



CNYSBA NEWS

Train, Empower, Advocate, and Mobilize for Students

How to minimize COVID-19 infection risk as we return to school?

Syracuse University’s Center of Excellence recently hosted a forum regarding school’s air filtration system, and how to safely keep students in school.

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Reserve Your Spot: NYS Mandatory Finance Training Offered by CNYSBA

CNYSBA’s Mandatory Finance Training is coming up on November 6th, from 8:30 a.m. until 3:30 p.m..

Learn more about what is offered and how you can sign-up.

>[Get info and register here.](#)

COVID Safety Guidance?

NYSDE guidance for safe in-person learning is [available here.](#)



How to manage School Board Meetings in 2021

CNYSBA recently held a roundtable for school boards with strategies to keep board meetings smooth and productive.

The COVID-19 pandemic continues to pose a significant problem for districts as we enter the new school year, and often times the topic becomes polarized and the debate can overshadow an otherwise productive school board meeting.

The forum, held back in August, featured attorneys Colleen Heinrich and Charles Symons from Ferrara Fiorenza PC, who constructively answered questions from board leadership, and





This Fiscal Year is Anything But Normal

By Dr. Rick Timbs

Financially, as we enter a new fiscal year, many school districts have been able to recover their COVID-19 costs with the new Federal Fund grants. Additionally, overall, districts may have been able to secure additional fund balance from the 2020-21 fiscal year that would not ordinarily occur in any “normal” fiscal year.

The 2020-21 fiscal year was anything but a “normal” fiscal year. For instance, on the revenue side of the ledger, some districts have experienced an increase in Foundation Aid that will, according to state plan, make them fully funded within three years. Other districts received a somewhat larger than normal dollar increase if they were in the “save-harmless” Foundation Aid category. Also, all the expense driven aids remained intact with no formula changes so funds continued to flow to districts based on school expenditures from the previous year or years. *Continued on next page*

from CNYSBA Executive Director Derrick Dorsey.

Topics included:

- Keeping Meetings Focused and Productive
- Legal Authority/Managing Public Comments, Sensitive Issues
- Keeping Public Communication and Conversation Constructive and Informative
- Legal Strategies and Obligations.

The attorneys delivered an informative presentation and then answered questions from those in attendance on the Zoom call.

CNYSBA would like to thank Colleen and Charles and everyone at Ferrara Fiorenza for taking the time to facilitate such an informative discussion.

If you missed the roundtable and would like to watch the video presentation, contact Renee Stone at (315) 463-1904 or [email her](#).



Credit: Cape Gazette

On the expenditure side of the ledger, some districts were unable to proceed with their Capital Outlay Project, so those budgeted funds remained unspent. In many districts a significant number of budgeted items either were not fully expended or remained unspent. Examples include, certain technology purchases, BOCES services, material and supplies for teachers, library materials, athletic equipment, and supplies. A limited use category could also include such items as tutoring, substitute costs, the cost of utilities such as electricity, water and gas, and certain transportation costs. Some unspent categories could include travel and conferences, field trips, certain sports official and coaching costs, testing supplies, unfilled positions and even perhaps School Resource Officer (SRO) services.

While we experience this momentary financial largess, let's not forget that schools will continue to face significant financial pressures as we look forward. These include considerable inflationary cost escalations for the items school districts purchase, labor and pension cost increases, and the significant increases in health insurance and other employee benefits. Add to this the twists and turns contained in the Tax Cap calculation that is comprised of tax base growth factors, capital exclusions and PILOT (Payments In Lieu Of Taxes) payments and very limited inflation factors. Remember that districts only have limited control over a portion of the capital exclusion, but none of the other factors. Basically, everyone should be aware that any increase in reserves and fund balances yielded from the 2020-21 fiscal year may not last long when factored against increased expectations for school districts coupled with ever-increasing costs and Tax Cap limitations.

The Office of the State Comptroller (OSC) has continuously advised districts to develop a realistic and reasonable long range financial plan. It is often cited as a recommendation by the OSC at the conclusion of district audits for "Financial Condition". It is a critical component of proper district financial planning and serves as a guide to a school board, superintendent, business official and the public. It should contain at least information and data about the district's current financial condition and estimates of the district's future financial position. It also encompasses a reserve plan, and other accouterments to financial planning such as long-term purchases for technology, equipment, buses, and capital plans within a sound financial analysis approach.

Any long-range financial analysis that results in a long-range plan should also include the reality that there are significant Federal Grant Programs such as the Coronavirus Response and Consolidated Appropriations Act (CRRSA) and the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) to help support district financial and educational initiatives. Districts will have to make a submission for the approval of these grants.

But there are a few cautions:

- Adding such things as staff or programs designed to last a prolonged time is considered use of the grant to "supplement" the district's budget. These grants should not be used for reoccurring and escalating cost items. The grant's ability to "supplement" budgets are limited by time. Any costs associated with the grants, if continued after the life of the grant, will need to be borne by the district.
- Districts that would like to use these funds for capital needs should be aware that the process and procedures for approval of a capital project to obtain a building permit have not been provided by the State Education Department (SED) as of this writing. Further, the procedure to secure the funds and the timing of transfer of funds to the district in support of the capital expenditures has not been released by SED
 - The latter is very important because capital work will require a series of payments to vendors of all types from the planning and approval phase, construction, and submission of documents throughout the entire capital project process.

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- Additionally, these grants do permit “supplanting” district costs during the life of the grants and are generally aimed at but not specifically limited to pandemic related items, health and safety and other such uses.

- I’ve got to believe that “double dipping” would not be permitted in any case. I do not believe that any aid eligible actions related to Capital or even BOCES expenditures would remain aid eligible with the use of these Federal Grant funds.

- It is always best when the Board of Education, school leaders and stakeholders understand the assistance these funds provide and their limitations.

Lastly, let me note that there is still a concern about the future of the Foundation Aid formula. There are still several important updates that are needed to the formula to make it more equitable. There is also a concern that the financial level of state aid achieved by the 2023-24 fiscal year could subsequently prove to be problematic in the face of lowered federal support for the state and the degree to which the state’s economy rebounds. Thus, long-term, Foundation Aid predictability is on our mind.

You Do What for a Living?

There are many careers and opportunities in Central New York for graduating students who wish to stay here in the area. Many times those careers don't require the traditional college education. Our series "You Do What for a Living?" is designed for those students who are looking for opportunities after high school.

While these careers can often times offer great salaries and benefits, they don't always require the traditional college education and degree.

This week's video shines the spotlight on Wendi Czirr who is the Plant Maintenance Electrician Apprentice at WestRock in Solvay.



Click on Video to Play

COVID Safety in our Schools: A New Variant for a New School Year

Syracuse University’s Center of Excellence recently hosted a forum regarding school’s air filtration system, and how to safely keep students in school.

Widespread school closings, like we’ve seen through the COVID-19 pandemic, create long-term individual and societal costs. It is in the best interest of children and families for schools to remain open. To do that, every effort must be made to keep children healthy.

In the last year, we have learned a great deal about preventing COVID-19 transmission with in-person instruction. The delta variant now challenges us to make use of every layer of prevention. The good news is that children are at a lower risk than adults and there is a new body of evidence that shows that kids can be kept safe at school with a holistic, multi-layered plan to reduce exposure, limit transmission and respond to outbreaks.

This fall, how can schools prioritize risk reduction measures for COVID-19?

We spoke with Harvard researcher and exposure science expert Joseph Allen and East Syracuse Minoa School Superintendent Donna DeSiato to describe the most valuable strategies and how they can be effectively implemented in schools, even with limited budgets and staff.

Read Dr. Allen’s guest essay in the New York Times, [The Hard Covid-19 Questions We’re Not Asking](#).

[Click here to listen to the Podcast](#)

Welcome New Superintendents

The Central New York School Boards Association would like to welcome the
new class of Superintendents for 2021-22.

Brent Suddaby - Candor

Christopher DiFulvio - Cazenovia

Lloyd Peck, Ed.D - Fabius-Pompey

Eric Hartz - Newfield

Stephen Dunham - Westhill