



PREPARING FOR AN ELECTION YEAR

Eugene Goldwasser

The horrific events in Israel where Hamas terrorists launched thousands of missiles and invaded towns and military posts bordering Gaza, killing hundreds of civilians and kidnapping more than 100 people, taking them to Gaza, provoked indescribable anguish and fear. This despite the Israeli use of 'Iron Dome,' the anti-missile system deployed to shoot down missiles before they hit their intended targets. Prior to the publishing of this newsletter, the Israel Defense Forces initiated a siege and launched its own air strikes on Gaza. We condemn all wars and the inability of world leaders to find peaceful solutions to long simmering and deeply rooted differences, but this action on the part of Hamas demonstrates an utter disregard for human life as well as the inability to coexist.

In our country, we're also faced with dilemmas that impact the ability to govern, the ability to nominate and approve military leaders, and the ability of cities to deal with the influx of migrants. To these points, the election of the Speaker of the House is once again an issue as Kevin McCarthy was removed, and the Speakership is being contested by several Republican members. Until that is resolved, legislation in the House will be difficult to enact. Senator Tommy Tuberville (R-Ala) is continuing to hold up military appointments in the Senate. His action has already impacted the preparedness of our mili-

tary, as well as the military leaders who oversee operations in the Middle East. And, big city mayors in New York and Chicago, for example, are having a difficult time dealing with the influx of migrants being bused from Texas and Florida – states that are also trying to deal with large numbers of migrants coming across our southern border.



These are just a few of the issues we will be dealing with as we meet to determine what is important to NYSRSAS members and to our nation. Next year's elections are crucial. It's not only a presidential election year, but every member of the House is also up for election as is approximately one-third of the Senate. Once we determine what issues to target, we will engage in a process during the spring and summer of 2024 to determine which candidates we wish to endorse. The first step will occur at our next Executive Board meeting on Thursday, December 14th at 10:00 a.m. on Zoom. At that time, we will approve the criteria for assessing candidates and set a process to keep us on track to make final endorsements in September, 2024. If you would like to be a part of the process and attend some of the meetings we will be scheduling, send an email to ejgoldwasser@optonline.net and you will receive an invita- *(cont'd on p.3)*

FROM THE DESK OF: *The Reflective Retiree*

**AN EDUCATOR'S QUANDARY: THE PROS AND CONS
OF ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE**

Corine Lipset-Huberman

For the past year, the United States government and its many departments, branches and organizations have been working on designing a cohesive and comprehensive approach to artificial intelligence (AI) opportunities as well as its possible risks. Considering AI one of the most powerful technologies to emerge in recent times, President Biden has made it clear that we must support responsible employment of AI to allow us to utilize its benefits, while at the same time protect our government, our society and our economy from the threat of those who might use it for dark purposes. In May of 2023, Vice-President Harris met with CEOs of major American companies heavily involved in AI to underscore the importance of the above. Following this meeting, the Federal Trade Commission, the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau, the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, and the Department of Justice's Civil Rights Division issued a joint statement promising their collective commitment to protect the American people from AI related injury. Last month, Senate Majority Leader Chuck Schumer held meetings with several AI companies, involving such technology leaders as Bill Gates and Elon Musk, to work on legislation that would regulate the artificial intelligence industry.

While artificial intelligence has been around for some time now, it is only in the last several years that the topic has consumed newspapers and magazines, local weeklies, business literature, art, fashion and a host of other areas. It is only fairly recently

that educators, recognizing the inherent dangers and values in AI, have begun to come to terms with how to avert the dangers and how to utilize its benefits. Here is the question posed by many: Is AI now the world's best cheating machine, with students using it to generate essays or solve math problems, or will it become a useful tool to enhance learning? The answer remains unclear.



Technology experts are working feverishly to come up with programs that can identify the use of AI in a student's work. There is already an app called Turnitin that claims to do exactly that. ChatGPT presents a special challenge to instructors since it can produce its own original prose, which makes it more difficult to identify work taken from a non-human source. There is also the possibility that ChatGPT may present inaccurate or misleading information. In a disclaimer on its website, ChatGPT's parent company, OpenAI, states: "ChatGPT may produce inaccurate information about people, places, or facts."

Educators are now discussing the various chatbots in class, talking about both positive and negative aspects of them, and subtly letting students know that teachers will be looking for indications of plagiarism in student work. As Bob Vecchio, executive director of the Nassau-Suffolk School Boards Association, states: "We're in a transitional period -- some teachers will be embracing it and others may be pushing back against it. All will be looking to discern be-

(continued on p.3)

AN EDUCATOR’S QUANDRY . . .

(Continued from page 2)

tween original content versus what is produced by artificial intelligence.” Vecchio has said Long Island school boards have not yet crafted policies regarding AI, but intimated that any kind of cheating or plagiarism would be punished following existing codes of conduct for students. Some teachers are having students write more essays in class where they can be monitored. They are also stressing the importance of honesty in the work students hand in and some have issued warnings about cutting and pasting portions of essays from an app.

Recognizing that chatbots are here to stay, teachers are hopeful that chatbot apps can be used by students as a study aid to

help them study for exams, construct outlines for projects or theme papers and break down complicated concepts to simpler terms. Over the past summer, school districts have provided teachers with workshops to assist them in helping students use these apps as learning aids to do just these things. Patrick Fogarty, the Jericho district’s director of technology, believes that the best uses of AI are still coming into focus. “Our teachers are experimenting with it,” he said. “We’re dipping our toe in the water It’s scary, but exciting, too.”

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. She serves as editor of this newsletter.

<p>Mythical worry: Superintelligence is just years away</p>	 <p>PANIC!</p>	<p>Actual worry: It’s at least decades away, but it may take that long to make it safe</p>	 <p>PLAN AHEAD!</p>
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PREPARING FOR ELECTION YEAR *(Continued from page 1)*

tion providing access to the meeting on Zoom a few days in advance.

NYSRSAS Citizenship Awards

We are about to engage in the fourth year of awarding good citizenship awards to deserving high school juniors as nominated by their principals and/or guidance counselors. Last year we recognized 16 students from 16 high schools who received NYSRSAS Citizenship Award certificates and checks for \$100 each. The funds for the awards come from member contributions and not from dues. We will start the awards process at the

next Executive Board meeting on December 14th, and continue it at the March meeting. If you would like to be a part of this process, send an email to ejgoldwasser@optonline.net.

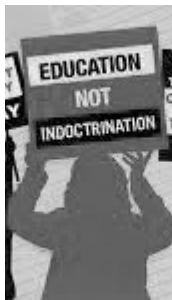
NYSRSAS President, Gene Goldwasser, was a school principal for 24 years. Since retiring, he has been a Hofstra adjunct professor and a coach with the Institute for Student Achievement.

NYSRSAS BOARD MEETINGS 2023-24
December 14, 2023
March 14, 2024
June 13, 2024

SOCIAL EMOTIONAL LEARNING: WHAT IS IT AND HOW CAN EDUCATORS DISPEL PARENTAL MISCONCEPTIONS OF IT?

Mary Louisie Haley

School administrators and classroom teachers are finding it challenging to navigate the politically polarized environment in which they work and educate their students. To get a sense of how educators are feeling about their practice on a range of issues, the EdWeek Research Center recently surveyed more than a thousand teachers and district and school administrators. One of the big issues that the researchers wanted to understand was how and to what degree classroom instruction has been or could be impacted by the parents’ rights movement.



The results showed responses from teachers, school leaders and district leaders who said that in the past year at least one parent expressed concerns that the school curriculum emphasized values or content of which he/she disapproved. The top responses included: LBGTQ/sexual orientation, gender, diversity, equity and inclusion, sex education, social emotional learning and racism. Educators are feeling the pressure. As a result, some educators have altered their instruction, particularly in the area of social emotional learning (SEL). Almost 25% of the teachers have changed, altered or modified their SEL instruction.

Conservative parents’ rights groups have complained that SEL is pushing children into ideologies and values that they do not support. In Montana, a bill was recently introduced by Representative Lola Sheldon-Galloway that would have banned social emotional learning in schools. However, by the end of the education committee hearing on the bill, during which educators, parents and lawmakers lined up to speak in opposition to the bill, Sheldon-Galloway, a Republican, had changed her mind. “The teachers have spoken loud and clear that they believe

that this program is an excellent program, and it is being used in schools in a good way.”



Through the discussion at the committee hearing, educators had the opportunity to clarify misunderstandings and confusions parents had about social emotional learning. Teachers explained that through SEL, they teach students to manage their emotions, set and achieve goals, develop empathy and maintain positive social relationships. SEL has quickly gathered momentum as a way to complement treatment for and help to prevent mental health and behavior problems that evolved or worsened from COVID-19 shutdowns. All 50 states have adopted SEL competencies into their frameworks or learning



Graphic from Buffalo County Community Partners—Kearney, NE

standards over the course of the past 10 years.

Educators express concern that what is often getting lost in the heated rhetoric from parents’ rights groups and the (continued on p.5)

LET'S FOCUS ON WHAT IS IMPORTANT IN EDUCATION

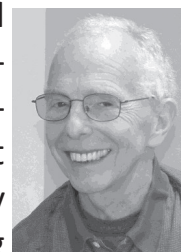
EDWARD PRICE

I read an interesting article in Education Week in which a teacher considered what students remember from their school years. After speaking with several of his former students, he discovered that they all recalled what he calls an 'awe moment,' when they did something innovative, made connections with teachers, questioned their perspectives, or discovered a new way of thinking. These are the experiences every teacher seeks to create for all students.

Although the author was thinking about his high school teaching, these opportunities can occur at any educational level. I teach a freshman seminar, *Ethics and Social Issues*, at Stony Brook University, where students examine current ethical questions from several perspectives. During a discussion of book banning, the class unanimously agreed that any restriction was unethical. When I inquired whether there should be any restrictions at all, one student indicated pornography was problematic. I then asked for definitions of pornography and students quickly recognized that this opened another ethical question. At the conclusion of the class, several students mentioned that the discussions caused them to think carefully about their opinions. For them, this was an 'awe moment' and for me a desire to continue teaching at the age of 79.

Since most of my career was spent as a superintendent, I began to consider what impact I had on the many students who passed through the district's schools. Like other superintendents, I worked with colleagues and the community to provide resources for all educational needs and experiences and supported staff members in intro-

ducing innovative curriculum and programs and worthwhile professional development opportunities. However, I concluded that my most important responsibility was recruiting and supporting great teachers who would create those 'awe moments' for our children.



An equally important obligation was keeping political nonsense away from classrooms. Today with politicians (including board members) attempting to inject their personal and cultural values into schools, it is essential for superintendents to create school cultures that support diversity and an environment that allows all teachers to continue fostering 'awe moments.'

Dr. Edward Price was a superintendent in several New York and New Jersey districts. Currently a lecturer in educational leadership at SUNY Stony Brook, Ned is also our NYSRSAS treasurer.

SOCIAL EMOTIONAL LEARNING (Continued from page 4)

impact on classroom curriculum is the mental health and well-being of students and their ability to function in an increasingly complex and diverse world. Ideally the school and family unit should work together to promote the well-being of children.

Schools need to have conversations with parents about the goals and curriculum for SEL.

Montana is one example of how these conversations serve to provide a better understanding of SEL and reduce apprehension. States and schools need to set up channels for communication with families as a way to dispel misconceptions and foster increased levels of trust, thus improving the home/school connection.

Mary Louise Haley (Mel) started her career as a special ed teacher and retired as an Elementary Principal from the Hericks Public Schools. She serves as NYSRSAS Education Chair.

SUMMER QUARTERLY QUERY—WHAT GIVES YOU PEACE?

In this period of national and international turmoil, what actions, hobbies, thoughts bring you a sense of peace and tranquility? What soothes you?

In 1991, I became a member of Osher Life-Long Learning Institute (OLLI) at Stony Brook University, then called The Round Table. This was a program of continued education classes known as workshops, given by retired members of the OLLI community. It was started by a few community members encouraged by a dean at the university. During the pandemic, all workshops were offered on Zoom, but since the end of the pandemic more and more workshops are returning to the campus. Since 1991, I have taken over 200 classes, the topics of which vary year by year. It is amazing the amount of knowledge and wisdom that can be gained from other members of the OLLI community. The workshop leaders do not frequently discuss their professions, but instead what they have learned from their own interests and hobbies, through their reading and experience, in what seems to be virtually every field of endeavor. OLLI has contributed to the enjoyment of my retirement and has immeasurably enriched my life in general. I delight in being a student and look forward to taking all my workshops on the Stony Brook campus once again.

David Long (retired from Rockville Centre UFSD)

Have you ever stood high at the top of a mountain gazing down at Magens Bay and as you gaze down at that scene, you raise your eyes to look out to the horizon? There, across miles of azure and cobalt seas, the

waters are dotted with islands. You can see Tortola in the British Virgin Islands where the Buccaneers once roamed. This scene soothes me with its beauty and seductive visual presence. I can spend hours relaxing and looking out at



these kinds of vistas, because of the colors of the waters, the vastness of the space you see, and the calmness of the seas about you. It is peaceful, quiet, and beautiful. It is soothing.

Joseph Gilkey (retired from Smithtown CSD)

What soothes me? Music – preferably Bach or Mozart. When things get too hectic, the world too stressful, the weather bleak, it's time to lose myself in music. Immersing myself in the multiple layers of a Bach fugue can put the world back in order. When I need cheering up, I can usually turn to Mozart for a "light" touch or a laugh listening to Papageno brag about his prowess as a bird catcher or his need for a wife. Of course, Dvorak, Smetana and Grieg also have their charms and can range from soothing to energizing. And conversely, if I wake up after a good night's rest and the sun is shining and all is right with my world, well then I'll sing along with "Zippity Doo Dah" (from the old movie *Song of the South*) which is just infectiously happy – even if the movie it came from is not now considered "politically correct." If you're feeling down, I recommend some good music –and maybe some chocolate.

Pat Galaskas (retired from Syosset CSD)

THE GOOD FIGHT . . . from a blog by Guest Author Sherri London Pastolove (9/1/23)

Because book banning is such an important issue for educators, I am sharing this blog written by an author friend. You can follow her blog on www.sherridarling.blogspot.com.

Corine Lipset-Huberman, Editor

Last week I had the good fortune to attend a conversation about book banning...it was hosted by former Congressman Steve Israel...now a writer and owner of Theodore's Books in Oyster Bay...I remember him from another lifetime on the Hebrew School car pick-up line...but anyway...with him was Congressman Jamie Raskin...hopefully beating cancer for a second time...still mourning the tragic 2020 suicide of his son...member of the January 6th committee...a constitutional law professor for twenty-five years before political life...quite engaging in his bandana...was this the one given by Steven Van Zandt?...a man who truly loves our constitution and our democracy...and fights the good fight the best he can...and so I listened to spirited banter...and thoughtful and funny questions from the audience...the topic of book burning searing the hearts of this group

of readers and thinkers...and I wondered...(oy, I sound like Carrie Bradshaw...the Mensa version)...what can I do?...the whole notion of book banning sends a lightning ripple of fear through my second generation Jewish American soul...it wounds the fabric of who I am as a writer...it leads me back to a phenomenal reading list in high school...in a Staten Island high school with no money...during turbulent times...would a high school student in southern states in 2023 be exposed to Solzhenitsyn, Camus, and Kafka?...or would it offend one parent who would have it ripped from the library bookshelf, or worse, curriculum?...how do I fight the good fight?...I think that's what everyone at this event was thinking...what are the answers?...voting...yes, but not enough...getting these banned books available where they are banned...yes, but...I think much of this boils down to reading...technology and social media...and teaching to test...have pulled this nation away from true literacy...we need to overhaul the educational system...the public educational system first...many who have had books removed from their schools...wait for it...never read them...so, my retirees who are looking for meaning in this new chapter of your lives...see if your local school or library is looking for reading tutors...and while you're at it...work on their writing too...so that they can compose more than a three-word text...that small child with an open mind will absorb all you can give...I'd like a future filled with Camus, not Boebert...the good fight starts page by page...k?



IN MEMORIUM



**SHERRY ALESSANDRO, ED.D.
1951-2023**

Sherry retired as Assistant Superintendent of the Rocky Point School District. A valued member of NYSRSAS, she served as our Recording Secretary. We will miss her beautiful smile, her winning personality and her wise contributions to our discussions.

Rest in peace, dear friend!

HOW HIGH CAN YOU COUNT?

Corine Lipset-Huberman

Have you ever been subject to insomnia? What techniques do you use to try to put yourself to sleep? Do you ever count sheep, a common solution for many? If your answer is yes, how many sheep do you count? Fifty? One hundred? One thousand? Do you ever run out of numbers? If so, I have the solution for you. Or rather, scientists have the solution for you.

On Friday, November 18, 2022, a group of scientists met outside of Paris. As the global population expanded beyond eight billion for the first time this century, scientists have expanded the world's measuring systems. Just as the knowledge base of the world has expanded with advances in data storage on the web, in the cloud, on smartphones, the terms used to measure weight and size needed extending too. So thanks to these scientists meeting in Paris in 2022, we now have words that expand both the gigantic and the miniscule scale. How many sheep do you think you could count if you counted up to a *ronna* (put 27 zeros after a one) or perhaps a *quetta* (try 30 zeros after a one)? Their miniscule counterparts are the *ronto* (27 zeros after the decimal point) and the *quecto* (30 zeros after the decimal point).

So tonight as you close your eyes and try to dream happy thoughts, hopefully you will not need a *ronna* or a *quetta* of sheep to fall into a deep, satisfying slumber, not even a duo or a threesome. Sweet dreams, my friends! Sweet dreams!



Quarterly Query AUTUMN 2023



This issue deals with many heavy topics. Let's do something a bit lighter for the next issue's Quarterly Query. Our Executive Board and most of our membership have been together now for many years. Having joined when we were in our late sixties or early seventies, many of us now are in our late seventies or eighties, some in our nineties. **SO – what is on your bucket list? What do you most want to do in the years to come and why?**

Please send your thoughts to
clipsethuberman@gmail.com

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

**If you can't fly, run; if you can't run, walk; if you can't walk, crawl;
but by all means keep moving.**

Martin Luther King, Jr., 1967



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