

More than 80 seminars offered at Convention

By Eric D. Randall
Editor-in-Chief

With gas so expensive, should your school district be looking more closely at "virtual" field trips?

Guy Lodico thinks so. He's director of technology for the Plainview-Old Bethpage school district on Long Island. At a seminar at NYSSBA's Annual Convention, he will explain how videoconferencing has not only become cheap and easy, but can involve students in absorbing activities that are well-integrated with the curriculum.

Lodico's seminar, called "Virtual Field Trips," is among more than 80 seminars at Convention. Most seminars are led by school board members and administrators, while others are led by experts from the State Education Department or school consultants.

A grid showing the schedule of seminars appears on C2. Lodico's seminar, for instance, can be found under the "Academic Innovations" strand. The seminar will begin at 8:45 a.m. Saturday, Oct. 18, in Conference Room C of the Sheraton New York Hotel & Towers.

Asked for an example of a virtual field trip, Lodico cited a NASA-sponsored Internet program called Operation Montserrat, in which a Caribbean island with an active volcano is threatened by a hurricane. One team of students monitors data on the volcano, another interprets satellite data on the storm, and a third is in charge of evacuating the island. Based on actual events in 1996, the exercise integrates science, math and social studies, and gives students an experience in decision-making, teamwork and leadership.

While educational videoconferencing used to require expensive equipment and often special facilities, now it can be accomplished with ordinary classroom computers, said Lodico, a board member of the New York State Association for Computers and Technology in Education.

Lodico will be giving participants a long list of museums, zoos and other organizations that welcome students to visit and learn via videoconferencing. "Students can sit in on a surgery and listen to the doctor talk about it as he does it," Lodico said.

"Board members need to know about this so they know what it takes to support the people in the classroom," Lodico said. Schools have invested a lot in classroom computers, and videoconferencing is one way to get the most from that investment.

"Technology is the means, not the end," he said. He said he is confident that when board members see his presentation, "the light bulb will go on."

Other seminars offered at Convention include:

- **Sex, Lies and School Employees.** Elizabeth Bradley, a retired school administrator and former human rights officer will explain how schools should handle accusations that a school staff member has behaved improperly with a student or colleague and tell five common errors.
- **Red Flags and Financial Reports.** Accountant Marianne Van Dwyne will educate board members on how to get the most out of their reviews of school financial reports.
- **School Boards and the Board of Regents.** Joseph Bowman, a member of the Board of Regents, will explain what the Regents do and the importance of your school board's relationship with the Regents.

• **The Role and Relationship of the School Attorney.** Attorney Richard Guercio of the Long Island firm of Guercio & Guercio says no topic will be too controversial, including questions related to ongoing state and federal investigations of the retirement status of school attorneys.

• **To AP or Not to AP.** Donald Dutkowsky, a professor of economics from Syracuse University, will explain what the data says about the benefits of offering advance placement (AP) programs versus concurrent enrollment programs (CEPs). In some scenarios, AP is better, in others CEPs are better.

"We're very pleased to be able to offer a lot of really outstanding seminars this year," said Barry Entwistle, NYSSBA director of leadership development.

Rooms have limited capacity, so arriving early for seminars is recommended. Priority in seating is given to board members, administrators and other paid attendees, although spouses are welcome if room is available.

If a seminar you want to attend is full, consider attending an in-depth workshop, which will be held in large-capacity rooms (See story, page C5).

Uplifting & 'just plain loveable'

By Barbara Bennett
Communications Associate

This year's Convention will begin and end with an inspirational bang. Jearlyn Steele, a frequent guest of public radio's *A Prairie Home Companion* show, will kick off the opening session on Oct. 16 with a musical message called "Songs in the Key of Life." She and her brother, Grammy Award winner Billy Steele, will demonstrate the importance of music in students' lives with help from members of New York City's Edward R. Murrow High School Chorus.

Dr. Lorraine Monroe will conclude the Convention on Sunday morning when she shares a message about the role of leadership in creating effective schools.

Both speakers will be "uplifting, thought-provoking and just plain loveable," said Barry Entwistle, NYSSBA director of leadership development.

Steele, a mother of two, strives to improve women and children's lives through music and public speaking and refers to herself as the singing speaker.

Her voice can be heard on CDs for national artists like George Clinton, Mavis Staples and Prince. She has also recorded commercials for companies including Kohler, H&R Block and Target.

A native of Indiana, Steele's singing career began when she moved to Minnesota and performed in churches, community centers and nightclubs. In time, she went into theater in the Minneapolis/St. Paul area. More than 10 years ago Steele and her siblings, The Steeles, performed the pop/gospel musical "Gospel at Colonus," which was eventually performed at Carnegie Hall.

Steele hosts a four-hour Sunday night talk show *Steele Talkin'* which airs on CBS affiliates in 30 states nationwide and in Canada.

Dr. Lorraine Monroe, the Sunday speaker, is a national and international consultant who teaches through lecture, video presentations, hands-on activities, and large and small group discussions.

Monroe was the founding principal of the renowned Frederick Douglass Academy in Central Harlem. She translates her experiences in New York City public schools – as teacher,

dean, assistant principal, principal, and deputy chancellor for curriculum and instruction – into a guiding set of leadership principles.

She created The Lorraine Monroe Leadership Institute and her groundbreaking work has been featured on *60 Minutes*, *Tony Brown's Journal*, the *McCreary Report* with Bill McCreary, the *Tom Snyder Show*, in *Ebony* magazine, the *New York Times*, the *Reader's Digest*, and the nationally syndicated *Parade Magazine*.

Monroe's first book, *Nothing's Impossible: Leadership Lessons from Inside and Outside the Classroom*, has been translated into Swedish, Finnish and Taiwanese. Her second book, *The Monroe Doctrine: An ABC Guide to What Great Bosses Do*, offers educators, administrators, and business people simple, fundamental lessons on becoming and remaining a truly great boss. Her books will be available at the NYSSBA bookstore on the third floor of the Sheraton New York Hotel & Towers.

KEYNOTE KICKOFF



JEARLYN STEELE –
Songs in the Key of Life with the Edward R. Murrow High School Gospel Chorus

Thursday, Oct. 16,
5:30 – 7:30 p.m.

Metropolitan Ballroom

SUNDAY SHOWCASE



DR. LORRAINE MONROE –
Leadership for Excellent Schools

Sunday, Oct. 19,
9 – 10:30 a.m.

Metropolitan Ballroom

Brain research offers solutions for schools

By Sarah Armstrong, Ed.D.



Have you heard the story about the boy who taught his dog to whistle? When his sister said, "I don't hear him whistling," the

boy responded, "I said I taught him; I didn't say he learned it!" Teachers may feel like that boy as they dutifully cover state standards yet find that many students perform below standards on state assessments. "Drill-and-kill" teaching strategies are popular, but still many students are being left behind. Is there a better way?

Brain research on how students learn and retain new information can help teachers improve results. In a brain-compatible classroom, teachers understand three things:

- Learning only occurs when a teacher (or task) has the full attention of the learner.
- Students must be actively engaged as learners.
- All new knowledge must connect or hook to something a student already knows in order

to establish the pathways in the brain that will lead to long-term memory.

If teachers adhere to these three basic tenets of learning, they will see students being more successful at processing new information.

Getting attention. What are some ways to get the brain's attention? Need-to-know is one factor. When students have a need to know, they are tuned in to what is to be learned. A very clear example is found with students who struggle academically, yet keep up flawlessly with every step and requirement that has to be met to obtain a driver's license.

The brain also pays attention to activities that are novel and involve the students in new ways. Research shows that embedding content in a story (like the one I told about the boy and his dog) can help us retain information because a story is more memorable than a list. Using metaphor (a kind of story) brings a picture or image to mind that can aid retention. Props and hands-on activities increase novelty and can assist in recall, as well.

Activating visual memory systems also helps students remember information. Using of pictures,

images or artifacts with study guides, learning logs, interactive notebooks, or other forms of note-taking enhances students' ability to retain information. For example, a railroad suitcase that was a prop for the fourth grade unit on reconstruction following the Civil War had contents associated with post-war expansion. A lump of coal, picture of a tobacco leaf, and a piece of cotton cloth were some of the artifacts that helped students remember about the influence of the railroad during reconstruction.

Engaging students as learners. "Drill and kill" is an example of how students become numbed by rote work and often begin to disengage. It is flawed to assume that students need to practice the same thing in the same way, over and over, before they can remember it. In fact, the brain has a way of habituating – saying, in effect, "been there, done that." Excessive lecturing, in which students sit in their seats as recipients of a teacher's knowledge, is another popular form of delivering information that often does not engage students.

More effective is "elaborative rehearsal," in which ideas and understandings are integrated and

connected. This enables students to "scaffold," or link, old knowledge to new knowledge.

Student engagement increases as the intensity of stimuli increases. The more intense the learning experience, the more the brain is activated.

Activating students' prior knowledge. The most critical factor in building memory is that the content being taught has to be meaningful to the student and connect to something they already know. Referred to as activating prior knowledge (APK), new information has a better chance of getting into long-term memory if it hooks to an existing neural network. When such connections are made in the brain, synapses are strengthened and new learning occurs. Insights from brain research ought to be woven into every teacher's daily lesson plans. School board members have a critical role to play in supporting research-based approaches in the classroom.

IN-DEPTH WORKSHOP

Dr. Sarah Armstrong
Leading Learning with
the Brain in Mind
Friday, Oct. 17, 2 – 5 p.m.
New York Ballroom East

In-depth workshops

Held in high-capacity rooms, NYSSBA's in-depth workshops will always have a seat for you ... even if you're late.

Educating African American Males/Preventing Minority Student Dropouts

Friday, Oct. 17, 9 a.m. – noon
New York Ballroom East

Dr. Olatokunbo (Toks) Fashola, an expert on the effectiveness of comprehensive school reform programs, will offer strategies for successful outcomes.

Implementing Technology Online and On Time

Friday, Oct. 17, 9 a.m. – noon
New York Ballroom West
Technology experts – **Dr. David Rose, Mary Thorngren and Jenna Wasson** – will introduce website tools that offer guidance on effective technology implementation.

Leading Learning with the Brain in Mind

Friday, Oct. 17, 2 – 5 p.m.
New York Ballroom East
Dr. Sarah Armstrong will share research-based strategies and best practice that can help your teachers transform classroom instruction (see column, above).

Adult and Teen Needs on the Autism Spectrum

Saturday, Oct. 18,
9:15 a.m. – 12:15 p.m.
New York Ballroom East
Diagnosed with Asperger's Syndrome in 2000, **Michael John Carley** serves as the executive director of the Global and Regional Asperger's Syndrome Partnership (GRASP). He'll explain the needs of teens and adults on the autism spectrum and how the expanded diagnosis of autism affects the country as a whole.

Maintaining Collegial Governance Team Relationships

Saturday, Oct. 18, 2 – 5 p.m.
Sheraton Manhattan,
Manhattan Room (5th floor)
Relationships between school boards and superintendents have been fraught at times with tension. **Dr. Meredith Mountford** will put it all into perspective.

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Sponsorship: Convention bags

Why we're a sponsor: Triton Construction has a long-standing, mutually-beneficial relationship with NYSSBA. We share a serious commitment to serve the educational market and, ultimately, the extended communities in which we live.



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