

The Empire State Supervisors and Administrators (“ESSAA”) had its monthly Stakeholder Meeting with Commissioner of Education, MaryEllen Elia and Senior Deputy Commissioner for Educational Policy, Jhone Ebert Tuesday, March 1, 2016.

Present at the meeting for ESSAA were: Shireen Fasciglione, ESSAA Member, Niskayuna School District; Rick Kimble ESSAA Vice President, Corning School District; Michael McDermott, RASA President; Michael A. Starvaggi, ESSAA Executive Director and Albert (Skip) Voorneveld, ESSAA Executive Vice President. Matthew Kravatz, ESSAA Member, Monroe Woodbury and Ryan Schoenfeld, ESSAA Vice President, Lockport School District, participated in the meeting by conference call.

The topics discussed were as follows:

Untimed Testing

With state exams fast approaching, we asked the Commissioner how the new Rules implementing an untimed testing policy are to be handled in practice. The Commissioner indicated that a guidance document was forthcoming and, in fact, it has since been published. The guidance can be found at <http://www.p12.nysed.gov/assessment/ei/2016/guidancegrades3-8testingtimepolicy.pdf>

When asked if it was her expectation that the tests would remain untimed into the foreseeable future, the Commissioner indicated that they would, which heightens the importance of our members to familiarize themselves with the new procedures.

Other Changes to State Testing

We raised the continued question about permanent decoupling of state test scores from principal and teacher evaluations and the Commissioner stated that it was too soon to speculate. She said that the first task was to review the standards, then to work on curriculum, then change the testing itself. Only at that point, she stated, would the issue of the coupling of testing and evaluation be revisited.

Transition to the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA)

Asked about New York’s policies in light of the broader latitude afforded to the states by the Every Student Succeeds Act, the Commissioner pointed out that there have not been any guidelines published by the U.S. Department of Education regarding the new law yet, so there is not much to report. However, she did state that there will be a new accountability system for schools which will be growth-based. We then raised the following question which was posed to us by one of our member units -- if state testing is being temporarily disregarded for APPR purposes, why was it still

applicable to SINI and AYP criteria? The Commissioner acknowledged that this was a legitimate question, but stated that the law still requires an accountability system for schools and state tests are the only logical vehicle for providing the standards.

We pointed out that the new law discusses allowing parents to opt their children out of state testing and asked for the Commissioner's perspective. She said that the provision simply states that parents cannot be *prohibited* from opting their children out, but the law still sets mandatory testing by grade level and. We asked if New York will revisit participation thresholds, but the Commissioner believes that the federal law still sets a 95% threshold. We followed-up by asking what the consequences for failure to meet the threshold will be and the Commissioner stated that she does not know at this time. She reiterated, however, that there may not be as much latitude as there appears to be in the new law because the federal government can still "take the money away."

Substitute Teacher Shortage

The Commissioner informed us that there has been new discussion to allow a noncertified teacher to substitute for 90 instead of 40 days with sign-off by the district superintendent. SED is also collecting data on the level of need for substitutes in the State. Our group had raised these issues during our previous stakeholder meeting and we believe that progress is being made to address the problem.

Revision of ELA and Math Standards

The Commissioner also asked us to remind our membership that SED is seeking volunteers to participate in the Phase 1 Standards Review Committees for the four year review of Common Core ELA and Math standards. This is a good opportunity for our members to give their thoughts and input into the Regents' review. If you are interested, you can apply online at the AIMHighNY website, which can be found at <http://www.nysed.gov/aimhighny>. For more details, click the following link <http://www.scribd.com/doc/300076020/P-12-Revision-and-Implementation-of-the-New-ELA-and-Mathematics-Standards> and refer to page 19.