Pandemic doesn’t slow NYSSBA advocacy

Dear NYSSBA Members:

This Report to the Delegates summarizes how NYSSBA has been active during the past year on priorities that were established by NYSSBA’s member districts during annual business meetings over the past five years. I am proud to report that the COVID-19 pandemic has not deterred our advocacy on your behalf, despite many obstacles.

Just like your school district and BOCES, NYSSBA has spent a lot of energy adapting to rapidly changing situations and imperfect information. By mid-March, the state Capitol was shutdown to visitors, including NYSSBA Governmental Relations staff.

Following adoption of the state budget in early April, the Senate and Assembly only returned to Albany on three occasions for less than 10 total days of session. While we continue to discuss important issues with state legislators and their staff, via email and phone calls, an unusual amount of NYSSBA’s recent advocacy work has been directed towards the governor’s office. This has become essential because, during the current state of emergency, executive orders have largely taken the place of the normal legislative process.

Our advocacy at the federal level has been stepped up as well, as we are all painfully aware of how much a new round of federal stimulus is needed. Shortly after adoption of the CARES Act, NYSSBA immediately drafted letters to our congressional delegation that called for a new round of stimulus funding. Additional federal funding is critical, as the state started the new school year by withholding 20% of aid payments to districts – possibly laying the groundwork for a true midyear aid reduction, as the governor has warned about since this past spring.

We asked for our members to raise their voices, and I’m proud to report that that school board members and other members of our school communities sent nearly 10,000 letters to Washington, D.C.

This summer, NYSSBA staff coordinated virtual meetings with the state’s congressional delegation to stress the need for funding. As has been NYSSBA’s longstanding custom, we have worked closely with the National School Boards Association (NSBA) on a wide variety of federal issues including the digital divide, child nutrition and student mental health.

Looking ahead, there is more uncertainty and need for strong school advocacy. In addition to the presidential election this fall, all 213 state legislative seats will be on the ballot. More than a few state Senate Republicans have previously announced their retirement or have otherwise chosen not to run for re-election. And on the Assembly side, some notable Democrats were defeated or have otherwise chosen not to run for re-election. And on the Assembly side, some notable Democrats were defeated in their primaries. So, we will need to establish relationships with a new generation of legislators in Albany. It will be important for individual school board members to connect with their fellow elected officials.

The political complexion of the Legislature seems unlikely to change, as Democratic majorities in both houses are all but certain to remain in place. However, the composition of legislative conferences is sure to change. So we will all be keeping a close watch on the November 3 election results and the leadership decisions immediately after.

This report also contains profiles of your Governmental Relations team.

Notable Achievements

At the state level, NYSSBA works closely with allied organizations to promote worthy proposals and oppose ones that would interfere with school success. Prior to the pandemic, we were able to:

- Avoid implementation of executive proposals to adjust and reduce building aid and transportation aid.
- Defeat an executive proposal to consolidate expense-based aids.
- Secure an extension of the small group health insurance waiver for districts with 51-100 employees.
- Effectively repeal the additional mandatory employee time-off for voting, resetting to pre-2019 standards.
- Secure adoption of net neutrality principles for all internet service providers in the state.
- Gain enactment of multiple protections to address the use of vaping and e-cigarette products amongst the state’s youth.

Our team has evolved since this time last year, with departures, new hires and existing staff taking on new roles. We’ve shared information about our families and interests, and we hope this gives our members some fun starting points for future conversations, whether online or (we can’t wait) in person.

Finally, I want to thank you for your dedication over this past year, in what has been one of the most challenging situations that we have faced, individually and collectively. Know that your time, efforts and passion is meaningful and important. I look forward to our continued work together and wish you a healthy and successful 2021.

Brian C. Fessler
Director of Governmental Relations
STATE AID REVIEW
Is your district getting all the State Aid it’s entitled to?

Maximize your district’s state aid with School Aid Specialists (SAS). With a combined 70 years of experience, SAS assures a thorough review of the myriad of more than 85 unique revenue sources whether they be attendance, special education, financial or operational. SAS has recovered substantial funds annually on behalf of school districts with customized state aid reviews.

School Aid Specialists offer:

- Comprehensive results-oriented services
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For more information, contact:
Cassandra Ingham
Business Development Manager
cassandra.ingham@nyssba.org or 518-783-3726
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School Aid Specialists
THE REVENUE EXPERTS

School Aid Specialists is an endorsed NYSSBA School Services Partner.

School Boards Lead So Students Can ACHIEVE

School Board Recognition Week
October 19 - 23, 2020

School board members take on one of the most important citizen responsibilities: overseeing the education of the community’s youth.

Take time to recognize and honor their contributions through

Learn how you can thank your local school board members visit www.nyssba.org/sbrw

Get Involved!
NYSSBA urges passage of legislation to support the sharing of programs and services between BOCES and local school districts with similar needs. It also advocates for local governments when it makes financial and programmatic sense. (2015)

NYSSBA supported S.1398 (Carlucci), which would have authorized local school districts, municipalities, and BOCES to share services between BOCES and local school districts to support the sharing of programs and services. This bill was not acted upon by the Senate Local Government Committee.

NYSSBA supported S.6965 (Little)/A.6755 (Walczyk), which would have authorized municipal governments to contract for services jointly with federal and state agencies through preexisting contracts (popularly known as “piggybacking”). This legislation was not acted upon by the Senate Local Government Committee or the Assembly Local Governments Committee.

NYSSBA opposed S.7665 (Harczak)/A.3164 (Byrne), which would have required school districts to be a part of countywide shared service panels. These panels were mandated in the 2017 enacted budget to recommend services for reorganization. This proposal would be put to referendum. It should be the choice of individual districts whether to participate or not. This legislation was not acted upon by the Senate Local Government Committee or the Assembly Local Governments Committee.

NYSSBA supported A.1108 (Steck), which would have authorized municipalities, school districts, and BOCES to share services. This bill did not act upon by the Assembly Local Governments Committee.

NYSSBA supports legislation permitting boards of education to sponsor a referendum which would create voting wards to foster community-wide representation. (2015)

NYSSBA supported legislation that would have authorized school boards to adopt a resolution to allow any part of one school district to decide if they wanted to create voting wards for boards of education. S.4506 (Finger/Skoufis)/A.5240 (Stein) was passed by the Senate but failed to move out of the Assembly Education Committee. It would have authorized school boards in Orange County to create at least two voting wards.

S.1633 (Skoufis)/A.5943 (Gunther) was a statewide bill that passed the Assembly in 2018, but has since not moved in either the Assembly or Senate Education Committees.

Three district-specific election ward bills were introduced, but failed to move out of the Senate or Assembly Education Committees. These bills were:

S.5883-A (Skoufis)/A.7864-A (Schmitt) would have authorized the Washingtonville Central School District to establish election ward districts. This bill was attached. This bill was not acted upon by the Senate or Assembly Education Committees.

S.5884-A (Skoufis)/A.7858-A (Schmitt) would have authorized the Chester Union Free School District to establish school election wards.

S.6179-A (Skoufis)/A.8012-A (Brabenec) would have authorized the Warwick Valley Central School District to establish school election wards.

NYSSBA opposes raising the charter school cap. (2015)

The 2020-21 Executive Budget proposed authorizing the reissuance of charter schools in New York City that had been surrendered, revoked or terminated. While that proposal did not make a statutory change to the charter cap, it would have resulted in an increase in charter schools. NYSSBA opposed the de facto increase in the charter school cap and this proposal was not included in the enacted budget. NYSSBA opposes the expansion of mayoral control of school districts outside New York City. (2015)

The 2020-21 Executive Budget included a proposal for the Commissioner of Education and the Mayor of Rochester to jointly appoint a monitor to provide oversight, guidance and technical assistance to the Rochester City School District. The proposal required mayoral approval of a proposed financial plan agreed upon by the district and the appointed monitor. NYSSBA pushed back against mayoral involvement and, in the end, the enacted budget removed all mayoral inclusion from the Rochester monitor bill.

NYSSBA opposed legislation, A.2569 (Gantt), which would have imposed mayoral control on the Rochester City School District. This bill did not move out of the Assembly Education Committee and had no Senate sponsors.

NYSSBA also opposed A.7042 (Peoples-Stokes), which would have authorized the mayor to appoint at least two members of the Buffalo City school board. This bill did not move out of the Assembly Education Committee and had no Senate sponsor.

NYSSBA supports the creation of regional high schools. When locally determined to be educationally or fiscally appropriate by the local boards of education. (2017)

NYSSBA supported legislation backed by the State Education Department (SED), A.6594 (D’Urso), which would have directed SED to establish a regional secondary school advisory council to make recommendations regarding the establishment of regional high schools. The legislation passed the Assembly, but was not introduced in the Senate.

NYSSBA also supported A.5427 (Goodell), which would have authorized two or more school districts located within the same BOCES district in Allegany, Cattaraugus or Chautauqua counties to enter into a contract to operate a regional high school. This bill was not acted upon by the Assembly Education Committee.

NYSSBA supports legislative changes to align the requirements for school district absentee ballot applications with the requirements of the State Board of Elections. (2017)

NYSSBA supported Chapter 616 of the Laws of 2019, signed in December, which aligned the absentee ballot application for general elections and school district elections.

NYSSBA will work with SED, the state Legislature and the governor to protect student privacy by allowing districts to use locally generated ID numbers for students to be used in all SED data collection instead of easily identifiable data such as names. (2017)

The Board of Regents adopted Part 121 of the Commissioner’s Regulations on Jan. 13, 2020 and the regulations went into effect 16 days later. The language adopted concerns the protection of personally identifiable information and outlines what school districts and third-party contractors must do to protect student privacy.

According to the proposal, school districts must take steps to minimize their collection, processing and transmission of personally identifiable information, and third-party contractors must use encryption to protect personally identifiable information in its custody. NYSSBA participated in conversations that shaped the drafting of the final regulatory language.

NYSSBA opposed in its present form, S.5140B (Kavanagh)/A.6787D (Wallace), which directs the commissioner of education to conduct a study on the use of biometric identifying technology and prohibits the use of biometric identifying technology on school buses until 2022 or until the commissioner authorizes such purchase or utilization, whichever occurs later. The bill passed both houses, but has yet to be delivered to the governor.

NYSSBA opposes any legislative and regulatory mandates that would impose new unfunded mandates. (2018)

Throughout the 2020 legislative session, NYSSBA opposed a number of new mandates and supported proposals to relieve existing mandates. The following represents some of the highlights of that work.

NYSSBA supported a bill, S.4752 ( Griffin)/A.6523 (Galef), that would have required every state legislative bill introduced to include a note with an estimate of anticipated fiscal impact on all political subdivisions, including school districts, for any changes to their health insurance plans. The bill was not acted upon by the Government Operations committees in either house.

NYSSBA opposed the following bills:

S.307 (Felder) would have required a poll of public school attendants to present all schools in New York City for one hour prior to instruction, during the entirety of instruction time following the completion of teaching. While it is important for district staff and students to feel safe in their environment, the presence of an officer could have adverse effects and pose a large financial burden on our public schools. The bill did not move out of the Senate City Committees.

S.2885 (Sanders)/A.1116 (Miller MG) would have required a substance abuse prevention and intervention counselor in all NYC schools, but with no funding attached. This bill was not acted upon by the Senate Cities Committee or the Assembly Cities Committee.

S.5930 (Breslin)/A.7870 (Abinanti) would have required notification to public retirees by their former public corporation for payment of any tax increases or other increases in benefits or plans or premiums. This bill was not acted upon by the Senate Local Government Committee or the Assembly Local Government Employees Committee.

S.6091 (Kaminsky) would have required annual screenings for depression of students in grades K-12. This bill was not acted upon by the Senate Local Government Committee.

S.6516 (Bailey)/A.5475 (Fernandez) would have required every school district throughout the state to be employed by every school district. This bill was not acted upon by the Senate or Assembly Education Committee.

S.7612 (Carlucci)/A.4908 (Fernandez) would have required all teachers to undergo at least three hours of mental health training each year. This bill was not acted upon by the Senate or Assembly Education Committee.

S.7664 (Breslin)/A.9117 (Cusick) would change the definition of substantial completion in the state building code to make it earlier in the construction process, specifically once at least partial occupancy is possible. This language could push the substantial completion time districts are allowed to hold retainage on the project. This bill passed both houses and died in the Senate Rules Committee.

S.8550 (Hoylman)/A.10648 (Fall) would have required annual reporting concerning convictions among students. This bill was not acted upon by the Senate Rules Committee or the Assembly Education Committee.

A.448 (Rosenthal) would have required all public elementary and secondary schools to have a staff member trained in administration of an opioid antagonist.
and have at least two doses of such opioid antitussives on file at all times. This bill was not acted upon by the Assembly Health Committee.

A.645 (Rosenthal) would have required schools to purchase and maintain at their own cost, two epinephrine auto-injectors, and have trained personnel for the administration of the injectors during all school hours. This bill was not acted upon by the Assembly Health Committee.

A.1335 (Richardson) would have required school boards to designate abuse reporters undergo two hours of training in the identification of child abuse and maltreatment prior to accepting a position in which they are a mandated reporter. Following the acceptance of such a position, all mandated reporters would be required to undergo one hour of additional training every two years, subject to approval by the state Office of Children and Family Services, eroding districts’ input and control of their training practices and schedule. This bill was not acted upon by the Assembly Health Committee.

A.3463 (Zebrowski) would have required integrated pest management plans in child day care centers, head start day care centers and schools. This bill was not acted upon by the Assembly Environmental Conservation Committee. A.3464 (Zebrowski) would have required principals, guidance counselors, teachers and bus drivers to undergo annual training on the signs and symptoms of a sexual assault, as well as the appropriate steps to be taken to respond to such symptoms. This bill was not acted upon by the Assembly Education Committee.

NYSSBA supports proposals to allow boards of education to determine if their buildings will be used as polling places for any elections. Since the adoption of a similar position in 2014, NYSSBA has actively advocated for legislative change to provide boards of education the authority to decide whether or not their buildings are used as polling places. Over the years, we have worked with policymakers in Albany and in district, issued memos to every member of the Legislature and conducted lobby days in New York City to underscore the importance of such legislative action.

The bill we were most supportive of was S.5287 (Carlucci)/A.4743 (Galef), which would have allowed districts to decline school building designations as early polling locations. However, none of the aforementioned bills moved out of either the Assembly or Senate Elections committees.

NYSSBA supports legislation authorizing municipalities to install speed zone cameras in school zones. In 2019, Gov. Cuomo signed into law Chapters 30 and 148 of the Laws of 2019 authorizing the installation of cameras in school speed zones in New York City, New York and Buffalo, respectively. Since then, NYSSBA has supported further legislation to enhance the safety of school speed zones.

NYSSBA supported legislation, S.8618 (Carroll), which would have reduced the liability for a speed zone ticket from 10 mph to 7 mph above the speed limit of a school speed zone in New York City. This bill failed to move out of the Assembly Transportation Committee.

NYSSBA supports legislation to expand the definition of Child Safety Zones in the Education Law of New York State by adding criteria that pertain to neighborhoods with high crime rates or that would create safety hazards. (2019)

NYSSBA supported legislation, S.5795 (May)/A.7534 (Sièrep), would have allowed school districts to decline school building designations as early polling locations.

NYSSBA also supported legislation, S.6930 (Kruyger)/A.6955 (Galef), which would have prohibited any public school building from being designated as an early polling location. This bill passed the Senate but was not acted upon by the Assembly Elections Committee.

Other NYSSBA-supported bills introduced this session that addressed schools as polling places included:

S.108 (Kaminsky) would have removed the requirement that schools be used as polling places, provided those primary or secondary schools are in session with minors present.

S.116 (Gallegly)/A.7410 (Smith) would have prohibited any polling place designated by the Board of Elections from being located on the premises of any public or private school. This bill failed to move out of the Senate.

S.828 (Boyle)/A.4586 (Englebright) would have required the State Board of Elections and State Education Department to jointly make recommendations concerning schools used as polling places.

John Daley and girlfriend Brooke

John Daley, Governmental Relations Representative

COVID-19 coping mechanism: Reading

Accomplishment in 2020: Starting work at NYSSBA!

Best thing about working for school boards: The people. We have a great team and great members. I enjoy learning about each district.

Not-so-obvious talent: I’m good at impersonations: I do a mean Christopher Walken, and I do a lot of comedians like Adam Sandler and Jerry Seinfeld. It would be career suicide to impersonate any politicians, so I don’t do Donald Trump, Bill Clinton or George W. Bush and especially not Gov. Cuomo. If anyone tells you anything different, it’s baloney!

Why I’m optimistic about public schools: Public schools have always been the backbone of the American education system. They have always prepared the next generation for leadership and personal development. This will never change, and that is because of hardworking board members, teachers, faculty, staff, administrators, parents and especially students.

Grants for all school districts to increase the length of either their school day or school year or restructure their school instructional year to create year-round instruction. (2015)

NYSSBA has presented to both Gov. Cuomo’s Reimagine Education Advisory Council and the Board of Regents’ School Reopening Task Force, and continues to have frequent conversations with both the Executive Chamber and the State Education Department regarding flexible instruction models. We strongly support guidance and flexibility around the 180 day requirement, as well as providing districts more latitude to determine how the school day and year will look.

NYSSBA also supported SED-promoted legislation, A.7113 (Lifton), that would have authorized school districts to pass resolutions allowing them to begin the school year before Sept. 1. This bill failed to move out of the Assembly Education Committee.

NYSSBA supports funding to expand New York State- and industry-approved and certified career and technical education programs. (2015, 2017)

NYSSBA supported the Executive’s proposed $6 million allocation to support the creation of at least 10 new Early College High School programs. However, this, along with other competitive grant proposals, was not included in the enacted budget due to the extreme fiscal pressure of COVID-19.

NYSSBA also supported SED-backed legislation, S.6557 (Montgomery)/A.5701 (Benedetto), that would codify the New York State Smart Scholars early college high school program and the New York State Pathways in Technology Early College High School program in order to continue funding of the funds. The bill passed the Senate, but failed to move out of the Assembly Education Committee.

NYSSBA supports making pre-kindergarten transportation for children four years old and older aidable to the same extent as pre-kindergarten transportation. (2015)

NYSSBA supported legislation, S.4409 (Jackson)/A.5467 (Fahy), that would have provided school districts with reimbursement for the transportation of pre-kindergarten students. This bill was not acted upon by the Senate or Assembly Education Committee.

NYSSBA opposes legislation that would provide tuition tax credits or educational vouchers that benefit private or parochial schools.

NYSSBA opposed legislation, A.8192 (Palumbo), that would have expanded the New York State College Choice Tuition Savings Program (529 plan) to allow parents to make tax-deductible contributions for elementary and secondary education expenses. This bill did not move out of the Assembly Education Committee.

NYSSBA has also held meetings with Congressional representatives around the state and in Washington D.C. opposing federal measures to divert public funds to private schools, including the U.S. Department of Education’s “equitable services” proposal that would have funneled education funding available through the federal CARES Act stimulus bill from public to private school districts.

NYSSBA supports state legislation that would modify the reimbursement formula for school lunches. (2016)

NYSSBA recommended additional funding from the state for school meal programs in our 2020-21 Budget Recommendations document distributed to the Executive and Legislative Chambers.

NYSSBA supports changes that ensure that Special Act School Districts are treated equitably with all other public school districts, including a tuition rate increase for shared services. (2019, 2021)

NYSSBA supported several pieces of legislation that addressed increasing financial support to special act school districts: S.5192 (Mayer) would have included interim plus rates for special act reimbursement methodology for tuition to account for the years it may take before these students reach college age to ensure a more timely reimbursement of funds. This bill did not move out of the Assembly Education Committee.

S.5606 (Mayer)/A.8001 (Benedetto) would have authorized special act school districts to create a special education reserve fund and would ensure that such districts receive the same percentage increase as that of general support for public schools. This bill did not move out of the Assembly Education Committee.

S.8014C (Harckham)/A.10193 (Abinanti) would protect school districts from negative financial impacts, including reduced tuition payments from reduced enrollment and from the inability to operate passenger transportation services that were supported both the Senate and Assembly and now awaits delivery for action by the governor.

S.8623 (Mayer)/A.10834 (Benedetto) would have authorized special act school districts to establish fiscal stabilization reserve funds. This bill passed the Senate but did not advance out of the Assembly Education Committee.

A.4130 (Ro) would have established that special act tuition rates grow by a percentage equal to or above the general support for public schools appropriation. This bill did not move out of the Assembly Education Committee and was not acted upon by the Senate.

A.7120-A (Benedetto) would have ensured that special act tuition rate increases are more timely and accurate. This bill advanced
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NYSSBA calls upon the state Legislature and the governor to reform New York State education funding in accordance with the following tenets to ensure adequate resources to public schools in the State of New York by providing for:

- Adequacy that provides sufficient resources to ensure the quality of a sound basic education for all students;
- Equity to distribute a foundation level of state aid for every student that is based on a school aid cost of providing a sound basic education that fairly compensates for differences in community costs, needs and resources while precluding municipalities from using state aid to replace local education resources;
- Flexibility to increase the percentage of operating aid so that boards of education retain the discretion to determine what educational programs best address local needs while local communities should not be required to fund state programs and
- Predictability based on timely passage of the state budget and a consistent distribution that would allow districts to adopt an adequate level of funding. NYSSBA supports legislative proposals that would allow districts to adopt an adequate level of funding. NYSSBA supported legislative proposals that

NYSSBA supported bills:

- A.6376 (Kaplan)/A.6376 (Magnarelli) that would have provided new and additional state aid for school districts financially harmed whenever they experience the unanticipated, significant loss of revenue due to tax certifications or the unexpected loss of a significant portion of the value of their taxable property.

NYSSBA has been included in presentations to Gov. Cuomo’s Reimagine Education Advisory Council and the Board of Regents’ School Reopening Task Force.

Also, as noted above, NYSSBA supported A.7113 (Lifton), which would have authored school districts to pass resolutions allowing them to begin the school year before September 1. This bill, supported by the Senate Education Department, failed to move out of the Assembly Education Committee.

NYSSBA supports preserving Medicaid funding to school districts, while also seeking greater reimbursement by Medicaid for school districts, state aid flat.

NYSSBA supports legislative proposals that would allow districts to adopt an earlier start to the instructional year with those dates being eligible for state aid and also allow for extending the school year beyond the last Regents exams. (2018)

NYSSBA has frequent conversations with the governor’s staff and State Education Department officials regarding the desirability of local school districts determining financial calendars. This topic has been included in presentations to Gov. Cuomo’s Reimagine Education Advisory Council and the Board of Regents’ School Reopening Task Force.

NYSSBA supported legislative, S.7812 (Rivera)/A.7894 (Guttierez), that would have allowed sponsors of school-based health centers (SBHC) the option to remain carved out of the Medicaid Managed Care Program, even after they transition on Jan. 1, 2021 to being incorporated into the Medicaid Managed Care Program. Many SBHC providers predict that the carve-in will disrupt and negatively impact their current programs. This bill advanced to the Senate Finance Committee and the Assembly Rules Committee.

Additionally, NYSSBA strongly supported the inclusion of school-based health centers as one priority of their federal lobbying efforts this year. Each Congressional representative received a memo from NYSSBA stating the need for Medicaid funding in schools.

NYSSBA supports additional state and federal funding for school safety programs, and equipment, including prevention programs directed toward social emotional development and mental health programs.

The enacted budget included a new appropriation of $10 million for student mental health support grants, as well as the continuation of $1.5 million to support mental health programs in schools.

NYSSBA was pleased to see a marked increase in state funding for student mental health services above what was initially proposed in the Executive budget.

NYSSBA supported bills S.115 (Ortiz) and S.7868 (Manso), that would have expanded building aid eligible expenses to include expenditures for school safety and security. These bills did not move out of the Senate Finance Committee and now did not have an Assembly sponsor.

NYSSBA supports proposals establishing additional dedicated funding for student health and mental health services. (2018)

On the state level, NYSSBA has advocated for a new expense-based aid to be established to reimburse districts for expenditures on mental health services, as well as building aid eligibility for costs associated with school health and mental health facilities.

As noted above, the appropriation of $10 million for student mental health support grants was supported by NYSSBA, as well as the continuation of $1.5 million to support mental health programs in schools.

Health and mental health services has also been a prominent point of discussion in NYSSBA meetings with Congressional representatives.

NYSSBA supported S.8416 (Metzgar)/A.10404A (Rosenthal), which includes audio-only and video-only telehealth and telemedicine in the telehealth and telemedicine services eligible for reimbursement. This bill was signed into law. (Chap. 124/2020)

Danielle Grasso
Grassroots Advocacy Manager
Governmental Relations Coordinator

COVID-19 coping mechanism:

My husband and I have been able to dedicate more time than we could’ve imagined to renovating our new home, including a complete overhaul of our front yard landscaping. You could say it’s been an extreme version of “nesting.”

Accomplishment in 2020:

We have been able to continue the work of our grassroots advocacy programs even while virtual!

We were able to have school board members have important conversations with representatives on the state and federal level even though we couldn’t meet in-person.

Best thing about working for school boards:

In any workplace, the mission and employees’ dedication to it makes all the difference. The enthusiasm our team has for public education advocacy is what keeps me going.

Not-so-obvious talent:

I’m an avid BBQ-er. During quarantine I’ve started to hone my meat smoking skills. My biggest summer accomplishment was a 14-pound brisket that took 20 hours to cook.

Why I’m optimistic about public schools:

Throughout my life I have seen the benefits and impacts that public schools have. Being both an attendee of a public school and the daughter of a public school teacher, I know what public education has and can do for entire communities.

COVID-19-cope mechanism:

My husband and I have been able to dedica
Your guide to the virtual convention experience

Visit convention.nyssba.org for the most up-to-date information

1 Schedule
On the virtual convention user menu, Click here to select a session to view, see slide decks and download presentation materials for:
• 40 hours of programming – seminars, workshops and roundtables.
• Keynote Presentation (Oct. 27, 8:30 to 9:30 a.m.)
• Conversation with the Interim Commissioner of Education
• School Board – The Musical

All sessions will be recorded! Recordings will be available 48 hours after the live presentation and online for all Convention registrants until Dec. 31. This means you will be able to view all sessions at your convenience.

2 Expo
Review the searchable list of exhibitors and enter their virtual booths by clicking on their logo. Schedule a meeting, sign up for email information and view videos. Exhibitors are eager to interact with you briefly or at length. They will be available Tuesday, Oct. 27 to Thursday, Oct. 29 from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. and during dedicated Expo time (indicated on the Convention schedule).

3 Sponsors
See who supports our Convention and educational programming and you will earn points toward the Game of Points. Visit their virtual booths in the Expo (See menu item 2.)

4 Networking
Start networking with your colleagues. See a directory and add anyone to your list of connections (My Connections) Create your e-business card and/or biography. You can begin drafting instantly.

Also, check out the leaderboard for the Game of Points, in which someone will earn $1,000 Amazon gift card for their school district (Second place is $750 and third is $500. See menu item 6.)

5 Forum
Congratulate a speaker or make an observation. The Convention will be also talked about on Twitter, Facebook and other public forms of Social Media (see menu item 9).

6 Game of Points
You will earn points by viewing sessions and participating in other Convention activities as noted in this guide. Compete with your colleagues from other districts. Check out the leaderboard under menu item 4 to see who has racked up the most points.

1st Place - $1,000 Amazon gift card
2nd Place - $750 Amazon gift card
3rd Place - $500 Amazon gift card

The gift cards will be made out in the name of the winning school districts and emailed to district clerks (Maximum of one prize per district; the district must be a member of NYSSBA in good standing at the time of the event.) The Game of Points will begin on Oct. 20 and end at 5 p.m. Oct. 29. Winners will be announced on Oct. 30 via email to the superintendents and district clerks of the winning school districts as well as to the membership.

7 Awards
Watch video presentations of the Everett R. Dyer Award for Distinguished School Board Service, the President’s Award and Teacher of the Year.

8 Student Talent
Recorded performances of student musical groups from Averill Park (above) and Syossett (below) will be accessible under the “Student Talent” tab in the interface menu. Also view student artwork and our “students in action” photo loop.

9 Ask NYSSBA
Ask a question, share information or chat with NYSSBA experts on advocacy, policy, leadership development, as well as our Member Relations team.

10 Social Feeds
See what people are saying on Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, YouTube and LinkedIn, and be sure to follow using #nyssba20. Participation will earn you points toward the Game of Points.

And more!
Via navigation tabs, you will be able to access more features including a Photo Gallery. Take a selfie and upload it to advance in the Game of Points. Be sure to also take advantages of a Notes function and participate in Surveys and Live Polling.

Judy Katz
Dyer Award
Ed Nklenski
President’s Award
Jennifer Wolfe
Teacher of the Year
Brian Fessler, Director of Governmental Relations

COVID-19 coping mechanism: My 2-year-old, Calvin, is a blast and has kept me plenty busy! I've also been able to read a bit more than I normally would, and I've been able to build up my political memorabilia collection with lots of socially-distanced eBay shopping.

Accomplishment in 2020: My wife and I watched both of the entire Star Wars and Marvel movie series. And I was promoted to my current position at NYSSBA.

Why I'm optimistic about public schools: It's a cliché, but public education will always be the great equalizer. There are, and will continue to be, plenty of challenges to face, but there are few things in life that can match the power and opportunity created by a quality public education.
for districts outside of New York City, and to allow teachers to
receive compensation for maintenance costs of state-operated
schools for the blind and deaf onto school districts. NYSSBA advocated against this
cost shift, and while it was included in the
enacted budget, the final version of the law
set the rates to zero after two years.

NYSSBA urges the Commissioner of
Education to increase the maximum age
of participation in inclusionary sports for
students andituants with disabilities. In their March
2020 meeting, the Board of Regents voted
to permanently adopt this rule.

LOCAL MANAGEMENT AND BUDGET

NYSSBA shall advocate changes in the Affordable Care Act to modify conditions under which mandatory penalties may be imposed on employers for health insurance premiums that exceed a benchmark established by the

NYSSBA supports the ability for districts of
51-100 employees to choose to opt out of “small group” coverage. Presently, school districts with 51-100 employees may choose to exclude themselves from the definition of “small group” for purposes of health insurance coverage. Forcing these districts into the small group category would lead to massive rate increases for more than 100 school districts.

While NYSSBA continues to push for
a permanent waiver for the enacted state budget extended existing provisions for an
additional year, until 2022.

NYSSBA supports the state assuming
responsibility for subsidizing the veterans’
tax exemption. (2015)

As in recent years, this past legislative
session saw numerous attempts to increase or expand property tax exemptions to
certain groups of taxpayers. Consistent with our position, NYSSBA requested amendments on any proposed exemption that did not offer state reimbursement. If a bill advanced without state funding, NYSSBA supported the legislation but was not acted upon by the Senate Local Government Committee. NYSSBA supported further legislation this
session to address the IDA and PILOT
issues faced by school districts, including the following:

S.1676 (Skoufis)/A.5941 (Rozic) would have expanded eligibility for the alternative veterans tax exemption for unimproved property
of certain non-profit organizations. This bill was not acted upon by the Senate Local Government Committee.

NYSSBA supported legislation enabling school districts and BOCES to create dedicated reserve funds to help offset the
costs of all employee pensions (including
teachers) and other post-employment
benefits (OPEB) obligations. (2016)

S.2090 (Kaplan)/A.49 (Cahill) would have authorized a green development neighborhood property tax exemption. The bill passed the Senate, but was not brought up for a vote and did not move out of the Assembly Real Property Taxation Committee.

S.662 (Runzenhofer) would have authorized a residential rent loss limited tax exemption for
homeowners who reside within the school district but provide voluntary services to a neighboring municipality. The bill passed the Senate, but was not acted upon by the Assembly 
Real Property Taxation Committee.

S.756 (Kennedy) would have established a real property tax exemption for service members who are not stationed in New York State. This bill was not acted upon by the Senate Local Government Committee.

S.1141 (Carlucci)/A.3359 (Abinanti) would have extended the authority to
BOCES to establish other post-employment
benefit reserve funds. This bill was not acted upon by the Senate Local
Government Committee.

S.5641 (Brooks) would have allowed
BOCES to establish other post-
employment benefit reserve funds. This bill was not acted upon by the Senate Real Property Taxation Committee.

S.5507 (Metzger)/A.6133 (Jaffe) would have extended the authority to
establish other post-employment benefit reserve funds. This bill was not acted upon by the Senate Local Government Committee or the Assembly Education Committee.

S.2222 (Borrello)/A.5797 (Giglio) would have authorized the Salamanca City
School District to establish a federal impact aid reserve fund. This bill was not acted upon by the Senate Local Government Committee or the Assembly Education Committee.

S.1141 (Carlucci)/A.1586 (Abinanti) would have extended the enhanced
STAR benefit to veterans, including state
Disabled Veterans regardless of whether they
were served in war. This bill was not acted upon by the Senate Local Government Committee or the Assembly Education Committee.

S.7507 (Gaughran)/A.146 (D’Urso) would have extended the enhanced
STAR benefit to veterans, including state
 Disabled Veterans regardless of whether they
were served in war. This bill was not acted upon by the Senate Local Government Committee.

S.1662-C (Skoufis) would have extended the enhanced
STAR benefit to veterans, including state
Disabled Veterans regardless of whether they
were served in war. This bill was not acted upon by the Senate Local Government Committee.

S.4662 (Ranzenhofer) would have authorized a residential rent loss limited tax exemption for
homeowners who reside within the school district but provide voluntary services to a neighboring municipality. The bill passed the Senate, but was not acted upon by the Assembly 
Real Property Taxation Committee.

S.1914 (Gaughran)/A.146 (D’Urso) would have extended the enhanced
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S.1662-C (Skoufis) would have extended the seven year limit on the real property tax exemption for unimproved property of certain non-profit organizations. This bill was not acted upon by the Senate Local Government Committee.

S.7783 (Brooks) would have authorized
BOCES to establish worker’s compensation reserve funds. This bill was not acted upon by the Senate Local Government Committee.

A.4807 (Smith) would have authorized the creation and funding of post-employment
benefit funds for BOCES employees. This bill was not acted upon by the Assembly Local Governments Committee.

NYSSBA supports legislation amending
Article 16-A of the General Municipal Law to
permit school districts, at their option, to
be necessary parties to payment-in-lieu-of-
taxes ("PILOT") agreements. (2017)

NYSSBA supported Chapter 185 of
the laws of 2019 which required IDAs to
streamline all meetings and to post
recordings of the meetings to their
website. NYSSBA also supported Chapter 421 of
the Laws of 2019, aimed at addressing the challenges presented to districts by PILOT programs. This law makes clear that any successful property assessment challenge resulting in a reduction to the amount of PILOTs paid to a school district does not take effect until the following school year.

NYSSBA supported further legislation this
session to address the IDA and PILOT
issues faced by school districts, including the following:

S.9 (Kaminski) would have required
IDAs to include an estimate of all property tax impacts from any tax exemptions in their analysis of project proposals prior to
awarding any PILOT agreements. The bill was not acted upon by the Senate Local Government Committee.

S.1914 (Gaughran)/A.146 (D’Urso) would have extended the enhanced
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S.1914 (Gaughran)/A.146 (D’Urso) would have extended the enhanced
STAR benefit to veterans, including state
 Disabled Veterans regardless of whether they
were served in war. This bill was not acted upon by the Senate Local Government Committee.
NYSSBA supports raising the allowable unlimited fund balance for school districts. (2017)

NYSSBA supported a bill, A.5645 (Giglio), that would have increased the fund balance limit for districts to an enrollment of less than 1,500 students or have a general fund budget of less than $5 million. The bill was not acted upon by the Assembly Real Property Taxation Committee.

NYSSBA supported legislation continued to curtail the Senate, which would have increased the allowable fund balance school districts can retain to 6%, above the existing four percent limit. The bill (A.9652, O’Mara), was not acted upon by the Senate Local Government Committee.

NYSSBA supports legislation that allows the date of the annual reorganization meeting to be on or before the Monday following the 20th of July. (2018)

NYSSBA supported the signing of Chapter 526 of the Laws of 2019 which expands the applicability of small city school districts in choosing dates for their annual school board reorganization meetings.

NYSSBA supports legislation to exempt expenditures related to school safety from the tax cap. (2018)

NYSSBA supported a number of bills that would have excluded safety-related expenditures from the tax cap. The bill did not move out of the Assembly or Senate Education Committee.

NYSSBA opposed legislation that would have increased the amount of money a public employer can spend on school resource officers who are serving as SROs to $65,000. This bill, A.6570 (Thiele), was not acted upon by the Assembly Local Government Committee.

NYSSBA supports meaningful reforms to the Tax Cap Law (2017).

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NYSSBA opposed legislation that would have increased the amount of money a public employer can spend on school resource officers who are serving as SROs to $65,000. This bill, A.6570 (Thiele), was not acted upon by the Assembly Local Government Committee.

NYSSBA supports the full restoration of the capped local tax (SALT) deductibility. (2019)

Since the Tax Cuts and Jobs Act was adopted in 2017 that placed a $10,000 cap on state and local tax deductions, NYSSBA has lobbied for a full restoration of SALT deductibility. In addition to including this as a priority during annual Congressional meetings, each Congressional representative has received a reminder on the SALT deduction.

EMPLOYEE RELATIONS

NYSSBA supports legislation to amend the Triborough Amendment of the Taylor Law to eliminate the obligation of school districts to be “deep” indemnified after the expiration of collective bargaining agreements. (2017)

The Association supported a bill, A.5168 (Skelos) which would have created the Public Employees' Fair Employment Act Study Commission to recommend existent Taylor Law work relations between public employers and their employees. The bill did not have a sponsor in the Senate and it was not acted upon by the Assembly Committee on Governmental Employees.

NYSSBA also supported a bill by Assembly member Goodell, A.5435, which would have protected public employers from being required to pay wage increases or benefits as a result of an expired collective bargaining agreement. The bill does not have a sponsor in the Senate and was not acted upon by the Assembly Committee on Governmental Employees.

NYSSBA opposes any legislative or regulatory effort to grant tenure status to non-instructional school employees. (2018)

NYSSBA opposed S.2305-B/A.7624-B sponsored by Senator Gonzalez. S.2305-B, which would have protected public employers from being required to pay wage increases or benefits as a result of an expired collective bargaining agreement. The bill does not have a sponsor in the Senate and was not acted upon by the Assembly Committee on Governmental Employees.

NYSSBA opposes legislation that would have removed the cap on state and local tax (SALT) deductibility. (2018)

NYSSBA supports the full restoration of the capped local tax (SALT) deductibility. (2019)

NYSSBA opposed a bill, S.340 (Akshar), which would have increased the annual earnings limit to 10% for districts that have an enrollment of less than 1,500 students or have 25% of their students qualify for free or reduced-price meals.

NYSSBA opposes legislation that would have required that every IDA governance board reorganizational meetings. (2018)

NYSSBA opposed legislation which would have changed the calculation of the state and local tax (SALT) deductibility. (2017)

NYSSBA supports legislation that would have protected public employers from being required to pay wage increases or benefits as a result of an expired collective bargaining agreement.
On the legislative front, NYSSBA supported proposals addressing the issue of underrepresentation in the teaching workforce, including:

- S.7608-A (Montgomery)/A.8355 (Arroyo) would have established a task force on educator diversity in New York State. These bills were not acted upon by the Senate or Assembly Education Committees.

S.7635 (Liu) would have directed SED to conduct a study regarding the assistance needed to encourage women and minorities to pursue careers in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics. This bill passed the Senate, but did not have an Assembly sponsor.

S.7642 (Jackson)/A.9730 (Hyndman) would have directed SED to conduct a study regarding the assistance needed to encourage women and minorities to pursue careers in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics. This bill passed the Senate, but was not acted upon by the Assembly Education Committee.

S.7647 (Persaud) would have established the “underrepresented teachers of tomorrow recruitment and retention program,” which the Board approved. NYSSBA’s sample policy follows which the Board approves. NYSSBA’s sample policy follows the recommendation that school districts to attract underrepresented educators generally to diverse experiences and best practices. This bill passed the Senate, but was not acted upon by the Assembly Education Committee.

S.7647 (Persaud) would have established the “underrepresented teachers of tomorrow recruitment and retention program,” which the Board approved. NYSSBA’s sample policy follows which the Board approves. NYSSBA’s sample policy follows the recommendation that school districts to attract underrepresented educators generally to diverse experiences and best practices. This bill passed the Senate, but was not acted upon by the Assembly Education Committee.

Involve discussion among students, parents, staff and the community about how hatred and bigotry based on race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, gender identity, disability status and religion endanger the pluralistic and diversity principles for which this nation stands.

Involves discussion among students, parents, staff and the community in developing and supporting educational practices which invite understanding and acceptance of others’ differences and which aim to eradicate hatred and bigotry. (2019)

NYSSBA is engaged in a number of initiatives to address racial and gender inequities in education. NYSSBA serves on the National School Boards Association’s Dismantling Institutional Racism in Education (DIRE) Committee. The goal of this initiative is to end the institutional, structural, and systemic racism that is ingrained in the history of our country and in our public education system.

NYSSBA staff has also served on the Board of Directors for the NYS Association of Women in Geomatics (NYWAG). Approximately 10 years ago, NYSSBA worked with the Caucus of Black School Board Members to implement a diversity strand of the Convention program which still exists today. The Caucus is represented on NYSSBA’s Board of Directors and Resolutions Committee.

In 2019, NYSSBA field Equity Summits together with the Urban Education Leaders Collaborative. The Summit had been organized in cooperation with the NYS Council of Black School Board Members, the National School Boards Association (NSBA), the NYS Council of School Superintendents (NYCSCSS), Generation Ready, the Equity Education Leadership Program and Leadership for Excellence and Equity Initiatives, University of Pennsylvania. Additionally, NYSSBA has partnered with NYCSCSS on Diversity and Inclusivity which focuses its efforts on racial equity.

NYSSBA’s sample Dignity for All Students Act (DASA) policy and sample regulation address bullying prevention, including the recommendation that school districts follow the state’s social and emotional learning guidelines that encourage the development of empathy and tolerance of others. Our sample regulation also promotes reaching among adults, through training, of the school experiences of marginalized student populations, social stigma in the school environment, gender norms in the school environment and best practices. This bill passed the Senate, but was not acted upon by the Senate Health Committee.

This bill was not acted upon by the Senate Health Committee.

S.7898 (Sanders)/A.8746 (Fall) would have established a tobacco and vaping cessation fund for research and programs to help students quit. This bill was not acted upon by the Senate Consumer Protection Committee or the Assembly Health Committee.

NYSSBA supports legislation that would increase the penalties against any business that sells vaping products to any person who is underage or against an adult purchasing vaping products for any person who is underage. (2019)

NYSSBA supported provisions in the enacted budget that increased the penalties for the sale of vaping and e-cigarette products to minors.

In addition, NYSSBA supported S.6766-A (Bailey)/A.2763-A (Fernandez), which would have prohibited the advertisement of tobacco advertisements and smoking paraphernalia within 500 feet of schools. This bill was referred by the Senate Health Committee, but not acted upon by the Senate Rules Committee or the Assembly Health Committee.

NYSSBA also supported a bill, S.5812 (Kennedy), that would have required electronic cigarettes and e-liquid products to be sold in separate specific locations where only customers 21 or older were permitted to enter. This bill was not acted upon by the Senate Health Committee.

S.7212-A (Harckham) would have required the online sellers of smoking products to require a recipient at the delivery address upon delivery. This bill was not acted upon by the Senate Health Committee.

S.7213-A (Harckham) would have required that online purchasers of smoking products digitally upload a government-issued identification for verification of age for online sales. This bill was not acted upon by the Senate Health Committee.

S.7214 (Harckham) would have required that online purchasers of smoking products digitally upload a government-issued identification for verification of age for online sales. This bill was not acted upon by the Senate Health Committee.

NYSSBA shall produce and widely recommend the adoption of a sample board policy stating that members who have been newly elected to serve as officers will participate in at least one accredited officer training. (2019)

NYSSBA shall produce and widely recommend the adoption of a sample board policy stating that all Board of Education members will, each year, participate in at least one new training which has been approved by that Board. (2019)

NYSSBA developed optional language in its sample policy on Board training that newly elected officers will participate in at least one training aimed at Board Officers and for each member every Board member will participate in annual training. This policy was sent to all subscribers of the Policy Update Service in March 2020 and published on page 3 of the Sept. 21, 2020 issue of On Board.

NYSSBA shall recommend appropriate parameters for social media and electronic communications between students and school district employees. (2019)

NYSSBA maintains a sample policy and guidelines that encourage the development of empathy and tolerance of others. Our sample regulation also promotes reaching among adults, through training, of the school experiences of marginalized student populations, social stigma in the school environment, gender norms in the school environment and best practices. This bill passed the Senate, but was not acted upon by the Assembly Education Committee.

Additionally, NYSSBA has partnered with the National School Boards Association, Caucus of Black School Board Members, The Education Trust - New York, Ready, The Education Trust - New York, the National School Boards Association, Caucus of Black School Board Members, and Leadership for Excellence and Equity Initiatives, University of Pennsylvania. NYSSBA maintains a sample policy and guidelines that encourage the development of empathy and tolerance of others. Our sample regulation also promotes reaching among adults, through training, of the school experiences of marginalized student populations, social stigma in the school environment, gender norms in the school environment and best practices. This bill passed the Senate, but was not acted upon by the Assembly Education Committee.

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NYSSBA shall advocate for action that recommends school districts to provide a professional development program related to the ethical practices and protocols employees should follow when using social media and electronic communications. (2019)

SED regulations govern professional development on this issue, which provide for a Professional Learning Team to develop a Professional Learning Plan, which the Board approves. NYSSBA’s professional development policy follows those SED guidelines.
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