

NYSSBA has a new program: NYSSBA Accelerate™



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NYSSBA Executive Director

This July, we expect about 600 newly elected individuals to join school boards throughout New York State. The learning curve for newly elected school board members is steep. So, I am pleased to announce that NYSSBA will address this problem with a new program we call NYSSBA Accelerate™.

Every month, newly elected board members will receive an email that contains one or more short videos in which we discuss the importance of specific topics such as executive sessions or public comment periods. Then we will direct them to in-depth resource materials available to them on a special webpage.

The once-a-month pace is designed to deliver needed information without being overwhelming. It should be considered a supplement to the state-mandated training in finance and governance that newly elected board members must complete during their first year. (See www.nyssba.org/education-training/state-mandated-training for more information.) A majority of our new members already participate in our mandatory training offerings.

I want both new and veteran school board members to understand that NYSSBA is there to support them and provide help in multiple ways.

Among other things, NYSSBA provides training, information and advocacy. Our departments include:

- **Governmental Relations.** We have a seasoned team of legislative experts who analyze legislation and coordinate our advocacy, which includes YOUR voice.
- **Leadership Development.** This team creates content for our training events that are delivered either in person or online. We will travel to your school district to help your board work through governance issues in events that we call Custom Board Retreats.
- **Legal and Policy Services.** This group of attorneys and policy experts ensure that our member districts understand their legal obligations and policy options. Among other things, this team produces our School Law book – an invaluable resource – every two years.
- **Communications, Marketing and Research.** This team handles media inquiries, produces *On Board*, provides updates via social media and other channels and gathers information through surveys.
- **Convention and Events.** This team handles logistics and content for our Annual Convention & Education Expo and other events throughout the year.
- **Member Relations.** This outreach team is in contact with board presidents, new members and superintendents throughout the state, and always happy to take questions from all members at (800) 342-3360 or MemberRelations@NYSSBA.org.

In addition, NYSSBA has departments for finance, administration, and information technology and project planning.

We are led by a Board of Directors of sitting school board members. They help our staff of 52 stay relevant to the needs of today's school board members.

For instance, while updating NYSSBA's Strategic Plan in late 2023, the Board of Directors asked the staff to think of ways to foster the relationship between school board presidents and superintendents. We have created a program to encourage great communication and understanding between these two roles. It's called the Governance Leadership Program (GLP).

I'm excited to share that after a very successful pilot last year, GLP sessions will be offered at several BOCES this fall.

Meanwhile, NYSSBA staff are in the process of analyzing how well we are doing in what we call "member engagement." We want to ensure you take full advantage of everything we have to offer, including advocacy opportunities, training programs and help with whatever is frustrating you as you pursue excellence in governance and fulfill your important mission of providing the best possible education to public school students throughout the state.

Have you noticed how many times I used the word "team" in this commentary? I am sure you agree that everything begins with teamwork, and we want to ensure that NYSSBA's member school boards are functioning as teams. Our job is to ensure you're able to do so. If you have an idea on how we can do better, contact me at bob.schneider@nyssba.org. I hope you will encourage your new board members to engage with the NYSSBA Accelerate™ program in addition to their mandatory training. If you have questions specific to the NYSSBA Accelerate™ program, please contact Member Relations Manager Patrick Longo at patrick.longo@nyssba.org.