

The Empire State Supervisors and Administrators (“ESSAA”) had its monthly Stakeholder Meeting with Commissioner of Education, Mary Ellen Elia and Senior Deputy Commissioner for Educational Policy, Jhone Ebert, on Tuesday, September 20th, 2016.

Present at the meeting for ESSAA were: Carol Conklin-Spillane, ESSAA President; Albert (Skip) Voorneveld, ESSAA Executive Vice President; John Rickert, ESSAA Vice President, Niskayuna Central School District; Paul Scampini, ESSAA Regent’s Liaison; and Michael Starvaggi, ESSAA Executive Director and Counsel. Matthew Kravatz, ESSAA Member, Monroe Woodbury; participated in the meeting by conference call.

1. Guidance for the Suicide Prevention Initiative –

As part of the new legislative changes regarding School Safety and Emergency Plans, districts are required to provide guidance to staff that includes training in mental health, specifically in the area of suicide prevention. The Commissioner indicated that resources have been posted on the NYSED School Safety and Emergency Plan website. She also requested that if we are aware of any exemplary suicide prevention plans currently in place, that we forward her the information so it can be posted as an additional resource.

2. AIS/RTI –

Carol expressed appreciation to the Commissioner for implementing the option of incorporating multiple school-based measures into the process of identifying students who should be receiving AIS services. The Commissioner indicated that the next phase of work in this area will focus on aligning and integrating AIS and RTI regulations to provide districts with more clarity in how to better develop their plans for academic intervention.

3. Regents Exam Scoring –

John asked the Commissioner about her rationale for the recent memo regarding Regents Exams and how they are used to calculate final grades for students. The Commissioner responded that she feels very strongly that how Regents exam scores are used in the calculation of final grades should be left to the discretion of local districts. She also indicated that, at this time, there are no plans to limit the number of Regents exams that are administered, and her

preference would be to offer more exams in additional subject areas if additional funding was available from the legislature.

4. APPR Plan Approvals-

To date, 435 APPR plans have been approved by NYSED. 138 plans have been submitted and are pending approval, while 137 districts have yet to submit their proposals.

5. CDOS 4+1 -

The Board of Regents recently approved an amendment that gives **ALL** students the opportunity to earn a CDOS 4+1 high school diploma by passing four regents exams in each of the four core subject areas (math, science, English and social studies) and completing a CDOS Commencement Credential relating to workforce readiness. The amendment expands the options for completing the work-readiness credentials to include assessment tools submitted to and approved by the Commissioner in addition to those that had been previously available. The Commissioner indicated that there are now 58 work-readiness assessment tools that have been approved. We expressed concern that students with special needs who meet IEP goals and complete the CDOS credential requirement do not get a local diploma and are counted as non-completers in the calculation of a school's graduation rate. The commissioner indicated she is open to proposals for amending this regulation in the future and to ways we can expand the credential assessment to include more pathways.

6. Anomalous Administrator State Growth Scores-

It was brought up there that there is still a great deal of inconsistency and confusion with how the APPR growth scores are calculated for high school administrators. We expressed concern that there is very little understanding of the formula used in calculating the scores and that they do not represent a true reflection of principal effectiveness. The Commissioner indicated that the current formula for calculating the growth scores is being re-evaluated. Factors she would like to have included in the revised formula include: graduation rate, certification rate, attendance, discipline referral rates and suspension rates.

7. Appreciation for Outside Observer Waivers and Principal Preparation Project –

Carol expressed appreciation for providing the option for districts to apply for waivers to exempt districts from having to use independent outside evaluators to conduct teacher observations. She also commended the Commissioner for the work NYSED is doing with the Principal Preparation Project.

With regards to the waivers, the Commissioner is pleased with her decision to offer the waiver opportunity to districts. She feels that there are several options available to schools and districts to effectively facilitate the observation process without outside evaluators and still meet the APPR requirements of the mandate.

An update of the status of the Principal Preparation Project was recently presented to the Board of Regents at their September session. New national standards for educational leaders have been revised and adopted as part of the Every Student Succeeds Act. An advisory team has been organized to develop policy recommendations from the project that meet the ESSA requirements. The current plan is to have these recommendations presented to the Board of Regents in April 2017. The goal of the project is to improve both building leader preparation programs at the college level and implement effective mentoring and professional development programs for new and aspiring school leaders.

8. Every Student Succeeds Act –

The Commissioner stated that one of the major initiatives for NYSED this year will be finalizing the proposal to the Department of Education to bring the state into compliance with the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA). Regional meetings are currently being organized throughout the state which will lead to public hearings about policy recommendations. The Commissioner encouraged us to take active role in attending the meetings and providing feedback on the proposed recommendations.

9. NYSED Annual Goals –

The meeting concluded with the Commissioner outlining the department's goals for the coming year. They included:

- Completion and implementation of the revised learning standards that were released for review last week
- Transition to 3-8 assessments that are entirely teacher developed
- Expanding career and technical programs
- Improving the teacher preparation and certification process
- Finalizing the proposal to the Department of Education to bring the state into compliance with the Every Student Succeeds Act.

10. Regents Feedback

The current administration at NYSED, led by Commissioner Elia, has shown the willingness to listen to input from practitioners in the field and use that input to shape policy. We are very encouraged by these efforts and hope that they continue. Therefore, in your interactions with local Regents, please help us promote initiatives to uphold local decision-making and support building administrators. This is particularly important as the ESSA initiatives are developed.

ESSAA strives to provide our members with timely information about our interactions with educational policymakers in our state. We do this not only to inform you, but also to solicit your feedback so that we can bring your voice to Albany and deliver a clear message based on the thoughts and concerns of the actual practitioners who strive every day to deliver the best education possible to students statewide.

We meet regularly with the Commissioner, attend all Regents meetings and have a powerful lobbying presence as well. Therefore we encourage your responses to the items discussed above and any others issues of concern. We will use your feedback to set future agendas with policymakers.

Your feedback is essential. Please send your comments to us at info@essaa.org.