



CNYSBA NEWS

Train, Empower, Advocate, and Mobilize for Students

Register For Our CNYSBA Roundtable

The Diversity, Equity & Inclusion Journey For Each School District with Roseann Bayne

Every school district is at different points in their Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Journey. CiTi BOCES will tackle the topic during a Zoom event on January 27th, from 5:30 - 6:30 p.m..

This presentation will teach about the Four Elements of Culturally Responsive Sustaining Education and professional development opportunities that can support those elements.

How confident are you that your district offers the following for every student?

1. Welcoming and Affirming Environment
2. High Expectations and Rigorous Instruction
3. Inclusive Curriculum and Assessment
4. Ongoing Professional Learning

[> Click here to Register](#)



Henninger Students Create Illustrations for SCSD Alumna's First Book

Growing up, Paola Benevento grew accustomed to people struggling to pronounce her name. As a student at Huntington – and then Henninger, where she graduated in 2009 – she said her name caused her a great deal of anxiety and discomfort.

Thanks to a SUPA English class in her high school years, Paola discovered her love for writing – a passion that she pursued in college. Now a teacher in the Bronx, Paola's love for writing, combined with her personal experiences growing up and a passion for finding solutions, inspired her to add an additional title to her resume: author! *Continued on page 2*





IN DEPTH: StateAid for 2022-23

By Dr. Rick Timbs

Happy New Year! This certainly a challenging time but your work continues.

Even after the recent State of the State speech by Governor Hochul, and after a careful reading of the 2022 State of the State briefing book, A New Era For New York, I find nothing new in the state aid picture for 2022-23. The Governor previously announced last October, that Foundation Aid will become “fully-funded” over by 2023-24.

Is this a reason to celebrate? Yes, ‘fully-funding’ the Foundation Aid formula is important, long overdue, and appreciated. But school districts are constantly reminded by state government officials, the Office of the Comptroller, and others to plan long-term. Usually that means three to five years out. That is sound advice. I wish state government would outline its plan for state aid for the next three to five years.

Continued from page 1.

Her first book, *Philomena and the Name Game*, is a children’s picture book that follows the journey of an Italian-Haitian-American 4th grader as she accepts her name as a positive part of her identity.

“During my time as an educator, I have actively sought out texts that represent the cultural, historical, and geographical experiences of my students,” Paola explained. “What I found was that this in itself became a full-time job! I realized that this was a problem that many other educators, parents, students and advocates for equitable representation faced. It was after this realization that I decided to create stories that I wish I had for my students and even myself at a young age. I fell in love with the idea of ‘If you don’t see it, create it!’”



Illustration by Henninger Students.

Paola said *Philomena’s* story is not only representative of the frustration she and some of her classmates felt growing up – but also the frustration that some of her current 7th grade students in New York City experience.

“As a teacher, I have about 90 students pass through my door each school year,” she said.

“When we are getting to know one another, sometimes they have difficulty saying my name, and sometimes I have difficulty saying their names. I remember one of my students told me, ‘well, that’s close enough’ after my third attempt at their name. However, I stopped the student and said ‘It is your name. Close enough is not good enough.’ I want people with the ‘difficult’ names to correct others EVERY SINGLE TIME!”

In speaking with other adults, she discovered that many of them were connecting with the book as well, as they reflected with sadness on past and present times when their names are pronounced incorrectly.

“I hope that this book shows readers of all ages that our names have great meaning and power; our names are how we introduce ourselves to the world,” Paola shared. “Be proud and don’t let others make you feel like your name is less important or special than others. It is important and powerful for children to open a book and see characters that not only have shared similar experiences as they have, but also characters that look like them, speak the same language(s) as them, live in similar spaces and more. Relatable content helps children develop a strong sense of identity and it also fosters engagement, which can lead to a deep love of literacy!”

Henninger Illustration - continued from page 2

As Paola looked into publishing options for her book, she discovered two major challenges: first, she had never published a book before; and second, she self-admittedly isn't an illustrator – and her picture book needed pictures!

In researching publishers and the process involved, she realized publishing was something she could handle on her own – and thanks to the mentorship of a friend who had self-published, her publishing company, Empire Orange, was born.

“As a self-publisher and business owner, you are faced with making many decisions,” Paola shared. “I chose to be very intentional with all of my decisions, from content, collaborators, and more. My publishing company is called Empire Orange in order to pay homage to the two cities that made me who I am: Syracuse and New York City. The mission of the publishing company is to highlight and elevate voices, talent, and beauty in spaces that are often overlooked and/or undervalued. To me, individuals living in Syracuse were and are often undervalued-- especially depending upon what neighborhood you're from.”

While searching for illustrators, Paola recalled her childhood friends who had been in the art program at Henninger High School.

“I remember the amazing work they would produce with Art teacher Lori Lizzio,” she said, noting that her sister was previously Ms. Lizzio's art student. “I feel as if I have many talents, but drawing is not one of them! I used to just be in awe that people my age-- teenagers-- could do what they were doing!”

She connected with Ms. Lizzio, who pitched the opportunity to her art students, and received great interest from three student artists: Mario Meledez-Tellez, Mellina DeSilvio, and Lauren Cameron.

“Mellina, Lauren and Mario are so incredibly talented but also really awesome humans,” Ms. Lizzio shared. “They're kind, modest and hard-working and I felt that this opportunity would mean a lot to them. I loved Paola's idea of showcasing the talent in our district. It's so important that alumni connect back to the school they went to. Earlier this year, we all met here in my classroom and we laughed as Paola shared memories of being in the building. My students really connected with her. I think my students will feel so proud when this goes to print and they were a part of it... they got a real sense of what it is like to work professionally as artists with deadlines and changes. I am so proud of them and what they did!”

“From the very beginning, they have been amazing!” Paola added of the students. “They became invested in the story immediately, and I love that we all talk about Philomena like she is a mutual friend of ours! It is great to work with people who are invested not only in your story, but your message as well. While most authors traditionally work with one illustrator, after meeting them and looking at their work samples, I couldn't turn any of them away. We talked about what each one felt their strengths were and we divided up the illustrations that way.”

Mario drew all of the characters, Mellina drew all of the background and scenery, and Lauren outlined and colored all of the illustrations.

“When Mrs. Lizzio came to me about this project, I was immediately excited,” Mellina shared. “I knew this could be an awesome opportunity for me to work with new people and complete a job doing something I love. Throughout the process, I was designing and drawing out most of the backgrounds – by the end of it, I was drawing out whole pictures.”

Henninger Illustration - continued from page 3

This book has taught me so much: to push myself, to be patient, and to better understand perspective. The best part has definitely been working with Paola. She was very consistent and clear with how to make the drawings fit better into the book. She was very patient with us and would give us a lot of leeway to showcase our own creativity!”

“I didn’t choose these students solely because of their geographic location, but because of what that means for them,” Paola explained of the students. “The media often picks up on the negative occurrences at Henninger and within the SCSD; it doesn’t focus enough on the positive. There is so much talent that came out of the SCSD, and that’s currently there, and I want everyone to see what they can do. These three students are now able to add this body of work to their own portfolios and can say that they have collaboratively worked with an artistic team and author to produce illustrations for a children’s book. They are able to take something away from this experience which will help guide them in their next steps as an artist.”

If you would like to contribute to help fund the completion of this project – primarily, printing and shipping costs – please click here to visit Ms. Benevento’s Kickstarter campaign. The plan is for printing to begin in early 2022. Donors also have the option to allocate funds toward an Arts scholarship which will be awarded to a graduating SCSD senior!

*This article was submitted by our member, the Syracuse City School District.
If your district has a great story you would like to submit for our monthly newsletter,
please email Renee Stone at CNYSBA by clicking here.*

C N Y S B A - M A C N Y Partnership - Our Youth Apprenticeship Matters

In January of 2020, MACNY’s Director of Apprenticeship, Martha Ponge, blogged in answer to the question of how to hire skilled workers. Martha stated simply, “Open Your Doors.” This couldn’t be more important when considering youth and the Youth Apprenticeship Pilot Program that we’re launching in Central New York.

Martha’s involvement with NYATEP, the NY Association of Training & Employment Professionals, has acquainted her with the benefits of manufacturers “opening their doors” to youth with opportunities for job shadows and summer employment. Such experiences can lead to registered apprenticeships and viable careers for these youth.

“Work-based learning experiences are critical for today’s students to become tomorrow’s workforce,” advocates Ponge. “The commitment of employers to this kind of exposure ensures the continued strength and sustainability of employment in New York State.”

And our students come to understand that there are great careers awaiting them right here at home.

Stay tuned for more about our Youth Apprentice Pilot Program, scheduled to launch by June 30, 2022, in Central New York. For more information on how you can get involved, contact edonovan@macny.org.



Partners for Education & Business, Inc. in collaboration with SRC and the Keenan Center at Le Moyne College are pleased to announce this year’s CNY Innovation Challenge!

The CNY Innovation Challenge aims to spark ideas for developing unique products or services and to foster entrepreneurship. Students have creative solutions that can be marketable products, and this challenge was designed to do just that!

WHO	WHAT	WHERE	WHEN
Open to all students in grades 6-12 in Central New York	Pitch Competition (like Shark Tank!) in teams of 2-4 led by an adult mentor to win cash prizes	Maker Faire Syracuse – SRC Arena at Onondaga Community College	Competition to be held on Saturday, April 2nd

ARE YOU UP FOR THE CHALLENGE?

Register your team at: survey.alchemer.com/s3/6668612/2022-Innovation-Challenge

Have questions? Please email elangan@macny.org



State Aid 2022-23 by Dr. Rick Timbs continued from Page 2

School districts are now in the process of budget development. This serious and often mind-numbing task is vital to the financial survival of the school district. School district finances are the engine that drives the mission of schools to educate and support children. With the presence of the Tax Cap, the expanded mission of school districts as major social institutions, growing demands for contractual concessions, and inflationary costs, the budget development task has grown more difficult and demanding. This undertaking requires significant skill, knowledge, and stamina.

The only positive financial phenomenon that has come out of this pandemic is the “one-time only” accumulation of fund balance by school districts. I find that in every case, the amount of fund balance gleaned from the last fiscal year budget is an anomaly compared to previous years. While it may appear for the moment that affected school districts now have greater resources, long-term initiatives and historical trends point to the fact that this money will not last long.

What we know and do not know as of this writing

First, the revenue picture must be clearer. Those that anticipate the movement to “full-funding” know that by 2023-24 state law will get them there. But then what? Further, while the 2022 State of the State message points to “fully-funded” Foundation Aid, there are almost 300 school districts at or approaching quickly “save-harmless” status. There is no message for them. We will have to wait until the Executive 2022-23 State Aid runs are available to find out what those school districts can expect, at a minimum for additional state support through Foundation Aid. Those estimates will be for only 2022-23 and will not properly guide those school districts for the next three to five years.

We also know that the Foundation Aid formula consists of a series of outdated metrics, arbitrary weightings and caps to aid, and measurements of poverty and other factors that are not as inclusive as they should be. (I refer you to last month’s newsletter for specifics.) Moreover, the initial cost analysis to determine the appropriate cost per student as the basis for all Foundation Aid, has not been studied since the use of the “successful school model “ over 15 years ago. It no longer represents an accurate cost analysis of the cost of educating a child. Our mission has expanded and related costs have increased.

Although the basic premise and attempts to develop an adequate and equitable system of Foundation Aid exists in the current formula, improvement is required. Why should we continue to fund a formula that is seriously flawed and in need of revision?

On the expenditure side of the budget equation, there are also things to consider. There is a growth in labor costs due to a series of intertwined factors. The inability of school districts to secure employees for bus driving, as bus monitors, operations and maintenance work, substitute teachers and in certain specialized personnel in central office positions from the business office to other leadership and support positions have resulted in or will result in increased escalating costs forward.

Then there are those items that include both revenues and expenditures. We also know that the most recent Federal Grants provide us with significant opportunities to increase help for students and to stabilize school district finances. However, those grants are over and done by 2024. School districts that are highly supplementing their resources with these funds will need to find additional revenue supports should they wish to continue any cost-escalating initiatives. This revenue will be hard if not impossible to find. Additionally, the escalating costs created with the grants will be hard to absorb in budgets already strained by other factors.

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State Aid 2022-23 by Dr. Rick Timbs continued from Page 6

What do We Recommend?

- School districts must continue to adhere to and appropriately calculate the tax cap.
- School districts must build reserves for the potential “rainy-days” that may be in their future.
- School districts should complete a multi-scenario five-year plan complete with an analysis of revenues expenditures.
- Districts must advocate for:
 - A “costing-out” study to determine the basic level of support school districts are entitled to as a basic component to the Foundation Aid formula (The initial Foundation Aid per student amount.)
 - Changes to the Foundation Aid formula to ensure it becomes more equitable and adequate to our needs. (See last month’s article.)
 - The stability of all expense driven aids, enhancements to BOCES aid, and greater support for Pre-K.
 - The quick release of Smart Schools funds after application for payment
 - The payoffs for the “Prior Year Claims” Que
 - The Governor and legislature should outline a plan for Foundation Aid for the next three to five years
 - A revision of RPTL §1318 to permit a 10% unappropriated fund balance.
 - Greater support for NYSED to ensure our applications and approvals are timely
 - Corral Charter school costs incurred by school districts and create solid claw back provisions when student return to their home district.

We await the Executive state aid runs for a better analysis of the financial picture for all school districts. A quick reminder of our principles follows:

Preamble: School Districts consider the 2007-08 Foundation Aid formula, its general concepts, construct, and promulgation sacrosanct. Foundation Aid Goals:

- *The further development of more equitable distribution of funds among school districts based on accurate representations of fiscal capacity and poverty as well as the demographics of the student population relative to our educational mission.*
- *The adequacy of funds within the formula based on the actual costs of education for each school district that allows it to achieve their educational mission, under the obligations contained in state law and regulation.*
- *The development of a distinct phase-in plan over the next few years for an improved Foundation Aid formula to accomplish equity and adequacy so that state aid is significantly more predictable for each school district.*
- *The development of a sound financial plan to sustain state aid to school districts by the state.*

-Dr. Rick Timbs is the Executive Director of the Statewide School Finance Consortium (SSFC).



Michelle Groth
Chemical Engineer
Anoplate Corporation in Syracuse

Bill Keeler
CNYSBA

Michelle Groth of Anoplate Corporation in Syracuse has a great story to tell about her career as a Chemical Engineer.

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