

OUR KEYNOTE SPEAKER

Dr. Betty A. Rosa

New York State Education Department Commissioner of Education
President of the University of the State of New York



Dr. Betty A. Rosa is the Commissioner of Education and President of the University of the State of New York. Dr. Rosa was appointed as permanent Commissioner on February 8, 2021, by the Board of Regents. She is the first Latina woman to serve in the position.

Previously, Dr. Rosa served as Interim Commissioner since August 2020. Prior to that, she served as Chancellor of the Board of Regents since 2016. Dr. Rosa was elected by her Board of Regents colleagues as Chancellor in March 2016 and re-elected for a second term in 2019. She was first elected to the Board of Regents for a five-year

term in 2008, as the Regent for the Twelfth Judicial District (Bronx County), then re-elected for a second term in 2013 and a third term in 2018.

Dr. Rosa is a nationally recognized education leader and received an Ed. M. and Ed. D. in Administration, Planning and Social Policy from Harvard University. She also holds two other Master of Science in Education degrees, one in Administration and Supervision and the other in Bilingual Education from the City College of New York and Lehman College, respectively, and a B.A. in psychology from the City College of New York. She has more than 30 years of instructional and administrative experience with an expertise in inclusive education, cooperative teaching models, student achievement, and policy implementation.

Dr. Rosa began her career in the NYC Department of Education as a bilingual paraprofessional, teacher, and reading coordinator, served as an assistant principal and principal in special education, introduced an integrated linguistic model in developing a multilingual and multicultural school for general and special education populations, was principal of I.S. 218, a full-service community school in partnership with the Children's Aid Society in District 6, and developed and implemented the Office of Conflict Resolution for the NYC Division of Special Education. In 1998, Dr. Rosa was appointed to the position of Superintendent of Community School District 8 in the Bronx and later appointed to serve as the Senior Superintendent of the Bronx. One of the schools Dr. Rosa founded as superintendent, M.S. 101 (Maritime Academy for Science and Technology), became the top ranked middle school in the City of New York based on NYS examination results. She taught graduate level education courses including Education of Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Exceptional Children, Due Process: Law and the Handicapped, and Applied and Action Research for Doctoral Students, has served on dissertation committees, and is an executive coach for doctoral students.

Since 2015, Dr. Rosa has been honored with the Champions of Education Leadership Award from the Alliance for Quality Education, Woman of the Year Award from the NY League of Puerto Rican Women, Heimlich Community Service Award from the Ben Franklin Reform Democratic Club, Transformative Education Leadership Award from the International Chartership High School, Education Leadership Award from the National Puerto Rican Day Parade, Leadership in Education Award from the Association of Dominican-American Supervisors and Administrators, Women of Distinction Award from the Bronx Chamber of Commerce, and the Latina of the Year Award from the New York State Assembly and Senate's Puerto Rican/Hispanic Task Force.

CELEBRATION OF SCHOOL LEADERSHIP

Legacy of Leadership Award

Honoring those veteran leaders whose sustained excellence has left an enduring mark on their school and district, this award celebrates a leader whose career is defined by service, mentorship, and a steadfast commitment to the ideals of public education.



Rebecca Jones

Lincoln Elementary School Principal
Mount Vernon City School District

Rebecca Jones has dedicated 37 years to public education, beginning her career as an English teacher in the Mount Vernon City School District before moving into school leadership. Since 2010 she has served as principal of Lincoln Elementary School, a nationally recognized Blue Ribbon School where she has led a diverse school community with compassion, purpose, and a deep commitment to student success.

Throughout her career, Rebecca has believed that education is a calling rooted in service. She has consistently championed culturally responsive learning environments that nurture each student's intellectual potential and personal identity. Under her leadership, Lincoln Elementary was recognized by the New York State Education Department as a Recognition School for its strong academic performance.

Rebecca also served three terms as vice president of the Mount Vernon Administrators Group, mentoring colleagues and advocating for school leaders in the district. As she prepares to retire, she leaves a lasting legacy of leadership, mentorship, and dedication to students.

Rebecca leaves an enduring legacy of compassion, mentorship, and unwavering dedication to the students, educators, and communities she has served.

Innovation in Education Award

Honoring those who pioneer new programs, technologies, or instructional practices that elevate learning, this award celebrates a leader who embraces innovation, inspires others to see change as opportunity, and models continuous growth for staff and students.



Daniel J. Larkin

Sleepy Hollow High School Assistant Principal
Public Schools of the Tarrytowns

Daniel Larkin is Assistant Principal at Sleepy Hollow High School in the Public Schools of the Tarrytowns and a leader known for using technology and data systems to improve teaching, learning, and decision-making. Beginning his career as a mathematics and computer science teacher, he has consistently embraced innovation to strengthen school operations and student outcomes.

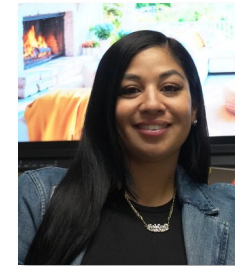
Mr. Larkin has redesigned district data systems within Infinite Campus to help educators monitor graduation requirements, academic eligibility, and student support structures more effectively. His work has streamlined processes across departments and provided clearer information to guide instructional and administrative decisions.

Beginning July 1, 2026, he will serve as the district's Director of Technology, continuing his work to ensure that technology supports teaching and learning in meaningful ways. He is recognized for pioneering practical innovations that make schools more effective for both educators and students.

Dan's innovative leadership demonstrates how thoughtful use of technology and data can transform systems and strengthen teaching and learning.

Student-Centered Champion Award

Honoring a leader who places students at the heart of every decision, this award celebrates a leader that ensures all students feel seen, supported, and empowered—academically, socially, and emotionally.



Ashley Pace

Middletown High School Dean
Enlarged City School District of Middletown

Ashley Pace serves as Dean of Students for Cohort III at Middletown High School, where she is known for creating a supportive and student-centered environment that prioritizes relationships, guidance, and opportunity for every learner. Her work focuses on ensuring that students feel respected, heard, and empowered throughout their high school experience.

A graduate of SUNY Buffalo State University, Ashley began her career as a social studies educator before moving into leadership roles that allowed her to expand her impact on school culture and student support systems. She believes the dean's office should serve not simply as a disciplinary space, but as a center for advocacy, mentorship, and problem-solving.

Ashley is recognized for her dedication to building strong connections with students and families and for her unwavering commitment to helping every student thrive academically, socially, and emotionally.

Ashley exemplifies the power of student-centered leadership, ensuring that every learner is supported, respected, and empowered to succeed.

Equity and Inclusion Leadership Award

Honoring a commitment to ensuring access, fairness, and belonging for every learner, this award celebrates a leader who champions courageous advocacy and systemic action to remove barriers and create inclusive, affirming learning environments.



Lydia Luxama Adegbola

*New Rochelle High School English Department Chair
City School District of New Rochelle*

Lydia Adegbola is the English Department Chairperson at New Rochelle High School and a respected leader in advancing equity and culturally responsive education. She champions initiatives that elevate student voice, expand representation in curriculum, and ensure that every learner feels seen and valued in the classroom. Through her focus on critical literacy and culturally sustaining pedagogy, Lydia has strengthened opportunities for students to connect their identities and experiences to academic learning.

Beyond her school community, Lydia serves on the board of the New York State English Council and as a trustee of the Greenburgh Public Library, advocating for literacy and access across the community. Her leadership reflects a deep belief that literacy empowers students and opens doors to opportunity. She is recognized for creating inclusive spaces where students thrive academically and personally.

Through her commitment to culturally responsive literacy and student empowerment, Lydia exemplifies the transformative power of equity-driven leadership in education.

Visionary Leadership Award

Honoring those whose innovative vision and strategic direction have transformed their school community, this award celebrates a leader who inspires staff and students alike with bold goals, creative problem-solving, and a clear roadmap for excellence in teaching and learning.



Georgianna Diopoulos-Grogan

*Warwick Valley High School Principal
Warwick Valley Central School District*

Georgianna Diopoulos-Grogan is the principal of Warwick Valley High School and a visionary leader with more than 25 years of experience in public education. Throughout her career as a teacher, department chair, and principal, she has cultivated school environments where students, staff, and families work together toward high levels of achievement and growth.

Her leadership emphasizes research-based instructional practices, including formative assessment and teacher clarity, inspired by the work of John Hattie. She is also deeply committed to collaboration and inclusive decision-making, believing that listening to the voices of students, teachers, and families is essential to meaningful improvement.

Georgianna is recognized for her ability to unite school communities around a shared vision for excellence while ensuring that every student is prepared for success in college, careers, and life.

Through thoughtful leadership and a commitment to collaboration, Georgianna continues to inspire a shared vision of excellence for students, educators, and the entire school community.

ESSAA Impact Award

Honoring those whose often unsung heroes whose steady unifying presence in a school serves to build trust across the community and strengthen school culture and operations, this award celebrates a leader who serves as an indispensable member of their school leadership team.



David Ward Harrington

*Corning-Painted Post High School Assistant Principal
Corning-Painted Post Area School District*

David Harrington serves as Assistant Principal at Corning-Painted Post High School and is widely respected for the steady leadership and positive culture he helps cultivate within the school community. With more than 25 years in school administration, Dave is known for his collaborative style, thoughtful communication, and unwavering focus on student well-being.

He works closely with teachers, students, and families to support student success while strengthening school operations and programs that enrich the student experience. Dave has also helped lead initiatives such as Hawks Thrive, a school-based food center that supports students and families in need.

A strong advocate for student voice and engagement, Dave believes every student succeeds when supported by meaningful relationships and a caring school community. He is honored for the trust he builds and the steady leadership he provides to students and colleagues alike.

David's steady leadership and deep commitment to student success embody the lasting impact that thoughtful and dedicated administrators bring to their school communities.

Equity and Inclusion Leadership Award

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Rachel Stead

*Principal - Newcomer Program at Albany International Academy
Albany City School District*

Rachel Stead is the founding principal of Albany International Academy in the City School District of Albany, where she leads a unique program supporting newly arrived immigrant and refugee students. Since opening in 2017, the academy has provided academic, linguistic, and social-emotional support for multilingual learners while helping students successfully transition into the broader school community.

With more than three decades of experience in bilingual and English language learner education, Rachel has been a statewide leader in advancing equitable outcomes for multilingual students. She previously served as Executive Director of the Capital District Regional Bilingual Education Resource Network, supporting programs in more than 140 school districts.

Rachel is recognized for her dedication to creating inclusive schools where language diversity is celebrated and every student is supported in reaching their full potential.

Rachel's visionary work affirms that inclusive schools - where language, culture, and identity are valued - creating pathways for every student to thrive.

Equity and Inclusion Leadership Award

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Dionne Wynn

*Director of Pupil Personnel Services
Roosevelt Union Free School District*

Dr. Dionne Wynn is an accomplished educational leader with more than 30 years of experience advocating for students with disabilities and expanding opportunities for underserved learners. A proud graduate of the New York City public schools, she has served as a teacher, assistant principal, and Director of Pupil Personnel Services within both the New York City Department of Education and the Roosevelt Union Free School District.

Her leadership has led to the creation of innovative career and technical education programs, including barbering, electrical apprenticeships, construction pathways, culinary programs, and career training for life-skills students. These initiatives have broadened pathways to success and strengthened connections between schools, colleges, and community partners.

Driven by her own experiences and deep commitment to equity, Dr. Wynn works tirelessly to dismantle barriers and ensure every student has access to the opportunities and support needed to succeed.

*Through tireless advocacy and innovative programming,
Dr. Dionne Wynn continues to expand opportunity
and ensure that every student has a pathway to success.*

Community Partnership Award

Honoring those who build bridges between school, families, and the wider community, this award celebrates a leader who strengthens public education through authentic collaboration, trust, and shared purpose.



Russell J. Buckley

*Director of Strategic Initiatives, Community Partners, and Special Projects
Lockport City School District*

Russell Buckley is Director of Strategic Initiatives, Community Partnerships, and Special Projects for Lockport City School District and a respected leader known for building strong connections between schools and the broader community. With more than 30 years in education, he has led initiatives that strengthen student support systems, expand learning opportunities, and engage families and community partners in meaningful collaboration.

Mr. Buckley previously served as Director of Alternative Education, where his leadership helped significantly increase graduation rates for students facing substantial barriers. He continues to oversee initiatives such as district strategic planning, community outreach, and programs that support diverse student needs.

His service extends beyond the district through leadership in professional organizations and community service with the United Way of Greater Niagara. Russ is honored for his ability to unite schools, families, and community organizations around a shared commitment to student success.

*Russ' leadership demonstrates how strong partnerships
between schools and communities create lasting
opportunities for students and families.*