



Volume 3, Issue 1

2013-2014 OFFICERS

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R.E.F.I.T. News...

Dr. Robert Dillon, Executive Director

Helen Maloney, Executive Secretary

January 2014

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A Message from the President of R.E.F.I.T.

On behalf of R.E.F.I.T., I would like to wish everyone a Happy New Year as we prepare for another challenging budget season. As always, R.E.F.I.T. is working hard to promote the interests of our member districts. As part of that effort, we have added liaisons from both Nassau and Suffolk Region PTAs. We believe that adding the voice of the parents to our conversations and work enhances our collective efforts.

We will also continue to hold our Legislative Breakfast where our members can have a dialogue with our state officials regarding the specific needs and concerns of R.E.F.I.T. districts. In addition to the financial inequities faced by our member and eligible districts, one of the issues that we will certainly address is the elimination of the GEA. We continue to try to expand our membership by encouraging those eligible to join our ranks and we ask you to reach out to colleagues you know on eligible/non-member boards to do so.

If you have any specific comments or concerns you would like REFIT to address, please do not hesitate to contact us.

R.E.F.I.T.'s Annual Meeting

On September 25, 2013, Reform Educational Financing Inequities Today (R.E.F.I.T.), held its annual business meeting at the Southward Ho Country Club in West Islip. There were over 60 in attendance from our member districts on Long Island.

Many issues were discussed along with the adoption of our goals for 2013-2014 and the election of our new Board of Directors and Officers. Susan Lipman from Eastern Suffolk BOCES was elected as President, Laura Curran from Baldwin School District is First Vice President, Dr. Kishore Kuncham from Freeport School District is Second Vice President and Dr. John Williams from the Amityville School District is the Secretary/Treasurer. A few new Board members were elected and many members are continuing service on the Board for another year.

The four goals adopted are:

- Continue to expand recruitment efforts, focusing on high tax-low wealth districts experiencing financial distress;
- Continue to develop a legislative platform consistent with our districts;
- Continue to cultivate relationships with child-focused organizations;
- Continue to increase communication using social media.

Our guest speaker for the evening was Mr. Howard Miller from the law firm of Bond, Schoeneck and King, PLLC. Mr. Miller's remarks focused on the Middletown City School District's litigation challenging the constitutional legality of requiring a supermajority vote when a district chooses to attempt to pierce the 2% cap on the tax levy. R.E.F.I.T. had voted to file a Friend of the Court Brief in support of the Middletown litigation. The firm has decided to file this brief on R.E.F.I.T.'s behalf "pro bono" as R.E.F.I.T. districts also face financial and instructional challenges very similar to those in Middletown.

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Annual Breakfast at NYSSBA Conference a Success!

On October 26, 2013, R.E.F.I.T. hosted its annual breakfast at the New York State School Boards Association Conference in Rochester. In attendance were approximately 60 school board members and superintendents from Long Island and throughout the State. This year, the keynote speaker was Ms. Kyle Belokopitsky, former lobbyist and legal analyst with the New York State Council of School Superintendents and currently with the New York State United Teachers.

Ms. Belokopitsky shared anecdotes from her years of experience working for the school superintendents and contrasted her former role with her current responsibilities working for the teachers union. She also reviewed the results from the recent NYSCOSS study on school fiscal matters. A vast majority of responding superintendents believe that the financial conditions in their home school districts have worsened over the past year. She also spent time informing the audience about current politics involving the governor and the legislature. Ms. Belokopitsky closed her remarks by acknowledging the challenges confronting school board members and administrators.



(To view more photos from our events go to <http://refitny.org/> and click on the Gallery tab)

Annual Meeting (continued from page 1)

Highlights of those challenges include larger class sizes and higher student to teacher ratios; reduction in curriculum; cuts and/or elimination of programs and electives, including advance placement courses; shortages of textbooks, resources and technology; and insufficiencies for physical education, extracurricular activities, library resources and facilities.

Mr. Miller concluded his remarks by stating that the goal of the litigation is to see that the State Education Department discontinues or remedies their inequitable and racially discriminatory method of funding public education in New York. And, as we move forward, provide adequate funds to local school districts to enable them to remove barriers for participation in educational programs for our ELL students.

Mr. Miller's remarks and discussion with those in attendance was well received.

R.E.F.I.T. looks forward to their new leadership and the expansion of our efforts on behalf of our member districts.

Members

Amityville
Baldwin
Bay Shore
Central Islip
Commack
Comsewogue
Connetquot
Copiague
East Islip
East Meadow
Eastern Suffolk BOCES
Eastport/South Manor
Elmont
Farmingdale
Freeport
Hempstead
Islip
Lindenhurst
Longwood
Middle Country
Nassau BOCES
North Babylon
Oceanside
Plainedge
Riverhead
South Country
West Islip
Westbury
Western Suffolk BOCES
William Floyd

Upcoming Meetings

January 14, 2014
February 11, 2014
March 18, 2014
April 8, 2014
May 13, 2014
June 17, 2014

Meetings are held at Western Suffolk BOCES
507 Deer Park Avenue,
Dix Hills, New York

The meetings begin at 8 AM.