

The **Empire State Supervisors and Administrators (ESSAA)** had its monthly Stakeholder Meeting with Commissioner of Education, Mary Ellen Elia, and Senior Deputy Commissioner, Jhone Ebert, on Friday, December 16th, 2016.

Present at the meeting representing ESSAA were: ESSAA President, Carol Conklin-Spillane, ESSAA Executive Director, Mike Starvaggi, Executive Vice President, Albert (Skip) Voorneveld, ESSAA Vice President, Michael McDermott, ESSAA Vice President, Shireen Fasciglione, Niskayuna Central Schools, Brian Dunn, Troy City Schools and Paul Scampini, ESSAA Regent's Liaison.

The topics discussed included:

1. Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) – Required 95% Participation Rate

At the December Board of Regents Meeting, Commissioner Elia updated the Board on the status of ESSA. In her remarks, she commented on the challenges posed by the ESSA regulation that requires a **95% participation rate** in all state testing. As the plan is written now, any students in an accountability group that exceeds a 5% non-participation rate will be considered as **non-proficient** for accountability purposes.

When asked about the potential negative implications of this requirement, Commissioner Elia emphasized that while she shares our concerns, the mandate is currently defined by the statute and the regulations of ESSA and not SED. The Commissioner went on to say that they are working diligently to review the various options that are available to address the mandate in the most equitable way possible.

2. ESSA– Requirements For Reporting Per Pupil Expenditures

Another significant challenge posed by the ESSA legislation requires that, beginning in the 2017-18 school year, **individual schools** must annually report very detailed **per-pupil expenditure data**. The reporting must be disaggregated by source of funds (federal, state, local) and include specific categorization of the expenditures.

When asked to comment on the logistics involved with this significant change of reporting student expenditures at the building level, Commissioner Elia responded that the state will need to ensure that per-pupil expenditure data is easily accessible and presented effectively. NYSED is currently working with several outside organizations to develop the technical capabilities and metrics to support effective implementation. The Commissioner also said that NYSED will seek to consolidate the new reporting requirements with current requirements so as to make the process as efficient as possible.

3. ESSA – Expanding Accountability Indicators Outside of Reading and Math

From the feedback coming out of the ESSA Stakeholder Meetings and Workgroups, at which Dr. Ryan Schoenfeld represents our Organization, it has become evident that one of the most prioritized and emphasized high concept ideas focuses on the need for **identifying and developing the most appropriate assessments and testing conditions for students**. At the December Regents meeting, Scott Marion, the Executive Director of the National Center for the Improvement of Educational Assessment, made a presentation to the Board about possible ways to meet this goal within the ESSA guidelines. He expressed concern that measuring achievement only in the areas of ELA and Math provides a very limited perspective of true student learning. Scott suggested that an additional valid and reliable indicator would assist in providing educators with a more accurate and comprehensive measure of student achievement and quality of instruction. Suggestions included: an additional assessment in another subject area, graduation rate, growth measures, gap closure, ELL growth and proficiency, and student access to higher level coursework.

When asked about NYSED's position on this concept, Commissioner Elia said that there has been very little discussion to date about this idea within the department but that she is open to exploring the idea of expanding accountability indicators in the future.

4. SMART Bond Disbursements/Computer Based Testing

Mrs. Conklin-Spillane expressed concern that many schools/districts have not received SMART Bond allocations and that both the approval and disbursement processes appear to be stalled. Commissioner Elia responded that the process requires approval through three different governmental entities. She acknowledged that she shares our frustration and that she is attempting to coordinate with the other divisions to move the process along.

Mrs. Conklin-Spillane also mentioned that the lack of SMART Bond funds is limiting the capability of schools to participate in Computer Based Testing (CBT). Mrs. Fasciglione followed up with a question regarding the feedback that was received from the 800 schools that participated in the CBT field testing last year, Mrs. Fasciglione, whose school participated in the field testing last year, stated that she has not received any follow-up communication from SED regarding problems that occurred with the field tests and how the process is being improved. Commissioner Elia responded that SED took in a lot of comments from the field, and that the field test data is also currently being analyzed by Questar. She said she would look into sending out a guidance document to schools in the

near future highlighting the issues that were encountered and how they are being addressed.

5. VADIR/School Climate Index

At the December Board of Regents Meeting, the Board formally approved the previously proposed amendments to the current VADIR/DASA reporting system that had been discussed at earlier meetings. The new system reduces the number of VADIR incident categories from twenty to nine. It also combines and aligns the reporting mechanisms for VADIR and DASA into one reporting system. It will go into effect for the 2017-18 school year.

As part of the initiative, several schools from around the state are piloting a School Climate Index program put out by the US Department of Education. Mr. Dunn asked the Commissioner if an index could become part of the VADIR reporting process for schools in the future. The Commissioner responded that many districts successfully use a School Climate Index on a voluntary basis. She went on to say that SED will look at feedback from the pilot and that she would like to have a climate index tool available for all schools to use in the future. She did mention that at some point it could be **required**. When asked about specific indicators that she feels would be important to monitor, she noted attendance, suspension rates, and student/staff/parent school quality feedback.

6. Developing School Leaders

Mrs. Conklin-Spillane asked Commissioner Elia for an update on progress with SED's initiative aimed at improving preparation and support for new school leaders. The Commissioner indicated that work is continuing with the Principal Preparation Project Grant of which ESSAA members Shireen Fasciglione and Greg Avellino are currently a part. The goal of the project is to work toward restructuring administrator preparation programs to better develop the skills needed by new administrators and also develop a more comprehensive mentoring/support structure to assist them when they begin working as an administrator.

7. New Standards Rollout

As part of the Commissioner's agenda for the meeting, she asked that we communicate the status of the rollout of the newly developed ELA, Math and Early Childhood learning

standards. Feedback from the most recent round of public comment is currently being reviewed at SED for possible revisions. Their goal is to have the new standards presented to the Board of Regents for approval at the upcoming February or March meeting so that schools can begin working toward implementation in the 2017-18 school year.