



GOVERNANCE RETREAT

Many districts. One Voice. Stronger Together.

AUGUST 14-15, 2025

THE LANDING HOTEL AT RIVERS CASINO & RESORT

21 RUSH STREET

SCHENECTADY, NY 12305

ABOUT THE GOVERNANCE RETREAT

Exclusive. Strategic. Impactful.

The Governance Retreat is more than a meeting—it’s an exclusive strategy summit. This small, select group of leaders has been brought together to think boldly, act decisively, and continue charting the advocacy course for New York State’s 57 small city school districts. In this focused ‘*think tank*’ setting, every voice is heard, every idea is explored, and every solution is aimed at measurable impact.

Over two days, participants will engage in strategic dialogues, examine state and federal priorities, address critical concerns from the field, and launch a coordinated lobbying initiative. From Foundation Aid to the Portrait of a Graduate, the work accomplished here will influence policy, strengthen advocacy, and drive success for our students and communities.

WELCOME ADDRESS



NYSASCSD PRESIDENT & HOST
JOHN CARMELLO

Welcome to the Governance Retreat! This inaugural gathering has been intentionally designed as a focused ‘*think tank*’—a small, select group of leaders convening to tackle the most pressing priorities for New York State’s small city school districts. Our size is our strength: in this setting, we can have deep, candid conversations, identify practical solutions, and move from ideas to action without the limits of a larger conference format. Together, we will address solutions rooted in best practices, innovation, and proven strategies. Over the next two days, our agenda will take us from a shared vision for small city school districts to strategic planning on pressing issues such as:

- The future and sustainability of Foundation Aid
- The Portrait of a Graduate and its role in shaping meaningful student outcomes
- Concerns from the field—and how to translate them into actionable policy
- Launching a lobbying initiative to strengthen our influence in Albany and Washington, DC

We are honored to welcome voices from across the field, including **Dr. Jeff Matteson** from the New York State Education Department, whose extensive experience and perspective will help us align our work with statewide priorities. The insights and strategies we develop here will not end with this retreat. They will guide advocacy, inform decision-making, and drive meaningful change for the 57 small city school districts across New York State.

Thank you for your commitment and your leadership. Let’s make every conversation count.



DR. JEFFREY MATTESON
NYS EDUCATION DEPARTMENT



August 14, 2025

TIME	EVENT
4:00 PM	Hotel Check-In/The Landing Hotel & Resort
6:00 PM	Setting the Stage for Success (The Landing Meeting Room) Welcome: John Carmello , <i>NYSASCSD President & Retreat Host</i> Opening Remarks: Bob Breidenstein , <i>NYSASCSD Executive Director</i> Retreat Overview: Brian Schmitt , <i>Schmitt Leadership Group</i>
6:30 PM	Buffet Dinner & Networking
7:10 PM	Vision Forward: Scaling Success for Small City School Districts: Felicia Watson , <i>NYSASCSD Director of Strategic Engagement & Growth</i> Strategic Dialogues: Strengthening Small City School Districts: Bob Breidenstein , <i>NYSASCSD Executive Director</i>
8:00 PM	Networking Conversations, Connections, Cocktails & Resort Exploration

August 15, 2025

TIME	EVENT
7:30 AM- 8:30 AM	Breakfast (The Landing Meeting Room)
8:30 AM	Setting the Stage for Success (The Landing Meeting Room) Opening Remarks & Association Business: Bob Breidenstein , <i>NYSASCSD Executive Director</i>
8:45 AM	Designing the Future: Strategic Visioning & Planning: Bob Breidenstein , <i>NYSASCSD Executive Director</i> Jeffrey Matteson , <i>NYSED Senior Deputy Commissioner for Education Policy</i> Brian Schmitt , <i>Schmitt Leadership Group</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• State and Federal Small City School District Concerns & Priorities• SWOT Analysis • Foundation Aid • Portrait of A Graduate
10:30 AM	Break
10:45 AM	Designing the Future: Strategic Visioning & Planning (continuation) • State & Federal Education Priorities: Insights & Impact • Small Cities Federal Lobbying Initiative
11:30 AM	Working Lunch
12:30 PM	Updates: Legislative, Programmatic & Events: Bob Breidenstein , <i>NYSASCSD Executive Director</i>
12:50 PM	From Retreat to Results: Closings Reflections, Next Steps: Felicia Watson , <i>NYSASCSD Director of Strategic Engagement & Growth</i>
1:00 PM	Adjournment