



Executive Viewpoint

Kevin S. Casey, Executive Director

Welcome Back

Welcome back. I know that most of you didn't actually go away, except for perhaps a week or two vacation, but the return of students and staff creates the feeling of a fresh start.

It has been just over six months since the school shooting in Parkland, Florida, and its profile in public discourse has begun to fade. In my opinion there has been a lack of a meaningful response, which is truly disappointing. There has been some money

allocated for improved school safety, but in the larger scheme of things it does not amount to much, and it does not make any change to the basic construct of our current gun laws. Instead, our secretary of education is considering allowing states to access Student Support and Academic Enrichment grant money to train and arm school personnel. Both Chancellor Rosa and Commissioner Elia have (appropriately in my opinion) spoken out against this idea. Nevertheless, I expect the United States

will continue to lead the world in gun violence by a large margin.

In June the United States Supreme Court (USSC), by a 5-4 vote, overturned 40 years of settled law and ruled agency fees unconstitutional. The USSC overturned a 1977 Supreme Court case that was decided with a 9-0 vote, and now allows "free-riders." The plaintiff in the June case, Mark Janus, had his legal fees paid by conservative anti-union organizations. Starting the very day of the decision in favor of Janus, teachers around the country, including in New York, started to receive emails from the Michigan based Mackinac Center "educating" them on how to opt out of their unions. The Mackinac Center is funded in part by the DeVos Foundation. I often wonder why many of those who have

so much spend so much time, money, and effort attacking institutions which historically have raised the living standards of the institutions' members. Aren't there more positive causes for their energetic efforts?

With a new school year comes a new focus. Back to far more traditional concerns such as student achievement, new standards, and the development of ESSA state regulations that will operationalize a school accountability system consistent with the ESSA state plan. Also on the horizon is yet another iteration of an APPR system. These are issues that are important, and welcome compared to school shootings and anti-union attacks.

With a focus on educational issues, SAANYS will conduct its Annual Conference on October

14-15 in Lake Placid, NY and I hope you will consider attending. I do not suggest one should become desensitized to the horrors of school shootings, or not remain aware of forces acting against your interests, but students and parents alike need educators to educate, despite what is going on around them.

There will always be challenges and there will always be students who need your efforts. We all need a break once in a while, but after the break it's time to roll up the sleeves and together face head-on the professional challenges that confront us. You do important work and positively impact many. Welcome back, as we are all better off for it. ■

School Benefits in Implementing Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (ASEL)

Sponsor Opinion Piece by Scott B. Crowder, CEO, Educational Vistas, Inc.

It is not surprising that NYSED is issuing voluntary Social and Emotional Development and Learning (SEDL) Guidelines to give school communities support in addressing child and adolescent development. There is much for schools to gain when school environments are calmer and safer for both teaching and learning. Here is where education addresses teaching the "whole child." While taxonomies have existed

for years, the only one to receive serious regard has been the cognitive. Now, it is time to integrate the cognitive with the affective.

"Social and emotional competence is the ability to understand, manage, and express the social and emotional aspects of one's life in ways that enable the successful management of life tasks such as learning, forming relationships, solving everyday problems, and

adapting to the complex demands of growth and development" (Elias et al., 1997).

The research is clear in supporting ASEL. Both hard and soft sides of learning benefit. In the case of NYSED, it sees SEDL as "promoting positive peer relationships; self-directing and collaborating skills; getting along in a pluralistic community; avoiding risky behaviors; and finding help when feeling sad or hopeless." By combining SEL skills and behaviors with content learning, student growth moves into the area of lifelong learning.

If you have not already noticed in this article, the key is integrating SEL with the academics. There is no way that education can stand an additional layer of programming on top of

what already exists. To be effective, schools need to think and move on ASEL to promote and support the highest level of learning ever imagined.

While considerable curricular planning will be required to bring the integration of content learning and SEL into place, the fit will be natural and exciting for both teachers and students. Good teaching of content brings the student into its midst to experience it at a deeper, personal level of understanding and application. In fact, the integration ASEL with Next Generation Learning Standards will serve both effectively.

Those schools who choose to volunteer for SEDL will enjoy the benefit of being a part of a significant education change with the promise

of supporting equity and higher student achievement. To support the SED's ASEL initiative, EdVistas is hosting a First ASEL Conference at the Fort William Henry Conference Center, Lake George, NY on September 13. Keynote and presenter is Dr. Maurice Elias, one of the leading proponents of ASEL. Those interested in attending should contact Tara O'Neill at 518.805.1113 or toneill@edvistas.com. ■

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