



# CNYSBA NEWS

*Train, Empower, Advocate, and Mobilize for Students*

## Best School Districts in the Syracuse Area

What are the best school districts in the Greater Syracuse area?

A new list published by [Niche](#) ranks the best schools in Central New York based on data from the U.S. Department of Education, including state test scores, college readiness, graduation rates, SAT/ACT scores, teacher quality, and public school district ratings. *Read the complete story [here](#).*

### INVITE: CNYSBA Annual Dinner

Wednesday, May 25th at The Lodge at Hillrom in Skaneateles Falls [Click here for details and to register](#)



## DEI: America's Long March Towards Justice for All

by Lester W. Young, Jr., Chancellor, NYS Board of Regents

It is fair to assume that most people believe that introducing diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) into the classroom is a new idea. But, as I see it, the DEI journey continues America's long march toward a "more perfect union."

*Photo Credit - Fordham GSE News*

*Continued on Page 2*



Children begin each school day by reciting the Pledge of Allegiance all across our state. Most of them are probably too young to comprehend this fully, but when they recite the pledge, they promise to uphold our country's foundational principle: guaranteeing justice for all. That means we are all treated fairly, equally, and without bias. Not just in a court of law but everywhere. Fairness, equality, and freedom from prejudice are what "justice for all" demands.

Throughout American history, each generation has faced its struggles and challenges. As a nation, we moved from chattel slavery to abolition; from Reconstruction to Jim Crow; from Women's Suffrage to the Voting Rights Act (of 1965 and 1975); from Civil Rights to a Woman's Right to Choose and LGBTQ+ rights. An accurate read of reactions to the quest for freedom, democracy, and equity for all will reveal that it has rarely been peaceful and has never been easy. Our attempts at achieving liberty and justice for all have been a continuing quest since our nation's founding.

But today, the fight for justice has moved to a new place – the schoolhouse. While *Brown v. Board of Education* may have ended legal segregation in our schools, it certainly did not end inequity. One only has to examine the gaps in resource allocations, access to opportunities, disparities in academic achievement, disproportionate representations as well as life outcomes measures.

Forward-thinking individuals have always known that education alone can't solve all of our problems; however, it is the key ingredient to our nation's success, and I dare say, our very survival. In the nineteenth century, the educator Horace Mann called education the "great equalizer." We see the establishment of Land

Grant Colleges and Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCU) during this period. A century later, President Lyndon Johnson, a former high school teacher, believed that if poor children were provided a better-quality education, they could achieve the same educational and occupational outcomes as students from wealthier families – ultimately breaking the cycle of poverty. And so, our nation's largest and most celebrated compensatory education programs grew out of President Johnson's "War on Poverty" and the recognition that the federal government needed to compensate for the nation's history of hostile and discriminatory treatment based on race.

When the struggle for civil rights and desegregation was of profound national significance, the advent of compensatory education programs served as an unprecedented symbol of the federal government's commitment to equality of educational opportunity. This commitment led directly to the enactment of Title I, which continues to provide funding to schools with high numbers or high percentages of children from low-income families.

The next step in the DEI journey was the enactment of the No Child Left Behind Act in 2001 (NCLB). Like previous efforts, the NCLB sought to remedy and compensate for past inequities in the system. It utilized a carrot and stick approach – providing more funding to poor schools but tying that funding to increased accountability and creating high stakes testing environments in our schools.

In New York, we found that the compensatory funding was helpful and that increased accountability made people sit up and take notice. However, neither approach got us to where we needed to be. Ultimately, it became clear that cash investments alone do not change culture or behavior. We learned, instead, that what we need is a policy that will begin to change behaviors.

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Now is the time for that change. We have an opportunity to reframe the system in ways that will positively impact all students, not just some of them. Rather than making allocation decisions solely based on test scores, we are now at a point where we can begin to examine the *substance* of what we do and how we can better support children, families, and communities. And that's why it was so important that the Board of Regents adopt a DEI policy.

We had many programs to improve DEI, but we didn't have a policy that clearly expressed our expectations for schools and districts. So, this is where we are now – taking another critical step in our country's long march to a more perfect union. Our pursuit of "justice for all" is the most American and patriotic thing we can do.

Schools and communities do not have to implement their policies simultaneously or in the same ways. That's ok. The goals and outcomes are what are essential. It took America centuries to develop the systems in place now, and it will take time and effort to effectuate the changes we know are necessary.

We have recommended that New York's school districts and schools adopt a contextual approach as they work through the following six elements: Governance, Teaching and Learning, Family and Community Engagement; Workforce Diversity; Diverse schools and Learning Opportunities; and Student Support and Wellness.

And there are very promising signs that these ideals are beginning to take hold in meaningful ways. Throughout our state BOCES, local school districts and school communities are building more supportive, welcoming and nurturing learning environments for all students. The next phase of this continued effort will consist of both the learning and implementation phases. Our primary goal is to support districts from their individual starting points as they work through the six recommended DEI elements.

Historically, "all" has never really meant "all" when it came to educating our students. But that is changing all across New York State. Advancing DEI in our schools is the right thing to do. The wrong thing is to do nothing at all.

# Budget Vote, Financial Literacy, and the End of Another School Year

By Dr. Rick Timbs, Director SSFC



I hope you all had a successful budget vote!

When I think of budget votes, the future comes to mind. Here are things to think about.

Model Life-Long Learning for new Board of Education members

Sometimes with the budget vote comes a new board of education member or two. New board members need and desire a better basic understanding of financial literacy. CNYSBA has already planned a workshop on this and other important topics for new board members to member districts. The workshops will be held Monday, June 6th, from 6:00 pm- 9:30 pm and Saturday, June 11th from 9am to 3 pm.

## Financial Literacy

All the topics covered are important, but financial literacy is a topic that always needs a revisit. School boards and superintendents are a valuable team but without a significant understanding of the district’s finances, attempts to corral the district’s primary mission directed toward student achievement and performance can run into trouble. Please make financial literacy a board and superintendent goal.

Let us take the use of the new Federal Funds (CRSSA and ARPA).

A district should be clear about the intend to both supplement and supplant the general fund budget with these funds. First they can provide the necessary services needed by students, in a post-pandemic instructional and support setting. Second, they can provide the district with a temporary amount of fund balance for the continuance of district initiatives beyond the scope or timeline provided by the grants.

But these funds, for the purpose of supplementation are both finite and time limited. The supplement choice is helpful to the mission of the school district. However, when the funds run out and the time is up (CRSSA 9/30/23 and ARPA 9/30/24) personnel supported by those grants will no longer be funded. It may be the plan of the district to discontinue these services at that time. But that may be politically difficult to do. Once educators, parents, students, and board members see the value in the additional assistance provided by the grant there may be pressure to continue these services. Some may even conclude that the funding or time allotted for use of the grants was insufficient to the need to assist students not only with educational, but mental health concerns and other related issues. The addition of the costs of these services, unplanned, may place unforeseen pressure on the general fund budget requiring uncomfortable reallocations of resources and/or use of fund balances.

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The supplant choice is helpful to the mission of the school district as well. Armed with needed fund balances the district can be better suited to continue critical programs initiated by the original grants, other identified initiatives, or enable a reallocation of resources within the general fund budget for other district long-term plans. These plans could include major expenditures for technology, equipment, bus and/or vehicle and capital project needs. Supplanted funds may also provide a bulwark of some degree against inflationary pressure that hopefully may ebb over some period of time but may not really be totally excised.

### Future Financial Implications

There is a perception that many districts are “flush” with cash right now. The key words contained in that perception are “right now.” I am not really a “glass half empty” kind of person. But I have found over my career that it has been what I did not know that sometimes became problematic. So, I have become more cautious. Let me reference a recent article that echoed the sentiments I have been articulating for the last six months or so: [New York comptroller on the state budget \(nystateofpolitics.com\)](http://nystateofpolitics.com).

Here are highlights from the Susan Arbetter, State of Politics/Capital Tonight article and interview that resonated with what I have been concerned about:

*The New York state comptroller's office on Tuesday released [its analysis of the recently enacted state budget](#).*

*The record-breaking \$220.5 billion spending plan passed on April 9. The state's coffers this year were bolstered by higher-than-expected tax revenues, as well as federal pandemic aid.*

*According to state Comptroller Thomas DiNapoli, the big question is whether the state can sustain this record-setting spending from year to year.*

*“Part of the answer to that still remains to be addressed because the next piece of what we need to see is a state financial plan that the Division of Budget will be releasing in the next few weeks,” DiNapoli told Capital Tonight. “That will really look to the out-years and identify the revenue that's projected to back up the spending commitments that are being made.”*

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*The financial plan will look at recurring spending in the budget. According to DiNapoli, whether the state can afford that spending is not yet known because the state's financial picture is in flux.*

*"We're dealing with the fallout from the terrible Russian invasion of the Ukraine. What does that going to mean long term? We don't know the answer to that," DiNapoli said.*

*The primary concern identified by the comptroller is that there must be a recognition by the Legislature and the governor that the federal money is finite.*

*"If the economy doesn't pick up to make up the difference in terms of tax revenue, we're going to have to make some tough choices about, perhaps not keeping some of that spending, or doing more revenue actions which I know will translate to taxes and people are already concerned about the level of taxation," DiNapoli said. "So, there are still a lot of questions for us to answer."*

Here are excerpts from the analysis from the Comptroller: [State Fiscal Year 2022-23 Enacted Budget Analysis | Office of the New York State Comptroller](#)

#### *Conclusion*

*The SFY 2022-23 Enacted Budget was adopted following two years of extraordinary volatility in State finances. Significant increases in tax resources and federal aid have led to substantial growth in spending for relief programs, new initiatives, and expanded commitments to existing programs. While some of this spending will be temporary, much of it will be recurring; pending the release of the Financial Plan, it is unclear how projected spending growth will track with anticipated growth in State-sourced revenues.*

*While the State's financial position currently appears strong, sustaining new recurring commitments over a longer time may be difficult, as new economic risks emerge, federal funds are*

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*federal funds are spent down, and temporary tax revenues sunset. Bolstering reserve funds is essential for ensuring services New Yorkers rely on can be preserved through economic challenges and fiscal uncertainties, and every opportunity should be taken to maximize deposits to the State's statutory rainy day reserve funds.*

*The Office of the State Comptroller will provide an in-depth of analysis of operating spending, capital commitments and debt affordability after the Enacted Budget Financial Plan is released.*

This tells me that boards of education and superintendents must include Long-Range Financial Analysis and Planning in their decision-making and practice.

*Dr. Rick Timbs is the Director of the Statewide School Finance Consortium*

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# The CNYSBA 2022 Annual Dinner

FEATURING KEYNOTE SPEAKER



## NYS SENATOR JOHN MANNION

*Senator John Mannion is a lifelong Central New Yorker. The grandchild of Irish immigrants, he grew up on Syracuse's famous Tipperary Hill. He now resides in Geddes with his wife, Jennifer, and his three children - Jack, Quinn, and Brady. John brings with him nearly three decades of classroom experience as a teacher.*

*He spent his final twenty-one years as an Advanced Placement Biology teacher at the West Genesee School District. He has been a strong advocate for teachers and students, serving in the capacity of President for the West Genesee Teachers' Association.*

*He has been embedded in his community, volunteering in many areas including coaching soccer, basketball and baseball. He and his family enjoy the diverse cultures and historical significance that Central New York offers. He now represents the 50th Senate District, which encompasses part of Syracuse's north side, as well as parts of Onondaga County and Cayuga County.*

**Wednesday, May 25th**

**The Lodge at Hillrom (formerly The Lodge at Welch Allyne)**

**4355 State St, Skaneateles Falls, NY 13153**

**5:30 pm**

RSVP no later than May 20th

Cost (in-person only) \$50

# CNYSBA ANNUAL 2022 DINNER



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