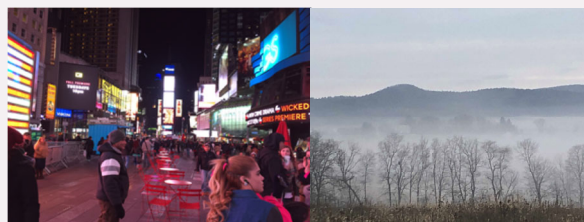




RSA TODAY

News for New York State's
Rural Schools

December 2018



I don't live in New York,

I live in New York

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FARM TO SCHOOL 25 CENT REIMBURSEMENT GUIDELINES

NYS Department of Education and the New York State Department of Agriculture and Markets have finally released the long awaited [New York Grown Reimbursement Guidelines](#)! These guidelines let School Food Authorities know what is eligible for inclusion in the 30% threshold in order to receive the 25 cent reimbursement. You will notice many of the elements we advocated for are included—particularly the requirement that processed foods are comprised of at least 51% NY grown or produced raw agricultural products.

Introduction

When schools use food products from local sources, it supports local farmers and provides healthy choices for children in the school meal programs while supporting the local economy.

Chapter 56 of the Laws of 2018 provides school food authorities (SFAs) with increased State reimbursement for the purchase of New York State (NYS) food products for school lunch programs. Specifically, SFAs that spend at least thirty percent of total food costs for the school lunch program on NYS food products in the preceding school year are eligible for additional State reimbursement that, combined with any existing State reimbursement, will not exceed twenty-five cents for any school lunch meal. Hereinafter, this initiative will be referred to as the "30% NYS Initiative."



SFAs that purchase food items and prepare their own school lunches or SFAs that contract with a Food Service Management Company to purchase food items and prepare school lunches are eligible to participate in this initiative. SFAs that procure school lunches from a vendor* are not eligible to participate. SFAs must apply to the New York State Education Department (SED) annually to receive this additional reimbursement.

The guidelines provided in this document are established jointly by SED and the New York State Department of Agriculture and Markets (DAM) pursuant to the 2018 legislation and are intended to define the requirements and explain the procedure to apply for this optional funding initiative as well as provide guidance for SFAs to ensure that purchases made with child nutrition program funds are appropriately procured in accordance with federal, state and local procurement requirements.

** A vendor is a company (commercial enterprise, nonprofit organization, or public entity) that prepares, cooks, and packages unitized or bulk-form meals, with or without milk, off-site at their own facilities and delivers them ready-to-eat or heat to the site or location requested by the participating institution or makes them available for pickup. Vendors provide meals only and do not manage any aspect of the school food service.*

Definitions: New York State Food Products

Any New York State (NYS) Food Product purchased and used in the reimbursable meal for the school lunch program may contribute toward the 30% NYS Initiative. A “NYS Food Product” is defined as:

- A food item that is grown, harvested, or produced in NYS; or
- A food item processed inside or outside NYS comprising over 51% agricultural raw materials grown, harvested, or processed in NYS, by weight or volume.

“Producing” means the producing of food grown upon and/or harvested from the farm or waters through agricultural, horticultural, aquacultural, or dairying processes.

“Processing” means any alteration of a food product from its raw or original state to enhance its value or render it suitable for consumption. Examples of processing include, but are not limited to, butchering of meat or poultry, and cooking, pasteurizing, and/or packaging food products.

Procurement of NYS Food Products

SFAs are required to follow all applicable federal, state and local procurement rules in purchasing products for the 30% NYS Initiative. SFAs may apply a geographic preference in the procurement of unprocessed, locally grown or raised products as prescribed by the United States Department of Agriculture. Specific guidance on using a geographic preference and other methods to procure local food for child nutrition programs can be accessed through the following links:

Federal and State procurement requirements and guidance:

<http://www.cn.nysed.gov/content/procurement-information>

Federal and State procurement thresholds:

<http://www.cn.nysed.gov/content/guidance-procurement-methods>

Purchasing local food for use in schools including how to apply geographic preference:

<http://www.cn.nysed.gov/farmtoschool>

<https://www.fns.usda.gov/farmtoschool/procuring-local-foods> (link is external)

To find New York State products, please visit:

<https://www.agriculture.ny.gov/f2s/FoodServiceDirectors.html> (link is external)

Determining the amount of NYS Food Products to purchase

To participate in the 30% NYS Initiative, SFAs are required to purchase at least 30 percent of their total food costs for lunches in the preceding school year on NYS food products. The cost of reimbursable lunches will be used as the base to determine the minimum amount of NYS product purchases each SFA is required to incur to receive the additional reimbursement. To determine the minimum amount of NYS food product purchases for school lunch required to qualify for the additional reimbursement use the 30% Calculation Tool found [here](#).

SFAs will not include the value of USDA (commodity) foods as a revenue, expense or in the amount purchased on NYS food products for this initiative. The value of USDA foods is excluded from this initiative as these food items are made available through entitlement funding and not at a cost to the SFA.

Application

SFAs will apply for the additional reimbursement annually through SED’s Child Nutrition Management System. All Child Nutrition reimbursement claims from the previous school year must be submitted prior to completing the application. Through the application, SFAs will report the following information from the previous school year, excluding the value of any USDA (commodity) foods:

- Total cost of all food purchased (breakfast, lunch, snack, a la carte, etc.)
- Total amount of revenue from federal and state reimbursement for all child nutrition programs
- Total amount of revenue from the sale of all food
- Total amount of revenue from reduced price and paid lunch meal sales
- Total cost of NYS food products purchased for the school lunch program

These figures will be used in to determine whether the SFA purchased enough NYS food products to qualify for the additional reimbursement.

The application will require an attestation from the SFA Superintendent, Executive Director, Chief School Officer, or their duly authorized designee that the SFA made the disclosed amount in purchases and maintains documentation to support the SFA's eligibility for the additional reimbursement.

Required Documentation

SFAs that receive additional State reimbursement through this initiative are required to maintain documentation on file to demonstrate that the procurement and use of NYS food products for lunch meals was at least 30 percent of the SFAs school lunch food costs in the preceding school year. Typical documents used to support this initiative and justify the additional reimbursement may include, but is not limited to, solicitations, contracts, purchase orders, price lists, labels, invoices, receipts, production records and NYS Product lists.

For processed products, SFAs must require that product manufacturers complete the Product Formulation Statement for Documenting processed New York State Food Products found here to certify qualifying products. Processed products for which a Product Formulation Statement for Documenting processed New York State Food Products has not been certified by the manufacturer and maintained by the SFA cannot be counted toward this initiative. SFAs must maintain these signed statements for documentation.

Upon request, SFAs are required to make all accounts and records pertaining to its school food service immediately available to USDA, SED or any other authorized entity, for audit or review. These records must be maintained for a period of three years after the date of the final claim for reimbursement for the fiscal year to which they pertain, except that if audit findings have not been resolved, the records shall be retained beyond the three year period as long as required for the resolution of the issues raised by the audit. Therefore, notwithstanding records pertaining to an unresolved audit, records supporting this initiative are to be kept for a three year period commencing after the date of the final claim for reimbursement in the following school year.

Payments

SFAs will apply and be approved annually to receive the additional State reimbursement. Approved SFAs will receive the additional reimbursement based on monthly lunch meals claimed in the Child Nutrition Management System in the following school year. Payments will be made in the same manner as current State reimbursements are made for school meals.

Timeline

The chart below demonstrates the implementation of this initiative in the first year.

SY 18/19	SFAs track lunch purchases and maintain documents
July 1, 2019 – August 15, 2019	SFAs apply for reimbursement using SY18/19 data
July 1, 2019 – September 1, 2019	SED processes applications
SY 19/20	Approved SFAs receive a total of \$.25 in State reimbursement for lunches claimed each month SFAs track lunch purchases and maintain documents to apply to receive reimbursement for SY20/21

Questions?

A compilation of frequently asked questions has been developed and will continually be updated to provide more information and guidance relative to this initiative. [Click here to access the FAQ.](#)

SFAs can contact SED via email at cn@nysed.gov ([link sends e-mail](#))

Farmers, processors, and other vendors can contact DAM via email at farm2school@agriculture.ny.gov ([link sends e-mail](#)).

This guidance was prepared jointly by the New York State Education Department and the New York State Department of Agriculture and Markets.

RSA ADVANCING FARM TO SCHOOL AGENDA



One of your Rural Schools Association's legislative success stories is the effort to secure new Farm to School funding in last year's state budget. The program is the most generous of its kind in our nation. But that doesn't mean we're done. As you can see from the following joint letter to the governor, our coalition of advocates is broad and ready to tackle the remaining obstacles. If your district hasn't yet looked into the program, please do yourself, your students and your community a favor by doing so. The program can increase your school lunch revenue, provide healthier food opportunities for kids and support your community's economy!

NEW YORK GROWN FOOD FOR NEW YORK KIDS

November 20th, 2018

The Honorable Andrew M. Cuomo Governor of New York State Executive Chamber
State Capitol
Albany, New York 12224

Dear Governor Cuomo,

Thank you for your leadership in expanding access to healthy food grown and raised in New York for K-12 schools to purchase and serve to our children. At a time when childhood obesity rates have reached new highs and farmers and rural communities are struggling economically, the commitments you made in the 2018 "No Student Goes Hungry" initiative, including creating a New York Grown Purchasing Incentive for K-12 schools and doubling the state's investment in the Farm to School grants program, have the potential to improve our students' health and academic performance while at the same time boosting farm income and reviving rural economies in New York State. Additionally, programs that you have championed such as New York Thursdays and New York Grown and Certified have contributed significantly to the growth and success of Farm to School programs across the State.

However, barriers remain for schools that are seeking to purchase more foods from New York farms to serve to our children. Addressing these barriers will unlock the economic development and public health potential of the New York Grown Purchasing Incentive. As a first step this year, modest investments and simple legal changes can be made to help students enjoy more farm fresh New York grown food in school cafeterias. Therefore, we respectfully recommend the following actions over the next year:

Continue Nation Leading Program to Help K-12 Schools Purchase and Serve more Fresh, New York Grown Food to Students

The New York Grown Food Purchasing Incentive created and funded in the FY2018-19 New York state budget is now the most generous incentive in the country to encourage in-state food purchasing by K-12 schools. In order to maximize participation from schools, which are already in the menu planning stage for the 2019-20 school year, we recommend:

- Continuing to fund this incentive as an entitlement program in the FY2019-20 state budget to provide a reimbursement of 25 cents per lunch meal to schools that annually spend at least 30% of their lunch dollars on items grown or produced in New York State.
- Releasing guidelines from New York State Department of Education by the end of November 2018 on how schools can qualify for the increased reimbursement incentive and ensuring that guidelines detail a process that is both user-friendly for K-12 schools, and stringent enough that it will have a measurable effect on New York farm sales. The overall spending on local products should include any products that are purchased by the district including via grants, reimbursements, or allocations.
- Providing ongoing, statewide trainings for schools on how to follow these guidelines and procure New York grown food.

Expand Access to and Supply of Food Grown by New York Farmers that is Available for Purchase by all K-12 Schools

Administering the New York Grown Food Purchasing Incentive alongside the Farm to School Grants program is critical in helping to increase the ability of schools to purchase and handle foods grown and produced in New York State. The popular Farm to School grants program has begun to make the investments necessary to grow Farm to School programs by funding the hiring of Farm to School coordinators, purchase of equipment, and training opportunities for school food service workers on how to use farm fresh products. Regional Farm to School coordinators in the North Country and Southern Tier supported by these grants have been instrumental in helping schools purchase local food by assisting with planning, providing necessary technical assistance, aggregating purchasing to increase buying power, and fostering relationships to connect farms with schools.

Continuing to support these activities, as well as investing in the capacity throughout the supply chain to aggregate, process, and transport farm products into schools will help unlock the full potential of the New York Grown Purchasing Incentive while also building market pathways for other institutions to purchase local foods. Additionally, the ability to trace food and raw ingredients back to their source of origin will be essential to ensure that the New York Grown Purchasing Incentive has the integrity necessary to realize its public health and economic development goals. Over the long term, investing in a coordinated, statewide network of regional coordinators and in the further infrastructure development will be critical to unlock the potential of the New York Grown Purchasing Incentive. Over the next year, we suggest:

- Appropriating \$3 million for the Farm to School grants program in the FY2019-20 State Budget to meet the current demand for this popular and successful program, and creating a new category within the Farm to School grants for statewide training and support which could be used to hire regional coordinators, deliver broader statewide Farm to School training, and/or build other regional efforts;
- Building on the state's investment in supply chain infrastructure by creating a \$5 million Farm to School Capital Project Grants Fund through REDCs for school districts, farmers, food hubs, food banks, and processors to invest in capital projects that support minimal processing and packaging, transportation, storage, cooking and/or source verification of New York food products; and
- Amending State Finance Law to increase the discretionary purchasing threshold for school districts purchasing local food to \$75,000, and providing easy-to-understand guidance and ongoing statewide trainings on how to use informal procurement methods to purchase New York Grown food.

Give a New Generation of Students Hands-on Food and Nutrition Education through Eating and Enjoying New York Grown Foods

Children choose and eat more fresh foods in school meals if they are directly involved in growing or preparing them, or if they learn about these foods in an experiential way. Nutrition education, cooking demonstrations, school gardens, farm visits and food tastings are just a few of the activities that New York schools undertake to teach kids about farms and the benefits of healthy eating; lessons that will serve them for a lifetime. Further, when children are more fully engaged in learning about the farm fresh foods they are eating, they bring these lessons home with them, consuming more fresh fruits and vegetables with their families. We recommend that the State of New York promote more of these activities in schools by:

- Creating a Model New York State School Wellness Policy supporting Farm to School that promotes locally-sourced school meals and links them with increased experiential education such as hands-on lessons, taste tests, school gardens activities, local farm visits, and family engagement.

New York has a tremendous opportunity to build on recent success and continue to lead the nation in increasing access to healthy meals for our schoolchildren while creating substantial economic opportunities for our State's farmers. Thank you for all of your leadership in these areas, and for your consideration of these actions at this critical moment in the year ahead.

Sincerely,

See attached list of signatories (next page)

cc: Patrick Hooker, Deputy Secretary for Food and Agriculture

Jamie Frank, Assistant Secretary for Education

Richard Ball, Commissioner, New York State Department of Agriculture and Markets

Mary Ellen Elia, Commissioner, New York State Department of Education

Michael Gulino, NYS Coordinator, Action for Healthy Kids
 Joshua Bakelaar, Local Economies and Agriculture Director, Adirondack North Country Association
 Chris Clapper, Superintendent, Alexandria CSD
 David Haight, New York State Director, American Farmland Trust
 Caitlin O'Brien, Government Relations Director, American Heart Association
 Cheryl Stair, Chef/Owner, Art of Eating
 Katrina Light, Supervisor of Food & Agricultural Programs, Bard College
 Mark Bordeaux SNS, Senior Food Service Director, Broome Tioga BOCES
 Amy Klein, CEO, Capital Roots
 Wes Gillingham, Associate Director, Catskill Mountainkeeper
 Fabrizio Facchini, President, Chef's Alliance of New York State
 Dina Faticone, Director of Community Health and Engagement, Common Ground Health & Healthi Kids Coalition
 Liz Accles, Executive Director, Community Food Advocates
 Julie C. Suarez, Associate Dean, Cornell College of Agriculture and Life Sciences
 Natasha Thompson, President and CEO, Food Bank of the Southern Tier
 Kumar Chandran, Policy Director, FoodCorps
 Mitch Gruber PhD, Chief Program Officer, Foodlink Inc.
 Stephen Cook, MD, Pediatrician, Golisano Children Hospital at UR Medicine
 Claire Barnett, MBA, Executive Director, Healthy Schools Network
 Jesse Coburn, Superintendent, Heuvelton Central School District
 Annetta Centrella Vitale, Adjunct Instructor, Hofstra's Department of Sustainability Studies
 Todd Erling, Executive Director, Hudson Valley Agribusiness Development Corporation
 Susan Zimet, Executive Director, Hunger Action Network New York State
 Joel Berg, CEO, Hunger Free America
 Claire Raffel, Deputy Director, Laurie M. Tisch Center for Food, Education and Policy; Teacher's College, Columbia University Program in Nutrition
 Peter G. Bertrand, Food Service Director, Massena Central School
 Cynthia Haskins, President and CEO, New York Apple Association
 Renee St. Jacques, Assistant Director of Public Policy, New York Farm Bureau
 Julie Tighe, President, New York League of Conservation Voters
 Jennifer Martin, Executive Director, New York School Nutrition Association
 Carol DeNysschen, PhD, RD, MPH, CDN, FAND; President, New York State Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics
 Michael Borges, Executive Director, New York State Association of School Business Officials
 Kyle Belokopitsky, Executive Director, New York State Parent Teacher's Association
 Bill Miller, President, New York State School Boards Association
 Bill Telepan, Chef, Oceana Restaurant
 Kathleen P. Dorr RD, MBA, Assistant School Lunch Director, Oneida-Herkimer-Madison BOCES
 Ray Armater, Executive Director, Poughkeepsie Farm Project
 Jack Salo, Executive Director, Rural Health Network of South Central New York
 David Allan Little, Executive Director, Rural Schools Association of New York State
 Mary Beer, President, S2AY Rural Health Network
 Jennifer L. Gaffney, Superintendent of Schools, Sackets Harbor Central School District
 Jake Samascott, Owner, Samascott Orchards LLC
 Ruth Pino, Food Service Director, Saranac Lake School District
 Julia Van Loon, President, Slate Foods-Red Barn Provisions, New York Beef in Schools
 Rich Vergili, Chapter Co-Leader, Slow Food Hudson Valley
 Kelly McGlinchey, Board Co-Chair, Slow Food NYC
 Laura Luciano, Governor, Slow Food New York State
 Jennifer John, Executive Director, The Sylvia Center
 August Ruckdeschel, Chair, Suffolk County Food Policy Council
 Patricia B. LaBarr, Superintendent, Watertown City School District
 Wendy Siskin, Senior Program Director, Wellness in the Schools
 Sue Bell, School Food Service Director, Wilson Central School District



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IDENTIFY A MENTOR

Identify a mentor locally that really believes in you. This could be a teacher at your school, a 4-H club leader, a coach, FFA advisor, or even a parent. They will help keep you on track and motivated to complete the paper.

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HOW SCHOOLS ARE FORCED TO CLOSE AS RURAL POPULATIONS DWINDLE

PBS Newshour

Judy Woodruff: We have tried to show lately a number of efforts aimed at reviving small towns and rural areas around the country.

Tonight, we focus on a problem that's tied to towns and small cities losing too many residents. Some rural schools are being forced to shut down or consolidate as people move away.

Jeffrey Brown reports from Central Wisconsin for our weekly education segment, Making the Grade.

Jeffrey Brown: Every morning, 6-year old Brady Schlamp boards the bus in Arena, Wisconsin, to travel the 10 miles to his new school in the neighboring town of Spring Green.

Just a few blocks away, Arena Elementary, a now abandoned building where Brady attended kindergarten last year. His mom, Deborah, says the transition has been tough.

Deborah Schlamp: He's adjusting. Slowly, he's starting to make some new friends, which he's happy about. But I think he's sad some days, especially when we go by the school. Now we go by, and it's just — it's sitting empty. The playground is sitting empty.

Jeffrey Brown: Empty schools closed to save money, it's happening in rural areas all over the country, including here in the River Valley School District in Central Wisconsin, which shuttered elementary schools in two towns in the last two years.

Some here commute to work in Madison, less than an hour away, and the area boasts attractions like Frank Lloyd Wright's home and studio, Taliesin.

But the rural economy and demographics are changing, and that, says Superintendent Tom Wermuth, impacts schools.

Tom Wermuth: Although our area is growing as a whole, we're growing primarily over the age of 60 and becoming more of a retirement destination. And we're not attracting the families that traditionally were of child-bearing age.

Jeffrey Brown: So it's a numbers game in part?

Tom Wermuth: It's a numbers game. And it's a numbers game because student head count dictates how we're financed.

Jeffrey Brown: But for everyone here, of course, it's about much more than just numbers. The school closures have split communities and pitted towns against one another.

Karen Wilkinson: It was hard. It was emotionally hard. Still hard.

Jeffrey Brown: I see, yes. Because?

Karen Wilkinson: Well, it was such a part of our lives.

Jeffrey Brown: Karen Wilkinson was a teacher at Arena Elementary for years, until she retired two years ago.

Karen Wilkinson: Neighbors stopped speaking to neighbors, and friendships were divided.

Jeffrey Brown: Really? It got to that point?

Karen Wilkinson: It did get to that point.

Jeffrey Brown: Wilkinson and others say, when the Arena school was closed, the heart of the town was lost, leaving just one cafe and a cheese shop as the main social and economic engines.

And Deborah Schlamp says, without a school to attract younger people, a vicious cycle is perpetuated.

Deborah Schlamp: I don't think families are going to want to come here anymore. They're going to start looking at the other towns, and nothing's going to happen with Arena. It's just going to eventually kind of dry up, I think.

Jeffrey Brown: Residents of nearby Lone Rock have similar concerns.

Kathy Rossing taught at its elementary school until it was closed. She, like many students, made the move to Spring Green and now teaches at the consolidated school.

Kathy Rossing: It was very, very hard, both having taught my entire teaching career there in this nice small family atmosphere, and then also as being from Lone Rock. That was a whole different concern too, with being a property owner in Lone Rock, and worrying about what our value of our house is, and are we losing that?

Jeffrey Brown: Superintendent Wermuth says the decision to close schools wasn't easy, but the failure of residents to vote for a tax increase two years ago, coupled with what he calls an antiquated state funding formula, meant he had no choice.

Tom Wermuth: I think we made the difficult decision that we had to make in order to continue to provide the students that we're serving the best possible academic and co-curricular experiences that we could.

Jeffrey Brown: That is, consolidation does bring benefits, as Wermuth was eager to show on a tour of the newly configured schools.

Tom Wermuth: There's more children in the building than there have been in years.

Jeffrey Brown: Yes, which is a good thing.

Tom Wermuth: It's a good thing. It's good. It allows us to do things like balance classrooms by gender and behavior and ability level.

Jeffrey Brown: And he said students have made the adjustment more easily than many of the adults.

Kaylie Killoy: I'm making a lot of — more new friends and all that stuff.

Jeffrey Brown: Case in point, 10-year-olds Lydia Johnson and Kaylie Killoy, who now go to the consolidated middle school in Spring Green as fifth-graders.

Lydia Johnson: We have lockers, and we have more responsibilities. We have to travel from one class to another.

Kaylie Killoy: I like having the lockers too and having an actual study hall.

Jeffrey Brown: Oh, yes? You didn't have that before?

Kaylie Killoy: No.

Jeffrey Brown: As elsewhere, consolidation is nothing new here. In the 1960s, in another period of change, the district went from four high schools down to one.

Then, as now, Superintendent Wermuth says the goal is to offer students access to classes and programs unavailable at smaller schools.

Tom Wermuth: We have got phenomenal career and technology education programs. We have a welding program. We have an automotive program. We have an electronics program. We have a business program. We have an agriculture program.

Julie Underwood: Lots of times, when a school closes in a small community, it closes a community.

Jeffrey Brown: Education expert Julie Underwood says, although closures can be devastating to small towns, consolidation is often the only choice to keep school districts viable.

Julie Underwood: You want to stay vibrant as much as possible. And once you start losing that by losing students or cutting your programs, you're going to lose more students and cut more programs. It's a bad cycle.

Jeffrey Brown: She adds that rural school districts like River Valley are victims of a double economic whammy.

Julie Underwood: If you look at the demographic maps of Wisconsin, not only has the population shifted out of rural areas, but those rural areas have become poorer in terms of income, so they have less resources to deal with greater problems.

Jeffrey Brown: And now, even with the consolidation, the district finds it's still short of operational funds. It put another tax increase before the voters earlier this month, which failed to pass. When we spoke before the election,

Tom Wermuth told me a no-vote could lead to programs being cut.

Tom Wermuth: We have phenomenal co-curricular experiences for our students, from the arts and music to our equestrian team.

Jeffrey Brown: You're saying all these things could be at risk?

Tom Wermuth: They could be at risk, without a question.

Jeffrey Brown: As for the town of Arena, there is hope for building a new future, out of the old.

Fifty years ago, as an eighth grader, Jay Jones was giving tours of this Arena school building, then a K-8 school.

Jay Jones: This is the village office. The police station would be taking this classroom.

Jeffrey Brown: Today, he's part of a citizens group aiming to repurpose the abandoned building into a community center, police station, day care, and even a commercial kitchen for start-up chefs.

Jay Jones: I was part of the fight to keep the school open. We lost. So, we were handed lemons, so now you try to make lemonade. And that's what we're doing here.

Jeffrey Brown: It will take commitment and funding, says Jones, but he thinks the will to keep the town alive is there.

For the "PBS NewsHour," I'm Jeffrey Brown in Arena, Wisconsin.



RSA Executive Director David Little recently provided legislative and advocacy information to the Erie County Association of School Boards. Pictured here, Dave is flanked by ECASB Executive Director David Lowrey and Dr. Jill O'Malley, President of the Ken-Ton Board of Education.

NYSSBA PRESS RELEASE



Student Mental Health is becoming recognized as the pervasive concern among rural school leaders. The following release from the NYS School Boards Association and the NYS Association of School Psychologists shines light on the tremendous concern of those addressing the problem. The report speaks for itself, but please note the geographic areas of highest concern are all rural regions

New report questions whether schools in New York have enough psychologists to meet student mental health needs

Twenty-nine percent of school superintendents in New York State said their school districts lack enough school psychologists to meet student needs. And among school psychologists, a whopping 66 percent believe there is not enough capacity to meet their needs.

Those findings come from surveys by the New York State School Boards Association (NYSSBA) and the New York Association of School Psychologists (NYASP).

Among superintendents, the level of concern varied by region. It was highest in the Mohawk Valley, where 60 percent of superintendents said they see a shortage of psychologists. Also highly concerned were superintendents in Central New York (44 percent); Capital Region (37 percent); St. Lawrence-Black River (35 percent); Suffolk County (33 percent); and the North Country (32 percent).

The results are summarized in a report entitled, *Of Sound Mind: Do schools have enough mental health support staff to meet student need?* It is available at http://www.nyssba.org/clientuploads/nyssba_pdf/report-of-sound-mind-120318.pdf.

Statewide, there was an average of 555 students per school psychologist in the 2016-17 school year. Ninety-six percent of districts had no more than 1,000 students per school psychologist, which is the maximum recommended by the National Association of School Psychologists.

However, one problem identified in the survey is that school psychologists perceive that they spend a lot of time on state and federal requirements, including paperwork, minimizing time to provide mental health services to students directly.

"Everyone in public education has been waking up to the fact that it is extremely important to pay attention to the mental health needs of our students," said NYSSBA Executive Director Timothy G. Kremer. "This is especially true in light of myriad current concerns, including school safety and teen suicide. We hope our report stimulates discussions about whether we are paying enough attention to students' mental health needs and what resources can be brought to bear."

"The fact that school superintendents throughout New York State are recognizing an increasing need for mental health supports, as well as an increase in the school psychology workforce, represents important steps to addressing this crisis," said NYASP President John Garruto. "The good news is that New York State currently has approximately 3,600 certified school psychologists and 25 school psychology graduate training programs which produce approximately 350 new school psychologists annually. This represents a significant potential workforce to meet the needs of children, youth, and families throughout New York. Through the implementation of the recommendations contained within this report, schools will be in a better position to recruit and retain highly qualified professionals for work in the schools and community."

IS THERE A FEDERAL RIGHT TO AN EDUCATION OR IS THAT RESERVED TO THE STATES?

Your RSA is a partner with the Center for Educational Equity (CEE) in its legal challenge to the state's school funding formula. It is not a partner in the group's latest effort; a federal lawsuit claiming a U.S. Constitutional right to a public education. This new lawsuit is based on the concept that every child needs the ability to become an informed and involved citizen of our democracy (and that our schools generally are not currently providing the means for that to happen.) RSA will determine whether it is appropriate to support this effort in the future, but for now it is important that rural schools (that are being shortchanged the most) know about this attempt to create a federal right to education. Whether or not the federal courts decide that public education is a federal constitutional right, there is little question that civics education is needed as much now as at any point in our nation's history. A little known aspect of the CFE court decision a decade ago was that the whole point of the state's responsibility to provide a sound basic education to every child stems from the need to provide the state with residents who are knowledgeable and able to participate in elections, jury service, local boards, etc. Your RSA is part of a coalition to support civics education in our New York State schools.



Center for Educational Equity Executive Director Michael Rebell Files Federal Class Action Suit to Establish Right Under the U.S. Constitution to An Adequate Education to Prepare Young People for Full Civic Participation

November 29, 2018

The lawsuit, filed yesterday in Providence, Rhode Island, is extremely timely. The Trump presidency and the midterm election campaigns have underscored troubling trends in our national politics: an increasingly polarized electorate, lack of focus on substantive policy, and widespread acceptance of one-sided, erroneous information.

Other disturbing trends have existed for decades. A low proportion of eligible voters actually go to the polls; the number of citizens who participate in local community activities has dramatically declined; and more Americans than ever are neglecting basic civic responsibilities, like jury service.

These worrisome developments raise serious questions about how well schools are carrying out one of their most critical responsibilities: to prepare citizens capable of safeguarding our democracy and stewarding our nation toward a greater realization of its democratic values. If schools are not preparing students to participate in the deliberative processes needed to make government work properly, then they are not meeting their obligations under the law.

"Most people think that students have a right to an adequate education under the U.S. Constitution," said Michael Rebell, the lead counsel on the case and an education law professor and founding director of the Center for Educational Equity at Teachers College, Columbia University. "Unfortunately, the federal courts have never held that there is such a right. Today, although it is more important than ever that the schools carry out their traditional responsibility to prepare all of their students to participate effectively in our democratic institutions, most schools are failing to do so."

"A revitalization of American democracy will require the knowledgeable and committed engagement of the younger generation," Rebell added. "This lawsuit asks the U.S. District Court in Rhode Island to make clear that all students in Rhode Island and throughout the United States have an enforceable constitutional right to an education that will truly prepare them to be capable civic participants in a democratic society."

"I have attended the public schools in Rhode Island for my entire life and have not been exposed to how to engage sufficiently in critical thinking or even the basics of how to participate in democratic institutions," said Musah Mohammed Sesay, a co-plaintiff and senior at Classical High School in Providence. "It is only through my work with advocacy organizations outside of school that I have become aware of what is missing from my preparation in school for adult life as a fully engaged member of the community."

The lawsuit asks the federal court to confirm the constitutional right of all public school students to a civic education that prepares them adequately to vote, to exercise free speech, petition the government, actively engage in civic life and exercise all of their constitutional rights under the 14th Amendment, and under Article 4, section 4, which requires the federal government to guarantee each of the states a "republican" form of government.

Young people equipped with the necessary knowledge, skills, and experiences, recognize their civic agency and exercise their civic powers to work for meaningful social change. Unfortunately, too many schools, particularly ones that serve students in poverty and students of color, are ill equipped to provide this type of education, even though the U.S. Supreme Court and 32 state supreme courts have explicitly stated that preparation for capable citizenship is a primary purpose of education.

READ MORE ABOUT THE LAWSUIT IN THESE 11/28/18 ARTICLES:

NY Times: [*Are Civics Lessons a Constitutional Right? These Students Are Suing for Them*](#)

The Atlantic: [*The Lawsuit That's Claiming a Constitutional Right to Education*](#)

READ THE OFFICIAL LEGAL COMPLAINT:

[*Cook v. Raimando Complaint*](#)



Introducing NYSED Community Schools Technical Assistance Centers

This past summer, New York State Education Department announced funding for three regional community schools technical assistance centers (TACs). Rockland 21st Century Collaborative for Children and Youth was recommended for the Eastern Region TAC, representing judicial districts 3, 4, 9 and 10. Binghamton University was recommended for the Central and Western TAC, representing judicial districts 5, 6, 7, and 8. As the regions that are supporting rural school districts, the Eastern and Central/Western Community Schools TACs are very excited to work with educators, administrators, and school board members to ensure that our regional efforts are as effective and collaborative as possible.

We understand that rural areas provide both a unique set of challenges and opportunities for the implementation of the community school model, so our goal is to provide professional development specifically geared to meet your needs.

Some of the overarching goals of the Eastern and Central/Western Regional TACs are to:

- Assist rural schools with identifying tools to help design, assess and implement needs and resource assessments that support whole child education
- Establish and maintain communities of practice that build capacity within rural districts by connecting them with other districts across the region

In the coming weeks, we will be reaching out to our rural school district partners with additional information about the Eastern and Central/Western Region Community Schools TACs, as well as upcoming opportunities for professional development and collaboration. Please note that our support is open to all schools, not only those that have received state community school funding.

We look forward to partnering with you!

Damion Morgan

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A community school is a strategy to create the conditions for learning, growth, and success. By integrating community resources in a school, community schools increase access to medical and mental health care, expand learning opportunities through after-school and summer programs, and provide parent/family engagement support to remove the barriers to learning that young people might face. With these essential elements housed in a school, the work leads to expanded student achievement, stronger families, and ultimately a better New York State.

FY2019-2020 BUDGET PRIORITIES FOR COMMUNITY SCHOOLS

Invest in Foundation Aid

Maintain \$200 million in funding for community schools through the Foundation Aid Community Schools Set-Aside

Expand Quality Community Schools

Invest \$100 million in new funding for community schools through a Community Schools Categorical Aid. Community schools are a unique strategy to integrate programs and services that address student safety and wellbeing. A categorical aid would allow specific investments for a coordinator/director, social emotional learning programs, and comprehensive health services.

Enhance Regional Community Schools Technical Assistance Centers (TACs)

Add an additional \$500K in funding for the TACs, for a total of \$1.615M annually through June 30, 2023. School districts and community partners must receive the necessary support and implementation assistance to ensure their efforts are successful. An additional \$500K would provide funding for each TAC to hire a dedicated staff member for on-site technical assistance and coaching and will allow for an annual “statewide” convening for community school directors or district representatives.

Mission: The New York State Community Schools Network advocates to develop, promote, and sustain community schools in collaboration with government, local school districts, and community partners. Through a diverse coalition of community-based agencies, parents, teachers, and statewide advocates, we champion effective community school policies so that children and families can thrive.

The NYS Community Schools Network also supports critical funding for the programs and services that community schools effectively leverage and coordinate in order to ensure that students and their families are supported and engaged. In collaboration with the New York State Network for Youth Success, Winning Beginning New York, and the New York School-Based Health Alliance, we support the following budget requests:

Afterschool and Summer Programs

Invest \$15 million for Advantage After School Program (AASP) funding to expand the per student rate

Early Childhood Education

Invest at least \$150 million to ensure children outside of New York City have access to quality full-day pre-k programs and to enhance quality and eliminate barriers to expansion in districts ready with a plan to meet the needs of and prioritize at-risk children in their communities.

School-Based Health

Maintain \$17.1 million in FY19 funding levels and add an additional \$5 million for school-based health center sponsors.

Don't Try to Fit Rural Health Into an Urban Box

By: Melissa Bosworth, www.rwjf.org

In rural areas, lack of access to adequate care can be a matter of life and death. Transforming rural health requires creative, place-based solutions and a commitment to fostering local leadership.



The amputation was scheduled for that day. John's* uncontrolled diabetes had stopped blood flow to his lower leg. With the tissue starting to die, it seemed inevitable that his foot would have to be removed to save his life.

Thankfully, a team I work with had recently helped bring telehealth services to the rural Colorado hospital where John had been admitted. A cloud-based video system connected to electronic health records enabled his doctor to consult with an infectious disease specialist hundreds of miles away in Denver. The specialist suggested one last “cocktail” of antibiotics, to be administered by I.V. The protocol worked. John kept not only his foot, but also his livelihood as a rancher: his ability to graze cattle, grow wheat, and provide for his family.

I wasn't always bringing life-saving services to rural hospitals. At the beginning of my career, I was using music therapy to help patients recover from traumatic brain injuries. But as I helped individuals, I became increasingly concerned by larger systemic problems, especially by how a lack of access to care affects residents of rural areas. I saw too many people die simply because they could not get adequate medical attention. Inspired by my love for the people and places of the rural West, where my family roots run deep, I refocused my career on transforming rural health and health care.

[The problem of rural health care access is a very intricate web. It can't be solved in hospitals alone.](#)

Today I am executive director of the Eastern Plains Healthcare Consortium, a new five-hospital collaborative. In this role, I help institutions improve health care delivery through various approaches like workforce sharing, telehealth services, and expanded access to broadband internet. Through the consortium, hospitals also pool resources to buy all kinds of supplies in bulk—from surgical gloves to anti-venom for rattlesnake bites—and then share them, reducing costs for everyone. These are game-changing measures for rural health. So is increasing access to affordable, healthy food, designing flexible place-based policies, and reintegrating human services into health care delivery so that all disciplines nurture the whole person.

Recommendations for Rural Health Equity

As vital as those interventions are, I devote much of my attention to the broader challenge of helping communities change the way they solve systemic problems. As a consultant, I work not only with hospitals but also with other nonprofits to help them shape solutions that fit the intricacies and individuality of diverse communities and circumstances.

My colleagues and I tackle a wide range of challenges, from helping resolve water-rights issues to working with clinics serving transgender people—many of whom are homeless—to assisting with the development of high-tech smart homes that help keep seniors safe by monitoring their vitals, medications, and more. The problem of rural health care access is a very intricate web. It can't be solved in hospitals alone.

Having learned from failures and successes alike, I can offer these five recommendations for anyone interested in improving rural health access and equity:

1. Support local leaders and customized solutions. Every rural community is unique, faces particular challenges, and must shape its own solutions. Don't ask people to conform to a model developed for an urban area or even another rural community. The key is finding champions in each community and helping them develop the skills they need to facilitate change.
2. Design for both community and individual. Every solution must be community-focused and must also help individual people. Legislation and tax credits, for example, can attract medical students to study in rural areas and provide incentives for health care professionals to stay. This builds community capacities while benefiting individual providers and patients.
3. Celebrate older generations. Older community members must be honored and included as key players in crafting local solutions. In working to overcome a community's challenges, we need older generations' wisdom. We need to know what has worked for that community in the past and then leverage that for the future.
4. Take the long view. As a society, we're into quick solutions. That approach won't work for most rural communities. What we need is broad, systematic change, and that's going to take a long time and a lot of patience. I'm probably not going to see it all happen in my lifetime. It's important to realize that we're in this for the long haul.
5. Respect and build on rural strengths. Every day, I see the pioneering spirit that built everything west of the Mississippi. I see people rising to meet the extraordinary challenges that come with living long distances from public services. Rural communities are good at capitalizing on existing resources in creative ways.

For there to be a serious investment in rural health leadership, we need to challenge stereotypes about people in rural communities. The rural folk I know are some of the most brilliant people and some of the most open-minded. We need to recognize and celebrate them as teachers with wisdom—as champions for their own places and for our country—and see how we can assist them in transforming systems of care and improving community health. It's a crucial shift in perspective and approach.

I feel a responsibility not only to rural communities in the West, but to the rest of the country and beyond. So I am constantly thinking about how to help other communities build their leaders and capacity. I encourage you to think about this as well.

- A pseudonym



Melissa Bosworth What we need is broad, systematic change, and that's going to take a long time and a lot of patience. I'm probably not going to see it all happen in my lifetime. It's important to realize that we're in this for the long haul. —Melissa Bosworth

Article can be read online here: https://www.rwjf.org/en/blog/2018/11/dont-try-to-fit-rural-health-into-an-urban-box.html?cid=xtw_rwjf_unpd_dte:20181115



Dr. Gretchen Rymarchyk,
Deputy Director RSA

Deputy Directors Corner

Research News from Cornell

1. **John Sipple was involved in the production of a video on rural career preparation for local jobs.** It's short and sweet, and very inspiring! Check it out here:
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=crZWPQPfVHY&t=1s>
2. **ON October 25-26 I attended the Sixth Biennial Urie Bronfenbrenner Conference.** The Theme this year was An Equal Start: Policy and Practice to Promote Equality of Opportunity for Children.

Here are the juiciest tidbits, followed by less exciting details:

This was a relatively small conference with perhaps 50-60 attendees. Many were invited thought leaders in the field, presenting their most recent research. The proceedings of this conference will be published in a special edition from the American Psychological Association.

Eight different projects were presented:

1. "Whatever They Need": Helping Children through in-Kind Child Support, by Timothy Nelson from Princeton University
2. Baby Bonds: A Bold Policy to Reverse the Tide of inequality, by Derrick Hamilton from The New School.
3. How Low-Poverty Neighborhoods Matter: Assumptions, Adaptation, and Agency, by Stefanie DeLuca (Johns Hopkins University), Anna Rhodes (Rice university), and Allison Young (Johns Hopkins University).
4. Does the WIC Program Promote Equality of Opportunity in Early Life? By Janet Currie from Princeton University.
5. Promoting Equality of Educational Opportunity by Investing Early: Can ECE Programs Offer Long-term as Well as Short-term Benefits? By Tyler Watts and Cybele Raver from New York University. [Dr. Raver was one of my professors here at Cornell.]
6. Public Education Spending, Academic Achievement, and outcomes in Adulthood by Kirabo Jackson from Northwestern University.
7. Behavioral Insights and Parental Decision-Making, by Ariel Kalil from University of Chicago.
8. How Do Early Life Experiences Affect Equality of Opportunity for Future Generations?? By Marianne Page (University of California - Davis) and Chloe East (University of Colorado - Denver).

Some important messages I took from this include:

- * Urie Bronfenbrenner was the Carl Sagan of Human Ecology at Cornell, and one of his biggest impacts was getting us to think beyond singular causes of well-being (or ill-being) for people; instead you have to consider the larger context: the people, the processes, the context, and the time in which a person is operating to understand what causes their behavior (choices, good or bad).
- * This presents a challenge for research and policy, because the money (to fund research projects, or to pass a policy and fund implementation) often goes to the most dramatic findings, and we are simply not going to find one big cause or single factor solution for inequality – unequal outcomes in test scores, attendance, graduation rates, behavior management, etc.

- * However, there were many ideas that had at least preliminary data, if not more, showing:
 - ◇ Early stressors have impacts that span lifetimes, and in fact, GENERATIONS. This includes health, social class, and education level. This is good evidence for funding early interventions, preventive and universal health care, early poverty alleviation and remediation efforts, early behavior management training, early academic preparation, etc. (e.g., children who had Medicaid, later grew up to be healthier to the point of recouping \$.56 for each dollar spent on health care in their childhood).
 - ◇ We need to emphasize parenting BEHAVIORS rather than “style,” because it turns out that low-income and high-income parents have the same educational aspirations for their children, and the same level of information on how to support them (eg. regularly read with your child). Low -income parents still don’t read as many minutes as high-income parents do, BUT it appears there may be some rather inexpensive means to help shift that in a positive direction.
 - ◇ More money = higher academic performance: increases in spending results in increased years of education, increases in wages, and decreases in poverty for these students – results are more pronounced for lower income students. Also, school finance reforms may have increased impact in states with teacher unions because that money goes directly into the classroom, rather than as tax relief.

3. ICYMI (In Case You Missed It): Face Book Posts since November RSAToday:

11/26: Good information for you, your stakeholders, and your policy makers: Frequently Asked Questions about Kindergarten Entry Assessments. A Research Brief from Child Trends. https://www.childtrends.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/11/FAQKEA_ChildTrends_November2018.pdf?fbclid=IwAR3T6WwA85HVYnFUDfbj-NFpKWTKcM4AH6Hh59ssffoF70Xyw4gvidDsYWQ

11/15: Get the most out of our winter conference, and meet our keynote speaker here, so you can have questions at the ready! <https://research.cornell.edu/news-features/damaging-effects-poverty-children?fbclid=IwAR2DT2ejAbtp1b6gSZlYgtex8S9tLmSPETyIVQRc7LyrG7PrjXviv4b1lwg>

11/12: We often hesitate out of fear it will ruin a happy holiday, but that doesn't happen here. It's important that we teach students both sides. Read: Decolonizing Thanksgiving: A Toolkit for Combatting Racism in Schools <https://medium.com/age-of-awareness/decolonizing-thanksgiving-a-toolkit-for-combatting-racism-in-schools-5d4e3023a2f8?fbclid=IwAR0elXfWAcI6GBLhFuuGqS0TlMZc9CoWF19QwDKWipDcZhWu4rYDHJ3UTbU>

11/07: FREE WEBINAR (from USDA, Nov 2018 Newsletter) Going Big in Small Places: Millennials Make Their Mark in America’s Towns (https://www.eventbrite.com/e/going-big-in-small-places-millennials-make-their-mark-in-americas-towns-registration-50494999904?aff=DailyYonder&fbclid=IwAR32TsNID7Dgn0G44dLJA_b_pdGmnbcVxMGxdaIYACZH981LNkCGpjIXKs8)

A webinar “Going Big in Small Places: Millennials Make Their Mark in America’s Towns” which is part of the Orton Family Foundation’s series, “Heart & Soul Talks” will be held November 14, 2018 at 1:00 PM EST. The Daily Yonder is a co-sponsor of the webinar, along with the Citizen’s Institute for Rural Design. Ben Winchester, senior research fellow, University of Minnesota Extension, Center for Community Vitality, will be joined three Millennials who are finding opportunity and community in small towns and rural areas – Whitney Kimball Coe of Athens, Tennessee, Brittany Grimes of Galesburg, Illinois, and Bree Henderson of Laconia, New Hampshire.

11/06:

Be sure to come to our Winter Summit next month to learn about how we can help. “More Kids Are Showing Up in ERs with Mental Health Crises”. https://www.nbcnews.com/health/health-news/more-kids-are-showing-ers-mental-health-crises-n930506?cid=sm_npd_nn_fb_ma&fbclid=IwAR3JXJWK3akafaX6K1qLq0POHyHytH3JfdTpvpe7VcHvNAiVwplTRAwI4Do

11/02: Some reading for your weekend: DoE Section 5005 Report on Rural Education <https://www2.ed.gov/.../i.../ed/rural/rural-education-report.pdf>

11/01: A resource idea maybe? “TEALS helps high schools build and grow sustainable computer science programs through partnerships between classroom teachers and tech industry volunteers.”
https://www.tealsk12.org/?fbclid=IwAR0RueA30ypE59Wq-_oFvcNML7ImwYbzK985gE3Dz3tU4FMpPRb-ghtdU6s

