

Suffolk Region: October 2021 N-SSBA Notes

- Executive Director, Lorraine Deller meeting highlights
 - ED attended NYSCOSS Fall Leadership Summit, “The Ride of a Lifetime”, hosted by recently elected NYSCOSS President, Phyllis Harrington (Oceanside); excellent break-out sessions; the Major topic: disruption of BOE meetings and threats to superintendents.
 - N-SSBA Resolutions Meeting: Nassau/Suffolk’s membership were in general agreement with the executive committee positions in support of the 17 recommended resolutions and the 8 resolutions not recommended.
 - District Clerk Workshop: Please urge all district clerks to stay in touch with rapidly changing measures for records keeping, FOIL applications, etc.
 - LI regional Planning Council met on 10/14/21: Guest speaker was NYS Comptroller, Tom DiNapoli who delivered a presentation “Where We Stand” (familiar ring?) to update attendees on the NYS and LI economy; recognized the significance for districts to be able to increase the allowable fund balance of 4% which the association has been advocating as the current limit is not related to the fiscal reality many districts face.
 - Meeting with Rep. Kathleen Rice: continuing to push for SALT-D at federal level which also remains a priority for Rep. Suozzi; anticipate a decision the week of 10/25/21.
 - Governor Hochul announced the settlement and discontinuation of the New Yorkers for Students' Educational Rights v. New York State case. The state will follow through with its commitment to fully fund the current Foundation Aid formula to New York's school districts over three years and end the State's prior opposition to providing much-needed funding to NY’s students.
 - 50% of LI districts have been on safe harmless since the introduction of the foundation aid formula.
 - “Equity” is the most important factor for funding NY’s schools; LI must make sure that regional cost differences, enrollment, etc. are considered. The association will push to have demographic studies reviewed since many demographic changes have taken place across the state and especially on LI.
 - Although perhaps not in the same number or concentration as in the past, unaccompanied minors is a reemerging issue. LI was the epicenter for the last surge and hopefully there were lessons learned. We must call for federal funding for school districts in which these students are being placed. The call should be: “full funding, in the same year, with adequate notice”. As such, schools will be prepared from the outset and have the necessary resources, both fiscal and human capital, to support these students and districts.

- Deputy Executive Director, Robert Vecchio
 - Also shared impressions re: LI Regional Planning Council. State comptroller Di Napoli reported on LI economic indicators which demonstrate that LI is leading the nation in return to fiscal health; sales tax receipts are doing well, mainly due to changes in law; revenues should be approx. \$5.9B, higher than predicted in April
 - The N-SSBA newsletter has been revamped and first issue sent out – wonderful!
 - Continuing to upgrade phones, infrastructure, etc. at N-SSBA office
 - At the 10/18 Regents meeting – as in prior month, much discussion centered around DEI; other discussion included the idea that the state DOE will become a “customer service” agency rather than a regulatory agency and the state is planning to shift away from hi-stakes testing to more formative testing.
 - During state school board’s conference bylaws amendments were approved; one recommended resolution failed; one not recommended resolution passed.
 - We must keep a watchful eye on the expansion of charter schools on LI as Wyandanch and Riverhead are moving in that direction.

- Superintendents Reports
 - Dr. Maria Rianna (Glen Cove):
 - Nassau superintendents focusing on foundation aid changes; what approach to take re: tax cap (push for fixed cap? for exclusions?); the impact of changing enrollments; building aide; shortage of ENL teachers; pandemic issues revolving around student mental health, vaccines for younger students.
 - Thanked all LI school board members for time they dedicate with little return as far as appreciation.
 - James Polansky (Huntington)
 - Recognized the efforts and contribution of board of ed trustees
 - Ongoing conversations among Suffolk superintendents include: fund balance; full restoration of foundation aide and impact on budget development; Covid19 and student resilience, opening testing centers.
 - Suffolk superintendents legislative committee will meet with state delegation next month; meeting with Rep Suozzi re: unaccompanied minors and issues of staffing, transportation although Suffolk districts are not seeing the same numbers as in the past and seem to be better prepared.
 - Cited Board of Regents renewed focus on replacing high school exit assessments with alternatives to one-shot Regents tests.

- Area Directors
 - BA Schoen: Area 11
 - Reported much discussion among members re: NSBA's action to bring the Dept of Justice into the issue some BOEs are currently experiencing with regard to the lack of civility, threats and safety of board members and administrators as reported across the nation. (Concern was expressed by state association leadership for NSBA letter sent to DOJ that was not necessarily representative of the nation's school board members. Two states have withdrawn from NSBA membership, several others are considering withdrawal which would be a significant a fiscal hit for the national association, only adding to NSBA's existing financial challenges).
 - Progress is being made on the development of a joint statement between NYSSBA and NYSCOSS re: DEI.
 - Cathy Romano: Area 12
 - Announced the upcoming Saturday retreat for strategic planning with DEI embedded. The joint statement mentioned by BA will be among NYSSBA, NYSCOSS, The Big 5 and Rural Schools. The statement will reflect the associations' commitment to every child to be respected. Framework, guidance, and resource materials are being developed and will be available to statewide school boards. The focus of the initiative is "closing the achievement gap".
 - Board officer training and custom board retreats are ongoing.
- REFIT
 - New Board members have been elected: President, Dr. Ed Card (East Meadow); 1st Vice President, Aubrey Philips (Elmont); 2nd Vice President, Dr. Christopher Dillon (Levittown); Secretary/Treasurer, Mary Jo O'Hagan (Baldwin).
 - REFIT is comprised of 21 board members; there are 7 available positions open to eligible districts; Bob Vecchio will be the N-SSBA liaison.
 - Discussions included: How fully funded foundation aid will impact REFIT districts and concerns that funds coming through will be distributed equitably and with proper indexing of wealth, enrollment and cost factors. There's unilateral acknowledgement that the formula as is is not workable -- there has been no recognition of enrollment growth and inadequate recognition of regional cost differences. LI Boards need to make certain enrollment growth, demographics and regional cost differences are factors in aid distribution.
- Round Table Discussion: executive board members re: happenings/events in the districts represented.
- Next virtual meeting: November 18, 2021