



## NYSRSAS UPDATE

*Eugene Goldwasser*



### **Position Paper School Board Elections**

We conducted a series of meetings to determine our perspective regarding the pressure Boards of Education, administrators and teachers have been dealing with in various communities both nationally and locally. After two Focus Groups (February 23<sup>rd</sup> and April 12<sup>th</sup>) and one Executive Board Meeting (March 16<sup>th</sup>), we developed a position paper that highlights the importance of School Board Elections and the role school board members play in each local school district.

The position paper (see page 7) discusses the qualities we believe school board members should possess as well as the duties and responsibilities boards of education have with respect to supporting teachers and administrators.

We strongly recommend that everyone vote in their local school board elections (May 16<sup>th</sup> in New York State), attend school board meetings to learn how school board members vote on issues they confront, and listen to those individuals running for school board to determine whether they are interested in meeting the needs of children in your school district or have another agenda they wish to pursue.

### **NYSRSAS Citizenship Awards**

This is the third year NYSRSAS has worked with school districts to provide citizenship

awards to high school juniors nominated by principals and/or staff members. We decided to make the award available to high school juniors so they could include it in the awards section on college or work applications. The award comes with a custom-made certificate and a check for \$100. Funds for the award come from voluntary donations from NYSRSAS executive board and general members.

Each year we have increased the number of participating schools, and this year we solicited nominations from 20 high schools. To date 15 have responded – a list of the high schools with student awards appears on page 4 of the newsletter. This process has been very rewarding for the students selected (we have received photos of quite a few) and for us as well.

### **June Executive Board Meeting on Zoom**

Our June Executive Board Meeting is scheduled for Thursday, June 15<sup>th</sup>, at 10 AM, on Zoom. To attend, please e-mail [eigoldwasser@optonline.net](mailto:eigoldwasser@optonline.net) and you will receive an e-mail providing the Zoom access code a few days before the meeting.

*NYSRSAS President, Gene Goldwasser, was a school principal for 24 years. Since retiring, he has been a Hofstra adjunct professor and a coach with the Institute for Student Achievement.*

**There can be no keener revelation  
of a society's soul than the way  
it treats its children.**

*Nelson Mandela*

**SUPPORTING PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES**

*Edward Price*

I recently was watching a PBS program regarding people with autism which began with a story about an 89-year-old man living in a small southern town. The producers explained that before approaching this individual, they spoke with people who know him. The citizens of the town agreed to arrange a meeting if the autistic man accepted the offer. However, they added that they would prevent any action intended to humiliate or otherwise hurt the man. They said he was accepted in



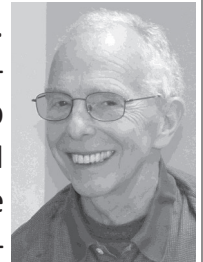
the community despite some quirky behavior because “he is one of us.”

This story reminded me of young man with disabilities in a small school district where I was superintendent. His awkward behavior was accepted by his classmates who included him in all activities. The other kids protected him since they saw him as “one of us.”

Reflecting on these stories brought to mind Mayor Adams ordering the police to forcibly remove disabled people with strange behavior from the streets. While the mayor’s actions are understandable considering several violent incidents involving disabled people, this is not a long-term solution. People with disabilities in a large urban environment often lack the support of families and neighbors that is found in smaller communities. Without needed support and understanding, the disabled become “the other.”

For those without family support, well-staffed, well-managed, small group homes in neighborhoods allow people to know and support each other and can provide an alternative. Unfortunately, many oppose having these

homes in their neighborhoods. Several years ago Catholic Charities attempted to open a group home in a community where I was superintendent. Since there was significant opposition, I arranged community meetings for the organization to explain how the home would function. Unfortunately, these efforts were fruitless, and the project was abandoned.



There are alternatives to forcibly holding disabled people in jails and hospitals. Community leaders must work with social service groups such as Catholic Charities in creating an environment where residents of group homes are seen as neighbors rather than a danger. Group home residents can be included in neighborhood activities where community members can get to know them. In these smaller environments, it is possible for disabled people to be considered “one of us.”

*Dr. Edward Price served as superintendent in several New York and New Jersey school districts. He is currently a lecturer in educational leadership at Stony Brook University. He also serves as NYSRSAS treasurer.*

**IN MEMORIAM**

We recently learned of the passing of four of our NYSRSAS members:

- Gilbert Blum
- Jeffrey B. Cordell
- Anthony Mercogliano
- Dr. Fillmore Peltz

We extend our condolences to their families and friends.

FROM THE DESK OF: *The Reflective Retiree*

FROM "WAKE UP" TO "STAY WOKE" TO "ANTI-WOKE" . . .  
**HOW DID WE GET THERE?**

Corine Lipset-Huberman



In 1923, Jamaican philosopher and social activist Marcus Garvey wrote "Wake up, Ethiopia! Wake up, Africa!" Those words conveyed the earliest idea of *wokeness*, warning Black culture to be more conscious of the dangers of racism and discrimination. In 1938, Black American folk singer-songwriter Buddie Ledbetter, a.k.a. Lead Belly, warned of the danger of Blacks walking through a particular neighborhood, saying: "I advise everybody, be a little careful when they go along through there – best stay woke, keep their eyes open." By the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century, the word *woke* had taken on a political or cultural connotation, meaning "well-informed" or "aware." The political connotation of *woke* took on even greater meaning when the play *Garvey Lives!* by Barry Beckman included the line: "I been sleeping all my life. And now that Mr. Garvey done woke me up, I'm goin' stay woke. And I'm gon help him wake up other black folk."

Activists of the Black Lives Matter (BLM) movement used the phrase *stay woke* to urge awareness of police brutality following the shooting of Michael Brown in 2014. Within that decade, the word *woke* came to mean being politically and socially aware among BLM activists, pertaining to issues of racism and discrimination affecting African Americans. Soon after, *woke* became associated with ideas promoted by progressives or leftist political ideology. According to Perry Bacon, Jr., an African American *Washington Post* columnist, the following are some of the ideas that have become associated with *wokeness*:

- a rejection of American exceptionalism
- a questioning of America as a true democracy
- that Black people suffer from systemic racism
- that white Americans enjoy white privilege
- that African Americans deserve reparations for the period of slavery inflicted upon them
- that US law-enforcement agencies need to be reformed
- that women suffer from systemic sexism
- that LGBTQ choices should be respected
- that US capitalism is flawed.

While many of these ideas are popular with the progressive left, there are many centrists in the Democratic party who take exception to some of the above.

The millennial generation soon became associated with the term 'woke' as well. In May 2016, *MTV News* listed *woke* as being among ten words teenagers should know in that year. In 2017, the American Dialect Society voted *woke* the slang word of the year, and Oxford English Dictionary included *woke* as an entry. By 2019, those who opposed the progressive political movement used the term mockingly or sarcastically.

In American politics, conservatives have come to use the term *woke* as an insult, with Republicans increasingly using the term to criticize Democrats. Perry Bacon Jr. contends that this anti-woke expression promotes white conservatives' fear of activism by African Americans as well as changing cultural norms. Terms such as *wokeness*,

*(cont'd on page 4)*

## 2022-23 NYSRSAS Citizenship Award Winners

The NYSRSAS Citizenship Award was established to raise awareness about the importance of good citizenship in a democratic society. It recognizes high school juniors who exemplify the qualities of good citizenship, civic responsibility, concern for others, and enhancement of school and community relationships. As of this printing, 15 schools have responded with student recommendations for the 2022-23 award. Those schools are:

- Amityville Memorial High School
- Bellport High School  
(South Country School District)
- Brentwood High School
- Central Islip High School
- Elmont Memorial High School
- Freeport High School
- Greenport High School
- Hampton Bays High School
- Huntington High School
- Lawrence High School
- Riverhead High School
- Roosevelt High School
- Westbury High School
- William Floyd High School
- Wyandanch High School

All of the students exhibit the qualities specified for the award. All are conscientious about their studies, although academic achievement was not the essential quality specified. Many are National Honor Society members. Many winners are of African American, Hispanic, Arabian or Asian descent and contribute their talents and efforts in organizations that seek to eliminate bias and promote justice for all. Several students provide tutoring at local libraries. Some work with young children, others provide fundraising assistance for charities. Many are involved in leadership clubs. All of our award winners are active

members of their school and community. Reading the letters recommending these students, we were very proud to have initiated this Citizenship Award Program and equally proud of the students who have been its recipients. Our thanks to our members who contributed to make this award possible.



### FROM "WAKE UP" TO "ANTI-WOKE" (cont'd from page 3)

*cancel culture* and *critical race theory* are now a feature of many political speeches offered by Republicans. In 2021, former President Donald Trump said that the Biden administration was "destroying" the country "with woke." Republican Senator Josh Hawley complained, while promoting his book, that the "woke mob" was trying to suppress it. Recently Governor Ron DeSantis of Florida, in a diatribe against Democratic politicians, used the term innumerable times.

The terms *woke* and *wokeness* have crossed both the Atlantic and the Pacific Oceans. In Japan, *woke* has been used to describe the progressive politics of the West. In Europe, the term is used in ways similar to its use in the United States, depending on whether it is used by right wing or left wing parties.

So, my fellow Americans, wake up! Learn what's woke and what's anti-woke and who supports which, and learn it well before you vote in any political contest, 'cause as we now know for sure, elections do indeed have consequences!

*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.*

## WINTER QUARTERLY QUERY RESPONSES

***In November of 2022, former Secretary of State Mike Pompeo made this statement: “I get asked ‘Who’s the most dangerous person in the world? Is it Chairman Kim, is it Xi Jinping?’ The most dangerous person in the world is Randi Weingarten. It’s not a close call. If you ask, ‘Who’s the most likely to take this republic down?’ It would be the teachers’ unions, and the filth that they’re teaching our kids. . . .”***

***Below are some of the responses members of our Executive Board wrote in reaction to Mr. Pompeo’s statement.***

What I would like to say to Mike Pompeo in response to his comments regarding Randi Weingarten and the teachers’ union:

I would tell him that he has no facts or data to support his comments. In schools, we teach children to develop their ideas with supporting documentation. What filth specifically is he saying that teachers teach?

Mr. Pompeo and others who share his opinions do not know the facts/history but act on their ignorance; those who are weak but will do whatever they can in order to appear strong; those who control with force rather than with knowledge; those who fear learning and education because they are uninformed and uneducated; those who would close the minds of children rather than encourage openness. For example, those who would ban books in schools and libraries, thus showing their ignorance.

As educators, we must continue to open the minds of children and encourage them as they develop thinking skills and explore. We must fight by supporting a strong, expansive education that opposes the indoctrination resulting from comments such as those of Mike Pompeo.

***Sherry Alessandro, Recording Secretary***

When asked who is the most dangerous person in the world, former Secretary of State, Mike Pompeo, responded – Randi Weingarten as well as the teachers’ union she leads. On first blush, this seems to be another absurd statement from a crazy politician. However, after thinking about the comment, it seems appropriate for today’s Republican Party. On one hand, it appeals to the business-oriented faction that opposes unions and the higher costs and taxes associated with them. On the other hand, it addresses concerns of the populist faction that opposes supposedly “woke” public schools and teachers. When considered from this perspective, Pompeo’s remarks make perfect sense for a potential Republican presidential candidate.

***Edward Price, Treasurer***

Mr. Pompeo, you must be out of your mind! With three dangerous authoritarian leaders – Kim Jung Un, Vladimir Putin and Xi Jinping -- just waiting for the United States to make one false move indicating weakness, with climate change wreaking havoc on various parts of the world with floods, avalanches, cyclones, hurricanes and earthquakes and climate change deniers not willing to do anything about it, with more and more authoritarian-ruled countries gaining access to nuclear power, you think Randi Weingarten is the most likely candidate to take down the United States? And what is that *filth* that educators are teaching our kids?

Randi Weingarten has been president of the American Federation of Teachers since 2008. She was president of the United Federation of Teachers from 1998 to 2008. She has been fighting for quality education and teachers’ rights for 25 years. It is surprising indeed that someone who graduated from West Point Academy as valedictorian and then received a law degree at Harvard should *(continued on p.6)*

## WINTER QUARTERLY QUERY RESPONSES *(cont'd from page 5)*

be unappreciative of the importance of quality education.

In the January 2019 issue of the NYSRSAS newsletter, we printed a speech given by a school principal at a graduation, exact source unknown. We are reprinting it here, because in light of recent attacks on school curricula, banning of books and pressure upon teachers to “obey” the rules of non-educators, it needs to be heard again.

### FROM A SCHOOL PRINCIPAL’S SPEECH AT A GRADUATION

He said “Doctor wants his child to become a doctor . . . Engineer wants his child to become an engineer . . . Businessman wants his child to become CEO . . .

BUT a teacher also wants his child to become one of them !!! Nobody wants to become a teacher BY CHOICE . . . Very sad but that’s the truth!!!

The dinner guests were sitting around the table discussing life; one man, a CEO, decided to explain the problem with education.

He argued, “What’s a kid going to learn from someone who decided the best option in life was to become a teacher?”

To stress his point, he said to another guest, “You’re a teacher, Bonnie. Be honest. What do you make?”

Teacher Bonnie, who had a reputation for honesty and frankness replied,

“You want to know what I make?(She paused for a second, then began . . .)

Well, I make kids work harder than they ever thought they could.

I make a C+ feel like a Congressional Medal of Honor winner.

I make kids sit through 40 minutes of class time when their parents can’t make them sit for five minutes without an iPod, Game Cube or

movie rental.

You want to know what I make?

(She paused again and looked at each and every person at the table.)

I make kids wonder.

I make them question.

I make them apologize and mean it.

I make them have respect and take responsibility for their actions.

I teach them how to write and then I make them write.

I make them read, read, read.

I make them show all their work in math.

They use their God given brain, not the man-made calculator.

I make my students from other countries learn everything they need to know about English while preserving their unique cultural identity.

I make my classroom a place where all my students feel safe.

Finally, I make them understand that if they use the gifts they were given, work hard, and follow their hearts, they can succeed in life.

(Bonnie paused one last time and then continued.)

Then, when people try to judge me by what I make, with me knowing money isn’t everything,

I can hold my head up high and pay no attention because they are ignorant.

You want to know what I make?

I MAKE A DIFFERENCE IN ALL YOUR LIVES,  
EDUCATING KIDS AND PREPARING THEM  
TO BECOME CEOs AND DOCTORS  
AND ENGINEERS

What do you make, Mr. CEO?

His jaw dropped; he went silent.

***Corine Lipset-Huberman,  
NYSRSAS Newsletter Editor***

**SCHOOL BOARD ELECTIONS ARE IMPORTANT**  
**MARK YOUR CALENDAR – MAY 16**  
*A Position Paper from NYSRSAS*

Most people realize that boards of education and library boards have responsibility for approving budgets and tax rates, but few are aware of the full range of their powers. New York State Education Law grants boards of education responsibility for

- establishing admission requirements
- overseeing instruction, student discipline and grading procedures
- employment and management of personnel
- purchasing, preparation of the budget

- hiring the superintendent
- adopting legally binding policies and regulations relating to these responsibilities.

While many boards delegate some of these requirements to the superintendent, clearly board members have the power to direct educational practices within the confines of Education Law.

The key question facing voters is what qualities are needed for successful board members? Board candidates should have essential virtues required for any public office. They must demonstrate commitment to justice, equality, and compassion. Specifically, they must recognize they represent a community with citizens holding a variety of beliefs. To do this effectively board members must be open to varying perspectives and collaborate with colleagues in making decisions. Most importantly, they must make decisions with concern for equitable treatment of all students, recognizing that resources must be allocated fairly, so that all benefit.

Board members have the responsibility and duty to ensure that teachers have the freedom to teach their subject matter. In teaching potentially controversial subjects in a democratic society, effective teachers present both sides of an issue, then entice their students to debate and decide for themselves. This is not just thoughtful teaching, it's necessary in a flourishing democracy where citizens must learn the art of listening to and respecting each other, a vital lesson that begins in school.

The underlying principles of teaching should incorporate the core values of justice, truth, respect, responsibility, fairness, and compassion.

*(continued on page 8)*



**Quarterly Query**  
**SPRING 2023**



Recent discussions among publishers and literary estate managers have focused on whether or not to remove what may be regarded as offensive language in classic editions of now deceased authors. Offensive language may be related to race, gender, weight, mental health or anything else current society may object to. Authors such as Roald Dahl, Agatha Christie and Ian Fleming have had their works altered in some way. Some believe there is merit in removing offensive language to make the work palatable to a contemporary audience; others have criticized updated works as an act of censorship.

What is your opinion? Please write and tell us your thoughts regarding this issue.

*Please send your response to*  
[clipsethuberman@gmail.com](mailto:clipsethuberman@gmail.com)

*Kindly include your name and the district from which you retired.*

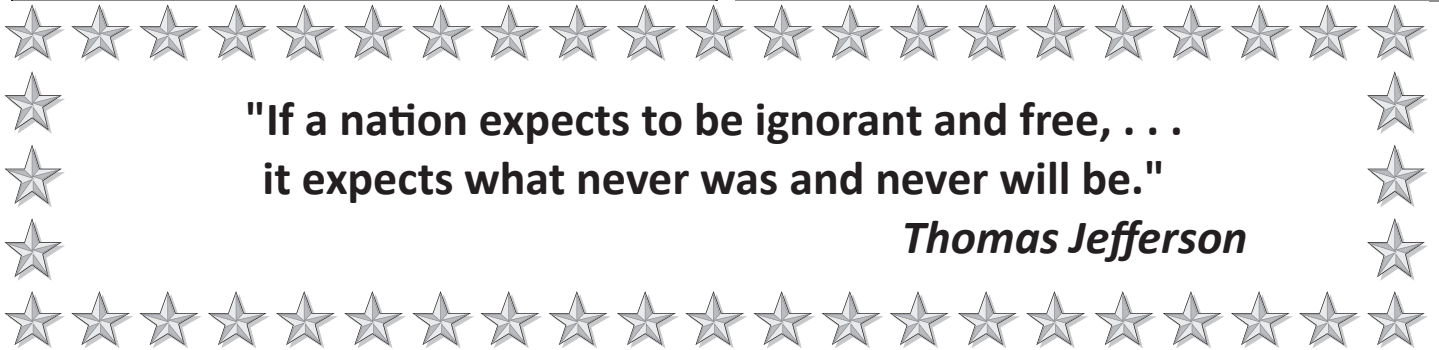
**NYSRSAS POSITION PAPER (cont'd from page 7)**

This means:

- All students must be treated equally, regardless of religion, race, gender, or sexual orientation.
- The history of racism should be studied, so as to learn both to recognize and overcome it.
- Material offered to students must be accurate, non-discriminatory, and non-inflammatory.
- Building and classroom libraries must be well-diversified and sufficiently stocked with books of all genres and research materials so that students can find information suitable to their personal and academic needs.

In voting for a school board member, think about the things that are important to you and find out where the candidates for office stand on those issues. Attend school board meetings to determine how the school board makes decisions. What is its relationship with the community? Does it value public education and respect citizens' input? Do its members believe in the democratic process and are they dedicated to serving the needs of all the district's children?

**Then, armed with the results of your analysis, VOTE on May 16 for the candidates you have determined will best serve the students of your community.**



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