



NYSRSAS UPDATE: FEBRUARY, 2022

Eugene Goldwasser

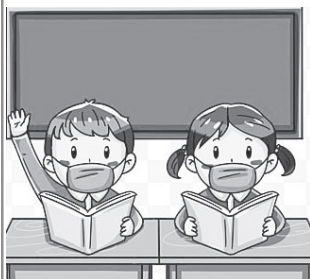
Focus for 2022

New York State and federal elections will be our focus this year. On the federal level, New York Senator Chuck Schumer is up for election, as is every member of the House of Representatives. In addition, New York will elect a Governor. Kathy Hochul, who took office after Cuomo resigned, will compete among others. Additionally, state senators and assemblymen are on the ballot. We will be assessing the candidates during the late spring and early fall to determine how they align with the needs and concerns of retirees. We will make our endorsements and publish them in our October newsletter.

In-Person Learning and Omicron

Most school districts on Long Island have advocated for in-person learning this year. It is now common to see children wearing masks as they travel on school buses, and parents wearing masks as they wait on the corner for the bus to arrive in the afternoon. Although they would prefer to be maskless, the children in my neighborhood have adjusted to wearing masks during the school day while in school. Younger children get periodic “mask breaks” when they can take off their masks for brief periods and when they eat lunch.

If you’re following trends, NEWSDAY provides updates regarding each community’s vaccination rates as well as daily and weekly COVID cases, which helps if you’re trying to decide whether to engage in public events. Such venues as The Staller Center at Stony Brook University practice COVID



safety measures which require attendees to be fully vaccinated and masked during performances, and most supermarkets and retail establishments require masking for entry.



NYSRSAS Citizenship Award

NYSRSAS created a Citizenship Award in the spring of 2021. This award is given to high school juniors, nominated by their principals in selected school districts, who exemplify the qualities of good citizenship, civic responsibility, concern for others, and enhancement of school/community relationships. Letters requesting nominations of deserving students were mailed to the high school principals of selected districts on February 1st with a return date of March 4th. We will publish the names and schools of this year’s award recipients in the May newsletter.

NYSRSAS Election of Officers

Officers in NYSRSAS serve three-year terms. The officers up for election in June, 2022, include: president, first and second vice-presidents, recording secretary and treasurer. According to our constitution, a nominating committee has been established to determine the slate of officers. The committee consists of Corine Lipset-Huberman, Mary Louise Haley and Marvin Kreutzberger. The slate of officers proposed by the committee will be published in the May newsletter. The election of officers will take place at the June General Meeting. Any members interested in running for one of the positions listed may contact NYSRSAS by email at info@nysrsas.org.

NYSRSAS President, Gene Goldwasser, was a school principal for 24 years. He has served as a Hofstra adjunct professor and as a coach with the Institute for Student Achievement.

TRANSGENDER ATHLETES — REVISITED

William Stern

In my first article on the transgender athlete issue, I looked at the problem in high schools. Now I will look at that situation at the college level.

Lea Thomas is a 22 year old University of Pennsylvania senior who is a transgender female. For her first three years at Penn, she swam on the men’s team as a man. During the COVID year, she began to transition to a female - but at 20 years old, had already developed the height and musculature of a man.

In a meet with Cornell and Princeton this past fall, Thomas swam in the 200 and 500 meter free-style events, setting school records in both events. In an invitational meet at the University of Akron in December of 2021, Thomas won the 500 yard free-style, setting an Ivy League record. In the 200 yard freestyle in that meet, she swam a “Best in the Country” time.

Recently, Thomas swam the 1,650 yard free-style in 15:59.71, a full 38 seconds faster than the second place swimmer. In a sport where races are won by hundredths of a second, 38 seconds is like a lifetime!

Most members of the team have told their coaches that they are upset with the situation, but feel that “Our coach really likes winning.”

On paper, if Lea Thomas gets her times down to her former best times as Will, the times would be female world records. As a man, Thomas was second-team All Ivy in the 500, 1,000, and 1,650 freestyle events.

Just recently, 13 members of the Penn women’s swim team wrote to the National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) and the President of Penn, asking that Lea Thomas not be allowed to swim in the NCAA championships. As a man, Thomas was ranked 487 among male college swimmers; as a woman, Thomas is number 1 in the country. We await their decision!

Nancy Hogshead-Makar, a three-time gold medalist for the U.S. in the 1984 Olympics, stated, “Lea Thomas has shown us all that the current rules are not fair, and forcing her into the women’s category only engenders resentment . . . sport

must adopt creative ways that are not harmful to the women’s category.” Martina Navratilova and Chris Evert, both many time Grand Slam tennis champions, agree with the opinion of Hogshead-Makar.

Sport performance coach Linda Blade responded to Thomas’ performances by saying, “Well, of course women’s records are being smashed! Lea Thomas competed as a man for her first three years in the NCAA. This is not right!”

In an effort to deal with the problem of transgender female college athletes, the NCAA has put new rules in place as of January, 2022. In sports with sport governing bodies, the governing bodies will make the rules. In sports without governing bodies, the NCAA will rule.

The new general rule in the NCAA is that a transgender female must take a blood test one month before a championship, and have a testosterone level that is acceptable for females. What about all the dual meets? The problem not mentioned is that if an athlete begins to transition after the completion of puberty, that person has the physical characteristics of a man - narrower hips, wider shoulders, a larger lung capacity, and a great deal more muscle.



Caitlyn Jenner, the former Olympic champion who transitioned many years after winning the men’s Olympic decathlon, voiced her opinion back in May, 2021, stating that she opposes trans women competing in female sports.

Only a third of Americans believe that trans athletes should be allowed to compete on teams that don’t match the sex they were assigned at birth. As a former professional in the field of athletics, I believe that those people don’t fully comprehend the problems associated with the inclusion of trans female athletes on female teams.

Dr. William H. Stern is former Director of Health, PE and Intramural Sports in the Half Hollow Hills District. He also served as coach of high school and college athletic teams.

FROM THE DESK OF: *The Reflective Retiree*

I'M NOT A LIBRARIAN, BUT I'M ANGRY TOO!

Corine Lipset-Huberman

As a preteen, my home away from home was the public library. We lived in the Bronx and I was fortunate enough to be able to board a bus just a block away from my apartment building that stopped almost directly in front of the Parkchester Public Library. There I would fill a shopping bag with books that would suffice for a week or two. I was an avid reader and the world of books took me to diverse and exciting locations. There I met fascinating characters who led me to vicariously experience the gamut of emotions, some of which I was too young to fully understand. As I matured I graduated from my friend, Rebecca, of Sunny Brook Farm, to Nancy Drew, who I was sure was the world's best detective. During warm weather I sat on my fire escape, high above the oak tree that almost reached my fifth floor apartment, and commiserated with Francie, the heroine of *A Tree Grows in Brooklyn*. Still later, I became fascinated with Scarlet, the *femme fatale* of *Gone With the Wind*, although I really understood that Melanie was the woman with better values. As did all females who read that book and/or saw the movie, I fell madly in love with the hero of the book. Who could resist the magnetic charm of Rhett Butler? I learned much about life through the world of books.

And so it is with deep concern and much anger that the freedom to read has come under attack from certain sources. In October, Rep. Matt Krause of Texas compiled a list of about 850 books focused on LGBTQ issues, race and sexuality, directing schools to state which titles are in their collections and their cost. Governor Greg Abbott of Texas demanded that the Texas Association of School Boards eliminate "pornographic" material from school libraries. He next demanded that the Texas Education Agency investigate "the availability of pornography" in public schools and



that they report instances of said material provided to a minor "for prosecution to the fullest extent of the law." The question then becomes who decides what is pornographic? Members of a Virginia school board have gone so far as to suggest that they would like to see some books burn.

Some politicians seem to have concluded that whipping the public into a frenzy regarding critical race theory (which is not taught in the schools) and diversity in education through the medium of the printed word is going to win them elections. Librarians are not suggesting that we give children inappropriate materials (materials that are indeed pornographic or deal with issues that they are too young to understand). Rather they are concerned with the general topic of censorship. "Librarians are the secret masters of the world," wrote American Canadian author Spider Robinson. "They control information. Don't ever piss one off."

There is much evidence that librarians, indeed, are quite "pissed off." Deborah Caldwell-Stone, director of the American Library Association's Office for Intellectual Freedom, worries about the long range effect of this national attack against books and libraries. "Our job is not just about school curriculums, but about developing a love for reading," she said. "We believe that parents absolutely have the right to guide their children, but no one parent should be telling the community what everyone else should be reading."

Works dealing with LGBTQ issues appear to be targeted for censorship, thus taking away a valuable source of information for all citizens but particularly valuable for young people seeking to understand their identities. Libraries, both public and school, provide a safe venue for private learning. It would be shameful and indeed catastrophic if that safe haven was lost to the American public.

Dr. Corine Lipset-Huberman has had experience at all levels of education. She spent the last 19 years prior to retirement as principal of the Village Elementary School in Syosset, NY.

WHAT'S THE LAW ABOUT A SCHOOL'S LIABILITY IN MASS SHOOTINGS?

Terrance O'Connor

As we have seen in the November '21 incident at Oxford High School, Michigan, the DA has charged the parents of the school shooter with some criminal acts including involuntary manslaughter. The general consensus is that getting something to actually pass muster in a trial as a criminal act on the part of the parents will not be an easy lift. Were they co-conspirators? Legally, most likely not a sustainable charge. Was there criminal negligence as alleged by the DA? Again, when it comes to parents and their children, this is a tough mountain to climb. Who's to set the bar for how parents interact with their children?

When we look at other egregious lethal tragedies such as the Parkland shooting, the Sandy Hook shooting, or even the earliest tragedies, say at Columbine, or the Paducah shooting in Kentucky, no parents were ever criminally charged for the actions of their children. That does not preclude, however, the possible actions of a civil suit where they might be sued for negligence or perhaps deliberate indifference and thus share some culpability/liability. These cases have some possibility of success. Some states do have laws that speak to the requirements of safely managing firearms, but these are a distinct minority of states, and I don't believe this recent event is in one of those states. Nonetheless, if the actions of the parents were egregiously negligent in protecting access to a firearm, that might be fertile grounds for a civil suit. While we are thinking of a gun, let's reconstitute this as access to a car. Here the teen-



ager, using the parents' car, drinks and drives at night and kills another person, perhaps a passenger. Has the parent

committed a crime? Probably not, unless the parent has participated in the actions of the event, e.g., providing the alcohol. NOW that IS a crime, a felony actually. If there is a fatality, the parent (alcohol server) is in deep trouble. So did the parent put the gun in his child's hand and tell him to have a good time? Tough to make a connection. In the Sandy Hook shooting the mother did get a VERY close inspection in terms of how her son got the assault weapon and the ammunition, but since she did not survive, she never faced a criminal prosecution.

At the basic level, fighting is probably the simplest area of this type of question. Did the parents know that their child is a danger to others and took no action? Tough to prove, and parents are, after all, expected to stick up for their children. When parents file assault charges against another student for attacking their youngster, the parents of the promoted aggressor are not viewed generally as co-conspirators. One side accuses the other of bad parenting, but that isn't a crime. I have observed parents taking each other to court (civil) where they both tried to get the district to support their side of the story: who's innocent, who's guilty (of course the basic issue was between two teenagers). Usually both sides claim harm. Who decides? Sometimes schools are in receipt of "orders of protection," one student from another. THAT gets complicated, especially in a high school where students are in the halls every 45 minutes.

So the long and short of this is, it is tough to prove that an adult knowingly and willfully, acting in concert with the teenager, provided and assisted in the execution of a lethal act. It will be interesting to see what happens in this latest tragedy, both on the shoulders of the school personnel and the actions (or lack thereof) of the parents. A good answer from the district would include a systemic reporting system, a progressive "action" sheet that school administration follows, *(cont'd on page 5)*

SHOULD WE SAVE THE “SNOW DAY?”

Kenneth Forman



Let me begin with an anecdote. It’s 5:00 am and it’s snowing heavily outside. I remember as a principal, getting up, looking out the window and sitting by the phone waiting for that magic call from the superintendent . . . “Schools will be closed today.” It was a sense of relief and joy, not having to get dressed, clean the snow off my car and make my way to my school, dreading to get the absence list from the teacher registry. It was magic that the snow brought, letting kids be kids and the principal and teachers recharge.

Campbell’s Soup decided that as a result of one of the most frightening winters in recent memory, when coronavirus is killing thousands, and millions of children are barred from their classrooms, struggling to use the internet to learn, kids should be able to take a day off. So Campbell’s Soup initiated “Save the Snow Day.” The campaign, launched recently, isn’t finding a universally warm-and-fuzzy reception with its intended audiences: parents, and the K-12 leaders who make snow day decisions. One superintendent remarked: “Kids staying home with a bowl of soup with their parents in my most struggling schools sounds m’m m’m good but parents, especially in low-income neighborhoods with COVID, working in essential services support jobs, can’t take the day off!”

Michael Casserly, the executive director of the Council of the Great City Schools, which represents 76 of the country’s largest urban school systems, remarked: “Nice try, but protecting snow days is not even close to the top of our priority list right now.” The Council would much rather see corporations help districts get universal high-speed broadband so teachers can consistently reach their students.

Moreover, in a recent national survey of prin-

cipals and district leaders by the Education Week Research Center, 39 percent said they’d already switched snow days to remote instruction days because of COVID-19. Another 32 percent said they were considering making that switch. Daniel Domenech, who leads AASA, The School Superintendents Association, indicated: “Superintendents and parents are worried about learning loss. The last thing they need this year is to cancel a day of school because of snow.”



I’m in the corner with Campbell’s. Snow days are not just a cherished tradition, but an important soul-charger for teachers, students and parents slumped in front of computer screens.

Kenneth Forman, Ph.D, has had extensive experience as an administrator in various New York public school systems. He currently serves as an adjunct professor in the Educational Leadership program at Stony Brook University.

LIABILITY IN SHOOTINGS (Cont’d from page 4)

and steps to document, document, document all interactions, AND follow-up with the alleged victim for his/her satisfaction (or lack thereof) with the school’s intervention and contact. Having a trail of this material and being able to assert that all reasonable efforts were made, can at the very least, mitigate some of the potential civil damages frequently assessed in court.

Our guest author, Dr. Terrance O’Connor, is a retired school administrator. He has taught school law at multiple colleges. and is now an Adjunct Professor at Stony Brook University.



IN DEFENSE OF SCHOOL BOARDS

Edward Price

During the past few months disgruntled citizens have disrupted school board meetings and threatened board members. They contend these actions are a result of schools closed for an extended time and mask mandates imposed to prevent the spread of COVID. Some also claim to oppose the teaching of critical race theory. The protests are misdirected. Mask requirements and school closings were mandated by the governor of New York. They also misunderstand critical race theory which is designed to identify systemic discrimination embedded in American institutions. Moreover, the content of social studies is outlined in New York State curriculum standards.



Unfortunately, many citizens see school board meetings as the only venue in which to protest educational decisions, but that does not give them the right to disrupt and threaten board members. Board members, serving without compensation, generally attend at least two meetings each month and receive extensive information packets from the superintendent each week to assist them in making important decisions. Board members are elected by community residents to oversee local schools, but they must follow state regulations. Some may disagree with their decisions, but most board members act in what they believe to be in the best interest of children and the community. Those who oppose the decisions have the opportunity to run for election.

There are boards with members of differing opinions. In those cases, the majority rules and the superintendent has the responsibility to attempt to create consensus. Even if that is not possible, the superintendent must recognize that all board members believe they are acting in the best interest of their constituents and respond to their con-

cerns. If the superintendent's values are in opposition to the group as a whole, it is time to look for a more compatible community.



Even when boards hold differing opinions, these must be discussed in a civil manner by the trustees as well as the public. Otherwise, there is little hope of compromise and consensus. Eventually, disruption will lead to fewer people willing to serve on boards and community committees. Ultimately, that will be a loss for public education and the children of the community.

Dr. Edward Price served as superintendent in several NY and NJ districts. He is currently a lecturer in educational leadership at Stony Brook University.



Quarterly Query WINTER 2022



In recent years, there have been many instances in which a child has gained access to a firearm owned by the parent and done serious harm. Many cases involved school shootings. It is incumbent upon parents who purchase a weapon to keep it in a secure, locked location. When a child gains access to a weapon because such precautions were not taken, should parents be held liable for their child's subsequent destructive actions? Liability may be in the form of arrest, followed by prison and/or monetary awards or any other penalty the court may decide.

This issue is of great interest to school administrators since it often involves a school setting in which students and/or teachers are killed.

***We would be interested in learning how our readers feel about this issue.
Please write and let us know your opinion.***

**Please send your thoughts to clipsethuberman@gmail.com
(Kindly include your name and the district from which you retired.)**

AUTUMN QUARTERLY QUERY—COPING WITH THE PANDEMIC

COVID-19 has brought changes to our lifestyle. Please share with us how you've adapted, what you've done to survive the isolation and pervasive anxiety of the past two years.

As a faculty member and assistant director of the Educational Leadership Program at SUNY Stony Brook, mornings I walk down to my basement office to review online activities for the day. Reading and writing emails, interacting with my students, faculty and my friends online, has narrowed my world to my basement.

Socially, my wife and I have deferred from gathering in large groups, whether eating indoors in restaurants or gathering with friends if we're unsure about their vaccination status. It certainly has narrowed our world to streaming or live TV, reading books from the library (but taking them out is another story). That's not to say we haven't met with vaccinated friends for meals, either with take-out or prepared at home (I'm a great BBQer). Life has changed for us as we knew it; we're certainly looking forward to post-COVID times.

Ken Forman

For the past two years, along with most of my friends, my husband and I have pretty much self-isolated, more of late since the arrival of the omicron variant. We have kept busy attending to our respective interests, participating in many Zoom meetings, Facetiming with family members, reading and writing. A trip to the supermarket, double masked and gloved, trying not to inhale, avoiding other shoppers and purchasing only items that were easy to find so that I could get out as quickly as possible – that was the excitement of my weekly excursions. It wasn't until the day of New Year's Eve -- December 31, 2021 – that I realized how much had really changed.

I went out alone in the afternoon to do two errands. First, the pharmacy to pick up some monthly medications. Strange, the parking lot was almost empty. I put on my two masks and my gloves and peered into the store. Good, no other patrons. I opened the door with my coat-covered elbow, retrieved and paid for my purchases and

quickly left. I got back in my car and drove to my next stop – TCBY, my favorite restaurant. For some New Year's Eve means champagne, for me I have to have ice cream. As I drove, I noticed the relatively empty roads, the almost deserted parking lots. *Funny*, I thought, *it's New Year's Eve. In past years, people would be out picking up last minute items for parties, getting clothes for that evening out of the dry cleaners, getting the car washed . . .* I arrived at TCBY, again no one in the shop. I made my purchase and returned to my car to drive home. At a busy corner, there was the usual red light but there was not the usual line-up of about ten cars. I was the second car at the light, the light turned green and a few minutes later, I was home. Throughout the drive, there was an eerie feeling of emptiness, like the world was weeping.

The evening progressed with phone calls from our children and grandchildren, all of us at home in our own little boxes, longing to be together, but sensibly deciding that traveling long distances was not wise during COVID time. We sent each other virtual hugs and kisses and everyone professed they would all be asleep by midnight. Bah, humbug, no one was waiting up to see the ball drop!

At some point during the evening, I looked out the window. Since our house was at the head of an intersection, I could see quite a distance down the street. All was quiet, no cars parked on the street indicating house parties. At about 11:45 pm, the phone started ringing. One after another, our children calling . . . Couldn't sleep, Happy New Year, Love you!!! After all the phone calls, my husband and I turned to the TV to watch the ball drop . . . 5-4-3-2-1 . . . HAPPY NEW YEAR!!!! We turned the lights out, turned the TV off and listened to the sound of silence. We heard no horns blowing, no cars honking, no road noise, no firecrackers, only silence. 2021 softly slipping into 2022 . . . a silent night! Another year of COVID!

Corine Lipset-Huberman



SOME FINAL NOTES AND REMINDERS

Membership Dues.

If you have not already done so, we urge you to renew your membership. Annual dues are \$25. Checks should be mailed to: Edward Price, Treasurer, 31 Walters Avenue, Cold Spring Harbor, NY 11724.

Membership Survey

Included in your membership letter, you will find a survey form. Please complete the form and include it along with your membership dues. The survey is helpful to us to determine whether we are meeting your needs. Results of the survey will be published in the spring newsletter.

Citizenship Award

As you know, following the January 6, 2021, attack on the Capitol, we established a Citizenship Award consisting of an Award Certificate and a monetary grant of \$100 to a high school junior who demonstrates outstanding citizenship through commit-

ment and service to their community. The award is not related to the student’s scholarship or decision to attend college. High schools are selected from among the most economically disadvantaged districts on Long Island. The funds for the awards come solely from donations, initially all from Executive Board members. If this is a program you would like to support, please send your donation of any amount you choose in the form of a check payable to NYSRSAS to our Treasurer, Edward Price, 31 Walters Avenue, Cold Spring Harbor, NY 11724. If you wish, you may include it along with your dues and survey form.

Newsletter Articles

Newsletter articles reflect the views of their writers and do not represent “official” NYSRSAS positions unless so indicated. We welcome your comments on any articles. You can contact us, attention to the editor, at info@nysrsas.org.

Every year we celebrate the birthday of Martin Luther King, Jr. In his honor, we offer this quote:

"Our lives begin to end the day we become silent about things that matter."



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