The Executive Budget and Education

On January 21, 2020 Governor Cuomo presented his proposed state budget. SAANYS subsequently participated in several budget briefings and the following is a summary of the education portion of the proposed executive budget for 2020-21 based on SAANYS' analysis and discussions.

The proposed state budget is being offered as a budget that "equalizes disparities," directing funding to poorer schools and not just a district. In an attempt to decrease disparities, the proposed budget targets 85 percent of the Foundation Aid increase to highest need districts. In doing so, the governor has proposed revising the formula to more evenly distribute funds. In the proposed budget this is accomplished with new tier formulas and reducing the current ten tiers to five.

Overall, the 2020-21 proposed budget increases total aid to districts to $28.5 billion, which is a $826 million increase over last year. Of this increase $504 million is directed to Foundation Aid, however the increased aid is directed to the highest need districts.

Foundation Aid also includes a $50 million increase in community school funding; however, as a set-aside carved out of foundation aid, it in effect decreases the actual foundation aid amount. The additional community school funding is anticipated to expand the total number of districts receiving funds to 440. The proposed budget establishes two tiers of funding for community schools. The Tier 1 is targeted to districts with a CSI school or a five-year growth in ELL students greater than the statewide average. Tier 2 districts are those that have not received community school funding in 2019-20.

Other substantial changes have been proposed in regard to expense-based aid. The proposed budget recommends that ten categories be folded into Foundation Aid. Additionally, it creates a new tier for Building Aid for projects approved on or after July 1, 2020. SAANYS has asked for clarification as to whether approved means SED approval or public approval through budget votes. The stated intent is a desire to rein in the use of such funding for athletic fields or other "incidental costs." For the school year 2021-22 a proposed cap on transportation expenses has been included as well.

Additionally:

 Charter schools will receive increased funding of about five percent. Nonpublic schools will realize a three percent increase in reimbursements.

Overview of the January Board of Regents Meeting

The first 2020 meeting of the Board of Regents was held on January 13. The meeting was filled with an agenda ranging from the graduation measures initiative to a proposed change to a special education classification.

Graduation Measures

In the introduction to the item on graduation measures, Chancellor Rosa stressed that the board has two primary pillars of work that will guide their focus: early education and the graduation measures review. She discussed the importance of both in working toward a public education that is equitable for all students.

Staff first discussed an adjusted timeframe for the completion of this work, which has been extended to at least two years. Many meetings on this issue will be held across the state, as well as the formation of a Blue Ribbon Panel. The participation of SAANYS members at these meetings will be very important. This initiative has the potential to impact members’ work should policies regarding assessments, coursework, and alternative pathways for obtaining a diploma be revised.

Staff at SED developed a comprehensive report on current requirements that was used in part for this meeting and which may be a good reference in your work. That report may be found using this link: https://bit.ly/3b2H3SH. Pay attention particularly to attachments 6-8 as the document covers quite a bit of information. Additionally, SED has set up a website for the graduation measures initiative, which may be found at http://www.ednys.org/grad-measures.

The dates of the meetings are posted at this site and it already has extensive information on NYS requirements, as well as analyses of requirements in other states.

Discussion Around the Table

Many members of the board expressed a host of process questions regarding participation, their roles, arrangements, and materials for the meetings. Other members indicated the importance of having students at the table, and staff indicated that SED has asked the hosts of each meeting to ensure student participation.

Both Regents Young and Cottrell wanted to add a focus on “dispositions” or soft skills. They thought that the materials did not adequately address the need to consider what was needed for college and career readiness in socio-emotional domains.

Regent Ouderkirk also indicated that she thought readiness should read “college and/or career readiness.” This resulted in a longer discussion on whether both college and career readiness is needed to graduate. No conclusion was reached on this point and it will be interesting to see how final language on this issue is presented.

Special Education

This meeting primarily focused on special education issues. The first item was a presentation on the status of implementation of revisions to the education code. The presentation was an overview of the items that were included in the proposed code revisions. The presentation included discussion of the code revisions and the potential impact of the revisions.

Graduation Measures

The charts below and on page three provide a framework for understanding the severity of the problem.

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Prior to being granted tenure, an administrator’s employment is essentially “at will.” New York is an “employment-at-will” state that provides probationary administrators with very little due process rights or protections. Probationary appointees do not enjoy the protections provided by NY Education Law Section 3020-a. For example, probationary appointees are not afforded the right to a hearing before termination. This means public school employers have a nearly unfettered right to deny tenure, or terminate a probationary employee during their probationary period, with or without cause—as long as it is not for an illegal reason, such as discrimination or retaliation.

The unexpected news that tenure is being denied often comes as a shock, and unsurprisingly, creates a great deal of stress for some of our members. The SAANYS Legal Department frequently receives calls from members whose tenure has been denied, or whose probationary employment has been terminated. Unfortunately, when SAANYS receives these types of calls from probationary employees, we are very limited in regard to guidance and legal action we can take due to the lack of protection afforded under New York laws.

NY Education Law Section 3031 governs the limited protections afforded to probationary employees. Administrators in the state, when SAANYS receives an inquiry about these protections.

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Executive Viewpoint
Kevin S. Casey, Executive Director

Advocating for Advocates

The legislature is back in session. The governor has given his budget address and released his proposed budget. It is the initial step of the annual budget dance. Next, with respect to what dominates our attention, will be a joint Assembly/Senate Education Committee hearing where school districts, advocates, groups, SAANYS included, will advocate for their institutional priorities and interests. It promises to be a marathon session.

We know there is an estimated $6 billion gap in the state budget. We also know that there are many competing interests. We need to be smart and without the education world, and there’s not enough money to satisfy everyone. After the advo- cacy pleads their cases, if history is any guide, the Assembly will issue a one-house budget bill that proposes to substantially increase state aid to edu- cation as compared to the governor’s proposal. The Senate will then issue its own one-house bill with a state aid proposal that is different from both the governor and Assembly. The real negoti- ations will then begin. The dollar figure finally settled upon as an in- crease in state aid is only part of the equation. How that money gets distrib- uted, both among aid categories and districts, is of critical importance to many. Watching pro- posed modifications to the Foundation Aid Formula, as well as specific aid allocations, is an exercise in watching the sausage being made but it is not the only one.

When the legislature is in session it legislates. Many consider the number of bills passed as a measure of legislative effectiveness, although I am not cer- tain that it is a meaningful metric. To be fair to our legislators, they cannot possibly be experts on all the topics that come before them, and they cannot possibly appease all of the competing priorities and interests on any given topic. Many well-meaning legislators support or oppose a bill without a deep understanding of the bill’s impact. This is where advocates play an important role.

Advocates may be driven by institutional self-interest, and thus color their arguments according to their interest and bias. Without question, bills are being written to meet the changing needs of our learners and be consistent with proven methods. Research reveals that teachers who had a sustained more than 30 hours of profes- sional development in their discipline improved student achievement (Toon, et. al. 2007). Seldom do we find school districts committed to differentiat- ing professional learning and investing in multi- year initiatives to fully realize 30 or more hours of teacher professional development and support. Too much valuable time is spent on fleeting one day themed workshops which may change by the next conference day. But there are some very promising professional development programs that have recon-figured teacher learning that deserves attention.

Dr. Sam Silverstein’s Columbia University Summer Research Program has applicability across the entire K-12 professional development landscape. His program involves placing biology teachers into Columbia University’s Medical Research Center over two summers working with a principal investigator (PI) and team of researchers. Science teachers work with their researchers for four days per week. They spend their 5th day working with other teacher researchers transferring their lab experiences to relevant lesson plans and learning activities. Participating teacher’s biology regimen scores have improved significantly as a result of these professional develop- ment experiences. Dr. Silverstein has shared the methods of the Columbia Univer- sity Summer Research Program with Dr. Gladys Cruz at Questar III BOCES and they have replicated the science program and expanded it into a STEAM Research Institute for teachers across many disciplines includ- ing math, engineering, technology, and art. The teacher hosting organiza- tions now include private technology and gaming companies as well as research institutions like the University at Albany and the SUNY Health Science Center.

Teachers receive a modest stipend of $10,000 for 7 weeks of summer work. The Quest program has been very successful with teacher demand out- pacing available funding sources. The program tenets are to connect teachers and their students with contemporary research and educational applications in a field of study or discipline. Teachers who participate work with their research- ers and companies throughout the school year connecting student learners to relevant stud- ies and technology as well as career opportunities. For more information visit https://www.saanys.org/Advocates.

The statements and opinions expressed herein do not neces- sarily imply or reflect the opinion or philosophy of SAANYS.

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As can be seen on the charts, New York State has more impartial hearings than any other state. Although the problem is New York City centric, districts around the state face similar challenges. The above graphics highlight an overuse of extensions, delays in hearings, and the extensive amount of special education complaints regarding the provision of special education programs. Contributing to this crisis is a lack of impartial hearing officers (IHOs), insufficient rates for impartial hearing officers, lack of space, and New York’s stringent regulations. Assistant Commissioner Suriano indicated that a change in the state definitions require that any classification used also be consistent with terms used by professionals in the psychiatric community. A point needing further clarification is that the federal and state definitions require that any classification used also be consistent with terms used by professionals in the psychiatric community. The discussion not only raised possible solutions, but raised serious questions. One area of particular debate was the elimination of non-attorneys as impartial hearing officers. Although many members’ initial reaction to this was negative, staff reminded the members that originally, educators could be trained as IHOs and conduct hearings. As this option was discussed more fully, the concept seemed to gain some traction. Scan the QR code to complete a one-questions survey on whether you would support the use of non-attorneys as impartial hearing officers. The number of complaints being filed raised the larger question as to how to address the state’s special education issues. The challenges are daunting and are sure to be a focus of the BOR and SED over this year. The second topic for discussion was a possible change in wording for the classification of emotional disturbance. The presentation by staff was very brief and primarily presented classifications used by other states. Twenty seven states use either the terms emotional disturbance or serious emotional disturbance; twelve states use “emotional disability” or “serious emotional disability;” and other states use variations such as emotional/behavioral disability or disorder, emotional impairment, or behavior disorder.

Discussion Around the Table

The discussion by members of the board signaled a need for more information than had been included in the report. Many members wanted to know what precipitated the item and what evidence or data was available on the need to change the classification. Other members questioned how changing the names would or would not be consistent with terms used by professionals in the psychiatric areas.

A point needing further clarification is that the federal and state definitions require that any classification used also meet the criteria that the disability affects the student’s learning. Lacking this clarification, the discussion seemed to spread into tangential areas.

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 Cynthia Gallagher, SAANYS director of government relations, at cgallagher@saanys.org.

SAANYS has always been there for members who need advice or assistance from legal counsel on job-related matters. Now, SAANYS has partnered with the law firm of Feldman, Kramer and Monaco to help when you need personal legal advice and assistance.

$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.

Contact Feldman, Kramer and Monaco, the law firm that administers the plan for SAANYS members, at 1-800-832-5182.

Be prepared to present your membership ID.

Member Poll
1. Would you support the use of non-attorneys as impartial hearing officers?
   Yes
   No

SAANYS is the official state affiliate of both the National Association of Elementary School Principals and the National Association of Secondary School Principals and their state / national principal of the year programs.

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SAANYS is the official state affiliate of both the National Association of Elementary School Principals and the National Association of Secondary School Principals and their state / national principal of the year programs.
In addition to my role as director of professional learning, I am a regular SAANYS mentor, trained way back with a host of other colleagues years ago, before I even found my way to my current position.

Last week I had the opportunity to visit with two of my current mentees in a small rural district not too far from Albany. They are both new to the district this year: one with prior principal experience and one in her first principship. It is an honor to know both of them, and their current district is fortunate to have them aboard.

Because we are roughly halfway through our ten-month partnership, I asked both of them to reflect on the big picture in regard to what they had learned or how they had grown since they began back in September. Their answers truly resonated with me, and perhaps they will with you:

“When I came here,” said one, “I brought experience in the role, but was completely new to the area. When the superintendent outlined goals for the year, getting to know the community and the families, faculty and staff who make it up was identified as my primary goal for this first year. Now that the year is at the midpoint, I can say that I am doing that and in the process have learned two things:

• Sometimes we get to know people best when challenges present themselves. Helping students and families and getting to know them when we needed to work through tough situations together really has started building trust and cementing relationships.

• I talk to everybody at any opportunity: students, teachers, custodians, aides, and support staff, to understand what they bring and what they teach me about this excellent new community I now feel a part of.”

The second, new to “principaling” had roots in the community itself, but was given the primary goal of learning about the role and responsibilities that come with a principship.

“When I was an assistant principal in another district, my principal at the time always asked me, ‘Are you sure you really want to do this?’ especially when he was really feeling the challenges of the role. I always responded that yes, I was sure, but inside I thought, ‘Yes, but I would do this, and I would do that, and those approaches would certainly work much better.’ Now a half year out, the main thing I have learned is how complex, how challenging, and how hard this role is. There are not as many easy alternatives as I had imagined... but staying true to yourself is the key. There is not only one way to ‘principal,’ and learning about the role takes time, patience, love, and a few missteps along the way. I love this work and this community.”

It is a credit to the district that the proactive step of reaching out to SAANYS to provide a mentor for these two new leaders was taken. Feeling supported in the first year in a role as complex as this is essential, and we who are mentors learn as much from our mentees as they do from us.

REGIONAL SCHOLARSHIPS
Visit the “Regions” page at saanys.org for information on SAANYS regional student scholarship programs.

Region 4 | Application Deadline: April 1
Region 6 | Application Deadline: March 6
Region 11 | Application Deadline: March 1

SAANYS Mentor Coaching Services
1:1 Mentor Coaching Group Mentor Coaching Available

To support, inspire, and ignite new and mid-career administrators.

For more information, contact Karen Bronson at 518-782-0600

SAANYS 2020 Retiree Student Scholarship
APPLICATION DEADLINE: APRIL 17, 2020
Open to any high school senior graduating in June 2020. Applicants must be sponsored by a current SAANYS Active Retiree, Affiliate Retiree, or Associate Retiree member in good standing. For purposes of this scholarship, regular Active SAANYS members listed as a sponsor shall not be considered.

Learn more at saanys.org/for-retirees

SAANYS After School Series

Be Informed on Timely Topics.

The Role of the School Resource Officer In Schools
Don’t miss this panel event featuring Peter Kehoe, executive director of the NYS Sheriff’s Association, along with a sheriff, city police officer, and local school leader(s) who work directly with the SRO’s in their schools.

SED/APPR Informational Update: What You Need to Know
Dr. Cindy Gallagher, SAANYS director of government relations, will share what’s new in the world of regulations that can impact your work. Updates and answers to your questions about APPR, the Red Flag Law, building-level reporting, vaping, vaccinations, and other things to watch will be provided.

Contract Negotiations and Hot Topics
Art Scheuermann, SAANYS general counsel, will discuss current legal issues impacting NYS school leaders and share trends and tips for successful negotiations. Don’t miss this lively and important conversation and Q&A with a SAANYS attorney.

Register online: saanys.org/events

Location:
SAANYS Headquarters | 8 Airport Park Blvd., Latham | 4 PM - 6 PM
Light refreshments will be served at 4:00 pm and discussions will begin at 4:30 pm.
Cost per session: $10 SAANYS Members | $15 non-members

Cost per session: $10 SAANYS Members | $15 non-members

To register visit: saanys.org
SAANYS RETIREMENT PLANNING WORKSHOP

LOCATION: Comedy IP the Carlson
50 Carlson Rd, Rochester, NY 14610

AGENDA: 4:00 pm - 4:30 pm Registration 4:30 pm - 6:30 pm Presentation and Dinner 6:30 pm - 7:00 pm Social Time

COST: FREE to ASAR members; Buffet dinner included; Cash bar

TO REGISTER: Contact John Rowe - John.Rowe@RCSUK12.ORG or call: 585-262-2130

March 30
Beyond the ABCs of Trauma and ACS
Presenter: Dr. Joe Fantigrossi
Director of Intervention and Professional Development
Finger Lakes Community College

April 21
Courageous Conversations that Improve Student Learning
Presenter: Dr. Bonnie Tryon
SAYMIS Mentor Coordinator

May 21
Effective Feedback Around Instruction: Building Your Skills
Presenter: Karen Bronson
SAANYS Director of Professional Learning

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SANAYIS RETIREMENT PLANNING WORKSHOP

This workshop will consist of two parts:

AXA Presentation
AXA was one of the first companies to offer retirement planning services for New York State employees. In this session, AXA representatives will discuss the benefits of retirement planning for public employees. Attendees will learn about the importance of planning for retirement, the various retirement options available, and how to start planning now. The session will be led by AXA representatives.

New York State Teachers’ Retirement System
The New York State Teachers’ Retirement System (NYSTIS) provides information on the importance of retirement planning for teachers. Attendees will learn about the NYSTIS benefits, including retirement, social security, and Medicare. The session will be led by NYSTIS representatives.

Venue
Comedy IP the Carlson
50 Carlson Rd, Rochester, NY 14610

Date
April 28, 2020

Time
4:00 pm - 6:00 pm

Contact
Karen Bronson at kbronson@saanys.org or if you need additional information.

ATTENTION ALL PRINCIPALS AND APs
If you are a new, aspiring or seasoned school leader, this one’s for you...

Online Workshop for Current or Aspiring Principals and Assistant Principals

Session 1: Intro and Goals (chapter 1)
Be a Better Leader/Reflection

Session 2: (chapters 2-4)
Culture and Relationships

Session 3: (chapters 5-7)
Organization and Productivity

Session 4: (chapters 8-10)
Resilience and Reflection

Session 5: (based on prior sessions)
Group chooses topic they want to explore in more depth

Juggling New Financial Obligations and Planning for Retirement

The Social Security system is one of the most important, and often misunderstood, retirement systems out there. Making the right decision is critical to your retirement planning. This seminar provides helpful information about the Social Security system.

There are several Student Loan Forgiveness options available to New York State educators, but sorting through all of them can be a challenge. Let us help you navigate the requirements by giving users who may be eligible, how you may be able to qualify, all the way to how to submit the paperwork.

Have you been so busy during the school year that you put off addressing any and all personal financial matters? This presentation will provide a checklist of items that should be addressed during the summer, as well as a timeline and suggestions for an easy implantation of the plan.

Don’t miss this five-part online series with Andrew that will feature engaging conversation on the issues that truly resonate with school leaders like you. All registrants will receive a copy of the book prior to the first session.

Search Your Site
Find regional events throughout the year at saanys.org/events.
Probationary Appointments: Advice, Tips, and Warnings for Probationary Administrators

There is very little that can be done after tenure is denied. It is critical to identify early warning signs before a final decision to terminate has been rendered by the board. Members take certain steps to protect themselves in advance of receiving an unfavorable employment decision. For example, probationary administrators should request a meeting with their superintendent and/or direct supervisor at the conclusion of each probationary year. At those meetings, members are encouraged to ask questions such as how their performance has been, what they can do to improve performance, and whether they are on track for tenure. Members should pay close attention to the responses provided. There may be subtle clues, or perhaps not-so-subtle ones, as to whether tenure will be denied. If there is any indication that tenure will be denied, it is time to start seeking new employment. This should be done sooner rather than later, ideally before a final decision has been made. History has shown that members are more likely to secure a new position while they are still actively employed. Members increase their chances of securing a new position by interviewing before their tenure is denied or probationary appointment gets terminated. Pay attention to signs that indicate that tenure may be denied. Being subject to progressive discipline, such as the issuance of counseling memos, should be viewed as a warning. If performance concerns were raised in an end-of-year evaluation, or pursuant to the district’s APPR plan, you may want to consider seeking a new position. The same holds true if your contract provides a date by which your employer is required to provide notice of its intention to grant tenure, and the date passes without you receiving said notice.

Since there is very little that can be done after tenure is denied, it is critical to identify early warning signs before a final decision to terminate has been rendered by the board. To reveal the reason(s) the employee is expected to leave the board, the employer’s ultimate decision can have a negative effect on the probationary appointee’s services. Furthermore, it is usually futile for a probationary appointee to request the reasons for termination, or to submit a response to the board of education as it is unlikely to have an effect on the employer’s ultimate decision. In fact, requesting the reason for package denial can have a negative effect on securing future employment because then the employer is expected to reveal the reason(s) they were provided to prospective employers, if requested. Since there is very little that can be done after tenure is denied, it is critical to identify early warning signs before a final decision to terminate has been rendered by the board. Members can take certain steps to protect themselves in advance of receiving an unfavorable employment decision. For example, probationary administrators should request a meeting with their superintendent and/or direct supervisor at the conclusion of each probationary year. At those meetings, members are encouraged to ask questions such as how they can assist you to negotiate protections into your contract. By negotiating protections into the contract, it provides a legal mechanism (i.e., grievance procedures) by which an employer’s decision to deny tenure or terminate probationary employees can be challenged. One basic protection that can be negotiated into the contract is a notice requirement. At the very least, notice requirements prior to any short-notices of termination and abrupt loss of income by requiring employers to provide advanced notice to the employee of the intent to discontinue employment. Other examples of protections to be negotiated into contracts are: (1) clear evaluation procedures with firm deadlines that provide members with the ability to challenge the denial of tenure if the evaluation procedure was not properly followed; (2) “Just Cause” provisions which provide a basis to challenge termination determinations; (3) provisions that require management to give probationary employees advanced notice of any performance issues, and at least three to six months for the employee to correct/cure any deficiencies before termination; and (4) a severance provision that requires the district/BOCES to continue paying salary and benefits for a specified number of months after termination, such a provision ensures a steady flow of income while seeking new employment. Do not hesitate to contact the SAANYS Legal Department to discuss how we can assist you to negotiate protections into your contract.
The table on page 8 summarizes the proposed 2020-21 budget:

- A $50 million increase for the “support of performance improvement”
- $18.5 million for Bilingual Education Grants, and
- $13.84 million to maintain school health programs in the Big 4 City school districts.

Funding has been included for new curriculum development in the areas of instruction in civic values, diversity, and inclusion. The board conditionally approved the Computer Science Standards. This work began when Chapter 56 of the Laws of 2018 was passed and required that SED review the existing framework and develop a new framework. The proposed work reflects much stakeholder feedback, with over 564 comments from the field. The chart below provides a brief summary of the new standards and the full item may be found by scanning the QR code.

Task Force on Civic Readiness

The presentation to the Board of Regents recommended the addition of a Seal of Civil Readiness. The seal could be used as part of the Humanities pathway or as a stand-alone seal. Students would need to earn points in two areas: civic knowledge and civic readiness (see chart below).

The Executive Budget and Education

Funding has been included for new curriculum development in the areas of instruction in civic values, diversity, history, and religious freedom. Comprehensive Education and Workforce Training Center is anticipated to be developed in Syracuse. This would be a cooperative between the Syracuse CSD, BOCES, local institutes of higher education, and the community at large in the region. The state will reimburse up to 98 percent of the costs to renovate space required for the center. The Rochester CSD will have an SED appointed monitor to oversee finances and academic programs.

Other funding highlights:

- Increases for Universal Prekindergarten Aid – total of $848 million.
- Maintaining funding formulas used for “high cost excess aids,” private excess costs, and transportation aid.
- Decreased funding for full-day kindergarten conversion aid – total of $2.48 million.
- Decreased funding for Reorganization Incentive Operating aid – $5.37 million total.
- $13.84 million to maintain school health programs in the Big 4 City school districts.
- $18.5 million for Bilingual Education Grants, and
- A $50 million increase for the “support of performance grant program.”

The table on page 8 summarizes the proposed 2020-21 funding.
Bridging Equity and Diversity
Christine Arlt, Principal, Central Valley Elementary School

Throughout U.S. history, the concept of equity in education has been discussed, tried through the courts, and written into federal and state policies. Yet defining and understanding what equity is, what it constitutes, and how to achieve it remain elusive. Without a definition of educational equity, or what constitutes equitable educational opportunities, educators are left to interpret and determine what constitutes equity as well as equitable educational opportunities, leading to more equitable outcomes.

If asked what on the surface seems a relatively straightforward question, “What is equity and how do you ensure it?” responses such as “Equity means fair…, inclusive…, giving each individual what they need…” emerge as top answers. But delving deeper into what these answers mean makes equity a much more complex concept to define, understand, and ensure.

In order for equity to be possible, we need to embrace diversity, celebrate and honor it, along with becoming conscious of our unconscious biases. Equally important is learning how to have and be part of uncomfortable conversations underpinning our unconscious biases from which we must learn from and grow. By recognizing not only culture, race, religion, gender, socioeconomics, and age; but through recognition, celebration, and purposeful inclusion, teaching and learning based on what each individual brings with them and offer others, can we truly begin to not only acknowledge the importance diversity plays in our growth personally and professionally, but the pathway this creates to creating true equity in all aspects of life.

Imagine what that could look like in classrooms for our students if we embraced and honored diversity. Now imagine what that could look like in our schools, districts, and communities if we consciously honored diversity on a daily basis, acknowledging our unconscious biases, with a willingness to be cognizant of them and work to move beyond them to create true equity for all.

Whether looking at equity for our students or for our faculties, families and communities, we cannot ignore that bridge. For educational opportunities, leading to more equitable outcomes.

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