



# MEDIA LITERACY EDUCATION: *Safeguarding Democracy in a Digital World*

Monday, October 20, 2025

# **Special thanks to the LYC's Subcommittee on the 2025 Civic Education Convocation**

Co-Chairpersons

Gail Ehrlich, Esq.

Jay Worona, Esq.

Christopher Riano, Esq.

Members

Nicholas D'Amuro

Christie Jacobson, Esq.

Richard C. Lewis, Esq.

Katherine Suchocki, Esq.

Jennifer Letitia Smith, Esq.

Hon. Jonah Triebwasser

# Welcome



Dear Colleagues and Friends,

On behalf of the New York State Bar Association, it is my privilege to welcome you to Media Literacy Education: Safeguarding Democracy in a Digital World. This full-day civics education program brings together leaders from education, law, the judiciary, politics, and the media to examine the critical role of media literacy in protecting democratic values.

In today's digital environment, misinformation, disinformation, and misrepresentation spread with unprecedented speed and reach. They threaten public trust and weaken civic engagement. As members of the legal and civic community, we share a responsibility to encourage and improve the public's ability to evaluate information, think critically, and participate meaningfully in our democracy.

We are honored to be joined by distinguished guest speakers, including Noel Francisco, former Solicitor General of the United States, and the Honorable Joseph Bianco, United States Circuit Judge for the Second Circuit. Their insights, and those of our outstanding panelists, will guide our discussions of the challenges we face and the strategies we can employ to amplify truth and safeguard our democracy in a complex digital age.

I encourage you to engage fully in today's discussions, reflect on the ideas presented, and consider how we, as professionals and citizens, can advance media literacy as a cornerstone of civic life. Your presence today reflects your commitment to strengthening our democracy in a meaningful way, and I thank you for your participation in this important work.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Kathleen M. Sweet".

Kathleen M. Sweet  
President, NYSBA

# AGENDA

8:30 a.m.

## **Continental Breakfast**

8:45 a.m.

## **Welcome and Introduction**

Kathleen M. Sweet, President  
New York State Bar Association  
Gibson, McAskill & Crosby, LLP

9:00 a.m.

## **Welcoming Address**

Hon. Rowan D. Wilson  
Chief Judge  
New York State Court of Appeals

9:30 a.m.

## **Panel One**

### **What Do We Mean By Media Literacy?**

Moderator:

Professor Howard Schneider  
Executive Director  
Center for News Literacy  
SUNY Stony Brook

Panelists:

Arielle Geismar  
Digital Media Health Educator  
Mary Miller  
Education Services Director  
News Media Literacy Program  
New York Newspapers Foundation

Michael A. Rebell  
Director  
Project on Education for Democracy  
Harvard Law School

Kelsey Russell  
Media Literacy Influencer  
Co-host, *First Stop News*  
Host, *Kronikled*

Chris Sperry  
Director of Curriculum and Staff Development  
Project Look Sharp  
Ithaca College

10:30 a.m.

**In Conversation**

Noel Francisco

Former Solicitor General of the United States  
(2017-2020)

Partner-in-Charge

Jones Day Washington

**with**

Christopher R. Riano

Co-chair: LYC Subcommittee on the 2025 Civic  
Education Convocation

Scholar of Constitutional Law and Government

Of Counsel at Holland and Knight LLP

12:00 p.m.

**Lunch**

1:00 p.m.

**Afternoon Remarks**

Honorable Joseph Bianco

United States Circuit Judge for the  
Second Circuit

1:30 p.m.

**Panel Two**

**The New York State Landscape for  
Media Literacy Education**

Moderator:

Susan Arbetter

TV Anchor, *Capital Tonight*

Spectrum News

Panelists:

Honorable Shelley B. Mayer

Chair of Committee of Education

New York State Senate

Melinda Person

President

New York State United Teachers (NYSUT)

Dr. Betty A. Rosa

Commissioner of Education

President of the University of the State  
of New York

New York State Education Department

2:30 p.m. -2:45 p.m.	<b>Break</b>
2:45 p.m.	<b>Reflections by</b> Peter Sagal Host, <i>Wait, Wait Don't Tell Me</i> NPR (Pre-recorded)
3:00 p.m.	<b>Panel Three</b> <b>Where Do We Go From Here?</b>
Moderator:	Jay Worona Co-chair: LYC Subcommittee on the 2025 Civic Education Convocation Partner Jaspan, Schlesinger Narendran, LLP
Panelists:	Nicholas D'Amuro Instructional Coordinator Genesee Valley BOCES  Greg Fredericks Regional Coordinator for Social Studies and Blended Learning Putnam Northern Westchester BOCES  Oliver Kaiden Student Scarsdale High School  Dylan Lemberg Student Scarsdale High School  Nan Eileen Mead Co-Executive Director DemocracyReady NY

4:00 p.m.

**Closing Discussion**

Jay Worona

Co-chair: LYC Subcommittee on the 2025

Civic Education Convocation

Partner

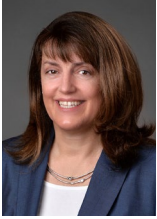
Jaspan, Schlesinger Narendran, LLP

4:30 p.m.

**Adjournment**

## Speakers' Biographies

### Morning Program



#### **President Kathleen M. Sweet**

Kathleen's practice includes the defense of medical malpractice actions and legal malpractice actions. A former confidential law clerk to New York State Supreme Court Appellate Division, she also handles appeals. She is a certified mediator for the United States District Court for the Western District of New York.

Kathleen is a past president of the Bar Association of Erie County. She serves in the American Bar Association's House of Delegates.

In 2016 Kathleen was nominated by President Barack Obama to serve as a United States District Court Judge. Her nomination was unanimously approved by the Senate Judiciary Committee. As was the case for many nominees, the Senate majority declined to hold a vote on her nomination before the end of the 114th Congress.

She is a Fellow of the American College of Trial Lawyers, and a Fellow of the Litigation Counsel of America. She is a graduate of Boston College and the Villanova University School of Law.



#### **Honorable Rowan D. Wilson**

The Honorable Rowan D. Wilson, Chief Judge of the State of New York and the New York State Court of Appeals, was born in Pomona, California, and grew up in Berkeley, California. He received his A.B. degree from Harvard College in 1981, and his J.D. degree from Harvard Law School in 1984. He was admitted to the bar of the State

of California in 1985, and the bar of the State of New York in 1987.

From 1984 to 1986, he served as a law clerk to the Honorable James R. Browning, Chief Judge of the United States Court of Appeals for the Ninth Circuit, based in San Francisco, California. In 1986, he joined the firm of Cravath, Swaine & Moore in New York City as an associate, and was elected to partnership there in 1991, in which position he continued until February 2017. His practice encompassed a wide variety of matters, including antitrust, intellectual property, securities and common-law fraud, contract, labor and employment, civil rights and first amendment issues. On January 15, 2017, Governor Andrew M. Cuomo nominated Judge Wilson to serve

as an Associate Judge of the Court of Appeals, and the New York State Senate confirmed his nomination on February 6, 2017. On April 10, 2023, Governor Kathy Hochul nominated Judge Wilson to serve as Chief Judge of the Court of Appeals and the State of New York. The New York State Senate confirmed his nomination on April 18, 2023. While in private practice, Judge Wilson served on the boards of several charitable and not-for-profit organizations and handled numerous pro bono matters.

## **Panel One: What Do We Mean by Media Literacy?**



### **Professor Howard Schneider**

Howard Schneider is the Executive Director of Stony Brook University's Center for News Literacy, the Founding Dean of what is now the university's School of Communication and Journalism and the former editor of Newsday.

Schneider helped pioneer the nation's first undergraduate course in News Literacy designed to teach students how to discern the reliability of news reports. Since, the Center has taught the course to more than 11,000 undergraduates and shared the curriculum with dozens of universities in the U.S. and overseas. In 2018, Schneider and his colleagues, convinced the instruction had to begin earlier, began collaborating with local school districts to adapt elements of the curriculum for high school and middle school students. His Center is currently working with seven pilot districts that have integrated elements of the curriculum into the required instruction of all students.

In 2009, he also co-founded the Alan Alda Center for Communicating Science at Stony Brook, with the actor, writer and science advocate Alan Alda. In 2012, Schneider was the recipient of the DeWitt Carter Reddick Award for professional achievement from the University of Texas. In 2002, he was the recipient of the Columbia Graduate School of Journalism Alumnus Award, where he earned a Journalism MS in 1967.



### **Arielle Geismar**

Arielle Geismar (she/her) is an organizer, advocate, creator, and strategist in human technology interaction. She has experience passing state and federal bills and leading essential advocacy campaigns around responsible technology, women's, and LGBTQ+ rights. An advocate since 16, her work has been recognized by the New York

Times, Washington Post, CNN, MTV, New Yorker, and noted in Teen Vogue's 21 Under 21 and Forbes 30 Under 30 lists. Arielle holds a B.A. in International Affairs and International Science and Technology Policy.



### **Mary Miller**

Mary Miller has been the Education Services Director for the New York Newspapers Foundation's News Media Literacy Program for over 24 years. Since creating the position, she has helped develop a growing library of News Media Literacy/Newspaper In Education (NIE) curricula for K/12 educators and students that can be found online at

[www.nynpa.com/nie.html](http://www.nynpa.com/nie.html). Increasingly, she is asked to give presentations to audiences of all ages, highlighting news media literacy and the importance of authentic news sources in navigating our digital world.



### **Michael A. Rebell**

Michael A. Rebell is an experienced litigator, administrator, researcher, and scholar in the field of education law. He is the director of the newly-establish Project on Education for Democracy at the Youth Advocacy and Policy Lab at Harvard Law School, and Professor of Law and Educational Practice Emeritus at Teachers College, Columbia University. He is also

the co-founder of DemocracyReady NY, a statewide, intergenerational coalition of education and civic groups and individuals committed to promoting enhanced civic preparation of young people in New York State and nationally. Previously, Mr. Rebell was the co-founder, executive director and counsel for the Campaign for Fiscal Equity. In *CFE v. State of New York*, the Court of Appeals, New York State's highest court, declared that all children are entitled under the state Constitution to the "opportunity for a sound basic education" and it ordered the State of New York to reform its education finance system to meet these constitutional requirements. Mr. Rebell was also lead counsel for plaintiffs in *Cook v. McKee*, a case that

sought to establish a right to an education adequate for capable citizenship under the U.S. Constitution. Following the decision of the U.S. Court of Appeals, *A.C. by Waith v. McKee*, 23 F.4th 37 (1st. Cir, 2022), the plaintiffs and the state education department agreed to a settlement of the case. He is currently working on policy and litigation activities regarding civic preparation in New York, Kentucky and other states.

In addition to his research, writing, and litigation activities, Mr. Rebell is a frequent lecturer and consultant on education law. In the past, he has also taught at the Yale Law School and Columbia Law School. Mr. Rebell is a graduate of Harvard College and Yale Law School.

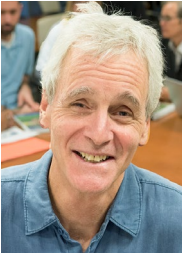


### **Kelsey Russell**

Kelsey Russell, the print princess, is a media literacy influencer, co-host of *First Stop News*, and host of the podcast *Kronikled*. Kelsey uses print media as a vehicle for promoting a natural sense of curiosity, improving media literacy, and fostering better emotional regulation when interacting with news. Her work has been featured in

*Slate*, *Columbia Journalism Review*, and *The Drew Barrymore Show*. She is a graduate of Boston University and Teachers College, where she studied Sociology and Education.

Beyond her media work, Kelsey is deeply committed to the next generation's engagement in news—she is an ambassador for VOX ATL and regularly speaks to students about positive news consumption. She has also collaborated with Edelman, Microsoft, and Vote.Org to amplify conversations around culture, education, and media literacy.



### Chris Sperry

Chris Sperry is the Director of Curriculum and Staff Development for Project Look Sharp, a media literacy initiative at Ithaca College he helped found in 1996. He is also Director of the ML3 Initiative: *Librarians as Leaders for Media Literacy*. Chris taught secondary social studies, English and media studies at the Lehman Alternative Community School in Ithaca, New York from 1979-2020. He is the producer of over 800 lessons that integrate media decoding and critical thinking into the curriculum in diverse subject areas. Chris is co-author with Cyndy Scheibe of the book, *Teaching Students to Decode the World* (ACSD 2022). He is the recipient of the 2005 National PTA and Cable Leaders in Learning Award for Media Literacy and the 2008 National Council for the Social Studies James M. Becker Award for Global Understanding.

## In Conversation



### Noel Francisco

Noel Francisco served as the 47th Solicitor General of the United States, from 2017 to 2020. He represents clients in a broad array of civil and criminal litigation, challenges to federal and state laws and regulations, and government investigations and enforcement actions. The matters he handles often have significant public policy implications, including in the areas of global climate change, opioids, asbestos, tobacco, firearms, health care, administrative law, free speech, religious liberty, and separation of powers.

Noel has argued some of the most important cases the Supreme Court has heard in recent years. For example, he argued *Trump v. Hawaii*, where he successfully defended the president's orders restricting travel from countries deemed to present security risks; *Janus v. AFSCME*, which upheld the First Amendment rights of public employees who decline to join labor unions; *Kisor v. Wilkie*, which adopted his argument that the "Auer deference doctrine" should be significantly curtailed but retained in its core applications; *Apple Inc. v. Pepper*, which addressed whether Apple's App Store customers had standing to sue the company for antitrust violations; *Knick v. Township of Scott*, which held that property owners could sue state and local governments in federal court to vindicate Fifth Amendment

takings claims; *Seila Law LLC v. CFPB*, which invalidated restrictions on the president's authority to remove the director of the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau; *McDonnell v. United States*, which reversed the federal bribery conviction of the governor of Virginia; *NLRB v. Noel Canning*, which limited the president's constitutional recess appointments power; and *Zubik v. Burwell*, which challenged federal insurance coverage regulations that violated Catholic organizations' religious beliefs.



### **Christopher R. Riano**

Christopher R. Riano is a nationally recognized and award-winning author and scholar in constitutional and public law, and he has lectured on constitutional law, jurisprudence, and public/administrative law for dozens of organizations nationwide for over a decade. He has served as a Visiting Lecturer at Yale Law School and as a Lecturer in Constitutional Law and Government at

Columbia University. He currently practices law as Of Counsel at Holland & Knight LLP, where he frequently advocates for parties as an amicus before the Supreme Court of the United States.

Mr. Riano currently is on the Standing Committee that selects the winners of the American Bar Association's Silver Gavel Award and is on the Board of Visitors of the School of General Studies at Columbia University. He is an elected Fellow of the American Bar Foundation and the New York State Bar Foundation.

Before his current roles, Mr. Riano was the President & CEO of the nation's Center for Civic Education, a Commissioner for the New York State Gaming Commission, an Assistant Counsel to the Governor of New York, the General Counsel for the New York State Liquor Authority, and a Partner at Drohan Lee LLP. Mr. Riano is a graduate of Columbia University and Washington and Lee University School of Law.

## Afternoon Program

### Afternoon Remarks



#### **Honorable Joseph Bianco**

Judge Bianco was appointed as a United States Circuit Judge for the Second Circuit by President Donald J. Trump on May 13, 2019, and entered service on May 17, 2019. Prior to his appointment as a United States Circuit Judge, Judge Bianco served as a United States District Court Judge in the Eastern District of New York. Judge Bianco was appointed as a United States District Judge in

the Eastern District of New York by President George W. Bush on January 3, 2006, and entered service on that same date.

Judge Bianco obtained his B.A., *magna cum laude*, at Georgetown University in 1988 and received his law degree in 1991 from Columbia Law School, where he was a Kent Scholar and a member of the Law Review. From 1992-1993, he served as a law clerk for the Honorable Peter K. Leisure, United States District Judge for the Southern District of New York. For a period of time both before and after that clerkship, he worked as a litigation associate at Simpson Thacher & Bartlett LLP.

From 1994-2003, Judge Bianco served as an Assistant United States Attorney in the Southern District of New York, where he became Deputy Chief and then Chief of the Organized Crime and Terrorism Unit. In 2003, Judge Bianco left the Department of Justice and became Counsel with Debevoise & Plimpton LLP in its Litigation Department.

In 2004, Judge Bianco returned to the Department of Justice and was appointed as a Deputy Assistant Attorney General in the Criminal Division in Washington, D.C., where he supervised the Counterterrorism Section, the Fraud Section, the Appellate Section, and the Capital Case Unit. He occupied that position until his appointment to the bench.

Judge Bianco has taught courses at Fordham Law School, Hofstra Law School, Touro Law Center, and St. John's University School of Law. He currently teaches at Columbia Law School.

## Panel Two: The New York State Landscape for Media Literacy Education



### **Susan Arbetter**

Susan Arbetter is anchor of *Capital Tonight* on Spectrum News.

Prior to returning to television, Susan hosted and produced WCNY's syndicated public radio program *The Capitol Pressroom*, which broadcasts live from the 3rd floor of the State Capitol in Albany weekdays from 11am to noon. Arbetter also held the title Director of News &

Public Affairs for Syracuse public broadcaster, WCNY.

The radio interviews Susan conducted on *The Capitol Pressroom* have been cited by the *New York Times*; *Washington Post*; *Wall Street Journal*; *Newsday*; *NY Daily News*; *NY Post*; *Buffalo News*; *Syracuse Post Standard*; *Albany Times Union*, *City and State*, among many other publications. Her guests have included leaders in politics, policy, law, and business representing the entire political spectrum. Recent guests have included Governor Andrew Cuomo, Preet Bharara, Comptroller Tom DiNapoli, Senator Kirsten Gillibrand.

Susan is the recipient of over 30 awards for electronic journalism, including 5 Emmy Award nominations and one Emmy Award win for Best Public Affairs Series. She has also received one or more of the following awards for radio broadcasting: Edward R. Murrow, Scripps-Howard, AP, PRNDI & NYSBA, among others.



### **Hon. Shelley B. Mayer**

Shelley Mayer has been a champion for children and public education for 13 years in the State Legislature. Starting with her time in the Assembly representing the City of Yorkers, Shelley has been focused on delivering for New York's students. Since 2019, when she was appointed as the Chair of the State Senate Education Committee, she has worked with her colleagues,

advocates, teachers, administrators, and concerned New Yorkers to deliver resources and policies required to provide a quality education for every child, from New York City to the Adirondacks. Most significantly she helped champion and win full funding of the Foundation Aid formula in the state's last three enacted budgets and this year, led the fight to restore school funding scheduled to be cut in the Executive's proposed budget for 2024-25. In 2023, Shelley introduced and passed legislation to encourage youth civic engagement by ensuring schools provide students with an opportunity to pre-register and register to vote and requiring all school districts provide high school students with the opportunity to participate in student government. Currently, Shelley is working on legislation to allow 16- and 17-year-olds to vote on school boards and to require student ex-officio members on school boards. Shelley has also been a vocal supporter of abortion rights, criminal justice, rights for workers, public safety protections, and tenants' rights. Shelley previously served as Counsel to the New York State Senate Majority. She lives in Yonkers with her husband, Lee Smith. They have three adult children and five grandchildren.



### **Melinda Person**

Melinda Person is the President of New York State United Teachers (NYSUT), the nearly 700,000 member union representing people who work in, or are retired from, New York's schools, colleges and health care facilities. As a dedicated union leader, she is committed to creating equitable classrooms where both students and educators thrive. Person has spent more than two decades

advancing education policy. She began her career student teaching in a 6th grade Boston Public Schools classroom. In her 16 years at NYSUT, Person has made strides to advance NYSUT's fight for public school educators and their students. She is a graduate of Cornell University, including the Cornell Union Leadership Institute, with dual degrees in Policy Analysis and Management.



### **Dr. Betty A. Rosa**

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 New York State examination results. She has 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.

## Reflections by



### Peter Sagal

Peter Sagal is the host of the Peabody Award-winning NPR news quiz *Wait Wait . . . Don't Tell Me!* and the author of *The Incomplete Book of Running* and *The Book of Vice: Naughty Things and How To Do Them*. He is a playwright, screenwriter, an amateur athlete, and host to several podcasts and documentaries, including *The Chernobyl Podcast* and *The Plot Against America* podcast

for HBO and Constitution USA with Peter Sagal on PBS. He also wrote the feature film *Dirty Dancing 2: Havana Nights* without meaning to. Peter has traveled to many places and done many things but is now happiest where he lives, north of Chicago, with his wife Mara, two sons, and two dogs.

## Panel Three: Where Do We Go from Here?



### Jay Worona

Jay Worona is a partner in the law firm of Jaspan, Schlesinger Narendran LLP in Garden City New York. In that capacity Jay is a part of the firm's Education Law Practice Group.

Mr. Worona recently retired from the position of Deputy Executive Director and General Counsel for the New York State School Boards Association. He joined the Association in 1984, was appointed General Counsel in 1990 and appointed Deputy Executive Director in 2014.

In that role, Mr. Worona was responsible for representing the New York State School Boards Association and its membership of approximately 700 school districts in both direct and amicus curiae (friend- of-the Court) litigation on wide-ranging legal topics such as tenure and seniority rights of school employees, special education, the constitutional separation of church and state as it applies to the operation of public schools and the legal authority of school boards.

Mr. Worona regularly presents at conferences throughout the state and nation on a range of legal topics affecting the operation of public education. In this regard, Mr. Worona is considered a national expert and has regularly appeared in the national media, including FOX National News, CNN, NPR and PBS.

Mr. Worona served as Chair of the Board of Directors of the National Council of School Attorneys (COSA) in 2007. This organization represents the interests of school lawyers throughout the nation. He is also a member of the Board of Directors of the New York State Association of School Attorneys, and serves as a member of the Board of Directors of the Law, Youth & Citizenship Committee of the New York State Bar Association, as well as a former President of the North American Association of Educational Negotiators.

He also serves as an adjunct professor at the School of Educational Administration and Policy Studies at the State University of New York at Albany. In 2003 and again in 2014, Jay received the Excellence in Part-Time Teaching Award for his service. Mr. Worona also serves as an adjunct instructor at Teacher's College at Columbia University.

Mr. Worona has been admitted to practice law by the New York State Bar; the United States District Court for the Southern District of New York, Eastern District of New York, Northern District of New York, and Western District of New York; the United States Court of Appeals for the Second Circuit, Sixth Circuit and Eleventh Circuit; and the United States Supreme Court.

Mr. Worona successfully argued and won a case before the United States Supreme Court involving the separation of church and state entitled, *Board of Education of the Kiryas Joel Union Free School District v. Grumet*.



### **Nicholas D'Amuro**

Nick D'Amuro has been a social studies educator for over ten years at a variety of grade levels. In order to effect change on a broader scale for social studies and civic education, he is now an Instructional Coordinator at Genesee Valley BOCES. As part of their School Improvement Team he assists educators and districts in Genesee, Livingston, Wyoming, and Steuben counties

with social studies curriculum development. Nick is also a prominent voice on the School Improvement Team's podcast, SIT & Sip. He facilitates a recurring New York State Seal of Civic Readiness Forum for districts in his region and is overseeing a book study of Kent Lenci's *Learning to Depolarize* to help educators bridge political divides within their districts. Nick was also elected to the town council of Clarkson, NY, in 2021 and continues to serve his community in this capacity.



### **Greg Fredericks**

Greg Fredricks is the Regional Coordinator for Social Studies and Blended Learning at Putnam | Northern Westchester BOCES and also serves as a New York State Education Department (NYSED) Regional Coordinator for the Seal of Civic Readiness. A passionate advocate for civic engagement in public education, Greg is deeply committed to expanding meaningful

civic learning experiences for students across New York State. His current doctoral research explores how teachers' perceptions of civics influence the implementation of the Seal of Civic Readiness in schools. Greg lives in Connecticut with his wife and is a proud father of six daughters—three daughters and three stepdaughters.

### **Oliver Kaiden**

Oliver Kaiden is a senior at Scarsdale High School and a passionate advocate of civic education and youth engagement as the President of NYSEC (New York Student Engaged Citizenship - [ny-sec.org](http://ny-sec.org)). NYSEC is an organization dedicated to furthering civic education and responsible, respectful dialogue across New York. Oliver joined NYSEC right after its inception in October 2023 after witnessing consistent polarization in the news and the lack of agreement between political parties in government. Outside of NYSEC, Oliver is an avid skier and is a diehard Mets fan. Email: [oliver@kaiden.com](mailto:oliver@kaiden.com)

### **Dylan Lemberg**

Dylan Lemberg is a senior at Scarsdale High School and Founder & President of NYSEC (New York Student Engaged Citizenship – [ny-sec.org](http://ny-sec.org)), an organization dedicated to advancing civic education and responsible dialogue curricula across New York. NYSEC has presented its flexible civic readiness proposal to all 37 BOCES Superintendents and is now working with multiple districts to integrate such curricula. NYSEC has collaborated with Commissioner Betty Rosa, Assistant Commissioner Dr. Santosha Oliver, Jay Worona, and numerous other educators and policymakers to strengthen civic education statewide. He is genuinely passionate about Civic Readiness for all New York students. Email: [dylanlemborg@gmail.com](mailto:dylanlemborg@gmail.com).



## **Nan Eileen Mead**

Nan Eileen Mead, M.A., M.Ed., is co-executive director of DemocracyReady NY, a nonpartisan, multigenerational, statewide coalition committed to preparing all students for civic participation. Ms. Mead was previously the Director of Outreach and Communications at the Center for Educational Equity at Teachers College, Columbia University. A longtime education advocate, Ms. Mead represented the 1st Judicial District on the New York State Board of Regents from 2016 to 2022, where she co-chaired the Regents Subcommittee on State Aid and contributed to the development of the Regents' framework and policy statement on diversity, equity, and inclusion. Before her election to the Regents, Ms. Mead was a financial sector professional and parent leader serving on several local policy and advocacy boards, including Community Education Council 3 and the Chancellor's Parent Advisory Council of New York City. She holds degrees in politics, public policy, and education.



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