have responsibly slowed the growth in school spending, and have found creative ways to allocate resources for improved student achievement. Now it is time for the state to do its part,” said New York State Association of School Business Officials Executive Director Michael J. Borges.

“With the state’s finances gaining strength, it is no longer possible to justify the continued existence of the Gap Elimination Adjustment, or the lack of an adequate, working Foundation Aid formula. So many educators say they fear their schools will never again be able to offer the opportunities students in the past had. It’s time for state education funding to guarantee all our public schools can offer their students the opportunities any of us would want for our own children,” said New York State Council of School Superintendents Executive Director Robert J. Reidy.

“With multiple years of forced reductions in school spending that ignore heightened expectations and shifting demographics, parents conclude that the status quo is simply not enough. If our goal is to see our children successfully competing in a global economy, it is essential that we work together to assure the necessary investment for every child to achieve that goal,” said New York State Parent Teacher Association President Lana Ajemian.

“Even assuming modest increases in school district expenses next year, schools cannot go it alone. The simple fact is, they will need a strong show of support from state lawmakers simply to maintain current programs. This is the year for the legislature to end the Gap Elimination Adjustment, and fully fund the state aid Foundation Formula once and for all,” said New York State School Boards Association Executive Director Timothy G. Kremer.

“Ensuring that every student receives a top-quality public school education will require a much greater investment by the state. While Albany has, indeed, stepped up over the last two years, too many school districts are still digging out from budget holes created during the recession. A greater commitment of school aid, more resources for vital initiatives such as community schools, programs for English language learners and to help career and technical education programs thrive, is the best way to ensure that every child is ready to learn at high levels, and graduate and succeed in college or the workplace,” said NYSUT Executive Vice President Andrew Pallotta. ■

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Recycle Your Resources...



Do you know of a website, a book, a grant, or other resource that your colleagues should know about? Share it in this column by emailing MHebert@saanys.org.

Lowe's Toolbox for Education

As a part of their Toolbox for Education grant program, the Lowe's Charitable and Educational Foundation is donating up to \$5 million in funds to public schools and public school parent teacher groups. As many as 1,000 different schools per school year will receive grants valued between \$2,000 and \$5,000. The deadline for the Spring 2015 cycle is February 13, 2015, but Lowe's reserves the right to stop accepting applications after 1,500 have been received.

Deadline: February 13, 2015
More details: <http://www.toolboxforeducation.com>

Close Achievement Gaps with a Matching Grant for a Grit Program

The nonprofit EduGuide program builds students' grit and other core learning skills to improve academic behaviors and achievement. A new matching grant covers half the cost of the evidence-based program for a limited number of schools.

Deadline: Ongoing
More details: <http://edugui.de/getagrnt> ■



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— Martin Luther King Jr.*

Contract Settlements...

continued from page 6

and 35 years, entitling eligible members to receive an additional \$1,500 for each milestone.

The team also negotiated an increase by \$1000 to the stipend of one title, elementary teacher assistant to the principal, during the life of the contract. In addition, if members in this title maintained their administrative certification, they would receive an additional \$600 stipend.

In addition to NYSHIP, a new HMO health insurance plan, called EPO 20 was added. Unit members will contribute .5 percent more to their cost, or 13 percent starting on July 1, 2014; 14 percent on July 1, 2015; and 15 percent on July 1, 2016. No cost retirement health insurance will now require 10 years of continuous service.

The Welfare Benefit Trust for administrators was increased by \$150 to \$2,050 for each year of the contract. In addition, the cap for payment of accrued vacation leave upon retirement was increased by five days, to a total of 70 days. A similar accrued vacation leave buyout for members who resign for any other purpose, other than retirement, was reduced by 8 days to a total of 57 days.

Catskill Administrators Association, Region 6

The Catskill Administrators Association (CAA) was represented at the bargaining table by Lisa Schlenker, Cheryl Rabinowitz, Dawn Scannapieco, and Marielena Hauser. They were assisted in negotiations by SAANYS General Counsel Art Scheuermann.

In the new three-year contract, members receive a flat \$2,500 to base salary on July 1, 2014; \$2,000 on July 1, 2015; and \$1,900 on July 1, 2016; along with revised longevity amounts twice during the contract. Prior to the new contract, members received longevity as follows: after 5 years - \$800; 10 years - \$900; 15 years - \$1,000; and 20 years - \$1,200. Longevity is cumulative. Under the new contract, as of July 1, 2014, each longevity step increases by \$400. On July 1, 2016, the longevity amounts for the 15th and 20th longevity steps will increase by \$200.

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CAA members will see an increase in employee cost sharing toward health insurance premiums of 3 percent over the three years of the contract period – one percent per year. In addition, the former parity clause relating to health insurance, i.e., “the district will provide the administrators with the same health insurance benefits as provided by the Catskill Teachers Association,” was removed so that the administrators alone control their health insurance negotiations. Vacation leave for current employees is 27 days, however, new employees hired prior to October 1, 2014 shall receive 22 days of vacation annually.

Cohoes Principal Association, Region 6

The Cohoes Principal Association (CPA) was represented at the bargaining table by members Jackie Dechairo and Deanna Kelly. They were assisted in negotiations by SAANYS General Counsel Art Scheuermann and Labor Relations Specialist Mike Dawkins.

For each year of the new three-year contract, members will receive a flat \$2,250 to base salary every July 1. Longevity steps were revised from 3, 7, and 12 years of service down to 3, 5, and 10 years of service. Under the new contract, members can now use \$300 toward SAANYS dues, which constitutes a non-taxable fringe benefit. Personal days were increased from 4 days annually to 6 days, after 20 years of service.

CPA members will see an increase in employee cost sharing toward health insurance premiums of 3 percent over the three years of the contract period, but with no increase in the first year. At the end of the contract, starting on July 1, 2016, unit members will contribute 15 percent toward the cost of health insurance. To bring the principals in line with other bargaining units, the parties agreed that unit members whose spouses also work for Cohoes will now be ineligible for the health insurance buyout. In exchange, the sunset language in the health insurance buyout provision was removed, making the buyout a permanent contractual right.

Whitesboro Administrators Association, Region 8

The Whitesboro Administrators Organization (WAO) recently negotiated a new contract covering 2014-2017.

Highlights of this agreement include:

Salary increases as follows:

- 2014-2015: 3.0 percent
- 2015-2016: 3.1 percent
- 2016-2017: 3.2 percent

Also included in the agreement:

- Availability of a 457 tax-deferred savings plan.
- Ability to buy back one unused vacation day beginning July 1, 2015.
- Increase in the rate of sick leave payout at retirement.
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The four-day, summer Transition to Superintendency Program remains the benchmark training for experienced school and district administrators preparing for the New York State superintendency. Participants include administrators first thinking about a move to the superintendency and those who do not have the time or resources to attend one of the two year-long programs.

James M. Merrins, Ed.D. (Indiana University, '79) is the executive program administrator of the ELI.

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