



NEWS FOR NEW YORK STATE'S RURAL SCHOOLS

FEBRUARY 2023 EDITION
RURAL SCHOOLS ASSOCIATION OF NEW YORK STATE



CARRYING ON UNCLE BUD'S LEGACY

by Executive Director David Little, Esq.



Today is the first day of my life without my Uncle Bud. He died this morning at 96. Weldon Little was a child of the depression, growing up working on his grandfather's farm and bringing food back to feed the neighborhood. In his late teens he became a soldier, fighting in the Battle of the Bulge and serving in Patton's Third Army to the end. Like many of his counterparts, he never talked about it. He came home and began working a rotating shift at the steel plant. If you don't know what a rotating shift is, it means he worked a week of nights, then a week of days, then a week of evenings (for 40 years.) I would've gone mad. He just got irritable.

He was a town council member, served on the library board and read to 1st graders throughout his retirement. He raised good boys, grandkids and great grandkids, was a good husband and father and served his country, his hometown, his church and his school. He lived from biplanes to lunar explorers, from FDR to Biden, through the materialistic 50s, the anti-materialistic 60s, years of unity and years of discord. Now we've lost yet another of the Greatest Generation.

Uncle Bud was not without opinions. He read voraciously and before Google was your "go to" source for information. I've been told that as a child, he could be a bully. He was different when he came home from the war; he had a different perspective and valued what we have here too much to give folks a hard time anymore. He knew the hardships of that era during his childhood but its fair to say he grew up from Normandy to Berlin. As an adult, he was disciplined. He had to be to work that shift and still have any semblance of a normal family life. He mellowed as he got older.

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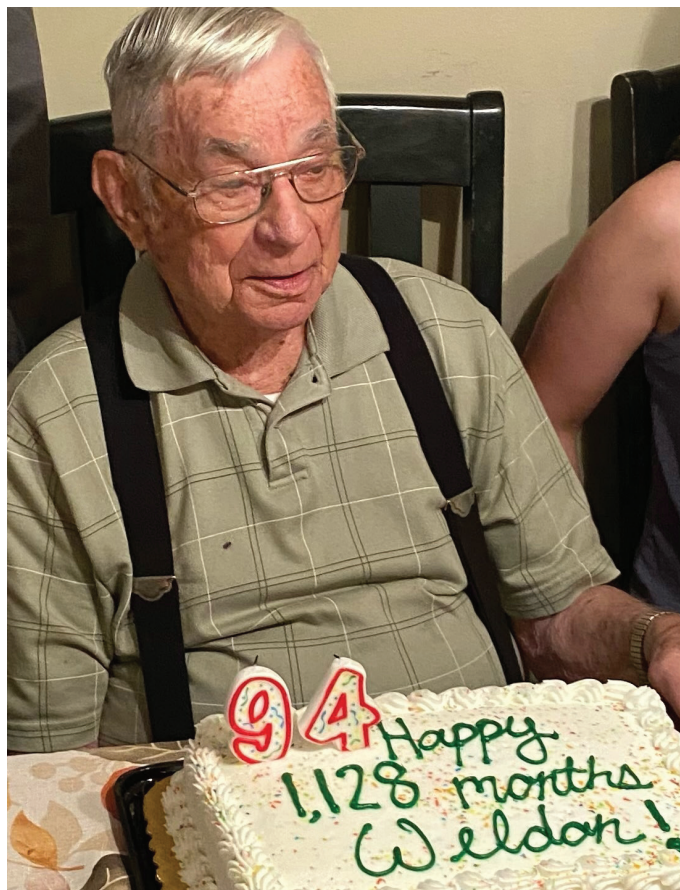
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He was a product of the public schools, whose extracurricular activity was driving a coal delivery truck starting at age 13 (before you needed a driver's license. When they finally passed a law requiring one, the local DMV just handed it to him. It was a small town and everyone knew he'd been one of the few people in town driving for years. If Weldon couldn't drive, no one could.) It's easy to look at his life and think, well that was a different time.

Duty was clearer, less room for selfishness; you did what you were called on to do. Serve. Work. Raise a family. Mind your business. How would he have fared if more of his adult years had been spent today? Today with its uncertainty, isolation, distrust and discord?



Would he have paired off into one of the political camps, watched only one network for his news or only followed Facebook to reinforce what he already believed?

How would he have fared in an age when he might have been forced to change jobs many times to support his family, when those books he read to kids are being reviewed to make sure it has what some group finds to be the appropriate kind of content, when those tried and true family activities and values are falling by the wayside?

We can't know and perhaps don't need to. What we do know is that we are left with an example of service to others, of straightforward dealing and actions that matched beliefs. His is an instructive life for us as we navigate these uncharted waters. Hold on to what matters to you.

Treat folks honestly. Show up even when you're tired and do good work because people are relying on you. Look beyond yourself to make sure you leave it better than you found it, whether it's your country or your community. Stand up when you're needed: Even if it's not your job, it might just be everyone's job.

It seems to me that the crazier things get, the more we need people like Uncle Bud. He may be gone now, but there are plenty of folks who have taken up the mantle. They've learned from the Uncle Buds of the world and are carrying on the work.

They are us; the people who use that touchstone of devotion to ideals to make this life better for others, for the kids in our charge. In our best version of ourselves, we are the ones we've been waiting for. We've watched the greatest, learned from the best and matched that with our own fortitude to face challenges even Uncle Bud would have found daunting. May God bless each of you for that.

Godspeed, Uncle Bud. We'll take it from here.



CHALLENGE SERIES

Dr. Terry Dougherty, Superintendent of Hancock Central and RSA Board of Directors member has written a series of insightful and helpful works. Each one zeroes in on a challenge currently facing our rural districts. Each is well researched and presented in a way designed to provide the most and easiest guidance to districts; in short, to be as helpful as possible in providing the information you need to tackle each topic in your own district. For the next few months, RSA Today will feature a new topic in each edition. We extend our thanks to Terry for providing leadership and guidance in this way.

Building An Excellent Educator Workforce

by Terrance P. Dougherty, Ph.D.

The impact of teachers on students' success makes getting – and keeping – highly effective educators a top concern for schools and districts.

Longstanding teacher shortages, often most acute in high-need fields and high-need urban and rural schools, have grown even more severe post pandemic.



Nearly half of administrators report struggling to hire teachers



Two-thirds of districts report having more teacher vacancies and more difficulty finding teachers to hire



Many remote schools struggle to fill positions in every subject

High-need schools in urban areas also experience above-average attrition rates and a larger share of younger, less experienced teachers than better-resourced schools.

Urban districts also consistently struggle to diversify their teaching workforce to more closely match the demographics of their students

Like pipeline development, teacher retention has become an increasing challenge for schools and districts across the country. Each year, more than 200,000 teachers leave the profession, citing:



INADEQUATE PREPARATION

New teachers with little or no preparation are 2.5 times more likely to leave the classroom after one year compared to their well-prepared peers.



LACK OF SUPPORT

New teachers who do not receive mentoring and other supports leave at more than two times the rate of those who do.



DISSATISFACTION WITH COMPENSATION

Beginning teachers earn about 20% less than individuals with college degrees in other fields, a wage gap that can widen to 30% for mid-career educators.



BETTER CAREER OPPORTUNITIES

More than 1 in 4 teachers who leave say they do so to pursue other career opportunities.



CHALLENGING WORK CONDITIONS

Teachers often cite working conditions, such as the support of their principals and the opportunity to collaborate with colleagues, as the top reason for leaving.



PERSONAL REASONS

More than 1 in 3 teachers who leave cite personal reasons, including pregnancy and childcare, as extremely or very important in their decision.

URGENT NEED TO FIND, SELECT, AND KEEP EXCELLENT EDUCATORS

Creating a stable workforce of great teachers won't be possible within the status quo. This complex challenge requires a multi-faceted solution that balances compensation, rewards, and other extrinsic drivers with intrinsic incentives –satisfying educators' desires for autonomy, mastery, and purpose, and building environments where people feel they belong and want to stay.

STRENGTHENING PATHWAYS TO THE POSITION

There are many things local education agencies, states, and the federal government can do to attract teachers to the role and build a diverse candidate pool.

LEAs:

Strengthening school cultures by providing opportunities for teachers to work and learn from one another, allowing more time for planning, and addressing other teacher-identified concerns.

Increasing recruitment and hiring capacity within central office, forecasting and filling vacancies earlier through early offers, participating in career fairs, establishing employee referral programs, and getting the word out via social and other communication channels.

Targeting fairs at and partnerships with historically black colleges and universities and other institutions with high enrollment rates of college students of color, establishing a special referral program for existing educators of color, as well as early offer options for candidates of color.

Supporting paraeducators, parents, and others in pursuing teaching coursework/licensure – while keeping their day jobs.

Immersing student teachers into the district's new teacher experience, inviting them to professional learning, orientation offerings, providing them with mentors or other new-teacher supports.

Increasing base salaries, compensating teachers more for hard-to-fill or ultra-important roles, or providing stipends, bonuses, childcare, relocation expenses, or other fringe incentives.

Working with community-based organizations and local government to establish programs such as affordable housing or loan repayment options.

STATES

Offering alternative licensing routes to educators from other states or would-be educators from other professions.

Creating information campaigns to draw people into and navigate educator pathways.

Investing in teacher higher education programs, including community college to four-year university pathways or making baccalaureate degrees available at community colleges.

Establishing scholarship or residency programs for students in teacher-preparation programs who commit to teaching in priority schools, communities, or subjects.

Collecting data on working conditions for teachers – and offering guidance on how to improve them.

FEDERAL GOVERNMENT

Reducing or forgiving college debt for educators.

Providing income tax credits.

Making housing subsidies more readily available.

Offering grant or scholarship programs to educators in hard-to-staff regions or subjects.

HIRING THE BEST TEACHERS

While these strategies will boost the supply of teacher candidates, districts need well-oiled hiring systems that reliably result in strong educator placements and address selection bias. Effective hiring systems:

Rely on multiple sources of information collected in multiple ways by multiple people.

Take into account fit factors specific to the candidate, school, and position – and the district's overall strategy.

Recognize that some people are better than hiring than others – and play to people's strengths.

Promote the district's selling points – the interview process works both ways!

Utilize diverse interview teams and a formal process that prompts interviewers to identify and address biases

Use competency-based criteria to assess candidates to ensure evidence-based decisions and minimize bias.

KEEPING GREAT TEACHERS

Keeping talented teachers requires as much attention as getting them in the door. Districts can think about retention as re-recruiting teachers already in their buildings, continuing to demonstrate the value add of your unique culture and offerings, and working to understand and appeal to what matters most to each teacher. Re-recruitment strategies include:

Enabling teacher collaboration to minimize isolation and increase collaboration, including affinity groups for staff from historically marginalized groups.

Increasing teacher compensation and continuing to work with partners to offer incentives like rent and relocation assistance, home buying assistance, etc.

Checking in with educators via conversations or stay surveys to understand their professional goals and help them reach them.

Offering career advancement opportunities that keep teachers in the classroom, like coaching or mentoring others, providing professional development, or leading collaborative work time.

Providing teachers supports like professional learning, coaching, and feedback that help them refine their craft stay motivated in their role.

Investing in induction and mentoring supports for new teachers.

Improving school leadership, which is routinely cited as a reason for staying in – or leaving – a campus or district.

Offering child care to staff.

Listening to what's working – and what's not – for teachers and involving them in addressing school and district challenges.

Working very closely with multiple community stakeholders to identify quality and affordable housing opportunities.



Updates from the Senate Health, Education, Labor and Pensions (HELP) Committee

In recent meetings, the Senate HELP Committee staff has stated that the committee's primary priorities will focus on: supporting the education workforce, supporting student wellbeing, and an overall commitment to mental health and bolstering community based organizations that provide wrap-around services for schools. The HELP Committee plans to engage the US Department of Education to ensure grant applications are available sooner (creating longer submission deadlines) and that the department is supporting increased levels of technical assistance to boost rural participation in the grant process.

Also notable, the first hearings of the HELP Committee will be on the topic of teacher salary. Both the House and Senate have bills that support a minimum of \$60,000 for teacher's salaries. Representatives are taking aim at teacher pay with the intent that it will address teacher shortages, recruitment and retention issues, and increase the resources available for the development of teacher pipeline programs. The National Rural Education Advocacy Consortium (NREAC) will continue to monitor these bills closely and work with staff to ensure the language works for rural schools and communities.



Child Nutrition Revisions

The USDA has recently released its new proposal for nutritional standards.

The recommendations include new rules on added sugars standards for the school lunch and breakfast programs, specifically targeting high sugar yogurts, cereal, and flavored milk.

It also will reduce limits on weekly sodium, and address long term milk and whole grain standards.

This new guidance is based on the Dietary Guidelines for Americans 2020-2025 and feedback the USDA received from child nutrition program stakeholders.

The new standards will also strengthen the Buy American provision in the school meal programs and make several corrections to the nutrition program regulations. The USDA is expected to issue a final rule in time for the 2024-25 school year. We encourage District Leaders and Food Service Directors to learn more about the proposed changes and leave comments prior to April 10, 2023 at: <https://www.regulations.gov/>

Introducing Norb Fuest, Interim RSA Board Chair



As the interim Chair for the Rural Schools Association, I would like to take the opportunity to introduce myself. My name is Norb Fuest and I have been a huge supporter of the Rural Schools Association for a number of years being on two local school boards.

I was on the Attica School Board for 18 years and am in my 10th year on the Genesee Valley BOCES Board where I am currently presiding as President. I am also a board member of the Genesee Valley School Boards Association.

I have been in Human Resource Management for 50 years and am currently semi-retired performing consulting work for many small businesses in Western NY. I have always felt it was essential to have dialogue between the Education and the Business Communities and helped developed a Business/Education organization in our area forty years ago that continues to stay a vital role in the community.

I have also been part of the GLOW Workforce Development Board where I currently serve as Chair of that board and have also been part of the NYS Workforce Investment Board (SWIB) for a number of years. In addition, I also serve on the Wyoming County Chamber and the Genesee Community College Foundation.

The Rural Schools Association has a diverse veteran board who comprehend the challenges that rural districts face. We are very fortunate to have a competent Executive Director and outstanding staff that are aware of these challenges and the steps needed to overcome them.





An Invitation to Apply For the Position of Superintendent



From the Board of Education

The Board of Education of the Schroon Lake Central School District is seeking an exceptional educational leader to fill the position of Superintendent of Schools. The successful candidate will be committed to maintaining a climate of excellence for students, faculty, staff and the Schroon Lake community.

The Board of Education plans to offer a minimum salary of \$130,000 to one that is regionally competitive, based on experience and training, with a competitive benefits package. The successful candidate will be offered a three-year contract with an annual performance review.

Jared Whitley
President

Susan Repko
Vice President

Bruce Murdock

Codie Aiken

Valerie Leblanc



Our Community

The Schroon Lake Central School District is located in Essex County in New York State. The district is located within the Adirondack Park.

The area serves as a vacation spot during all four seasons, boasting of superb camping, hiking, fishing, hunting and boating opportunities.

There are ample employment opportunities within the area for our community members. They include retail, construction, logging, a local paper mill, and non-profit organizations such as the Seagle Music Colony.

Schroon Lake Central School serves as the social center of our town. Sporting events, plays, and concerts are well-attended by parents and residents. The school enjoys a strong partnership with the community.

Organizations such as the Lions Club, Fish and Game Club, Seagle Music Colony, Word of Life, North Hudson Schroon Lake Historical Society, Chamber of Commerce, and local businesses and churches, are strong supporters of our school. As community partners, they add to the success of our students.



District Profile

Student enrollment at SLCS is approximately 240 students in grades pre-K through 12. The number of students per grade typically ranges from 15 to 18 students. Schroon Lake employs approximately 30 teachers and 32 support staff members.

The 2022-2023 voter-approved operating budget for the district is \$8,814,890. The tax rate for the three towns in the district (Schroon Lake, Chestertown, and North Hudson) is just under \$8 per one thousand dollars of property value. The District's budget is approximately 13% dependent on revenues from the state and 87% dependent on the tax levy.

Candidate Profile

The Schroon Lake CSD Board of Education is seeking a candidate who has a range of experiences, skills, and competencies in working with boards of education, faculty, staff, community, parents, and students.

The new Superintendent should:

- ✿ Have the ability to develop successful working relationships with school staff, students, parents, community, and the Board of Education.
- ✿ Be an instructional leader with prior teaching, administration, and financial management experience.
- ✿ Have effective leadership skills that include strong integrity, openness to innovation, and a drive for continuous improvement.
- ✿ Be skilled in identifying and analyzing problems, prioritizing tasks, developing solutions and leveraging resources.
- ✿ Possess the ability to build school-community partnerships.
- ✿ Have high expectations for academic achievement of our students.
- ✿ Build instructional capacity of staff to achieve excellence for all students.
- ✿ Demonstrate exceptional writing and speaking skills.
- ✿ Possess solid knowledge of school finance, budget building, grant and funding sources, and the ability to make sound financial decisions.
- ✿ Be able to relate and interact with our rural community to understand its uniqueness and to actively enhance the community's commitment to education.
- ✿ Have the ability to multi-task and delegate tasks based on personal strengths and weaknesses.
- ✿ Possess integrity, moral judgement, honesty, transparency, and empathy.
- ✿ Be compassionate to the social-emotional needs of students
- ✿ Strong communicator to all stakeholders utilizing social media and print publications.
- ✿ Focus on the needs of children and enjoys interacting with them.

Applications

Candidates must submit the following:

- ✿ Letter of interest, current resume, completed application
- ✿ Official college transcripts
- ✿ College placement file and/or three current letters of recommendation
- ✿ Copy of NYS School District Administrator (SDA) or School District Leader/School Building Leader (SDL/SBL) Certificate

Selection Process

The Schroon Lake Central School District is being assisted by Dr. Mark Davey District Superintendent of CEWW BOCES, in the selection process. All inquiries should be submitted to:

Dr. Mark Davey, District Superintendent
CEWW BOCES

P.O. Box 455

Plattsburgh, NY 12901

jolicoeur_julie@cves.org

Academic & Program Highlights

- ✿ Schroon Lake Central provides a comprehensive academic and extracurricular program for all students.
- ✿ We offer a wide range of college dual enrollment classes through local colleges including North Country Community College, SUNY Adirondack, and SUNY Albany. Motivated students can leave SLCS with in excess of 40 college credits in a variety of subject areas.
- ✿ SLCS also has a strong relationship with CVTEC, the vocational program operated through the CVES BOCES. Many SLCS students learn important hands-on skills and embark on technical careers after attending CVTEC.
- ✿ Our caring and accomplished faculty and staff are passionate about meeting the needs of all students and the low student to teacher ratio helps ensure that students don't fall through the cracks. Early intervention services and academic support are provided to all who need it. Success at SLCS is available to all students.
- ✿ We also believe that it is important to educate the whole child. For that reason, we offer a large number of extracurricular and athletic programs to our students including basketball, soccer, baseball, softball, tennis, golf, cheering, archery, and trap shooting. Each spring we perform outstanding musical theatre productions. Our videography club creates periodic news programs and live streams our school events. We have a high quality music program that includes concert bands, jazz bands, and choral presentations and participates in local music festivals. Our art program produces amazing works each year for the district wide art show.
- ✿ Students graduating from SLCS leave with the skills and confidence necessary to continue their education in college or to attend a technical school.



Timeline

Application Deadline: March 1, 2023

Candidate selection: March 15, 2023

Initial Interviews: April 3 - 4, 2023

Second Round Interviews: April 10 -11, 2023

Third Round/Site Visit: April 17 - 19, 2023

Appointment Anticipated: April 19 - 26, 2023

Desired Start Date: on or before July 1, 2023

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