



Four County School Boards Association Welcomes Stephen P. Miskell, Ed.D. as our new Executive Director

I am so happy to serve as the new Executive Director of the Four County School Boards Association. I am proud of the different roles that I have served in throughout my career as an educator; I served as a classroom teacher in both public and parochial schools and held different administrative roles during my career, including assistant principal/athletic director, principal, and school business administrator. I am particularly proud to have served on boards of education in the two communities I resided in while my children were growing up. I served as a board member and board president for the West Genesee Central School District in Camillus, New York, and after relocating my family to my hometown of Geneseo, New York, I also served as a board member and board president for the Geneseo Central School District. I am finding that my career experiences and school board service have provided me with a strong foundation upon which to build in my new role with the Four County School Boards Association.



Please don't hesitate to reach out to me or Sue Wyatt, our Coordinator of Membership Services, if you have any questions or concerns that we can assist you with. I look forward to working with our component school districts throughout the year on behalf of the children we all serve.

Sincerely,

Stephen P. Miskell, Ed.D.

Executive Director of the Four County School Boards Association.



This has been very different year, the challenges facing districts, Superintendents and Board Members are unique. Some challenges are tied to the pandemic, some are tied to politics, and most are tied to misunderstanding of the facts. As school board members we must focus on our jobs and not get distracted or bogged down.

Four County officers and staff have been busy since the beginning of the year in July. We have had several Professional development sessions and General Membership meetings on many important topics that school board members should be aware of. If you missed any of them, please check our website and log into the member section to review. There is more to come!

In September the Board of Directors appointed Stephen Miskell, Ed.D. as the Executive Director of Four County and he has hit the ground running, diving into the budget process and familiarizing himself with the Association and our membership. He presented on Strategic Planning with several Member Superintendents at this months General Membership meeting.

The Policy and Legislative committees have been busy also. They will report on their activity at the Board of Directors meeting on Tuesday, November 30th.

If there is a topic you would like presented, please do not hesitate to email or call the office to suggest it.

Russell Harris

FCSBA President

Stay tuned we have great programs planed for the new year also...

NYSSBA Area 2 Director's Message:

November 2021



There was an adage that went something like, "Just when the caterpillar thought the world was ending, he turned into a butterfly." Our past 18 months in education may have felt that way for some, that is, that the world was ending. But thanks to the dedication of you, volunteer school board members, along with your incredible administrative teams and teachers, you have all learned to fly as the butterfly does. We have been confronted with what appeared at times to be insurmountable odds but, by working together, we have continued to provide colorful, insightful, imaginative solutions for the children in our school districts. Because of COVID mandates, each of us still need to manage the various health requirements and pressures presented at some school board meetings, but by listening to our constituents and seeking inputs and strategies from NYSSBA and other neighboring district leaders, we will continue to successfully fly on behalf of our students.

NYSSBA continues to support each of you as we work together. As noted in the November 8 edition of the *On Board*, by NYSSBA senior writer Cathy Woodruff, "A pandemic pause that put initiatives on hold, an influx of federal recovery money and a new governor are among several developments that have created an opportunity for the State Education Department (SED) to renew its focus and rebuild its capacity to support school districts" and NYSSBA is continuing to work with the SED for better opportunities for all children across the State. As Governor Hochul is building her first State budget, NYSSBA will continue to advocate for responsible funding to support public schools.

On behalf of NYSSBA, I would like to welcome Dr. Stephen Miskell as your Four Counties School Board Associations new Executive Director. As a longtime school board member in the Geneseo CSD, Dr. Miskell is very familiar with the difficult decisions each of you need to make on behalf of the children and educational programs within your schools.

As we enter this season of giving thanks and holiday celebrations, I reflect on my family and the blessings I have enjoyed. My wife, daughters, and grandchildren are blessings to me. I am thankful for my community and the opportunities I have had to serve it, especially the children in my 22 years of school board service. I would like to take this opportunity to thank you for your service for all the children within your school districts. You might not hear it often enough, but you are appreciated for the difficult decisions you make every day on their behalf. I wish you and your families a joyous, peaceful holiday season and look forward to our opportunities to continue the good work together for the children of our region and public education across the State. Please continue to stay safe and healthy.

Rodney George

NYSSBA Area 2 Director



**FOUR COUNTY SBA WISHES YOU AND
YOUR FAMILIES A VERY
HAPPY THANKSGIVING!**

Legislative Updates

The legislative committee has been diligently working on this year's position papers. We began by surveying all of the participating Four County school boards. The committee took the results from those surveys and used them to develop our state positions. This year we are focused on equity and predictability in funding, mental health and SEL for all students and staff, the staffing crisis, and equitable internet. We meet again in December to work on our federal papers.



Jennifer Schoene

Legislative Committee Chair



As a representative for rural education who has taken part in several State and Federal level meetings related to topics such as school safety, school climate, and special education, it seems we're perceived as intentionally marginalizing certain student populations. The implication is that we don't fully understand or embrace diversity and inclusion because they see us (rural and small schools) as a homogenous group. It is imperative for us as school leaders to understand the policies and then be vocal in communicating our needs to help guide the important work of supporting all students.

The Safe Schools Task Force, NY SPP/APR, DEI and IDEA are at a crossroads (wow, acronym overload!). New York State is currently working to update the State Performance Plan/Annual Performance Report (SPP/APR) that is submitted every six years for our IDEA indicators. As well, the SED Safe Schools Task Force is reviewing data related to the SPP/APR through the School Climate Survey and Indicators. Federally, we are looking to update the language within, and fully fund, IDEA. We are also embarking on a DEI Initiative. All of these policies have indicators that intersect to help support students with disabilities, yet it seems a rural lens is lacking in policy decisions.

The Safe Schools Task Force is examining the in/out of school suspension and expulsion rates as part of a larger body of work around school climate and culture. The study by Child Trends, which is supporting the work of the task force, has highlighted the disproportionality that exists in small districts in the rates of suspensions and expulsions for black students, especially male black students with disabilities. This data was concerning because it is based on Civil Rights Data Collection from 2011 to 2017 and many of our districts have made great strides in our development of MTSS and Restorative practices since 2017. The study also did not take into consideration the resources available to small or rural districts. Lastly, the conversation at the November meeting ended with highlighting the issues in small districts, making that the main takeaway from the meeting. A meeting that lacked small or rural school representation.

The work of the Safe Schools Task Force also coincides this year with the SED's State Performance Plan/Annual Performance Report (SPP/APR) review, which occurs every six years. The SPP/APR contains 17 indicators that review the state's efforts to implement the requirements of the IDEA. It focuses on educational and functional outcomes for children with disabilities. In particular, the data from Indicators 4A, 4B (suspension rates), 9, and 10 (disproportionate representation) find crossover in both initiatives within SED. Based on the previous SPP/APR, the results or compliance indicators resulted in many small or rural districts needing to apply for waivers at the State level. It is important for the state to have input from multiple small or rural stakeholders in order to improve the reporting process. Please take the time to understand the SPP/APR and submit stakeholder feedback by visiting: <http://www.nysed.gov/special-education/ffy-2020-2025-spp-apr>

The intersection of these policy reviews and the beginning of the DEI Initiative will hopefully highlight and inspire some **much needed change for all students**. Please take the time to visit the SED website and offer your feedback from your district's perspective. If you have any questions or specific concerns, the RSA team is always here as a resource.

Heather Zellers

Seneca Falls BOE, Rural Schools BOD and National Rural Education Association BOD

December 7, 2021

5:30 pm Dinner, 6:00 pm Meeting - Hybrid

Professional Development Meeting

“Current Issues and areas of interest for Rural Schools”



Joining us in-person:

David Little, Esq. Rural Schools Association Executive Director

Heather Zellers, Seneca Falls BOE, Rural Schools Association (RSA) Board of Directors,
and National Rural Education Association (NREA) Board of Directors

Andy Doell, Superintendent of Bloomfield CSD, CSO Representative to RSA

Mark your calendar with upcoming Four County SBA meetings:

November 30th, Board of Directors Meeting - 5:30 pm Dinner, 5:45 pm Meeting - Hybrid

December 7th, Professional Development Meeting - 5:30 pm Dinner, 6:00 pm Meeting - Hybrid - Rural Schools Association

December 11th, Legislative Committee Meeting - 9:00 am - Zoom

January 8th, Legislative Committee Meeting - 9:00 am - Zoom - Senator Pam Helming will be attending via Zoom

January 18th, Board of Directors Meeting - 5:30 pm Dinner, 5:45 pm Meeting - Hybrid

January 24th, General Membership Meeting - Zoom

Click link below for downloadable/printable calendar of events:

https://4bc03dbc-a320-4a20-b03c-247eb62c5fd8.filesusr.com/ugd/c8d956_25170cb39be54b3c9fcaa5c81d0c400.pdf