



RSA TODAY

News for New York State's Rural Schools

June 2016

Rural Schools Association of New York State



I don't live in New York , I live In New York !

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CALL TO ACTION!



Rural schools stand to lose their state aid for both the current and upcoming years if they do not have an approved APPR staff evaluation plan in place by the end of this month. Two thirds of all schools have yet to submit their plans. Worse, many schools have reported that their plans are finalized but their local bargaining units are refusing to sign them without contractual concessions in unrelated areas of employment. That, friends is a travesty, but sadly, not unexpected. We've been through this before.

Schools already under severe financial constraints as a result of this year's local property tax freeze are now being held hostage under the threat of losing their only way of maintaining programs and services (and ironically, staff.) This week's RSA Lobby Day meeting revealed that the Assembly may not be as forceful on the issue as one would hope, given both their traditional alliance with labor unions and due to the expected submittal of New York City's APPR plan later this week. Once the school district represented by most of their members is already submitted, there is no incentive to separate the requirement of submitting district APPR plans to the penalty of losing of state aid for failure to comply.

In addition, since the linking of the plans to state aid originated with the governor, there appears to be little support there for delaying or eliminating the potential penalty. Nonetheless, legislation to help has been drafted and submitted in the Assembly. It must pass if our schools are to be freed from the threat of either losing aid or "giving away the store" to obtain union sign off on the APPR plans.

Please call your legislators and ask them to support Assembly Bill 10569, Assembly Education Committee Chair Cathy Nolan.

To contact your Senator, call 518-455-2800 and ask to be connected to your Senator's office.

To reach Members of the Assembly, call 518-455-4100 and ask to be connected to their office.

There are only 4 legislative days left in this year's legislative session. Please call today and tell them the consequences of your school losing its aid!



RSA MOVES ON ALBANY TO PUSH FOR RURAL SCHOOL HELP

With beautiful weather abundant, few major issues to keep them, an election season waiting to begin back home and only a handful of legislative days left on the schedule, the 2016 legislative session is winding down. That doesn't mean that there isn't important work left to do on behalf of struggling rural schools however and so RSA Executive Committee members traveled to the state capital to make the case for your end of session priority issues.

RSA Board Members Tim Hayes and Tom Huxtable are pictured in the Capitol "War Room" outside the governor's office, prior to meeting with the governor's top education advisor Dr. Jere Hochman during RSA Lobby Day.

Effective advocacy should be less about being the first to learn what is about to happen to you and more about **influencing** what is about to happen to you. So, your RSA delegation met with top state leaders of both legislative houses, the State Education Department and the governor's top education staff to discuss issues that are both immediate and important.

First, RSA pushed for the "decoupling" of negotiated APPR evaluation plans with the district's receipt of this year's state aid allocation. Law enacted in the state budget forces districts to have a staff evaluation plan in place by the end of this month or face the loss of state aid. In a year when local aid was essentially frozen, failure to receive promised state aid would be catastrophic. What we pushed for was a separation of the requirement and the penalty, so that districts weren't forced to negotiate away important items in order to meet the deadline. What we learned was that the issue is being debated daily in the respective conferences of each house but that the Assembly is unlikely to take up the issue if New York City gets their APPR plan submitted next week as planned. We also learned that the governor is reluctant to remove the penalty but that the parties are working to push out the deadline.

If a district were to miss the deadline and fail to receive its aid (as several districts did when the first APPR law was put in effect) students would face a drastically different school opening in the fall than voters approved last month. Programs and services would be cut, layoffs would ensue and the community would be justifiably outraged. RSA pointed out the implications for such a result on districts that largely rely on state aid to pay for the cost of those programs and services.

RSA also focused on the need to create a new state aid funding formula, now that the GEA has been eliminated. On your behalf, RSA expressed our appreciation for their having resolved the longstanding inequity represented by the GEA. However, we also pointed out the real need to create a new, legitimate funding formula that accurately assesses the needs of communities and provides an amount sufficient to comply with the state's constitutional responsibility to provide a sound education to every child. With the GEA finally a part of our past, the state needs to recalibrate post-recession local community wealth, enrollment trends and ultimately fix a funding scheme that is universally deemed the most inequitable in the nation (despite spending the most on public education of any state.)

Now is the time and the RSA delegation pressed for the State Education Department to provide a public forum on the topic and for legislative leaders to make this next year's top priority. What we learned is that legislative leaders don't believe the governor intends to infuse the funding formula with a large increase in an "off election year". This situation is of course compounded by the issue of a projected local property tax revenue cap



RSA Legislative Chair and Geneseo Superintendent Tim Hayes meets with Senate Finance Committee Chair Catherine Young and Sen. Patrick Gallivan outside the Senate conference room as part of RSA's Lobby Day.

that is expected to once again provide only miniscule increases in local funding.

We then took the opportunity to discuss the need for improved teacher recruitment efforts by the state. Many of our districts are experiencing serious teacher shortages (a national issue.) Districts that formerly received



RSA Lobby Day representatives meet with State Education Commissioner MaryEllen Elia during the annual RSA Lobby Day. Pictured left to right are Geneseo Superintendent Tim Hayes, Commissioner Elia, RSA Executive Director David Little and Mount Markham board member and RSA Policy Committee Chair Tom Huxtable

dozens of resumes for a teacher opening now receive a scant few; an issue that is most severe in subjects like math and the sciences. This obviously has a tremendous impact on the quality of instruction provided to students. Commissioner Elia relayed that in fact, SED is attempting to establish reciprocity between teachers that are certified in other states and have at least three years of satisfactory teaching performance. Legislative leaders were supportive of the concept.

Finally, we relayed to leaders the devastating problems being faced by districts coping with the effects of the heroin epidemic. Beyond prevention and treatment of students directly involved, we educated state leaders about the very real educational impact of students needing to transfer between districts when parents are affected and the financial implications for districts of accepting newly displaced students who arrive after budgets are fixed.

Quite a lot on the plate of leaders expecting that their work is largely done for the year! Please know that whether in Albany or back home, your Rural Schools Association will continue to inform state leaders of the need for the changes that allow you to most effectively educate your students and build your communities!

RSA in State Shared Services Study

RSA is participating in a state study to improve the availability of shared services for school districts and other municipalities. In a study being conducted on behalf of the state's Division of Local Government Services, RSA is providing insight into impediments and opportunities for the sharing of services between school districts and between schools and municipal governments in a project called "Partnering with School Districts for Shared Services: Impacts on Cost and Level of Service"

This is a project for the Department of State by the Maxwell School at Syracuse University. The primary goal of the report is to explore potential efficiency gains in both cost and levels of service for New York State through consolidation and shared non-instructional services between school districts and local governments. The report will compile information gleaned from interviews with stakeholders and then present analysis of the costs and benefits of potential shared services between school districts and local governments. The analysis will incorporate findings from case studies and interviews with those involved in previous consolidation efforts. The project team will also analyze the impacts on cost and level of service through supplemental research.

RSA has provided data, as well as regulatory and legal impediments to shared services for the study. We have also provided anecdotal evidence of how shared service agreements have worked in practice, why school mergers haven't caught on and the need for relief that will encourage digital learning and regionalization and specialization at the secondary level. Both RSA Executive Director David Little and Center for Rural Schools and RSA Cornell Liaison Dr. John Sipple participated in the study on behalf of RSA.

The final report will provide the Division of Local Government Services better insight into supporting shared services across the state.

Roxbury School Superintendent Tom O'Brien Named to Heroin Task Force

A local school superintendent has been named to a statewide heroin task force, Gov. Andrew Cuomo announced Tuesday.

Longtime Roxbury Central School superintendent Tom O'Brien will join state officials, health care and recovery executives, and representatives of law enforcement and social services on the 23-person panel chaired by Lt. Gov. Kathy Hochul and state Office of Alcohol & Substance Abuse Commissioner Arlene Gonzalez-Sanchez.



In a media release, Cuomo called the group "a broad coalition of experts in healthcare, drug policy, advocacy, education, and parents and New Yorkers in recovery" and said the group will "build on the state's previous efforts and use their expertise and experience to develop a comprehensive action plan to combat the state's opioid epidemic. Members of the task force will hold public listening sessions across New York to inform their recommendations."

"Opioid addiction is a national epidemic that continues to plague families in communities across New York – and the state has been taking aggressive action to tackle this crisis head on," Cuomo said in the release. "The Heroin Task Force will take these efforts to the next level with a comprehensive action plan developed by a diverse coalition of experts. We will use the task force's recommendations to implement smart solutions that will protect public health, enhance safety in communities statewide and save the lives of vulnerable New Yorkers."

Over the past decade, admissions for heroin and prescription opioid-abuse treatment in New York have increased 40 percent, the release said. In upstate New York and on Long Island, admissions for opioid and heroin addiction have increased 94 and 117 percent respectively. Moreover, heroin admissions to OASAS addiction treatment programs have risen 35 percent between 2006 and 2015. Five percent of students in grades seven through 12 have reported using a prescription pain reliever non-medically.

According to the release, overdose is now the leading cause of accidental death in New York. In March, the state DOH, in collaboration with the Harm Reduction Coalition, issued standing medical orders to the more than 750 independent pharmacies outside New York City, allowing these pharmacists to dispense naloxone without a prescription. At the same time, new regulations took effect that require all prescriptions to be transmitted electronically from the prescriber directly to the pharmacy. The measure is part of New York's comprehensive I-STOP law, first implemented in 2012, designed to curb prescription drug abuse across the state.

New Yorkers struggling with an addiction, or whose loved ones are struggling, can find help and hope by calling the State's HOPEline at (877) 846-7369 or by texting HOPENY (short code 467369).

The Task Force is asked to identify ways to expand awareness of heroin and opioid addiction; enhance statewide prevention efforts; increase access to treatment; and improve support for those in recovery. For more information, visit: <http://combatheroin.ny.gov/>.

RSA Summer Conference: Highlighting Innovation and Our Federal Connection



View of Otsego Lake from deck of Otesaga

More of you are planning on being with your Rural Schools Association in Cooperstown this summer than ever before! There are more folks registered and more vendors participating than at any time in RSA's existence! That makes perfect sense, since this year's conference offers more learning opportunities than ever before and the chance to hear from some of our state and public education's most influential leaders.

Imagine finding project based learning opportunities for your district, hearing about "adventure leadership" and Google in the classroom all in one day and then settling down to hear from the governor's top education official and the head of rural education for the U.S. Department of Education... and you haven't even gotten through the first day yet!



State Education Commissioner
MaryEllen Elia

By the time you leave Cooperstown 36 hours after hitting town, you'll have heard from State Education Commissioner Elia and the director of the National Rural and Community Trust, not to mention the head of the US Department of Agriculture (who has a personal story about the impact of rural public education you won't want to miss!) You'll have been inspired to greatness by world renowned educational leader Dr. Bill Daggett, networked with your colleagues from around the state with free dessert, beer and wine receptions and mixers, taste the finest food in the state, all the while gazing down the length of the jewel of the Finger Lakes.



Dr. Bill Daggett

Yes, the chance to mix summer at The Otesaga in Cooperstown with innovative and inspirational activities creates a must-see event. You can combine the conference with once in a lifetime educational opportunities like the Baseball Hall of Fame, the Farmer's Museum, Glimmerglass Opera or the James Fennimore Cooper Art Museum. And then there's the "wow factor" of strolling through the hotel and downtown with Baseball Hall of Famers like Harmon Killibrew or ESPN's Michael Wilbon (who we shared the Otesaga with last year!) Join your colleagues and your friends at RSA for the event of the summer by contacting Natalie Mitchell at NAM33@cornell.edu or <http://cardi.cals.cornell.edu/programs/rsa/activities/conference>

RSA on the Move

Your Rural Schools Association has undergone tremendous change in the past year and a half. We've refocused our efforts on advocacy, increasing our visibility and influence at the state and federal levels. We opened an office near the Capitol and legislative offices, reformatted our website, and upgraded our programs, services and tools available through the Center for Rural Schools. We reworked our relationship with Cornell to benefit us both and increased our contact with you, our members; as well as participating in statewide media shows and events. As a result, your RSA is more widely known throughout the state and (not surprisingly) more school districts have become RSA members than ever before.

As we reach out to better serve you, we want to make sure that we fully engage in the valuable work that takes place on your behalf at Cornell. Research that serves all rural schools, collaboration with other rural community programs and organizations, publications that inform rural public education and including Cornell undergraduate and graduate students in improving the lives of rural New Yorkers are all important components of that work. To do that work fully, we need an everyday presence at our campus office. So...

The search is on for a new Deputy Executive Director of RSA! Tom Marzeski is an invaluable member of the RSA team. He has served as a member superintendent, an RSA board member and as RSA Deputy Executive Director. We could not be more grateful for Tom's tireless and critically important service. Thanks goodness we're not losing him completely! Neither Tom nor Executive Director Dave Little are housed on campus and Tom's pending retirement from the Deputy position has allowed us to look for an individual who will bring strong research and communication skill, be able to collaborate with our partners in the Community and Regional Development Institute and the Center for Rural Schools and also coordinate the work of students doing work on our behalf.

Tom Marzeski will continue to serve RSA whenever we call for help and his wealth of knowledge about RSA history and operations will continue to be invaluable. The new Deputy Director will work out of Cornell on a daily basis to create and distribute information that is vital to you, our member school districts. We have conducted extensive interviews for this position and next week, we will select the successful candidate. That person will be a Cornell employee, paid with RSA funds. You should know that all of the finalists are outstanding individuals who bring significant strength to our efforts. We are thrilled about the expansion of services your RSA will provide to you and always welcome your thoughts about ways we can help!

Summer Food Service Program



The Summer Food Service Program (SFSP), which was established to ensure that low-income children continue to receive nutritious meals when schools is not in session. Free meals, that meet Federal nutrition guidelines, are provided to all children 18 years old and under at approved SFSP sites in areas with significant concentration of low-income children. Families can find feeding sites throughout the state using one of these methods:

- Call 1-866-3-HUNGRY
- Text “FOOD” to 877-877
- Dial 2-1-1

People can also visit <http://www.fns.usda.gov/summerfoodrocks> to use the mapper tool by USDA to find feeding sites. There are only a few sites listed currently. Once all of our sponsors submit their renewal information for this year, the map will be updated.

We are trying to raise awareness of the Summer Food Service Program in rural areas. If any of the school districts are interested in serving meals, please contact

Kylie Smith

Child Nutrition Program Administration

89 Washington Avenue 375 EBA

Albany, NY 12234

Phone (518)486-1086 Fax (518)474-9920



CaRDI Roundtable Addresses ‘Dire’ Rural Health Challenges

By Daniel Aloï

CaRDI's rural health roundtable featured (from left) Cornell Institute for Public Affairs (CIPA) project associate Maria Jose Sanchez Arrieta, CaRDI co-faculty director John Sipple, Cornell Cooperative Extension associate director Kim Kopko and CIPA director Sharon Tennyson.

The need to foster healthier rural communities informed discussion at a recent research roundtable, “Enhancing Community Impacts of School-Based Health Clinics in Rural New York.”

Hosted by the Community and Regional Development Institute (CaRDI), the roundtable explored interventions, including parent education, that Cornell research and outreach could assist with, beginning with two rural counties.

The motivation for the project, CaRDI co-faculty director and associate professor John Sipple said, was an email he received in 2014 from a Bassett Healthcare Network pediatrician, noting “profound poverty” as an obstacle to school-based clinical services having much impact on rural children.

Under the direction of Dr. Chris Kjolhede, Bassett operates 21 rural school-based clinics in central New York, out of more than 250 state-mandated clinics (most are in urban areas) providing medical treatment, immunizations, dental care and mental health services to schoolchildren. While the clinics “do a very good job” treating individual children, “they have very little impact on the broader communities in which these children live,” Sipple explained. “We’re trying to have a community-level impact.”

Sipple said he also was approached by a downstate school superintendent asking for heroin use data “because it is killing our community,” and showed a series of demographic maps charting population change and the escalating proportion of heroin and opiate-related admissions to healthcare facilities across the state from 2007 to 2014.

“The work in the rural communities presents a whole set of challenges. There’s high incidence of drug use and abuse, parental abuse and neglect, teen pregnancy, a lot of poverty,” said Kim Kopko, director of the Parenting in Context project and associate director of Cornell Cooperative Extension and of extension and outreach in the College of Human Ecology (CHE).

With campus and community partners, CaRDI is working on a grant proposal to the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation for work to enhance and create a culture of health in Otsego and Chenango counties, where Bassett



CaRDI's rural health roundtable featured (from left) Cornell Institute for Public Affairs (CIPA) project associate Maria Jose Sanchez Arrieta, CaRDI co-faculty director John Sipple, Cornell Cooperative Extension associate director Kim Kopko and CIPA director Sharon Tennyson.

has several rural school clinics.

Site visits to rural schools

On two Chenango County site visits, “in beautiful schools in very rural areas, the clinics themselves are impressive. That’s the good news,” Kopko said. “But the story that we heard from the staff ... the dental hygienist said she gave a 6-year-old a toothbrush and he said, ‘What is this?’ Another student asked if he could keep his toothbrush at school because ‘we have one in the house and everybody uses it.’”

By the time children in rural districts start school, many of them “already have dental issues or obesity or they are undernourished,” said Maria Jose Sanchez Arrieta, a Cornell Institute for Public Affairs (CIPA) project associate.

“You can provide children with lunch at school, but then what happens on the weekend, when you arrive home when you don’t have food, or heating? Sometimes they don’t have water,” she said. “I am used to working in developing countries, and it was really shocking to face almost the same issues here, an hour and a half from Cornell.”

Arrieta also said transportation for nonemergency medical services is reimbursable through Medicaid, a federal program, but complicated at the local level for rural residents.

Jillian Kasow, director of the state Legislative Commission on Rural Resources, cited a bill passed by the state Senate that expands access to telehealth services, including remote patient monitoring. “In rural areas it’s very difficult to get patients to their doctor’s appointments [for] preventive care,” Kasow said.

She said federal policy in the early 2000s had supported the idea that “transportation is essential to overall community health,” but in the wake of state budget cuts, “we’re seeing some counties that are struggling to maintain funding for their transportation systems.”

Schools as community hubs

Reaching families with the school as a hub could help build community health and capacity, said CIPA director Sharon Tennyson, professor of policy analysis and management.

“We’re trying to pull together various programs and resources to make it attractive and feasible for the families,” she said, including a community garden project in CHE. “These areas are apparently food deserts, [with a] need for community gardens, nutrition education and increasing availability of nutritious foods.”

Kopko said she is awaiting word on a grant proposal to bring portable parent education into the schools from extension offices, with research on community impacts to inform implementing the portable model elsewhere.

“We may be more readily providing access to parents, but will there be uptake? If you build it, will they come? We don’t know; we’re hopeful, but it’s a start,” Kopko said. “Where the conditions are this dire, you need to start somewhere. We’re starting where we know the needs are the greatest, and we’re going to learn from that and hope that we can make some change.”

What do school officials make?

Access a database of 68,355 salaries for Upstate school administrators and teachers

By: G. Scott Thomas Projects Editor Buffalo Business First

The following database contains the names of 68,355 Upstate New York administrators and teachers who received at least \$50,000 in gross pay from public school districts during the 2014-2015 academic year.

The information was provided by the New York State Teachers' Retirement System in response to a freedom-of-information request filed by Business First. The resulting database encompasses all school districts in the 48 Upstate counties with enrollments of 200 or more.

You'll see four tabs. Use the first to isolate one of eight Upstate markets. Then use the subsequent tabs to narrow your search to a single county, district and alphabetical group of surnames.

Or you can choose a broader option. If you ignore all of the tabs and simply hit the Search button, you'll get access to the entire database. If you use only the market tab, you'll see all salaries within a chosen area. Or you can use the remaining tabs to drill down to smaller groups.

You can re-sort the database by clicking any column header. A second click will reverse the sort.

Note that employees are not listed with job titles. Some may have shifted from one district to another in the ensuing year, and others may have retired. This list is confined to cash compensation. It does not account for the cost of pensions, health insurance or other benefits, but it may include lump-sum payments for unused sick leave or vacation.

Use the right-hand scroll bar to get to the bottom of a given list. If it extends to additional pages, you can reach them by using the arrow underneath the list.

Access the database at this link www.bizjournals.com/buffalo/news/2016/06/01/upstatepay.html

Buffalo Business First

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