

The **Empire State Supervisors and Administrators (ESSAA)** had its monthly Stakeholder Meeting with Commissioner of Education, Mary Ellen Elia and Executive Deputy Commissioner, Beth Berlin, on Tuesday, November 22nd, 2016.

Present at the meeting for ESSAA were: ESSA President, Carol Conklin-Spillane, (via phone), Executive Vice President, Skip Voorneveld (via phone), Ryan Schoenfeld, Amherst Central Schools, John Rickert, Niskayuna School District, Paul Scampini, ESSAA Regent's Liaison, Matt Kravatz, Monroe Woodbury School District, and Brian Dunn, Troy City Schools.

The topics discussed included:

1. Changes proposed by the Regents Examination Workgroup regarding Regents Exams as they relate to graduation requirements:

At the November Board of Regents Meeting, the Regents Examination Workgroup proposed several recommendations:

- Moving from the current multi-diploma system (nine different options) to a single diploma for all high school graduates.
- Use of multiple measures rather than just Regents Exam scores for determining whether a student earns a diploma.
- Shifting report cards and transcripts from the current 0-100 scoring model to a 1 – 5 system that includes scaled scores. Grades of 3, 4, and 5 would be considered passing scores.
- Offering a new Regents Exam in Statistics to improve college readiness in the area of mathematics.

Commissioner Elia was asked to comment on these recommendations. She emphasized that the proposals are still in the early stages of being reviewed and will require a great deal of discussion before any of them are implemented. She did mention, as an example, that we currently have a cumbersome 58 page document that outlines the state's graduation requirements to achieve one of nine different diplomas. She agrees with the workgroup that this is something that should be streamlined and less complicated. She also feels that the use of multiple measures rather than a single exam score would provide a much more accurate representation of a student's true level of achievement toward meeting graduation requirements.

2. Every Student Succeeds Act

Dr. Schoenfeld asked about the NYSED progress with the federal ESSA proposal and presented the Commissioner with a copy of a position paper he sent to the Department of Education on behalf of our Association. Commissioner Elia emphasized that the presidential election results will most likely bring about significant changes to the regulations which will not happen quickly. While the law itself

will remain in place, the regulations will most likely change under the new administration. The current plan is for NYSED to continue working toward the planned July submission date and make adjustments as necessary.

As a participant in one of the workgroups, Dr. Schoenfeld commended the Commissioner for the inclusive and collaborative approach that NYSED has taken in developing the ESSA plan. Over 2,200 stakeholders participated in 44 regional stakeholder meetings that were held across the State. Feedback from the meetings will now be reviewed. Additional meetings, designed to include a more diverse group of stakeholders, will be scheduled in the coming months. Mr. Voorneveld also commended the Commissioner for how effectively the stakeholder meetings were facilitated.

3. 2017-18 Budget

Mrs. Conklin-Spillane expressed a continued concern that the 2% tax cap, as it is currently structured, poses a significant threat to the funding received by high needs districts. Commissioner Elia emphasized that this is a legislative issue and not one under the control of NYSED. She said that the Board of Regents State Aid Subcommittee is finalizing their proposed 2017-18 budget for presentation at the December BOR meeting. The proposal is focused on setting priorities for increased areas of funding and on a plan for the gradual elimination of the gap in Foundation Aid over the next three years.

The budget discussion also led to questions regarding how the election results could impact future funding at the national level. Commissioner Elia is very concerned that the new administration will be putting forth proposals to make significant shifts in federal funding to support school privatization and tuition tax credits which could significantly impact the federal funding states currently receive.

At the time of our meeting, the nominee for Secretary of Education had not yet been announced. With the recommendation of Betsy DeVos, it certainly appears that these are legitimate concerns.

4. APPR Plan Approvals-

To date, 576 district APPR plans have been approved by NYSED. 72 plans have been submitted and are pending approval.

5. State Testing

Commissioner Elia was asked about the decision to maintain the current 3-8 testing format for the coming year. There is concern among members of our organization that using the same framework will continue to result in the significant opt-out numbers we have seen in recent years. The Commissioner shares our concern but feels that maintaining the same format (time, length,

question types etc.) will provide consistency with data that will enable them to better examine student achievement trends. She did mention that the shift to the new standards in 2018-19 will present an opportunity to make significant changes to the assessments such as staggering the testing days in different months rather than administering them on consecutive days, including more performance tasks, shortening portions of the tests, and incorporating a combination of formative and summative components.

6. CDOS 4+1

Mrs. Conklin-Spillane brought up her continued concern that, while the CDOS 4 + 1 option is a very positive step in the area of CTE, there are significant possibilities for expanding it into other curricular areas. The Commissioner indicated that she is open to looking at different options such as regional exams in certain content areas or other local assessment formats that would not raise issues of inequity.

7. TeachNY Roundtable

Mrs. Conklin-Spillane shared with the group that through her experience with the TeachNY committee discussions, she is not sure that teachers/administrators across the state are fully aware of the scope of the teacher shortage. Mrs. Conklin-Spillane asked that the topics being discussed by the group be more effectively communicated to the field to increase awareness.