Schools are the mirror of America, Juan Williams tells Convention-goers

By Eric D. Randall
EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

When journalist Juan Williams visited a Minneapolis high school and asked to meet with student leaders as well as top scholars and athletes, two-thirds of the students had something in common: They were all girls.

“Young women set the pace for achievement in school,” Williams said, noting that women outnumber men in all graduate programs except physics and engineering.

In fact, a college admissions officer told him that boys seem more in need of an affirmative action-style edge in admissions than minorities.

That’s just one example of many changes that deserve the attention – and thoughtful response – of school district leaders, Williams told attendees in the keynote speech at NYSSBA’s 93rd Annual Convention and Education Expo in Rochester.

“It’s unbelievable what’s happening in education,” Williams said. “There is constant change impacting our society,” and every societal shift has some effect on public education.

As an analyst for Fox News, Williams listens to both power brokers and ordinary people to try to get a sense of how big trends are playing out. His conclusion is that schools are “in the currents of history” as we adjust to not only a changing economy but an ever-evolving national identity.

Every demographic, fiscal, political and social trend reverberates in some fashion in the public schools, Williams said. That’s why “you guys are heroes,” he said. A strong public school system is vital to give Americans access to “that first step on the ladder of mobility.”

Schoolchildren “may not know your name,” but that does not diminish the fact that the decisions that school board members make have great significance in their lives. “They depend on you.”

The TV personality also expressed appreciation for a Convention attendee who emitted a witty greeting earlier in the day: “Juan Williams! It’s good to put a body with the talking head!”

Sandy shutters 200 districts

Nearly 200 school districts in New York State shut down due to power outages and other disruptions caused by Hurricane Sandy.

“It’s way too early to get any kind of accurate count on the number of schools damaged,” Jonathan Burman, a spokesman for the State Education Department, said as On Board went to press Oct. 31. “We’ve received a half dozen reports so far, but it’s obviously going to be many, many more than that.”

On hard-hit Long Island, 13 schools served as American Red Cross shelters and were housing a total of 1,500 people when On Board checked on Oct. 30. More than 500,000 customers lost power in the Hudson Valley, and Western New York was battered by wind and rain as Sandy carved a path between Syracuse and Rochester.

“The only good thing about a storm like this is that it gives us an opportunity to pull together and help our neighbors,” said NYSSBA President Thomas Nespeca, who lives in the Rochester area.

“Everyone is being nice and calm, taking turns,” said NYSSBA Vice President Susan Bergtraum, reached at friend’s house after her Nassau County home lost power. “But check back with me in a few days.”

- Eric D. Randall, Editor-in-Chief
Kremer to delegates: Vision is imperative

In today’s economy, schools must prepare students for jobs that don’t even exist yet, NYSSBA Executive Director Timothy G. Kremer told delegates at NYSSBA’s Annual Business Meeting.

“Just ask Beth LaPierre, who became Kodak’s first ever ‘Chief Listening Officer’ in 2010,” Kremer said. Before moving on to another job, LaPierre monitored more than 300,000 daily mentions of Kodak on Facebook, Twitter, message forums, YouTube, blogs, and elsewhere on the Web each day.

“Other graduates will become app developers, data miners, social media managers, eldercare consultants, sustainability experts and user experience designers. None of these well-paying careers existed 10 years ago.”

While no one has a crystal ball, “your board is expected by your community to embrace a global perspective and find ways to prepare students for success wherever they go or whatever they do.”

Preparing students for tomorrow is a complex challenge, Kremer said.

“I have faith that school boards will do their part,” he said. “But you cannot do it alone, which is why you are assembled here today. Your actions today will send a message to state officials and the general public that NYSSBA members are eager partners in the quest for innovative and fundamental change in public education.”

Noting that the resolutions passed by members set NYSSBA’s legislative agenda, Kremer said the process is an essential one if school boards are to remain a factor in state and national discussions on school funding and policies. “When so many people would prefer to ignore school boards, NYSSBA, acting as your voice, is a constant reminder to state and national leaders, the unions and the media that school boards have the legal authority and responsibility to set policy, secure resources and evaluate success.”

He added: “What you are doing here today will make a difference because student-centered, forward-thinking, courageous school board leadership has never been more in demand.”
Delegates to NYSSBA’s Annual Business Meeting overwhelmingly voted down a resolution that would have created a committee to study whether charter schools should become members of the Association.

While acknowledging charter schools’ status as public schools, delegates argued there are important distinctions.

Public schools exist to educate all children, regardless of their abilities, unlike charter schools, which are able to choose their students, delegates said. They added that charter schools are not subject to the same mandates as public schools, which contributes to different political priorities.

While charter school personnel and board members might benefit from attending NYSSBA training events, delegates pointed out they can do so by taking advantage of NYSSBA’s nonmember attendance rates (typically twice the amount charged to member districts).

“This Association is an advocate for public schools, schools that provide for the brightest of our students and for those that need and require the most,” said Pat Burk, a board member from Batavia. “At this crucial time it is even more imperative that we advocate and represent public, all inclusive schools and not recognize charter schools that can discriminate with regards to a student’s ability and remove resources from our budgets.”

Delegates reinforced their charter schools stance by passing a resolution that directs NYSSBA to oppose a potential parent trigger law for converting a failing public school into a charter school. Delegates also voted to have NYSSBA and its governmental relations department oppose legislation to include virtual charter schools in the state’s charter school law.

In other action, they passed resolutions directing NYSSBA to seek legislative help in revamping the delivery of education. Among those were resolutions to have the state give local boards of education incentives to create regional high schools and give local school boards authority to determine how much “seat time” is required for students to earn course credit or meet graduation requirements. Another resolution seeks more digital learning opportunities for students.

Finances were also top of mind at the Annual Business Meeting. Delegates passed resolutions directing NYSSBA to seek legislation to eliminate the state aid spending cap based on personal income growth, allow contingency budgets under the property tax cap to be adjusted for local tax base growth, prevent state education aid from being directed for performance grants, and seek school tax stabilization if gas exploration (fracking) is legalized in the state.

In all, the 228 delegates passed 20 resolutions Oct. 27 in Rochester. These resolutions will become part of NYSSBA’s 2013 advocacy agenda. The resolutions were presented by Resolutions Committee Chair Roseanne Sullivan of Pine Bush.

Other resolutions passed by the delegates will direct NYSSBA to:
• Facilitate efforts to allow BOCES and their component districts to create a common calendar and bell times that would enable them to coordinate distance learning, shared programing and regional course credit or meet graduation requirements.
• Ask the State Education Department to hold university schools of education accountable for the quality of teacher graduates.
• Strengthen the state process for revoking teacher certification.
• Ensure a secure system for handling student and staff data.
• Reduce testing by eliminating requirements that districts participate in exam field tests.
• Seek support for holding a statewide referendum by 2017 to hold a state constitutional convention.

Delegates agreed to extend four resolutions that were slated to sunset at the end of the year. Those involve state funding of mandatory grade 3-8 state tests, reform of the teacher discipline process under a set of principles, modification of testing requirements for students with disabilities, and repeal of salary increments under the Triborough Amendment.

“Despite our best efforts, we have not yet achieved the aims of these 2007 resolutions,” said Timothy G. Kremer, NYSSBA executive director.

Delegates also elected NYSSBA officers for 2013. Thomas Nespeca of Webster was elected president for a second one-year term. Lynne Lennhardt of Bethel, Capital Region BOCES and Tech Valley High School was elected first vice president while Susan Bergrbaum of Nassau BOCES was elected second vice president, both for second one-year terms. Michael Masse of Fayetteville-Manlius was elected for a seventh one-year term as treasurer.

NYSSBA President and Webster School Board Member Thomas Nespeca, who presented the 2013 New York State Teacher of the Year at the Keynote Kickoff, acknowledged a wealth of Webster riches at NYSSBA’s Annual Convention.

“I assure you again – I had nothing to do with the choice!” he exclaimed as he proudly introduced Gregory Ahlquist, a 12-year high school social studies teacher at Webster Thomas High School, near Rochester.

Ahlquist beamed as he took the stage. “Teaching is more than a job, it’s an opportunity to change lives,” he said to the audience.

Ahlquist, who teaches AP World History and AP European History, helped with a district initiative to increase the number of students enrolled in AP courses. “The only failure in my class is not to take a risk,” he said.

Alquist participates in annual events in the Webster community that help the hungry as well as raise money and awareness in the fight against leukemia.

“I believe in the transformative power of education to help all of our students,” he said.

Nespeca added, “You have to see Greg as I do at a school board meeting. His passion for teaching comes through so genuinely that you can’t help but understand why he was chosen as the New York State Teacher of the Year.”
NYSSBA president sees progress

By Eric Randall
EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

Stepping up to the plate as an advocate for public education can be like stepping onto a treadmill, NYSSBA President Thomas Nespeca told delegates at NYSSBA’s Annual Business Meeting. “It seems that as soon as you cross one item off the list, three others have to be added,” he said.

Nevertheless, NYSSBA had an exceptionally good year of advocacy, Nespeca reported just prior to being re-elected to a second one-year term. His examples:

• “With your help, NYSSBA secured a huge victory when Gov. Cuomo vetoed a very bad bill that would require consideration of a student’s culture and home environment when making special education placements.”

• “NYSSBA was the lead advocate on pension reform, which was recognized when New York’s lawmakers delivered Tier VI pension reform, that will make employee retirement systems more affordable in the long term.”

• “Lawmakers agreed to allow schools to use national purchasing cooperatives and ‘piggyback’ onto large municipal contracts, paving the way for millions in cost savings. Passage of this legislation was also led by NYSSBA.”

• “We have a reputation as an organization of school boards that is progressive and results-oriented,” Nespeca said. The involvement of rank-and-file school board members in advocacy is vital, he added. “School board members can be very effective lobbyists at the grassroots level,” he said. “Oftentimes, you know your local assembly member or state senator – or key members of their staff. And a phone call, a note or an email in support for a NYSSBA initiative might be just the help we need to finish the task. This is a team effort.”

Nespeca described NYSSBA’s relationships in Albany as healthy and strong, noting the governor and legislators sought NYSSBA’s support for a “balanced approach” regarding the confidentiality of teacher and principal evaluations. While not making these ratings public information, the revised law “still allows those who need the information the most – parents – to know the quality ratings and effectiveness scores of their children’s teachers.”

He cited NYSSBA-supported legislation including new laws that allow school districts to continue using lever voting machines, provide aid for instructional days lost to storms, and permit BOCES to contract with libraries and out-of-state school districts.

But much more work lies ahead, he said. “We still lack a sufficient and equitable state aid formula. New York public schools need relief from outdated, costly and burdensome mandates and the flexibility to initiate common-sense reforms locally.”

He added: “You can be sure that NYSSBA will put forth the maximum effort to achieve our goals. We will never lose sight of our mission to give students the best opportunity to have a great experience in the classroom and achieve success. New York is the national leader in education, and with your energy and dedication it will stay that way.”

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Expanding the role of BOCES could help school districts cut the Gordian Knot of school finance, Commissioner of Education John B. King Jr. said in a dialogue with school board members at NYSSBA’s 93rd Annual Convention.

“We’ve got to figure out a way to leverage the BOCES as the true regional leaders they should be,” King said.

Schools face a myriad of financial issues, he said. A local property tax levy cap enacted last year and tight restrictions on the growth of state school aid will continue to financially hamstring New York’s school districts, he said. Meanwhile, districts have been struggling with lower property values and diminishing options to cut staff and program spending, he said.

“I don’t want to pretend there are new resources coming along. I think the reality is that they are not,” King told one questioner. “The cavalry with new resources is not coming.”

Therefore, King said, regionalism and cooperation hold the most promise for districts looking to preserve or improve their programs and build student achievement.

He acknowledged that mergers and consolidations are “a difficult, challenging subject,” recalling the murmurs that spread throughout the crowd at last year’s NYSSBA convention when he raised the issue. Nonetheless, he insisted, “If you were starting from scratch, you would not design a system of 700 school districts.”

King urged school leaders to more readily embrace joint options such as regional high schools, early college high schools, career and technical program spending, he said.

“It’s important to review school district policies that might affect social media users. For example, school districts can state on their Facebook page answers? Answer: Only by hitting the delete key, assuming your are the administrator” for social media relations, said Sanik. Goshen Central School District in Orange County is among users of Pinterest.

The audience buzzed with questions: Are tweets subject to the state’s Freedom of Information Law? Answer: Although the issue hasn’t come before the courts or the state Committee on Open Government, the answer is probably yes if the tweets are official communications.

How can you control people’s responses? Answer: Only by hitting the delete key, assuming your are the administrator of a Facebook page. Bradley emphasized the importance of policies and guidelines to offset such concerns. She noted that guidelines are “your administrator’s marching orders” and school districts should choose a “skilled administrator” for social media relations – one who knows the school district well and can anticipate district concerns. “You control your message,” Sanik said.

It’s important to review school district policies that might affect social media such as those concerning bullying, sexual misconduct and community relations. Be sure that your school district’s privacy settings are correctly set up and post the “rules of engagement” for social media users. For example, school districts can state on their Facebook page that they can remove comments that don’t conform to their guidelines of use.
Gruwell: Every kid is on an Odyssey

By Cathy Woodruff
SENIOR WRITER

When Erin Gruwell took the stage to deliver the kickoff address at NYSSBA’s 93rd Annual Convention, she seemed little changed from the perky, pearls-and-polka-dot-dress-wearing Pollyanna she described breezing into a Long Beach, Calif. classroom some 18 years ago.

“I was this cheerleader from hell,” she told a nearly full-house crowd at the Rochester Convention Center. “I believed that public education was the best way to save our youth.”

Her effervescent demeanor apparently undiminished since that first day in the inner-city school, Gruwell, 43, went on to captivate her audience with the account of how she found a way to reach 150 students who had been written off by educators as hopeless cases in the aftermath of the 1992 Los Angeles riots.

The first part of the answer, she found, was with three books written by traumatized teenagers from different eras on a distant continent: Anne Frank, The Diary of a Young Girl; Night by Elie Wiesel; and Zlata’s Diary, A Child’s Life in Sarajevo by Zlata Filipovic.

Gruwell said no words rang with more truth for some of her students than Anne Frank’s confession while hidden from the Nazi’s in Miep Gies’ attic:

“Sometimes, I feel like a bird in a cage and I wish I could fly away.”

The next key for her students, Gruwell said, was the journals that allowed them to write about their own lives and feelings. They poured out stories of lives wrenched and tossed by gang violence, drugs, incarcerations, death, abuse, homelessness, hunger and racial hatred.

Eventually, they also began to relate to some of the universal themes in classic literature by Homer and Shakespeare.

“I thought: Every single kid has an Odyssey, a journey,” Gruwell said, and the journals were a way to tell about their own.

The story of Gruwell and her students was chronicled in their 1999 bestseller, The Freedom Writers Diary, and in the 2007 film Freedom Writers starring Hilary Swank as Gruwell.

Gruwell concluded her animated, extemporaneous presentation with kudos to school board members for their service and a reminder of the power of education.

“I am an ordinary teacher who had an extraordinary experience. I walked out of that classroom as a student who had 150 teachers every day,” she said. “Everything you do is bigger than yourselves.”
Attorneys discuss issue of cheating

By Eric D. Randall
EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

After listening to a Georgia attorney tell a gripping tale about how a team of investigators broke through denials to uncover a top-to-bottom cheating scandal in Atlanta schools, attendees at the 16th Annual Pre-Convention School Law Seminar heard New York’s test security chief describe the State Education Department’s strategy to discourage and crack down on cheating.

Tina Sciocchetti, who has been SED’s head of Test Security and Educator Integrity since March, entitled her presentation “Learning from Atlanta.”

“You do not want to be like Atlanta,” where cheating was found in 44 of 56 schools, said attorney Robert E. Wilson of the Decatur, Ga., law firm of Wilson, Morton & Downs. He described an urban school system where the then-superintendent (Beverly Hall) created a culture of intimidation that placed pressure on principals and teachers to improve scores and meet defined “targets.”

The Atlanta saga began when the Atlanta Journal-Constitution published articles questioning the validity of Atlanta’s stellar improvement in test scores in 2001. Nine years later, in 2010, Gov. Sonny Perdue ordered an investigation, which was hosted by the New York State School Boards Association with Eastern Suffolk BOCES.

Investigators found no evidence of cheating scandal in Atlanta, Tina Sciocchetti of the State Education Department described what lessons New York has learned from Atlanta’s experience. Below are attendees James Denter, district superintendent of Washington-Saratoga-Warren-Hamilton-Essex BOCES and attorney Michelle Hendsel of Capital Region BOCES.

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Expert provides review of NYS Dignity Act and coordinator’s role

By Gayle Simidian
STAFF WRITER

Improving school climate is “the heart of the intent” of New York’s new Dignity for All Students Act, according to Mary Grenz Jalloh, executive director of the New York State Center for School Safety at Ulster BOCES. She led a session called “The Dignity Act Coordinator: Supporting and Strengthening their Role,” at NYSSBA’s 93rd Annual Convention.

Jalloh reviewed the list of 11 protected classes under the Dignity Act and four sections of regulations that cover:
- The code of conduct.
- Instruction.
- School employee training.
- Reporting.

To avoid being accused of violating the law, school personnel need to choose their words carefully when dealing with students, she said. A well-meaning teacher concerned about a thin student’s health might say, “Go get something to eat before class.” Given the fact that the law states that students cannot be discriminated against on the basis of weight, such a statement would be potentially problematic because a student may interpret it as being forced to eat something before they can attend class. Jalloh suggested a better phrasing would be, “The cafeteria is around the corner…”

When discussing the four regulatory sections, Jalloh emphasized the importance of having a well-written code of conduct. She detailed what needs to be included when reporting a bullying situation, including the “type of bias involved,” who directed it – employee or student, whether the situation was of a physical or verbal nature, and the area in which it occurred. Material incidents are those involving “…discrimination and/or harassment by a student or employee…” that cause “…a hostile environment…” and emotional distress, or disrupt academic functioning, and/or produce concerns about safety. They need to be reported.

Some important school employee training issues include having one dignity act coordinator approved by the board of education in each school with contact information publicly listed in the code of conduct. If a dignity act coordinator (DAC) leaves the position, another staff member needs to be approved and on the job within 30 days. Jalloh stressed that DAC responsibilities are a “local decision,” so districts may utilize these positions in different ways. Other training aspects concern communication between school and families regarding the Dignity Act, promoting a positive school climate and promoting diversity awareness.

Jalloh also linked implementation of the Dignity Act to aspects of the Regents Reform Agenda including the Common Core and the Annual Professional Performance Review system (APPR). For example, the Common Core’s emphasis on nonfiction reading is a suitable way to incorporate the instructional component of the Dignity Act in curriculum. In addition, its contents coincide with APPR so administrators can “marry” them. For example, teacher rubrics mentioning “student diversity,” respect, and “student safety” meld well with the intent of the Act.

Trust & conflict

NYSSBA staffer Darci D’Ercole explains strategies to deal with conflict in the boardroom. • Photo by Barbara Bennett

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Members chronicle Convention on Twitter

By Barbara Bradley
StafF Writer

During NYSSBA’s 93rd Annual Convention, board members and the commissioner of education conducted a running commentary of their Convention experiences on Twitter.

It was the third year that NYSSBA created a conversation thread dedicated to the convention, but the first year that dozens of participants chimed in.

For the uninitiated, Twitter is a 140-character microblogging social media platform. Messages are called “tweets.” Members were able to contribute to the same thread by ending their messages by typing a code called a hashtag. The Convention hashtag was “#nyssba12.” Under the name @nyschoolboards, NYSSBA staff got the conversation going with announcements of upcoming convention events, observations and links to photos. One example: “Anti-bullying expert Barbara Coloroso tells a full house kids should have a healthy regard for themselves & language matters #nyssba12.”

Convention attendees participated, adding nearly 200 tweets to the conversation. They tweeted their observations during educational sessions and special events, and sent messages to fellow attendees.

State Education Commissioner John King’s Friday morning presentation generated the most tweets – nearly 30. For example:

- Onteora Board Vice President Tony Fletcher (@tonyfletcher) reported, “NYSED’s message to school boards: Do more. With less. Get used to it #nyssba12.”
- Holland Patent Board Member Richard Allen (@Rallen29) observed, “We are wasting resources on the APPR. Let the local school board make the decision on how to achieve high standards #nyssba12.”

Even Commissioner King (@JohnKingNYSED) contributed: “Talking w/school board members about ed reform initiatives at the NYSSBA Annual Convention in Rochester. #nyssba12 @nyschoolboards #ROC.”

Other tweets:

- Springville-Griffith Board Member Kara Kane (@karakane): “Great session on transparency from Bedford CSD #nyssba12 solid communications = success.”
- New Paltz Board Member Ruth Quinn (@ruthquinn): “Coffee and documents printed at the print center. Ready to learn and connect #nyssba12.”

NYSSBA’s Twitter feed has nearly 570 followers, up from 39 at the 2009 convention, when NYSSBA first began using Twitter. This year for the first time the conversation stream was displayed throughout the convention on a special monitor at the NYSSBA booth and bookstore, just outside the Education Expo. To read the entire Twitter convention stream, go to https://twitter.com/search/real-time?q=%23nyssba12&src=typd. NYSSBA has already designated #nyssba13 as our hashtag for the 2013 Annual Convention and Education Expo. Please join our conversation.

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Renowned author, trainer brings bullying message to Rochester

By Paul Heiser
STAFF WRITER

Barbara Coloroso distilled a 30-hour course into a 90-minute session at NYSSBA’s 93rd Annual Convention. The renowned writer and educational consultant presented “The Bully, the Bullied and the Bystander – Breaking the Cycle of Violence,” to attentive listeners at the Saturday morning session, which was repeated in the afternoon.

Coloroso has written several books and travelled the country bringing her message to schools about the harmful effects of bullying, how to recognize it, and what to do about it.

Coloroso said bullying is not about conflict. It’s about contempt – a powerful feeling of dislike toward someone considered to be worthless, inferior or undeserving of respect. Bullying is a conscious, willful and deliberate hostile activity, intended to harm. It has four signs: an imbalance of power between the bully and the one being bullied; an intent to do harm; a threat of further aggression; and, if it continues unabated, it leads to terror.

Coloroso said that any bullying situation has three components: the bully, the person being bullied, and the bystander (or bystanders). Each has his or her own role to play.

**The bully.** Bullets feel a contempt for others that grows out of a sense of entitlement, or the right to control, dominate, subjugate, and abuse another human being. Bullies are intolerant to those who are different. Bullies also feel at liberty to bar, isolate, and segregate a person deemed not worthy of respect or care.

**The bullied.** The one thing that all kids who are bullied have in common is that a bully or a bunch of bullies has targeted them. Each one was singled out to be the object of scorn, and thus the recipient of bullying, merely because he or she was different in some way.

There are a number of warning signs that a kid is being bullied. A child who is being bullied often shows an abrupt lack of interest in school, doesn’t want to go to school at all or takes an unusual route to school. Typically a bullied student’s grades will drop suddenly, and he or she withdraws from family and school activities.

Unfortunately, bullied children often won’t tell someone who may be in a position to help them because they are ashamed of being bullied, are afraid of retaliation, or they don’t believe anyone can help them. They may also buy into the stereotype that bullying is simply a necessary part of growing up, and that tattling on their peers is wrong.

**The bystander.** Bystanders are the supporting cast who aid and abet the bully, through acts of omission and commission. They stand idly by or look away, or they actively encourage the bully or join in and become one of a bunch of bullies.

Bullying is challenged when the majority stands up against the cruel acts of the minority. Since much of bullying goes without adults knowing about it, it is incumbent upon kids themselves to show bullies that they will not be looked up to nor their behavior tolerated.

So how do you stop bullying?

Coloroso offers seven steps:
1. Discipline for the bully, including the “Three Rs”: restitution, resolution and reconciliation.
2. Create opportunities to “do good.”
4. Teach friendship skills.
5. Closely monitor TV viewing, video games and computer activities that expose children to violence.
6. Engage in more constructive, entertaining, energizing activities.
7. Teach ways to “will good.” This involves promoting activities that encourage students to extend themselves to others. Examples include serving as a crossing guard or reading to younger students.

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Media Boot Camp

In mock media interviews, NYSSBA members shine

By Cathy Woodruff
SENIOR WRITER

Three nervous volunteers learned that they had better on-camera instincts than they realized during a media “boot camp” session that featured mock interviews with a veteran television reporter. “You were likeable and credible,” public relations executive Jon Alhart told Carlos Gildemeister, the new Cuba-Rushford interim superintendent, after his interview with YNN reporter Seth Voorhees. “You were extremely authentic and believable,” agreed Ed Buttaccio, a YNN news director. “It did not sound like a canned response.”

Voorhees acknowledged as he approached his microphone to comment on a fictional scenario in which school buildings and vehicles had been badly damaged by student vandals. “I’m scared stiff,” Gildemeister acknowledged as he approached Voorhees and his microphone to comment. “They won’t have time to draw on diverse topics in a given day and probably will have scant time to produce each report.”

“Make sure your answers are short and packed with information,” said Marlin, whose experience includes serving as general manager for Time Warner Cable’s YNN. “They won’t have time to go through a lot of video to put their story together.”

A typical broadcast report may be drawn from author T.J. Walker’s guide, Media Training A-Z: “Thinking on your feet requires thinking at your seat.”

But while praising concise answers, Voorhees also advised boot campers to maintain a conversational tone. Buttaccio recommended against referring to notes during an on-camera interview, saying that it undermines the personal touch that enhances credibility and helps viewers grasp the information.

Alhart, a supervisor and digital media specialist with the Rochester public relations firm Dixon Schwab, advised his listeners on what to do when bad news happens. He encouraged them to embrace the rapid-response power of social media such as Twitter and Facebook. “You can take control because you are pro-actively putting the information out there and forcing the media to react to that,” Alhart said. “Sometimes, anything you don’t respond to in 10 minutes can create a firestorm.”

Even in the midst of a crisis, NYSSBA’s Albert cautioned, taking time to plan a message before stepping in front of a camera or speaking with any reporter is essential. Alhart offered a rhyming reminder drawn from author T.J. Walker’s guide, Media Training A-Z: “Thinking on your feet requires thinking at your seat.” He suggested selecting three key points that can be communicated within 30 seconds. And even though it’s good to adopt a conversational style in responding to a reporter’s questions, Albert cautioned, “An interview is not a conversation.” Statements should be able to stand on their own, making them clearer and more meaningful if they wind up as a sound bite or quote in an edited story.

It’s usually not smart to avoid a reporter’s questions — “one thing that we know doesn’t work is stonewalling,” Albert said. But he suggested planning ways to “bridge” back to a positive message after answering a question about a problem or troubling event.

All three volunteers applied Albert’s tips during their mock interviews after mapping out their strategies with others in small groups. “We are just in the beginning of the investigation,” Sharoff told Voorhees when he began pressing for details she would not yet have had about the hypothetical vandalism. “At this point, we are working with law enforcement,” she said. “There are a lot of questions we have as well. …We cannot let one unfortunate incident cast a shadow on our entire district.”
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How to tell if a grant opportunity is right for your school district

By Paul Heiser
STAFF WRITER

Is a grant right for your district? It depends on whether the grant would fill a pressing need.

In a pre-convention workshop, presenter Renee Bourque gave attendees a three-hour crash course on how to tell whether applying for a grant would be right for their schools. Doing this helps to avoid “chasing the money” — or applying for grants in order to obtain much-needed cash rather than to fill a need that’s consistent with the district’s educational mission.

Bourque, president of Bright Star Grant Consultants, Inc., spoke at NYSSBA’s Third Annual Education Foundations Workshop. Here are some of the keys things to consider before applying for your next (or first) grant:

Do a needs assessment. Grants are merely a framework for meeting a need. You determine a need by doing a needs assessment. And that need must be articulated to the funding agency you apply to. Remember, your application will be competing for funding against hundreds of other worthy projects. How does your need stand out from the rest? Why is your need more important than that of others? Coming up with solid answers to those important questions greatly increases your chances for success.

Think with the end in mind. Grant-funding organizations fund outcomes, not ideas. Funders aren’t interested necessarily in how things are achieved, but rather the positive outcomes derived from doing something.

For example, say a social services agency wants grant funding to purchase five new computers because the old ones are too slow. The purpose of the grant would not be that the computers are too slow, but rather the slowness of the existing computers causes the agency to not provide food, shelter and medical care to 30 needy people in an average day. The 30 people not receiving services every day, or 150 people a week, or 600 people a month, and so on, is the real purpose of the grant because it helps fill an unmet need.

One session attendee recounted how teachers and students in science and math classrooms in her district were able to obtain grant funding for technology that allowed them to measure the amount of heat loss from classroom windows. With this information, the district was able to make informed decisions about which windows needed to be replaced. This helped the district secure capital project funding for that very need. By replacing inefficient windows with more efficient ones, the district was able to focus more money on where it is most needed — classroom instruction.

Build relationships with grant funders. As in many aspects of daily life, it’s not what you know (or, in the case of grants, what you do), it’s who you know. Building relationships with funders is essential, and it should be done in three stages.

The initial stage occurs before you even make contact by researching a foundation or corporate grant-maker to learn how they want to be contacted, what their funding priorities are, and what types of organizations they support. This allows you to then make a first contact in which you present your purpose for making the first contact.

The second stage is to engage in active grant-seeking. You must be realistic about what you can accomplish and what your operating costs will be. You will most likely have a site visit or review process by the funder, so be prepared to document your need and the financial aspects of the proposal.

Third, it’s important to maintain a successful relationship after a grant is secured. Keep lines of communication open with your funding partner. Keep the funder apprised of key events at your organization and the progress of your funding goals. Don’t keep the funder in the dark if your goals are not progressing just as you had hoped. And, by all means, thank the funder for its generous gift.

Don’t be surprised or discouraged if you get turned down the first time you apply. It takes time to build a relationship, and you cannot assume that just because your district is addressing current needs and has great plans that the funder will bend the guidelines to help you.

Expert offers tips on school foundations

By Jeffrey S. Handelman
STAFF WRITER

Is your community tired of supporting gala and golf tournaments, bake sales and chicken dinners as fundraising vehicles for your district? While there is nothing wrong with these types of activities, presenter Nancy Dye provided dozens of ideas for reinvigorating school district fundraising at NYSSBA’s 93rd Annual Convention. She solicited additional ideas from attendees throughout her program.

The executive director of the American Schools Foundation Alliance (ASFA), Dye helps school districts set up and manage their foundations. From her national perspective, she comes across successful ideas all over the country, including:

• A district in New Jersey that raised $96,000 when 200 test families charged guests to attend a dinner at their homes at which a different member of the school community was honored. Such feel-good donations are an effective way to bring in money for schools.

• A district that raised $6,000 by partnering with a local community college to have professors lead book discussions in homes throughout the community, some including local authors.

• A phonathon that raised $100,000 by having high school students call all the alumni in the district’s database.

• A district that raised $300,000 through a campaign to encourage community members to commit to a dollar a day donation to its foundation. Yard signs were distributed to everyone who made a pledge, the signs providing a visible symbol of community support which helped the effort snowball.

• A district that raised $5,000 by distributing 20 ceramic, hand-painted piggy banks to local businesses, collecting donations from patrons of those businesses.

Collaboration between various fundraising endeavors in your districts is imperative, said Nye; otherwise you risk competing for the same donors. If your foundation and PTO are both running fundraisers, try to work together rather than separately. Since local businesses are often inundated with requests for donations, a community fundraising calendar can help them plan their donations accordingly. Another way to help make your event stand apart from others is to schedule fundraising activities during slow times of the year, rather than when everyone else is holding theirs.

Nye emphasized the importance of being willing to ask for donations, even from district employees. Payroll deductions are an easy way for district staff to participate in fundraising, and staff are often overlooked as potential contributors. Providing incentives for employees to donate, such as raffling additional days off, may help make this a popular option with faculty and staff.

Nationally, the biggest increasing donor base for district fundraising is alumni. Do you have a celebrity who graduated from your district? If so, consider inviting him or her to a benefit to increase your attendance and fundraising potential.

Although corporate giving to schools comprises only 5 percent of fundraising dollars, this represents $14 billion available to schools through grants. Grant applications are a very competitive process, but Nye recommends applying regularly rather than giving up after one application attempt. ASFA regularly sends grant opportunities to member districts through its grant alert service. Grants are an important additional revenue source that should be explored.

Nye also emphasized the benefits of school foundations joining their state and national network, which is helpful for sharing fundraising ideas and best practices. For more information on ASFA, go to www.asfalliance.org.
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New York State Department of Civil Service, Employee Benefits Division.
Is your district looking everywhere it can to save money and run more efficiently?

Adam Haber, a board trustee for the Roslyn school district on Long Island, has some cost-savings tips that his district has tried or considered. At NYSSBA’s Annual Convention, he presented them in an educational seminar on creative ways to save money.

The bottom line: everything is negotiable, and working together with other districts when possible is better than going it alone.

For instance, Roslyn refinanced its debt and saved nearly a quarter of a million dollars in the process. The district had a $3.175 million bond with nearly five-and-a-half years remaining. Simply by renegotiating the terms of the bond, the district was able to lower its interest rate from 4.39 percent to 2.28 percent, saving $238,000. Haber is a big advocate of cooperative purchasing as well. His district borders six other districts in Nassau County, and they have found great success in creating an ad hoc bidding unit to purchase goods and services more cheaply.

Haber cautions about hidden fees in the cooperative bidding process, though. For example, Roslyn bought five new high-end printers for roughly $62,000. However, there was nearly $6,000 in extra charges for such items as an attorney financing fee, project management and coordination, and a 2 percent receiving and inventory fee.

Another purchasing initiative undertaken by Roslyn involved buying toner refills rather than new printer toner cartridges, which cut their annual costs in half, from $80,000 to $40,000. The district is now in the process of implementing a health care plan modeled on Indiana’s Consumer Driven Health Care system. The plan gives all employees a $3,000 medical savings account to purchase health care. Any unused portion of the account may be rolled over into the following year, so the plan holder accumulates cash savings for being a savvy consumer of medical care.

The plan has cut Indiana’s health care costs by 35 percent. Other initiatives that may save districts money include:

- **Going paperless.** In Roslyn, all school board packets are done on iPads, saving the district about $20,000 per year. One session attendee mentioned his district started using BoardDocs, a NYSSBA-sponsored solution that helps reduce the time spent producing board packets by up to 75 percent. The district has also explored using online textbooks, which saves money and keeps content up to date.

- **Energy performance contracts.** Upgrading lighting and HVAC can be a significant money saver, which in turn helps to finance upgrades.

- **Missing tax revenue.** School district boundaries sometimes cut through property lines so that part of a property is in one district and the other part is in another district. For example, there are 100 properties in Roslyn that are divided between Roslyn and another school district. Conducting an analysis of the property taxes paid by property owners may reveal that a district may not be receiving the tax revenues it is rightfully due.

- **Cooperative busing.** New York State mandates that all residents who send students to schools outside of the districts must receive free busing. For example, Roslyn spends $40,000 per year to bus two girls to a private yeshiva in Queens. If a bus from one district must travel through another district to get to its destination, why not pick up kids along the way and split costs 50/50?

Roslyn conducted a pilot program with East Williston and North Shore to do just that and saved about $50,000 per district in the process.

- **Foundations/endowments.** This may be out of reach for some districts, but a university-style endowment in which districts raise donations from businesses, alumni, and community members may help fund worthwhile programs, such as sports, music and the arts, which otherwise would come out of a district’s general budget.

Laura Jackson, a board member from Sharon Springs pores over student artwork at NYSSBA’s Convention. “Once kids’ hands are coordinated enough and they discover they have talent, they make these amazing things,” she said of the pieces on display. — Photo by Barbara Bennett
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NYSSBA Past Presidents

NYSSBA’s Past Presidents gather for their annual photo at Convention. From left, standing are Judith Katz, 1988-89; Albert Hawk, 1990-91; Pamela Bethell, 1998-99; Anne Byrne, 2005-05; John Woods, 1975-76; and Caroline (Tarry) Shipley, 1996-97. Seated from left are Wayne Schlifke, 2008-09; Carl Onken, 2006-07; and Edward McCormick, 2000-01.

NYSSBA Past Presidents

Pamela Bethell shares her experience with effective board meetings at a seminar featuring the NYSSBA Players.

Edward McCormick, center, and his wife Bea, chat with Anne Byrne and NYSSBA General Counsel Jay Worona at the Innovation Awards Luncheon.

Education Commissioner John B. King, Jr. talks with NYSSBA 1st Vice President Lynne Lembard and past President Anne Byrne.

Photos by Barbara Bennett

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Building the Future of NYS Public Schools
Regents authorize new diploma option for special ed students

By Pilar Sokol
DEPUTY GENERAL COUNSEL

At their October meeting, the state Board of Regents took emergency action to give school boards a new way to enable students with disabilities to graduate with a local high school diploma. The so-called “compensatory option” allows students with disabilities to “compensate” for a score of between 45-54 on certain Regents exams that are required for graduation by achieving a score of 65 or higher on a separate required examination.

The option is available beginning with the current school year.

Until now, students with disabilities that are unable to earn a Regents diploma have been able to graduate with a local high school diploma only if:

- They obtain a score of 55-64 on one or more of the required Regents examinations, or
- They entered ninth grade before September 2011 and pass a Regents Competency Test (RCT) for each subject area in which they fail a required Regents exam.

The compensatory option provides another alternative, subject to the following specified conditions:

- Students must obtain a score of 55 or higher on the English and math Regents exams.
- A score of 65 or higher on a single Regents exam cannot be used to compensate for more than one other separate required exam.
- Students must pass, in accordance with school passing grade requirements, the course for the subject area of the Regents exam in which they scored 45-54.
- Consistent with school attendance policy, students must have a satisfactory attendance rate during the year in which they receive the 45-54 score being compensated, exclusive of excused absences.

The compensatory option is not available to students with disabilities using the RCT safety net option (see table).

For more information, see www.regents.nysed.gov/meetings/2012Meetings/October2012/1012p12a1.pdf

3 ways disabled students can earn a local high school diploma

To graduate with a Regents diploma, students must pass five required Regents exams (English, math, global history, U.S. history and government and science) with a score of 65 or more. School boards can issue a local high school diploma for students with disabilities who meet the requirements of one of the three options below.

1. Achieve a 55-64 score
   - The student obtains only a score of 55-64 on one or more of the required Regents examinations.

2. Pass a Regents Competency Test (RCT)
   - The student passes the RCT in the subject area of any failed Regents examination.

3. Compensate for a 45-54 score
   - The student is not using the RCT option, scores at least 55 on the English and math Regents examinations, can compensate a score of 45-54 on any other Regents exam with a score of 65 or higher on separate Regents examinations, and meets additional school attendance and course grade requirements.

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Celebrating students

Students and their families visited the Student Art Show during a reception held in the artists' honor.

Education Commissioner John B. King Jr. (inset) was among visitors to the Delhi district booth, which highlighted a school garden, an alternative energy program and a kindergarten initiative.

Fayetteville-Manlius student Colin Barber demonstrates a mini cello his class built for the Science Olympiad.

Convention-goers learn the details of a 1965 Shelby Cobra created by Jefferson-Lewis-Hamilton-Oneida BOCES students.

Students in the Woodmere Middle School Jazz Ensemble were the youngest musical performers at this year’s Convention.

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Students in the Woodmere Middle School Jazz Ensemble were the youngest musical performers at this year’s Convention.
How to handle a disruptive parent

By the New York State Association of School Attorneys

Public school districts generally encourage parents to visit schools, communicate with faculty and administrators, and attend school events. However, the conduct of some parents can be abusive. When rude behavior interferes with the district’s ability to educate its students, or a parent poses a danger to the district’s students, staff, or property, the school boards and their designees have lawful ways to limit that parent’s access to district property or ban the parent altogether. However, such actions should never be taken lightly, and generally only as a last resort.

The Education Law requires that school boards adopt a code of conduct “for the maintenance of order on school property, including a school function, which shall govern the conduct of students, teachers and other school personnel as well as visitors and shall provide for the enforcement thereof.” Most school boards dedicate a section of the code of conduct to visitor conduct. A school district must clearly set forth the consequences for violations of its policies, including provisions for limiting access to school property and ejection from school property. Parents, as members of the public, are subject to the code of conduct and the visitor policy.

The difficulty, of course, is in determining when restricting a parent’s access to school property is justified, and how to narrowly tailor the restrictions under the circumstances to ensure that the district does not impinge upon the parent’s rights.

Any instances of physical aggression should be addressed by immediately calling the police or other appropriate authorities. The more common situation involves a parent who is verbally abusive to school personnel, other parents or even students. One can only speculate on why this occurs. Some parents seem to believe that they can achieve their objectives by berating, demeaning and harassing others. In other cases, the parent is voicing frustrations, albeit in a very unpleasant and inappropriate way.

While school officials invariably view verbal abuse as an intolerable disruption, the bullying parent may claim a right to free speech, a right to access to district property or a right to be free from “retaliation” for exercising constitutionally guaranteed rights.

Although everything depends on the circumstances, the law generally is not on the side of bullies. School districts need not “tolerat[e] inappropriate behavior on school grounds and/or harassment of school students and/or employees,” according to the commissioner of education. “When such conduct occurs, school district officials are encouraged to seek the assistance of law enforcement and/or the courts where necessary to ensure the safety of students, staff and/or school property.” [Appeal of Anonymous, with reference to Cira v. Waters.]

Courts and the state commissioner of education have upheld the discretion of school boards and their designees to restrict the access of parents to schools if their presence is disruptive to school operations. School districts also have discretion to ban individuals from school grounds if those individuals pose a danger to the district’s students, staff or property. The individual who has been banned or had access restricted would be unlikely to prevail on a First Amendment claim against a school district as long as the district can show that its action was not based on the content of the parent’s speech but for the disruptiveness or danger that accompanies the parent’s presence on school property.

As a practical matter, we recommend school administrators handle badly behaving parents the same way they handle badly behaving children or staff: with measured, appropriate responses that are consistent with school policy.

When faced with an abusive or disruptive parent, the first step is to carefully document the parent’s conduct and statements immediately after the incident occurs. The conduct and statements should be analyzed and the school district should respond to each incident in accordance with its policy.

Progressively severe responses to a disruptive parent may include the following:

• An initial warning, in writing, that the parent must comply with district policies including the code of conduct and visitor policy and that the individual is expected to behave in a civil manner towards all district employees.

• A reasonable restriction on how communications to the district should be submitted, with specifics regarding time, place, and manner of those communications.

• A ban from school property, absent express written consent by the superintendent of schools, and more stringent time, place, and manner restrictions on communications to the district.

Disruptive parents can crop up in any community. Even the best handling by school officials can have fallouts including bad publicity and lawsuits. Be sure your school policies are well-constructed and that your administrators know that you want their energies focused on the mission of educating students. When it comes to bad-behaving parents, often the best anyone can do is, “keep calm and carry on.”

Members of the New York State Association of School Attorneys represent school districts and BOCES.

This article was written by John P. Sheahan and Barbara Emigholz of Guercio & Guercio, LLP.

Some parents use disclosure law to harass

The state Freedom of Information Law (FOIL) was created to ensure members of the public have access to government documents that are public information.

But some parents use the right to file FOIL requests as a weapon in a guerrilla war they wage against schools. The most common tactic is the submission of an excessive number of FOIL requests. These requests are often difficult to parse, duplicative or a long list of interrogatories. Responding to such FOIL requests drains the time of office staff and distracts school administrators from essential work related to the education of schoolchildren.

It’s important to keep in mind that school districts are obligated under law to respond to the requests they receive pursuant to FOIL, and may not prohibit the submission of such requests, even if an unreasonable number have been submitted. The district’s best response to the “FOILer” is to stick to the letter of the law. Deny requests which are unintelligible or ask for information rather than records.

FOIL simply requires the production of records, as long as such records are not exempt under the statute. The district can also routinely require a reasonable fee for copying, which may deter individuals from making excessive and burdensome requests.

Many school districts include in their board policies a provision allowing individuals who have been denied records requested pursuant to FOIL to appeal such denial to the school board. This is not recommended, because the disruptive FOILer may use such policy to overwhelm the board with appeals. It can also lead to situations in which the parent uses the public comment portion of board meetings to berate the board or district staff.

Accordingly, we recommend that such denials only be appealable to the superintendent of schools, who is in a better position than the board to handle appeals in a timely manner.

— John P. Sheahan and Barbara Emigholz, Guercio & Guercio
Superintendent of Schools

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Please visit our website at: www.k12.ginet.org for application materials and information related to the search.

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Awards recognize districts’ PR excellence

The New York School Public Relations Association recognized school district communicators for outstanding achievements at an awards luncheon at NYSSBA’s 93rd Annual Convention, held in Rochester. The NYSPRA contest is one of the largest of its kind with about 338 entries in 13 categories. Entries were judged by professionals including Barbara Bradley, NYSSBA deputy director of communications and research.

Awards of Excellence

Albany City School District
COMMUNITY NEWSLETTER
Ron Lesko, Director of Communications; Lisa Aungerame, Communications Specialist
SPECIAL PURPOSE PUBLICATION
Ron Lesko, Director of Communications

Binghamton City School District
COMMUNITY NEWSLETTER
Don Shura, Communications Coordinator; Clare Stenta, Graphic Designer

Burnt Hills-Ballston Lake Central School District
EXCELLENCE IN WRITING
Christy Malver, Public Information Specialist, Capital Region BOCES Communications Service

Capital Region BOCES
PR/Marketing Campaign
(2 awards)
Education Speaks Editorial Team; Tom Anis, Public Information Specialist; Karen Serney, Public Information Specialists; Gigi Geagan, Graphic Artist

Capital Region BOCES Career & Technical School
SPECIAL PURPOSE PUBLICATION
Monique J.J. Jacobs, APR, Public Information Specialist; Margaret Murphy, Graphic Artist, Capital Region BOCES Communications Service

Dobbs Ferry School District
DVD/VIDEO
Kevin Bolley, Cable TV Station Program Director; Elizabeth Hauzman, Public Information Officer

East Irondequoit Central School District
PHOTOGRAPH
David Yates, Director of Communications

Eastchester Union Free School District
DVD/VIDEO
Mary Ellen Mehan Byrne, Public Relations Coordinator

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Sapna Kollari, Public Information Officer

Mahopac Central School District
ELECTRONIC NEWSLETTER
Barbara Coats, School Communications Specialist

Marcellus Central School District
EXCELLENCE IN WRITING
Laura Ryan, Public Information Specialist, Capital Region BOCES Communications Service

Marlboro Central School District
CALENDAR
Ulster BOCES Community Relations Team

Monroe 2-Orleans BOCES
ANNUAL REPORT
Communications Group

Oneida-Herkimer Madison BOCES
PHOTOGRAPH
Jean Palmer, Senior Public Relations Specialist; Andrea Rafferty, Public Relations Assistant

Onondaga Central School District
BUDGET/BOND NEWSLETTER
Ulster BOCES Community Relations Team

Pine Bush Central School District
BUDGET/BOND NEWSLETTER
Ulster BOCES Community Relations Team

COMMUNITY NEWSLETTER
Ulster BOCES Community Relations Team

Pittsford Central School District
DVD/VIDEO
Anthony Jones, AV Supervisor

Queensbury Union Free School District
COMMUNITY NEWSLETTER
Melissa Graham, Public Information Specialist, Capital Region BOCES Communications Service; Robin Fitzpatrick, Communication and Information Technology Specialist, Queensbury CSD

Ramapo Central School District
BUDGET/BOND NEWSLETTER
Jen Citolo, Rockland BOCES Public Information Assistant; Michele Kessler, Rockland BOCES Public Information Assistant

Rockland BOCES
DVD/VIDEO
Stephanie Gouss, APR, Director of Communications; Mark Khaixon, Videographer

Saugerties Central School District
CALENDAR
Ulster BOCES Community Relations Team

Schalmont Central School District
CALENDAR
Audrey Hendricks, Public Information Specialist; Margaret Murphy, Graphic Artist, Capital Region BOCES Communications Service

Schoharie Central School District
BUDGET/BOND NEWSLETTER
Jason McCord, Communications Specialist; Kimberly Vignars, Graphic Designer

Tech Valley High School
COMMUNITY NEWSLETTER
Michael McGaug, Public Information Specialist; Denise LaRocque, Graphic Artist, Capital Region BOCES Communications Service

RECRUITING BROCHURE
Michael McGaug, Public Information Specialist; Margaret Murphy, Graphic Artists, Capital Region BOCES Communications Service

Watervliet City School District
WEBSITE
Craig Clark and Judy Frost, Public Information Specialists, Capital Region BOCES Communications Service

Wayne Central School District
CALENDAR
Amy Gebhardt, Public Relations Specialist

West Genesee Central School District
WEBSITE
Bonnie Russel, School Information Officer

Wykonskill Union Free School District
SPECIAL PURPOSE PUBLICATION
Dan Sherman, Director of Communications; Christine Koch, Website Manager; Jackie Geraci, Communications Specialist

Awards of Honor

Broadalbin-Perth Central School District
Broome Tioga BOCES
Burnt Hills-Ballston Lake Central School District (2 awards)
Byram Hills School District
Capital Region BOCES
Chatham Central School District
Cobleskill-Richmondville Central School District
Dutchess BOCES (2 awards)
East Irondequoit Central School District
East Syracuse-Minoa Central School District
Eastchester Union Free School District
Elmira Central School District
Erie 2-Chautauqua-Cattaraugus BOCES
Garden City Union Free School District
Geneva Valley Educational Partnership
Glen Falls City School District (2 awards)
Holley Central School District
Honeoye Falls-Lima Central School District
Jericho School District
Lancaster Central School District
Madison-Oneida BOCES (2 awards)
Maine-Endwell Central School District
Millbrook Central School District
Mohonasen Central School District
Monroe 2-Orleans BOCES
Nassau BOCES
New Paltz Central School District
Oneida-Herkimer Madison BOCES (2 awards)
Ontario Central School District (2 awards)
Pittsford Central School District (2 awards)
Queensbury Union Free School District
Quaker Hill (2 awards)
Rome City School District
Roundout Valley Central School District
Schuylerville Central School District
South Colonie Central School District
Southern Westchester BOCES
Valhalla Union Free School District
Victor Central School District
West Genesee Central School District
Two books authored by New York students were featured in the NYSSBA Bookstore.

Barbara Coloroso’s sessions are typically laced with humor despite her serious message about bullying.

Convention gives board members the opportunity to network with peers from around the state.

Photos by Barbara Bennett