

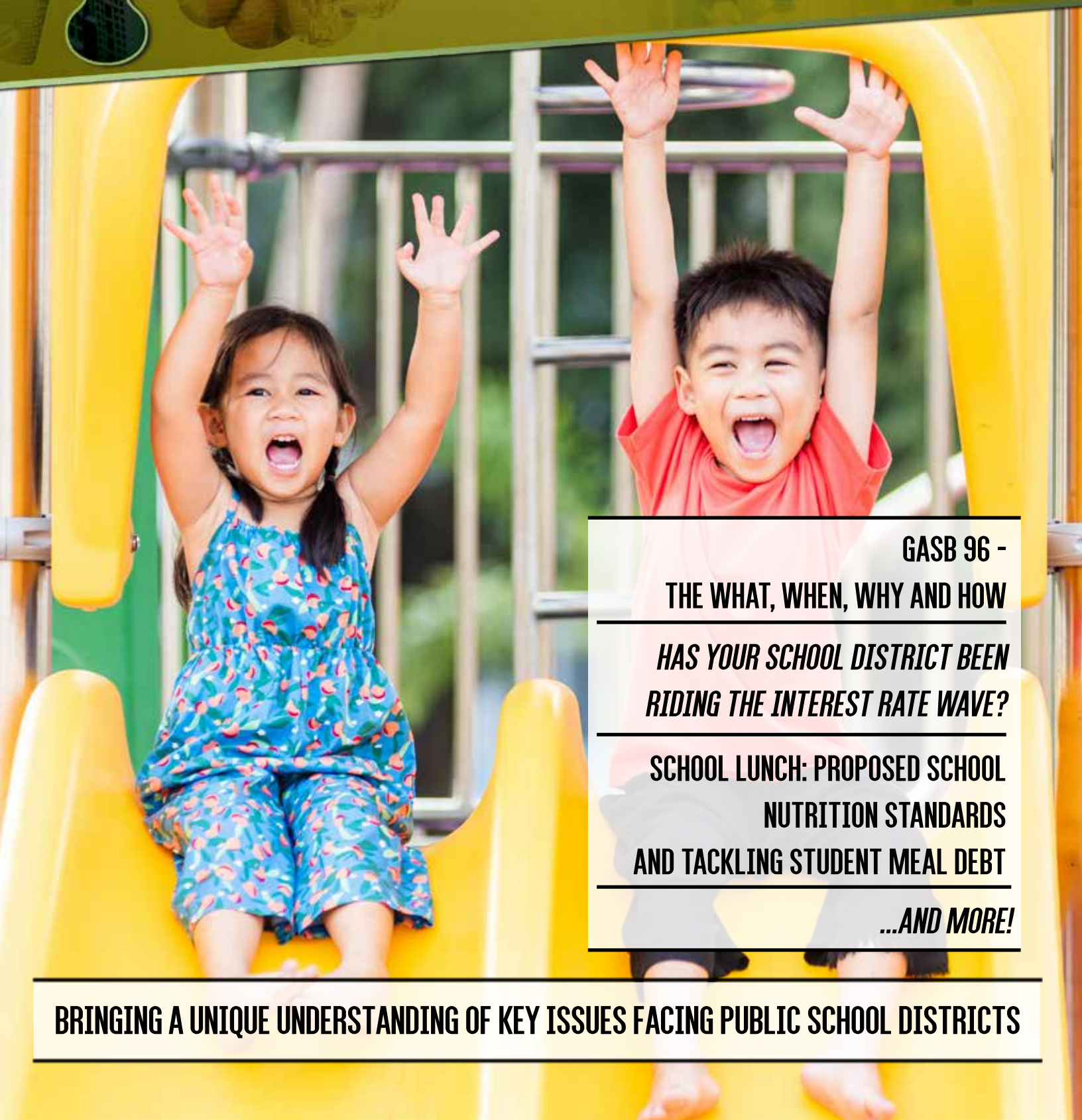


**CERINI
& ASSOCIATES** LLP
CERTIFIED PUBLIC ACCOUNTANTS

CERINI & ASSOCIATES, LLP | CERTIFIED PUBLIC ACCOUNTANTS
PRESENTS

LESSON PLAN

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GASB 96 -

THE WHAT, WHEN, WHY AND HOW

***HAS YOUR SCHOOL DISTRICT BEEN
RIDING THE INTEREST RATE WAVE?***

**SCHOOL LUNCH: PROPOSED SCHOOL
NUTRITION STANDARDS
AND TACKLING STUDENT MEAL DEBT**

...AND MORE!

BRINGING A UNIQUE UNDERSTANDING OF KEY ISSUES FACING PUBLIC SCHOOL DISTRICTS

School districts seem to be on a continuous spinning wheel and are expected to be able to successfully react. From changes in policies, laws, funding streams, and GASB regulations, schools have a lot to manage. Add on top of that rising security issues – both cyber and student safety – as well as increases in retirements and employee shortages, resources are being stretched thin. Some districts are seeing declines in enrollment as more parents are homeschooling, birthrates are declining, and more than a million students nationwide stopped showing up when the pandemic started. As enrollment is tied to funding, school budgets may be negatively impacted. This creates a perfect storm: declining enrollment, coupled with reduced budgets, COVID dollars will be drying up, and we are left with a potential fiscal cliff resulting in an economic downturn that may be on the way soon. The NYS OSC recently published a report on the potential shortfalls of New York City’s Financial Plan. The student needs that emerged due to COVID aren’t going away any time soon either. Districts have had to hire additional staff to support the mental health needs of students.

In this issue, we discuss:

- ▶ GASB 96 new reporting requirements
- ▶ Proposed new school nutrition standards
- ▶ Tips on investing funds
- ▶ Ensuring Amazon purchases comply with GML
- ▶ Controlling spiraling cyberattacks
- ▶ Health insurance options to save money
- ▶ Resources for professional learning
- ▶ Resources to help with mental health issues

Happy reading and let us know if there is a topic that you would like to know more about! We pride ourselves on being a resource to our public-school community.

Best of luck on the upcoming school budget vote!

Have a wonderful summer!

Shari Diamond

NOTICE!
SCHOOL BUDGET
VOTE
COMING UP!
TUESDAY
MAY 16, 2023

BEST OF LUCK AND
HAPPY VOTING!

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GASB 96 -

THE WHAT, WHEN, WHY AND HOW

The Governmental Accounting Standards Board (GASB) issued on June 25, 2020, Statement No. 96, “*Subscription-Based Information Technology Arrangements (SBITA)*.” On June 15, 2022, the guidance became effective which means current accounting has to be in line with GASB 96. This is right on the heels of GASB 87, so there will be some familiar ground here. GASB 96 applies to all public sector entities that follow **Generally Accepted Accounting Principles (GAAP)** in filing their annual financial statements which, of course, includes school districts. Because everyone now uses IT software such as Office 365, Adobe, and Zoom, the impact of GASB 96 is great.

WHAT AND WHEN:

A SBITA is a contract that conveys control of the right to use IT software alone or in combination with tangible underlying IT assets for a period of time in an exchange or exchange-like transaction. A SBITA encompasses a wide variety of products and services that can largely be categorized into three broad types:

- **Software as a Service (SaaS)** – a software license that allows the user to access an application over the internet instead of downloading software or maintaining hardware to run the application.
- **Platform as a Service (PaaS)** – allows a customer to use a SBITA vendor’s tools or coding language (*software*) to create applications that will run on the SBITA vendor’s cloud infrastructure.
- **Infrastructure as a Service (IaaS)** – allows a customer to remotely access the SBITA vendor’s network, server, and other fundamental computing tools to process, store, and operate the customer’s data.

GASB 96 provides guidance and addresses how the costs and investments for **subscription-based information technology arrangements (SBITAs)** are accounted for and disclosed by governmental entities. These changes are effective for fiscal years beginning after June 15, 2022. As more entities like public schools are using cloud-hosted software, GASB 96 will require schools to recognize a subscription liability for the amount owed on these contracts offset by a capitalized asset, and to recognize a liability and an intangible asset related to subscription-based IT arrangements. The liability should be recognized when the subscription is entered into, and the intangible asset should be recognized when the entity obtains control of the right to use the IT arrangements.

The liability recognized should be measured at fair value and should be amortized over the subscription period. The amortization expense should be recognized as an outflow of resources. The intangible assets recognized should be measured at cost or fair value, whichever is more readily determinable. The asset should be amortized over the period of expected benefit.

WHY:

Prior to GASB 96, there was no specific guidance available for government entities for the accounting and financial reporting of subscription-based IT arrangements. As a result, there were varied accounting treatments being used for these arrangements. It resulted in inconsistencies in financial reporting and made it harder for the reader to better understand the entity’s net position as the assets were previously not recognized or recognized incorrectly. This resulted in understated assets and overstatement of expenses. GASB 96 is intended to make the financial reporting more accurate as it requires organizations to track their obligations and resources related to IT subscriptions.

HOW:

There are, of course, some challenges that governmental organizations will face. First, the organization has to determine what is considered IT software as this is not clearly defined. Second, the organization has to get its arms around all the software that is being used and to determine if it qualifies under GASB 96. Schools most likely will need to create a team of staff from the IT and purchasing departments to obtain the inventory and usage statistics, and then examine the contract terms that are in place. Some questions to consider are:

- *Does SBITA create a subscription liability?*
- *Do you have a fixed or fixed-in substance payment that is not dependent on future performance or usage?*
- *Is the subscription based on the number of users?*
- *What is the subscription term? One year? Auto renewal?*
- *Do you know what you will pay in the future?*
- *Do you have a termination option?*
- *Is the subscription cost material? The current threshold is set at \$50,000 **Annual Exchange of Values (AEV)** and the AEV represents the dollar value anticipated to be exchanged between NYS and SBITA vendor during a 12-month period.*

The NYS OSC has posted an “*Agency Guide to GASB Statement 96, Subscription-Based Information Technology Arrangements*” on their website which includes definitions and implementation stages. There are some exceptions where GASB 96 does not apply such as short-term SBITA’s.

[For more information and helpful resources, click here to refer to the OSC’s GASB web page.](#)

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HAS YOUR SCHOOL DISTRICT BEEN RIDING THE INTEREST RATE WAVE?



The Federal Funds Rate is the interest rate at which banks and other depository institutions lend money to each other, usually on an overnight basis. It is an excellent benchmark for short-term interest rates and investors use it to determine how **local government investment pool (LGIP)** yields will behave. Unlike bank deposit products, stable net asset value LGIPs quickly adjust to upward movements in market interest rates.

Between March 2022 and March 2023, the Federal Reserve has increased the Fed Funds Rate at each of their 9 meetings, in 25 basis point increments, for a total of 19 increases. These increases have raised the Fed Funds Rate from the target range of 0.00% to 0.25% to the new target range of 4.75% to 5.00%. Elevated inflation, among other factors, have driven the interest rate hikes, which in turn has led to millions of dollars in interest earnings for NY school districts and municipalities over the last year.

LGIP participants are well-positioned to take advantage of rising rates once again. Given the short average maturity of pool investments, LGIP yields can adjust rapidly and provide a current market rate. As holdings in an LGIP mature, fund management invests these proceeds into high yielding securities thus providing investors with a more current (*and higher*) market rate. Many LGIPs have performed very well during this rising rate environment, closely mirroring the current Fed Funds Rate and, in many cases, offering daily yields incrementally higher than can be earned at local banking institutions. **New York Cooperative Liquid Assets Securities System (NYCLASS)** is a LGIP that has been serving NY municipalities and school districts since 1989 – www.newyorkclass.org/rates.

Despite another lower inflation reading in February 2023, the pace of moderation in prices continues to slow. Amid heightened market volatility and a still tight labor market, it has become increasingly difficult to forecast the Fed's path from here. Given the recent developments in the banking landscape, the market has begun to price in the top of rates. The Fed opted to raise the Fed Funds Rate 25 basis points at the March 2023 meeting and signaled that the central bank was not necessarily finished with tightening policy. While acknowledging the uncertainty surrounding the recent developments in the banking sector, the Fed affirmed its commitment to supporting financial institutions further if necessary, but remained adamant that the system is sound and resilient. With inflation still running well in excess of the Fed's longer-term objective, the possibility that rates remain elevated for longer remains very much in play.

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SCHOOL LUNCH: PROPOSED SCHOOL NUTRITION STANDARDS AND TACKLING STUDENT MEAL DEBT



Educators have long known that when students do not get enough to eat, it can adversely affect their academic performance. Many schools also know that for some students, the food served at schools is their primary source for a meal. During the pandemic, all students received free meals reducing the risk that a student would go hungry. When the pandemic risks ended, so did the free meals. Schools are once again grappling with getting students fed and seeing student meal debt rise. On top of this, new nutrition standards are being proposed by the USDA that may have an impact on the school lunch fund meeting its bottom line.

Serving children healthy, nutritious, and tasty food can be a challenge. The proposed nutrition standards reflect the most recent dietary guidelines which in short, call for schools to limit sodium and reduce added sugars in foods as well as adding more whole grain products to the menu. Post pandemic food prices have increased, especially milk and eggs, key ingredients in many food items used for school meals. The USDA understands that there are high food costs and supply chain issues and has developed a proposed timeline for implementation that spans several years, giving schools the opportunity to successfully make the changes in the meals [[see proposed implementation timeline from the USDA](#)]. The USDA has encouraged feedback on the proposed changes and indicated that the comments will be used to develop the final standards.

The nutrition standards currently in place already required meals to contain more whole grains and reduced sodium and sugar, and schools across the country have been having a tough time adhering to the guidelines, especially as the lunch fund, which is supposed to operate independently of the school district's general fund, has seen unpaid student meal debt charges increase since the end of the federal pandemic waiver. The Child Nutrition department of the New York State Education Department had issued legislation in June 2018 prohibiting all public, non-public and charter **school food authorities (SFA)** against meal shaming requiring school district to not shame or treat a student with unpaid meal charges differently than a student who does not have unpaid meal charges. This law, coupled with the increased food prices and supply chain issues, will make it harder for schools in New York to meet the proposed nutrition standards. Tackling the student unpaid meal charges will be critical to address nutrition standards.

One tactic for dealing with mounting meal charges is to have the general fund forgive the existing debt, but this is not always possible to do. Prices of other school district costs have also increased, for example computer equipment, general supplies, and cybersecurity insurance. Schools can consider getting donations from local nonprofit organizations, community organizations, PTA, etc., to pay for the debt. Managing this will likely require a lot of internal controls (*documentation and oversight*), and time. Schools across the nation, as well as local governments, are advocating for legislation that will provide universal free school meals, getting rid of the debt problem altogether. So far, three states have made this policy permanent: California, Colorado and Maine. Three other states extended the universal free school meal for the 2022-2023 school year (*Massachusetts, Nevada, and Vermont*). In New York, the **Community Food Advocates (CFA)** is among those supporting statewide legislation to provide universal school meals along with the **NY Health Foundation (NYHF)**. Both organizations are involved in supporting healthy food options, getting access to healthy food, and combating food insecurity.

For more information, click for their websites below:

[Community Food Advocates \(CFA\)](#)
[NY Health Foundation \(NYHF\)](#)

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MENTAL HEALTH SUPPORT FOR STUDENTS

Schools on Long Island are required to provide health education that must include instruction on mental health. Per the State Education Department, the purpose is to ensure that the instruction enhances student understanding, attitudes and behaviors that promote health, well-being and human dignity.

Counslr is a New York-based startup founded in late 2019 with the mission of making mental health support more accessible for students, and to better reach the traditionally unreachable. This Organization uses evidence-based research to maximize the ability of teenagers to receive timely support while being available 24/7/365. One type of readily available support entails using cell phone technology, something that most students are very familiar and comfortable with. The Organization partners with high schools to provide all students with unlimited access to text-based mental health support from licensed counselors at no direct cost. Accessible via a HIPAA, FERPA, and NYS-2D compliant mobile app, students can engage in live sessions on-demand in under 2 minutes, or by scheduled appointment. The Counslr mobile app is available on iOS and Android devices and guarantees a sub-2-minute response time at all hours of the day, 7 days a week.

The Counslr solution can reach someone in the early stages of a mental health crisis and may prevent years of suffering and alleviate long-term disability. The accessibility and ease of use of the app can allow students to address mild symptoms in a timely manner before they evolve into something more severe.

Counslr is a solution that will be accessible for the vast majority of adolescents. Furthermore, as Counslr is free to students and requires no insurance information, a significant hurdle to care is completely eliminated.

For more information about Counslr, please contact:



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HELPING SCHOOLS EMBRACE MINDFULNESS

Mission Be is a non-profit organization that is dedicated to bringing mindfulness-based social, emotional and life-skills to students, youth, families and educators in order to create a more sustainable and compassionate world. Mindfulness is the practice of paying attention to the present moment with non-judgmental awareness. It has been shown to reduce stress, anxiety, and depression, while enhancing emotional regulation and academic performance. Mission Be integrates mindfulness-based activities and practices into school curricula, youth programs and workshops, parent-teacher conferences, and professional development to support social and emotional well-being.

Mission Be works with children from kindergarten to high school, helping them develop skills that will serve them throughout their lives. At the beginning of each mindfulness session, they establish a safe and comfortable environment, where children are encouraged to share their thoughts and feelings. Their trained instructors lead students through a variety of activities such as mindful breathing, movement, and guided practices, which enable them to relax and become more focused.

Through mindfulness, students gain the tools to navigate life's challenges with greater resilience, empathy, and compassion. Children learn to become more aware of their thoughts, feelings, and physical sensations, and develop more positive and caring relationships with themselves and others.

Mindfulness-based practices have proven to be essential for the overall well-being of not only students, but also educators and parents. The Organization has seen a significant improvement in academic performance, focus, attention and behavioral issues in children who have participated in their programs.

Mission Be continues to create access to their mindfulness-based programs for underserved youth. They are based on Long Island and focus primarily on schools in Nassau and Suffolk County. Mission Be's instructors have trained over 12,000 educators and have reached over 150,000 students in New York and California, impacting over 28 states and 11 nations. Last year alone, Mission Be impacted 40 Long Island Schools.

Schools strive to support the well-being of all children. Mission Be's programs can achieve that goal by incorporating mindfulness practices into academic curricula to foster emotional and social well-being.

If you are interested in bringing mindfulness to your school district contact them at carin@missionbe.org or visit us at www.missionbe.org.

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KEYS TO SUSTAINING A PROFESSIONAL LEARNING PROGRAM THAT STICKS

Today, a school's success relies on its implementation of research-based and current instructional best practices. To improve student achievement and teaching practices, educators must also focus on integrating their own continuous learning in a sustained and measurable way. While there's no debating the importance of professional learning, schools sometimes find themselves challenged to effectively deliver programs that "stick" and have long-term impact. Schoolwide supports educator responsiveness to student needs by providing access to thousands of rigorous, standards-aligned, high-quality teaching and learning resources that address individual literacy learning needs, supports various teaching styles and ensures equity.

Designing meaningful Professional Learning plans has played an important role in forming close partnerships with districts they work with across the United States. Founded in 1993, Schoolwide was propelled onto the scene by a feature article in Parade Magazine that highlighted its student-run

school bookstore program. The program was designed to help economically disadvantaged students and families gain access to, and ownership of, new, high-quality children's books at low cost. Schoolwide exclusively supported and serviced student-run bookstores for the first five years of its existence, supplying collections of books called "bargain bundles" for an average price of \$1.00 each.

They recently created a new annual professional learning program called [Partners for Progress](#) where they have created professional learning experiences that address the individual needs and objectives of each partner. And they provide continual access and support throughout the year, helping to ensure the district is meeting its goals.

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AMAZON PURCHASES AND COMPLIANCE WITH GML

Documentation of the rationale for the selection of a vendor and their goods and services should be maintained and included as a part of the internal control procedures at any district. For auditors, documentation is paramount to show that goods and services were competitively procured. Just read any of the NYS OSC audit reports on procurement and you'll see how closely the OSC examines this area. When a district exceeds the bidding threshold of \$20,000 for purchased goods, GML requires districts to issue a formal bid. Purchasing goods from Amazon has become increasingly common in the last several years because of cheaper prices. Because of this increased use of Amazon, it is easy than ever for some districts to spend over the bidding threshold. *So how do you document that the goods were purchased competitively and comply with GML?*

Amazon has a bid feature which enables a district to get quotes so that districts can demonstrate that purchases considered competitive pricing. Amazon Business and OMINA Partners have created an Amazon Business cooperative that has contracts which are available to public sector entities including state and local government agencies, public and private K-12 school districts and higher education organizations, and nonprofit businesses. Their online store provides tools to guide the users to preferred products, approval workflows, analytics, seller certifications, and flexible account settings. They claim to have hundreds of thousands of suppliers across multiple product categories like office supplies, IT products, MRO, and more all in one place.

[In order to start using this bid feature, check out Amazon's website here.](#)

One district we work with shared that they work with a dedicated Customer Advisor on the Amazon Education Team. They recently received an email with two opportunities to save additional money and best use any remaining fiscal year funds:

- 1. Request for Quote Tool** –Amazon can help secure inventory and seek discounted pricing on bulk orders. When you have an opportunity that hits \$7,500 or 999 Qty, use the bulk buying feature available on your account. They even have a short video to help guide you through the process ([click here](#)).
- 2. Custom Supply Kits** – You order the same items to be handed out or packaged for Students/Teachers. Amazon can help by shipping pre-packaged kits with needed items that are ready to hand out. [You can learn more about Amazon's School Supply Boxed storefront here.](#)

You can register for a free Amazon Business account and get the ball rolling. There are a lot of advantages to enrolling which include ensuring purchases are tax exempt and getting free shipping on eligible orders over \$25. Save money while being in compliance with GML as well as your purchasing policy by utilizing Amazon's bid features.

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CONTROLLING SPIRALING CYBERATTACKS: UNDERSTANDING TODAY'S CYBER LANDSCAPE IS ESSENTIAL FOR ALL SCHOOL LEADERS

As we have seen in recent cyberattacks at schools, it is no longer a matter of if, but when your school may become the next target of ransomware, phishing, denial of service, or other cyberattacks. Understanding today's cyber landscape related to the education market is essential for all school leaders. Knowing what best practices should be deployed is critical.

Schools are under siege by cybercriminals looking to access valuable, sensitive data, such as the addresses, phone numbers, and financial information of students or their parents, as well as that of educators. A high percentage of cyberattacks on schools stems directly from their **information technology (IT)** vendors. K-12 Security Information Exchange data found that 75% of all K-12 school breaches in 2020 were implemented through the schools' vendors. These and other attacks were already increasing before the pandemic, but remote learning and the technology vulnerabilities it introduced gave cyberthieves more ammunition to fuel their attacks.

In fact, having access to more technology in education is generally regarded as a good thing; however, it opens up a school to more cyber land mines and gives cyberthieves new pathways for ransomware and malware attacks, and others.

Reports of cyberattacks have become an eyeopener for school leaders who recognize the need to prioritize cybersecurity and formalize their related practices. Many school leaders realized they needed a tighter communications policy between themselves and their vendors in the event a vendor experiences a cyberattack that affects the schools. Further, many school systems now require their vendors to submit a cyberattack response plan for alerting the schools regarding attacks, along with measures to be implemented to restore their systems' secure operations.

Schools are instituting other policies, including allowing only school devices to access the network, providing access to secure data on a need-to-know basis, and eliminating guest networks. Educating all constituents, including vendors, faculty, parents, and students, regarding sound cyber practices has also become a priority for many schools.

That education covers such practices as changing passwords regularly, ensuring that devices are protected with security software, and not opening suspicious emails. These and other essential measures should be adopted and incorporated into a comprehensive, proactive school cybersecurity program.

Schools must be proactive in their own organization's cybersecurity. That requires several key initiatives:

DETECTION:

Every school should begin by benchmarking its current cybersecurity status. To ensure its integrity, benchmarking should be performed by a third-party cybersecurity firm and not the school's internal IT department or its managed services provider. Detection involves two components:

1. *a comprehensive vulnerability assessment to evaluate the school's IT systems and assess risk levels and*
2. *penetration testing, also known as "ethical hacking," to determine how easily cybercriminals could enter the school's IT systems, including the network, ports, database, emails.*

MITIGATION:

Following the vulnerability assessment and penetration testing, measures should be taken to mitigate system weaknesses and vulnerabilities. Such measures range from installing firewalls, encryption software, and end-point protection to multifactor authentication, password and **SSH (secure shell protocol)** key management, and solutions to lock access to proprietary data.

BEST PRACTICES:

Best practices include data backups and backup data recovery, along with keeping up with software updates and limiting access to sensitive data to authorized staff members.

CYBERSECURITY POLICIES:

Policies—including best practices, responses to cyberattacks, and related communications—should be formalized in a cybersecurity policy manual and provided to all vendors and staff members who manage, use, or have access to school information systems and technology.

TRAINING:

Cybersecurity awareness training for staff should be conducted regularly to ensure that cybersecurity policies are understood and adhered to, and that staff are kept abreast of the latest developments in cyberattacks on schools. As part of this training, staff should be educated regarding the various forms of cyberattacks, including the most common forms, such as malware and phishing attacks.

CYBER INCIDENT MANAGEMENT AND REPORTING PLAN:

This comprehensive plan helps the organization prepare for, detect, respond to, and recover from network security incidents.

REGULAR REVIEW OF CYBER INSURANCE COVERAGE:

A regular review ensures that the insurance covers the latest threats and is adequate in covering the school's total exposures and liabilities.

Avoiding the many land-mines dotting today's cyber landscape is not easy. It requires heightened awareness and the commitment of education leaders and their staffs to follow prudent cybersecurity practices. Vigilance is essential for avoiding financial and reputational damages stemming from a lax attitude toward cyberattacks.



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DITCHING THE DEDUCTIBLE: COST REDUCTIONS THROUGH CREATIVE “FIRST-DOLLAR” COVERAGE



Plan design decisions impact costs for both employers and employees. Employers and their advisors can manipulate the levers of plan design to manage costs but these changes can also increase costs for participants, creating dissatisfaction and barriers to care. *What if there was a way to reduce costs and create “first-dollar” coverage without the downsides?*

HOW LOWER OUT-OF-POCKET COSTS IMPROVE ACCESS TO CARE

Typically, increasing the plan deductible, out-of-pocket maximum, or other factors will reduce the risk for the carrier, thus reducing the monthly premium. This reduces the risk for the carrier, so it charges less for the insurance. This can help employers manage costs. However, that move shifts the costs to participants since they need to pay more out of pocket before coverage begins.

Even for people with insurance coverage, out-of-pocket expenses can create a barrier to care. Most preventative care, like well visits and vaccines, are fully covered regardless of deductible. But depending on the plan, some specialists and other services may not be covered until after the deductible is met. This can have a big financial impact—the average deductible for a single coverage plan was \$1,763 in 2022. This can result in care being delayed or avoided which can cause more problems and higher claims later.

Conversely, when healthcare is more accessible and affordable, employees are more likely to use their health benefits and seek out early treatment. This can reduce high claims and long-term medical expenses.

This is where first-dollar coverage comes in. “First-dollar” refers to coverage that kicks in immediately without deductibles or initial cost-sharing required from the plan participant. While this may sound great, offering a no- or low-deductible option is very expensive for both employer and employee. First-dollar coverage, however, can be achieved through other solutions even if the health plan has a deductible. Savvy employers can use this to their advantage to lower costs.

HOW TO ACHIEVE FIRST-DOLLAR COVERAGE

Raising the deductible and other limits usually reduces premium costs but increases out-of-pocket costs for participants. Incorporating a vendor or other solution can offset these additional participant costs while still achieving savings for employers. This is often achieved through funding a **health reimbursement arrangement (HRA)**.

With an HRA, employers can fund these plans to cover the new higher deductible, other cost-sharing or even the entire out-of-pocket maximum. That way, participants aren’t responsible for cost sharing, thus providing first-dollar coverage. HRAs are advantageous for employers as they are employer-owned, meaning any money not spent on eligible expenses that year stays with the employer. Some HRAs allow annual rollover of unused funds, but the employer determines this amount.

A similar setup could be achieved through a **high-deductible health plan (HDHP)** combined with a **health savings account (HSA)**. Because HSAs are employee-owned, the funding contribution would be more limited, enough to cover the deductible or incentivize enrollment, for example. Unlike an HRA, money contributed to an HSA by the employer or employee stays in the account regardless of the individual’s employment status or if the money was used that year.

THE PLAN/EMBLEM 2.0

Corporate Synergies has refreshed the old Emblem HIP/GHI offering for School employees. Emblem has filed a special plan with Corporate Synergies with the New York State Department of Financial Services to achieve these great savings while enhancing the plan. The result of this would be to sunset the old out-of-date and high-priced plans in each school district and replace them with a lower premium plan backed by an HRA. For too long, the Emblem HIP/GHI offering wasn’t a true alternative because it became higher priced than the state NYSHIP plan. Now there is a solution to combat that.

EDUCATE EMPLOYEES ON THE PLAN

Education is essential when implementing an innovative solution like this. Employees are likely to react negatively to hearing about deductibles going up if they don’t understand how the whole package works. They also need to understand how an addition like an HRA works, what expenses qualify and how to use it to pay their bills. A robust employee education and communication campaign before, during and after open enrollment will improve engagement and satisfaction.

This approach can provide the savings your School District—and your employees—may be looking for without compromising healthcare coverage. Before implementing, it's important to make sure this type of coverage meets the needs of your employees and budget. If you have any questions on how to achieve this please feel free to reach out. We are always here to help evaluate if this could be a fit for your District.



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