RSA TODAY

NEWS FOR NEW YORK STATE'S RURAL SCHOOLS

RURAL SCHOOLS ASSOCIATION OF NEW YORK STATE

NOVEMBER 2026



Beyond the Challenges: Imagining What's Possible Together

by Dr. Tarkan Ceng; RSA Board Chair; Superintendent, Jefferson Central School District + South Kortright Central School District



As we move further into the school year, rural schools across New York State continue to navigate a familiar challenge: balancing the needs and aspirations of our students and communities with the realities of limited resources and an uncertain future.

From enrollment trends and fiscal pressures to staffing challenges and opportunities for regional collaboration, the decisions before us are rarely simple. Yet, if there is one thing rural schools have demonstrated time and again, it is that our strength is not defined by our size or our resources, but by our relationships, resilience, and willingness to work together.

Our rural schools are more than places of learning. They are sources of community pride, connection, and possibility. Their success depends not on any one individual or group, but on the collective efforts of Boards of Education, administrators, teachers, staff, families, and community members who care deeply about the future of our children.

Uncertainty can make us cautious, but it can also invite us to rethink what is possible. Perhaps the greatest challenge before us is not simply determining what we can afford to preserve, but having the courage to imagine what we can create together.

As we approach another season of planning, budgeting, and difficult conversations, I encourage all of us to remain focused on possibilities rather than limitations. We may not always agree on the path forward, but by asking the right questions, listening thoughtfully, and remaining united in our commitment to students, we can move forward with purpose.

The future of rural education will not be defined solely by the challenges we face, but by the choices we make and the willingness to face those challenges together.

Thank you for the many ways you support our students, schools, and communities. Keep asking questions, sharing ideas, and believing in what is possible.



More than Just a Radio Station: Ellenville's WELV-LP Gives Students a Voice and Helps Keep the Community Connected

Not many school districts can say they operate their own radio station, but the Ellenville Central School District (ECSD) is one of them! Broadcasting 24 hours a day, seven days a week, WELV-LP is much more than a traditional school media program. It's a fully functioning community radio station that gives students hands-on broadcasting experience while keeping local residents connected to their schools and community.

For Ellenville, WELV-LP has been part of the District's identity for more than two decades, growing from a student-driven television and media initiative into a distinctive program that continues to evolve and provide valuable opportunities for students.

A History of Innovation

WELV-LP's roots date back to 1992, when the District established its Educational Access Television Studio under the guidance of then-English teacher Dennis Warner. What began as an after-school club soon expanded into a variety of creative programs, including community interviews, storytelling for children, and music shows.

In 1997, studio staff began playing music on the District's television channel when regular programming was not airing, laying the groundwork for Radio Ellenville. When the Federal Communications Commission introduced Low Power FM licensing in 2000, the District seized the opportunity to establish its own radio station.

With support from the Board of Education and the efforts of Warner, Ellenville alumnus Eric Aiese, and other dedicated individuals, WELV-LP received its construction permit in 2003 and officially began broadcasting in 2005. Aiese served as the station's first Radio Operations Manager. He was followed by Tim Lukaszewski, who assumed the role of TV and Radio Coordinator, and Alan Buckler, the current Radio Operations Manager.

One of the station's most beloved programs was "Dennis in the Morning," which debuted in 2006 and featured Warner, then retired, alongside students. The show earned regional recognition and became a local favorite. Following Warner's passing in 2013, his legacy continued through the station's programming. Today, "The Music Playlists of Dennis Warner" can still be heard every weekday from 10 AM to noon.

Giving Students a Voice

Student involvement remains at the heart of WELV-LP. Broadcasting from its studio in the Junior/Senior High School, the station features an eclectic mix of music, local news, community interviews, school announcements, and coverage of District events.

Students have opportunities to participate in nearly every aspect of broadcasting, from researching and reporting stories to writing scripts, conducting interviews, compiling playlists, and announcing events.

- continued on next page -

- continued from previous page -

"These experiences help students develop communication and writing skills, explore media production, and build confidence in sharing their voices with an audience," said Buckler.

Even the youngest voices have a place on the airwaves through the Elementary School News Crew. Working with School Librarian Sarah Mitchell, students develop newspaper articles and then select stories to record at the High School studios, complete with music to accompany their segments. The group typically produces two to three radio episodes each year, which air on Saturdays at 5 PM.

Keeping the Community Connected

Although WELV-LP operates out of the High School, its reach extends beyond the school building. The District estimates that its signal covers approximately 95 percent of the school district's geographic area, reaching homes, businesses, and workplaces throughout the community.

Since introducing online streaming in 2016, WELV-LP has also connected listeners well beyond Ellenville, allowing alumni, former residents, and others to stay connected to the community from virtually anywhere.

The station continues to expand programming to serve District families. One newer addition, "The Ellenville Family Connection," is hosted by Director of Pupil Personnel Services, Jessica Mataraza, and Assistant Director of Special Education, Kristen Rabadi. The show features conversations, resources, and information designed to strengthen connections between schools and families.

"By introducing listeners to the people who make the District work and highlighting the resources available to families, the show reinforces an important message: families are partners in education, and support is always available," Buckler added.

More Than Just a Radio Station

For the ECSD, WELV-LP is an investment in student learning, community engagement, and the power of giving young people a platform to share their voices.

It's a distinctive part of what makes the school district special—and a reminder that sometimes, the most meaningful educational opportunities come from thinking beyond the traditional classroom.



Where in the World is RSA?

by Heather Zellers; RSA Executive Director



- **San Antonio, Texas**
- **Buffalo, New York**
- **Silver Creek, New York**
- **Angola, New York**
- **Watertown, New York**
- **Newark, New York**
- **Lake Luzerne, New York**
- **Lenox, Massachusetts**

Every visit offers another opportunity for RSA to understand what matters most to our members. This month, our travels brought us into classrooms, student leadership experiences, regional conversations, and national gatherings. We saw the creativity that strengthens our schools and listened to the challenges that district leaders and their teams are facing. Learning from our membership

Dr. Katie Ralston, Superintendent at Silver Creek CSD welcomed me for a tour that offered much more than a look at their facilities. In each thoughtfully crafted classroom, I saw the staff helping students feel valued and ready to learn. Their passion for students and high quality instruction was evident throughout the visit. I especially enjoyed learning about the student-run café, getting a sneak peak at the upcoming menu and hearing from both staff and students about the impact of the sensory spaces throughout the district.

A visit and conversation with the Erie 2 BOCES CSOs provided an opportunity to hear how district leaders are approaching NY Inspires, where they see possibilities for working together, and what barriers could stand in the way. These conversations help RSA understand where our support can make a difference as districts move from ideas toward implementation. Thank you District Superintendent/CEO, David O'Rourke, Ph.D. and Deputy Superintendent, Bryna Moritz for welcoming RSA to the table.

At the Wayne Finger Lakes BOCES, I had the pleasure of supporting the WFL Student Board Member Academy. Thank you to Dr. Michelle Reed for welcoming me into this work and giving me time with students, which is one of my favorite parts of this role. Through conversations about core values and their projects, we explored how understanding what matters to us can help guide where we put our energy. Spending the morning with board leadership, superintendents and student board members reinforced my belief that amazing work is happening in rural districts to support leadership development for future generations.

RSA joined Robb Garrand, superintendent at Northeastern Clinton, and Amy Campbell of CVES BOCES to experience the Cougar Outdoor Leadership Academy at Hidden Lake Girl Scout Camp. Students led empathy walks and circle discussions, reflected on those conversations, and participated in STEM activities. Their ability to lead with care and build connections was impressive. I left feeling energized by professional learning led by the students and by the possibilities those experiences create for their entire school community. I encourage RSA members to reach out to Robb Garrand to learn more about their student leadership development programs

Expanding Possibilities Through Partnership

A College Board gathering in Lenox, MA, brought RSA together with Northeastern partners to discuss expanding opportunities for rural students. Conversations with teachers and district leaders from Connecticut, New Hampshire, and Vermont offered fresh perspectives while reinforcing the good work already happening in New York.

- continued on next page -

- continued from previous page -

Hearing how others approach shared challenges helps us ask new questions about what might be possible in our own communities. I also want to thank NY SED for attending the event and for their continued partnership and willingness to work toward solutions that reflect the needs of rural students.

Bringing Local Context into Legislative Priorities
Our advocacy grows from these connections. Listening to the people responsible for leading schools and managing resources helps RSA bring specific needs and practical concerns into state and federal conversations.

RSA attended the National Forum to Advance Rural Education (NFARE) in San Antonio, and participated in the legislative work of the National Rural Education Association (NREA). As the co-chair of NREA's Legislative Committee, I presented alongside NREA Executive Director, Dr. Melissa Sadorf to state affiliates and helped lead the National Policy Forum plenary session. We want to give special thanks to ThoughtExchange for helping make the Policy Forum a success.

Members identified five priorities ahead of the gathering: rural school funding, educator recruitment and retention, infrastructure and connectivity, higher education access, and special education funding. We explored funding and workforce challenges in greater depth during the forum. NREA will continue working with state affiliates and partner organizations over the coming month to develop its legislative priorities. RSA is proud to collaborate with our national and state partners.

Closer to home, a conversation with the Northern Chapter of ASBO brought the perspective of school business officials into focus. We discussed transportation and health insurance pressures, and the additional needs of expanding UPK. Members also raised concerns about building capacity and outdated building aid calculations, along with business official turnover, recruitment, the loss of institutional knowledge, reporting requirements, and repeated audits. Thank you to Deputy Superintendent/DPO Michelle Carpenter for inviting RSA into your regional conversation.

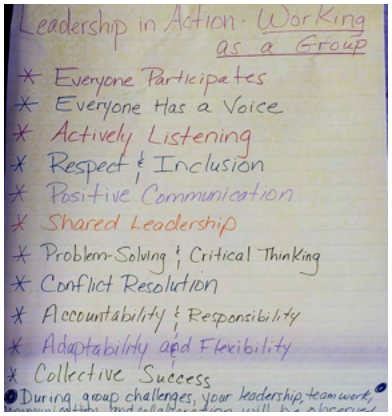
These details matter as RSA develops advocacy priorities that reflect the daily realities of operating rural schools. **RSA membership is a district membership, and we want every part of your team to feel supported by RSA.**

Thank you for welcoming us, sharing your experiences, and helping connect local needs to our collective advocacy. Your perspectives help us carry a clearer and stronger message on behalf of rural students and communities.

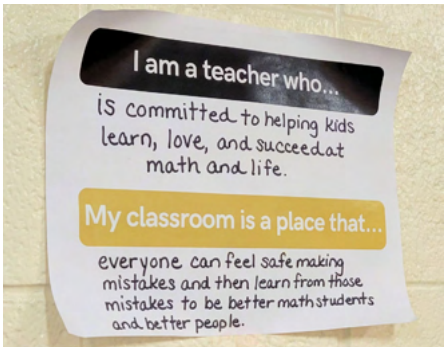
Where will RSA be next? We hope it's somewhere near you!













An Introduction to Western Governors University

Every rural district knows the challenge: great students, dedicated staff, and too few ways for local talent to earn a degree, a license, or an advanced credential without leaving home. Western Governors University (WGU) was built to close that gap, and I am looking forward to sharing how at the Rural School Association winter conference in Saratoga Springs this December.

What WGU Is

WGU is a nonprofit, online university founded in 1997 by 19 U.S. governors, with a mission of "changing lives for the better by creating pathways to opportunity." Its programs are competency-based: students advance by demonstrating what they know and can do, not by logging seat time, so working adults can move faster through material they already know and take more time where they need it.

Tuition is a flat rate charged once per six-month term, and students can complete as many courses as they are able in that term. WGU offers degrees through four schools: Business, Education, Technology, and the Leavitt School of Health. The university is accredited by the Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities.

Supporting Rural Educators and Communities

WGU's Teachers College offers more than 30 undergraduate and graduate programs, including licensure pathways and advanced degrees for working educators.

According to WGU, its educator programs have been continuously accredited since 2006 by CAEP and AAQEP, and it partners with more than 5,000 school districts nationwide for student teaching and clinical placements, usually close to where candidates live. The model fits "grow your own" strategies. Paraprofessionals, long-term substitutes, and other district staff can pursue a degree while continuing to work and live in their communities.

Scholarships and financial aid options are available, and WGU can help you find what fits your situation. In September 2026, WGU's School of Education announced a partnership with the National Rural Education Association (NREA) that offers educators and school staff from rural districts a 5% tuition discount, along with scholarship opportunities and help connecting rural districts with WGU students. Check with your HR office to confirm your benefits.

"The challenge of the nationwide teacher shortage is especially complex in rural communities," said Dr. Melissa Sadorf, NREA Executive Director.

"By partnering with WGU, we are opening up flexible, accessible pathways that empower local talent to earn their degrees and certifications without leaving home. This keeps passionate educators in the communities that need them most."

Certification rules are set by the state, so districts and candidates should confirm New York State Education Department requirements for any program they are considering. I am glad to walk through them in person.

Meet Me in Saratoga Springs

I will be attending the Rural School Association winter conference in Saratoga Springs this December. I am happy to talk about teacher pipelines, advanced credentials for your staff, and partnership options for your district.

Bring your toughest staffing question; I would like to hear what your district needs most. I can also be reached at scott.read@wgu.edu.

Have any questions about WGU's partnership with the National Rural Education Association? Learn more on the WGU and NREA partnership page.

I look forward to working with rural New York schools to build pathways that keep talent at home.

Resources:

WGU: About

WGU Teachers College

WGU and NREA rural teacher pipeline partnership

WGU and NREA partnership page

(Figures are WGU's own, as published on those pages)

CA BOCES Honors Community Impact Through Inaugural CTE Partnership Awards

CA BOCES recognized Mike Giardini and Kinley Contractors LLC for their contributions to Career and Technical Education (CTE) programs during the Greater Olean Area Chamber of Commerce's Business After Hours event.

Giardini received a certificate recognizing his outstanding contributions as the 2026-2027 Advisory Partner of the Year in Career and Technical Education Programs, while Kinley Contractors LLC, received the CA BOCES 2026-2027 Advisory Partner of the Year in Career and Technical Education Programs award.

The recognitions highlight the importance of partnerships between education and industry in providing authentic work-based learning opportunities for students. At CA BOCES, CTE students are challenged to complete at least 54 hours of authentic work-based learning experiences, made possible through the support and involvement of regional businesses and industry professionals.

"Mike consistently advocates for our students and programs, bringing valuable industry knowledge to conversations about the future of construction education," said Christopher Gagliardo, Assistant Superintendent of CTE Programs at CA BOCES. "Kinley Contractors LLC plays an equally important role by supporting Mike's involvement and empowering him to share his expertise with our students."

As CA BOCES' direct industry contact and representative at the advisory table, Mike Giardini consistently advocates for students and programs, helping ensure that CTE offerings align with industry needs. Kinley Contractors LLC supports Mike's efforts and demonstrates the company's



commitment to career and technical education, student success and workforce development.
The inaugural award celebrates the impact of existing industry partnerships while encouraging more businesses to get involved in Career and Technical Education.

By connecting students with industry professionals and real-world career experiences, CA BOCES and its partners are helping strengthen the regional workforce and local communities. As the regional leader in education services, CA BOCES offers state-of-the-art programs for learners of all ages and abilities, as well as cost-effective shared services for 22 component school districts.

CA BOCES empowers students to achieve their maximum potential through a wide variety of innovative programs and support, including special education, career and technical education, adult and continuing education, technology support and instructional support services.

Visit www.caboces.org to learn more.



Legislative Watch

by Heather Zellers; RSA Executive Director

RSA continues to ask for support with implementation of NY Inspires

RSA recognizes that our districts need the capacity to offer meaningful pathways and assessments. There are many remaining unanswered questions and we will work with the members of the Educational Conference Board (ECB) and NYSED to provide answers. RSA is seeking dedicated implementation funding, shared BOCES support, professional learning time and access to technical assistance.

While Commissioner Rosa and SED have called for a substantial state investment to implement the new graduation requirements, RSA continues to encourage SED, the legislature and Governor Hochul to include support for rural districts and our unique challenges.

The state's revenue outlook is stronger than projected, but carries uncertainty ahead.

The Comptroller's November report projects state tax-revenue growth of 10.6% in the current fiscal year, slowing to 1.8% next year. It identifies the uncertainty associated with federal policy, financial markets, inflation and economic conditions. The Assembly also noted pressures from Medicaid in their report. We remain cautious because these are forecasts and not guaranteed collections or revenues for the state.

While both the Senate and Assembly are reporting assumptions that would note a growth in school aid for 2027-2028 school year, we know this does not always translate into the enacted budget. Programs will still be vying for funding and resources in the next budget cycle. Even if NY has statewide increases in the education budget, it alone will not predict whether rural districts can sustain staffing, transportation, special education and expanded learning opportunities.

RSA will be working with our members to connect funding requests to specific services and student opportunities by collecting information and narratives on costs from districts that include operations, programming, staffing, and more.

Health insurance costs are emerging as a shared advocacy priority across NY.

While RSA is working with our partner associations to address teacher certification, sustainable funding for evidence-based literacy instruction, special education services, and safeguards on AI, rising health insurance costs is a top concern raised by our members. Our districts and BOCES need immediate relief from rising health insurance costs.

RSA remains committed to helping address health care for our districts by working in collaboration across sectors to address each part of our problem: reducing insurance costs, helping districts manage unpredictable expenses and improving access to care. RSA understands that rising healthcare costs affect both sides of rural education, the resources schools have, and the care students, staff and families can actually access. We need district examples showing premium increases, their share of your budget growth, and the resulting program tradeoffs to share a clear picture of the impact.

The federal scholarship tax-credit program.

Decisions about the federal scholarship tax-credit program continue to evolve. Recent changes in gubernatorial leadership have raised questions about whether states will finalize participation. Governor Hochul has announced her intention for NY to participate in 2027. However, as of November 13th, NY was not included on the IRS's list of states that have elected to participate. Participation requires state action and certification of eligible scholarship-granting organizations.

The Governor's decision also faces legislative scrutiny. Senator John Liu has introduced a bill S10734, which would give the Board of Regents authority over New York's participation and approval of scholarship-granting organizations beginning in 2028. The bill is currently in the Senate Rules Committee. RSA remains concerned about the implications for public education funding and equitable access, particularly in our rural communities. Our commitment is to strong investments in public education that reaches every student.

- continued on next page -

- continued from previous page -

At the same time, we recognize the responsibility district leaders carry to explore opportunities for their students. As New York's implementation takes shape, RSA will highlight solutions districts are developing, share emerging partnerships and help members understand potential pathways for public school students to benefit.

Our opposition to the policy does not lessen our commitment to supporting our members. We will continue advocating for rural public schools while helping districts navigate the decisions ahead. If your district is developing an approach or partnership, we welcome the opportunity to learn from your work and connect you with others.

Regents adopted new literacy requirements for teacher preparation programs.

The RSA board consists of a broad spectrum of organizations that support rural communities. Higher education has two seats on our Board of Directors and they bring a rich perspective to our conversations and we in turn help them understand the rural P-12 landscape with greater clarity.

The Regents adopted amendments aligning teacher preparation programs with the science-of-reading framework. They include stronger preparation in evidence-based literacy instruction, dyslexia and dysgraphia, and practical application during field experiences and student teaching. While this shift strengthens the future teacher pipeline, it reinforces the need for accessible professional development for educators already serving rural schools. RSA will continue to work with SED, teacher prep programs, and districts to ensure our staff have access to the resources they need.

Please share specific district information, narratives and examples with Heather Zellers at hzellers@rsany.org. This information will help direct our legislative efforts on behalf of rural schools.



Free "Level All" Webinar Series Dates Announced



Through Level All's partnership with the National Rural Education Association (NREA), its resources are completely free for schools and districts across New York State.

To provide districts with insight on how Level All's resources can help students prepare for life after high school, a calendar of free 30-minute webinars has been created.

Through Level All, students can:

- Explore career pathways across industries, including trades, apprenticeships, and careers requiring college degrees
- Understand next steps by learning about the education, training, and skills different careers require
- Build career readiness skills through resources on resumes, interviews, communication, and more

Educators also have access to ready-to-use lessons and tools to support students as they explore their options. You can also check out this video for a full overview of Level All. A series of free 30-minute webinars are now available to show schools and districts how they can put these resources to use.

"Collaborating with Level All marks an important step forward for our rural school communities," said Dr. Melissa Sadorf, Executive Director of NREA." By bringing together our nationwide network and Level All's college, career, and life-readiness tools, we can expand access to practical resources that help rural educators and learners plan for the future."

To learn about the platform, see it in action, and explore how it could support their communities, please visit:

Fall Webinar Series

Level All / NREA Member Resource Hub

HUNGER SOLUTIONS NEW YORK
UNITING POLICIES AND PROGRAMS TO END HUNGER

SUMMER EBT SURVEY: We want to hear from you!

Hunger Solutions New York's 12-minute survey is intended to gauge school staff's awareness and understanding of Summer EBT, as well as the support you need to better connect students with the program. We will use the survey results to create outreach resources and advocate for improvements to Summer EBT.

The first 250 respondents will receive an optional $10 Amazon gift card for participating. Thank you for supporting our efforts to connect more students with critical nutrition programs!

Please note: This survey is only for school staff who interact with Summer EBT.

CLICK HERE TO PARTICIPATE IN THE SURVEY!

Celebrating Mitch St. Pierre - A Champion for Rural Schools



RSA is proud to celebrate Michael "Mitch" St. Pierre, Crown Point CSD Board of Education president, CVES BOCES Board President and longtime RSA supporter, on receiving NYSSBA's Everett R. Dyer Award for Distinguished School Board Service. This recognition is the highest school board honor and celebrates exceptional service to public education and we cannot think of anyone more deserving.

For 30 years, including more than 20 as board president, Mitch has dedicated his time, energy, and leadership to Crown Point's students and community. From helping secure the district's first computer through a grant in 1997, to supporting educational opportunities and guiding the district through budget challenges and facility improvements, his service reflects a steadfast belief in what rural schools and their students can achieve.

For those of us at RSA, there is another familiar reflection of that commitment: Mitch proudly wearing his RSA pin at all events. That small detail means a great deal to us. It is a visible reminder of his enduring support for our association and the rural schools we serve together. We deeply appreciate his leadership and the passion he brings to this work.

Mitch's example reminds us that rural leadership is built through relationships and sustained commitment. It means showing up, knowing your community, and navigating difficult decisions with students always at the center. His decades of volunteer service embody the difference one dedicated leader can make.

Thank you to NYSSBA for recognizing Mitch and uplifting the important work of rural school leaders. We are delighted to join the Crown Point community and CVES BOCES region in celebrating this well-deserved honor.

Congratulations, Mitch, and thank you for being such a committed champion for rural students, we are grateful to have you in the RSA family!



Building Skills, Building Futures: BOCES and SUNY Morrisville Join Forces

Madison-Oneida BOCES CTE Carpentry students are making great use of their class location at SUNY Morrisville by teaming up with the college's Residential Construction program for a joint project.

The CTE students are working to frame a row of model apartments from the ground up, building floors and walls in their lab space. The college students have intermittently come in to help, and when the framing is complete, they will take over to install electrical and plumbing in the units.

Teacher Griffin Kleps said a real-world project like this is a great experience for the students – especially the opportunity to work alongside college students.

"It shows our students what's possible, what can come next if they want to go into this field, and what it's like on a work site," he said. "It's been a good partnership between BOCES and the college."

MOBOCES has had a two-year Carpentry program for juniors and seniors on its main campus in Verona for decades, and it operates at capacity most years due to a strong demand for skilled trades education.

In September 2025, MOBOCES opened a satellite location for a second Carpentry program on the SUNY Morrisville campus, both to add seats for students on the waiting list and to offer programming closer to districts in the southern part of the service region. That program has its own classroom and lab at the college and provides unique learning opportunities for both the high school and college students.



The SUNY Morrisville partnership has been so successful that is expanding to other CTE programs: seniors in a new Welding program take their classes there and our Livestock Management and Agriculture program now utilizes the college's state-of-the-art dairy facilities as part of its curriculum.













Join us for our "A Season to Thrive" Spring Conference

The Rural Schools Association is excited to announce our 2027 Spring Conference, "A Season to Thrive", which will be held at The Lake House in Canandaigua, NY from April 29-30, 2027.

Strong rural schools evolve from the care we provide for our students, our staff, and one another. RSA and WFL BOCES invite proposals that help district leaders turn a focus on care into practical decisions, sustainable services, and new opportunities for their communities.

This spring we will explore the people, partnerships, and systems that help rural schools thrive. We are seeking sessions that connect health and wellness with staffing, budgeting, regional collaboration, and meaningful opportunities for students. We also welcome complementary proposals that focus on student safety, coordinated supports, and strengthen systems focused on prevention.

We are seeking applications from school districts and/or BOCES districts that have any unique and successful programs currently in operation that include but are not limited to the following strands:

– Expanding access to health, mental health, and related services
– Supporting staff wellness and leading through change
– Sustaining services and budget decisions
– Growing capacity through regional collaboration and NY Inspires
– Building workforce and apprenticeship pathways

You can learn more and read the full proposal description by visiting https://rsany.org/2027-spring-conference/.



Next Steps Webinars

NEW DATE Our fall session has moved to **Tuesday, December 8**. Same time, same lineup. If October 14 is on your calendar, that's the one to change.

FREE · ONLINE · PARENTS & STUDENTS

Do you know every option after high school?



OPENING KEYNOTE

Kayleen McCabe

Licensed general contractor, 20+ years on job sites, five seasons hosting Rescue Renovation.

Ninety minutes with the people who do the work. Kayleen opens with a 20-minute keynote, then you meet local industry professionals in our **virtual breakout rooms** and ask them anything — what it pays, how you get in, what the first year is really like.

PATHS WE COVER

STRAIGHT TO WORK
Employers hiring now and training on the job.

APPRENTICE-SHIPS
Earn a wage from day one. Finish without debt.

TECHNICAL COLLEGE
Tuition-free programs and job placement.

TRADE SCHOOLS
Focused programs measured in weeks, not years.

MILITARY
Training, benefits, and the careers that follow.

2026–2027 SERIES

TUESDAY

Dec 8, 2026 NEW DATE

Then Tuesday, **Mar 16, 2027**

12–1:30 PM EST

FREE TO ATTEND

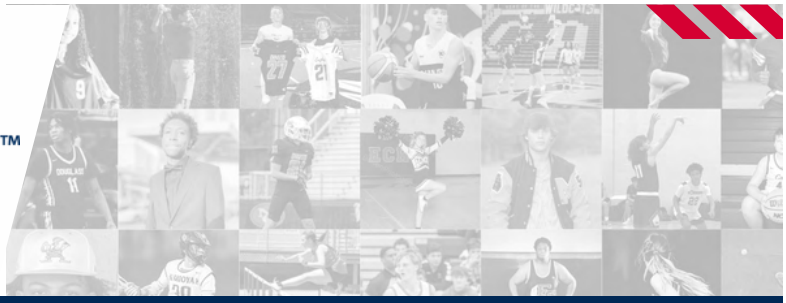
Noon works because everybody eats. Join from your desk, or **host it on a classroom screen** during lunch — nobody has to take time off to be there.

Register now

WWW.NEXTSTEPSWEBINARS.ORG

POSITIVE ATHLETE™

NEW YORK



RECOGNIZE, EMPOWER, AND CELEBRATE HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT ATHLETES

Positive Athlete is dedicated to recognizing and empowering high-character high school student-athletes for their off-the-field impact. We celebrate those who have overcome adversity, given back to their schools or communities in significant ways, or those that have an infectious positive attitude that makes everyone around them a better person.

MORE THAN A RECOGNITION PROGRAM. WE HELP PREPARE ATHLETES FOR LIFE.

Every nomination unlocks the chance for **awards, college scholarship opportunities** as well as every nominee receives free lifetime access to leadership development, character education and career readiness resources to help prepare these young leaders for success in life beyond sports.

THE NOMINATION PROCESS

- **FREE & Easy:** Nominations take just 5 minutes to complete and it is free to participate.
- **Awards & Scholarships Available:** We will be giving out awards and college scholarship opportunities throughout Pennsylvania and the Northeast region.
- **Inclusive Recognition:** Any student-athlete playing any sport in grades 9–12 can be nominated. Multiple student-athletes from the same school or team can be nominated.
- **Meaningful Impact:** Celebrate student-athletes who exemplify high character, leadership, perseverance both on and off the field.
- **FREE Resources for Life:** Every nominee gains free lifetime access to leadership curriculum, life-skills content, networking opportunities and more.
- **Trusted Nominators:** Anyone over the age of 18 can nominate a student-athlete, including administrators, coaches, counselors, teachers, parents, etc...
- **Coaches & Athletic Directors:** Special recognition for coaches and athletic directors exemplifying our core values

NOMINATE TODAY!

SCAN THIS QR CODE

HOW DO THEY OPERATE?

OPTIMISTIC
PUTS TEAM FIRST
ENCOURAGING
RESPECTFUL
ADMITS IMPERFECTIONS
TRUE HEART FOR OTHERS
EMBRACES SERVICE

JOBRIEN@POSITIVEATHLETE.OR
(203) 470 - 4140

www.positiveathlete.org
@positiveathnortheast
@positiveathnortheast

WSWHE BOCES · A FULL-DAY WORKSHOP

Building a Literacy Community

Families, screens, and the early years

Tuesday, January 19, 2027 · 8:30 a.m.–2:30 p.m.



When a parent asks what to do at home, most of us say *"read every night"* and stop. Spend a day rethinking that answer.

- **Coach families, don't just encourage them.** What the research says about the one adult we have never coached: the parent.
- **Not all screen time is the same.** Which tools, not how many minutes, and where digital citizenship begins for a four-year-old.
- **Become the parents for an hour.** Experience a playful literacy workshop from the inside, then unpack why every move mattered.
- **Build your district's literacy coalition.** Connect home, school, and library to your Portrait of a Graduate, and leave with a first draft.

Who should attend: UPK and early elementary teachers, paraprofessionals, ed tech, curriculum and literacy coaches, school library media specialists, principals, and family engagement staff. Birth through grade 3.

Come as a district team.

Led by Laurie Guyon and the WSWHE BOCES team, with Marci Houseman, founder of **rinnalla**

alongside moments that matter





November 13 Is "World Kindness Day"

Respecting 'No' Is an Act of Kindness

Our animated short film "*Are You Listening?*" teaches young teens three essential principles of consent: Ask. Listen. Respect.

World Kindness Day, celebrated internationally on November 13, reminds us that kindness is expressed through compassion, understanding, and respect for others. For young people learning to navigate friendships and relationships, one of the most important acts of kindness is respecting another person's feelings, choices, and personal boundaries.

"Are You Listening?" brings this message to life through a story that explores the struggles young people face when navigating consent in their everyday lives.

When a teenage boy named Kai attempts to kiss his friend, Ivy, at a party, he reacts with anger and embarrassment when she shares that she isn't ready. After their friend, Taryn, attempts to lend support, the three friends clash and their conflict continues when they return to school.

With the help of a school counselor, the friends discover that despite their different points of view, their experiences have more in common than they think. This discovery helps them remember that asking for what they want, listening to the response, and respecting the answer are powerful expressions of kindness and also, the foundations of consent.

Our "Fight Child Abuse" campaign is an abuse prevention initiative with *free* animated resources for children teens in grades K-12.

The animation lessons are available at www.FightChildAbuse.org and on YouTube.

The free resources are divided into grades K-3, grades 4-6 and teens.

Created by leading child advocates, therapists, and researchers, these age-appropriate lessons help young people recognize unsafe situations, build healthy relationships, and know when and how to seek help from a trusted adult.

The campaign was developed by the Barbara Sinatra Children's Center Foundation, in partnership with Wonder Media and the Joshua Center on Child Sexual Abuse at the University of Washington.

To view ***"Are You Listening?"*** scan this QR Code

Mike Nelson
Vice President, Education and Strategic Parternships
Barbara Sinatra Children's Center Foundation
in Partnership with Wonder Media
Cell: 801 368 5580 · Voice: 800 675 4123
Email: mnelson@wondermediagroup.net

This link contains a detailed history of the success of FightChildAbuse.org



As we enter this season of giving thanks, I am grateful for the people who make RSA strong. Thank you to our members and district leaders, whose commitment strengthens our collective voice, and to the students who inspire us every day.

To our business partners and fellow state associations your support reminds us that we are never alone in this work. I am grateful to RSA's past leadership for the foundation they built, and to Scott Bischoping, Andrea Durmiaki, and our Board of Directors for their dedication to growing and strengthening the organization for future generations.

This season, I hope we pause to recognize how far we have come together. The challenges ahead are real but so is the strength of our association. So please continue to check in with us, share what you are learning, and make room for one another at the table. Thank you for being part of RSA and for the opportunity to share in the work. Wishing you a Thanksgiving filled with connection, gratitude, and well-deserved rest!

All the best,

Heather Zellers

Appel Osborne Landscape Architecture
Apptegy
Ashley McGraw
Bernard P Donegan, Inc
Brainfuse
C&S Companies
C2AE
Campus Construction
Cartwheel
CLPS
College Board
Corbett Inc.
CPL
CSARCH
Edmentum
Education Elements
Educational Vistas
Equitable
Ferrara Fiorenza PC
Fiscal Advisors & Marketing, Inc.
Grand Canyon Univeristy
Highland Associates
Hunt Architects
John W. Danforth Company
Johnson Controls
King + King Architects
LaBella Associates
LeChase Construction Services, LLC
Lightspeed
Linkit!
New York Schools Insurance Reciprocal
NYBEST
PLS 3rd Learning (SuperEval)
Proximity Learning
Savvas Learning
Schoolhouse Construction Services LLC
SEI Design Group
Stark Tech / Day Automation
SUNY Plattsburgh
Synthesis Architects
Tetra Tech
Think Tech
Thought Exchange
TMobile
Trane
Utica National Insurance Group
Western Governors University
Young and Wright



Get featured in RSA TODAY!

Connecting schools and strengthening Rural New York's future.

We love collaborating with our member districts to help strengthen and inspire New York's rural schools.

From sharing achievements, resources, and opportunities to highlighting key partnerships, programs, and events, we'd love for you to be part of RSA Today!

SUBMISSION GUIDELINES

Please limit submission to the following:

Full Page Submission
(500 words maximum; up to three jpg/png photos)

1/2 or 1/3 Page Submission
(250 words maximum; up to two jpg/png photos)

Promotional Graphic, Photo, or PDF Link
(Please contact us for details)

Press Releases
(Length can vary; please contact us for details)

Vendors/Advertising
(For advertising inquiries, contact Scott Bischoping at sbischoping@rsany.org)

RURAL SCHOOLS ASSOCIATION OF NEW YORK STATE

WHAT KIND OF CONTENT ARE WE LOOKING FOR?

School Spotlights: Stories on successful rural school initiatives, innovative teaching practices, or community involvement projects.

Student Achievements: Highlight accomplishments of students in academics, sports, the arts, and extracurriculars, showing how rural schools foster talent and achievement.

Teacher/Administrator Spotlights: Recognize exceptional educators, administrators, or staff members making a difference in their communities.

Community Partnerships: Information on opportunities for schools to partner with local businesses, nonprofits, or higher education institutions to improve education and community engagement.

Grants and Funding: Updates on grants, scholarships, and other funding opportunities available to rural schools for programs, technology, or infrastructure improvements.

Collaborative Initiatives: Showcase collaborative programs between schools, local governments, and community organizations aimed at improving rural education.

Upcoming Events: Announce conferences, workshops, and gatherings (both in-person and virtual) related to rural education and advocacy.

Student and School Events: Promote student competitions, school fairs, fundraisers, and other local events that showcase school spirit and community pride.

Webinars and Online Forums: Provide information on virtual events that offer professional development or foster discussion about rural education issues.

Student Health Resources: Provide information on mental health initiatives, school counseling resources, and strategies for supporting students' well-being.

Local Challenges/Needs: Share unique challenges and successes, creating a platform for collaboration and mutual support.

We want to hear from you!

Contact RSA Today editor, Andrea Durmiaki
adurmiaki@rsany.org



For general questions, please contact
rsa@rsany.org

rsany.org