

The Empire State Supervisors and Administrators (ESSAA) had its monthly Stakeholder Meeting on Monday, October 30, 2017 with Commissioner of Education, Mary Ellen Elia, and Senior Deputy Commissioner, Jhone Ebert.

Present at the meeting representing ESSAA were: ESSAA President – Carol Conklin Spillane, ESSAA Executive Director-Mike Starvaggi, ESSAA Executive Vice President- Skip Voornveld, ESSAA Vice President-Ryan Schoenfeld , ESSAA Vice President-John Rickert, ESSAA member-Brian Dunn, Troy City Schools, ESSAA member-Jesimae Ossorio, White Plains Public Schools, ESSAA member -Ron Gonzalez, Mount Vernon City Schools and ESSAA Regents Liaison-Paul Scampini.

The topics discussed included:

1. Update on APPR for Principals

Mr. Rickert began the meeting by asking the Commissioner for an update on the status of APPR for principals. Commissioner Elia responded that they are still in the very early stages of evaluating the process. She indicated that the initial step will be to gather input and feedback from the field on the current plan. Stakeholder meetings will be scheduled across the state and a survey is being developed which will be sent out in the near future. One of her major goals is to make the process for determining how scores are calculated much easier for principals to understand.

With regards to potential changes to APPR in the future, the Commissioner stated that she is open to expanding APPR to include all administrators and not just principals. Additionally, she feels some of the multiple indicators being used to evaluate school quality as part of the Every Student Succeeds Act plan could be used, and the new Educational Leadership Standards will need to be incorporated into the APPR rubrics.

Mr. Rickert cited a specific example of a situation where a principal's APPR score did not align with the overall achievement level of his/her building. Commissioner Elia emphasized that NYSED is very willing to reevaluate the scores of any principal to ensure that it is in compliance with the current guidelines.

2. Integration of Mental Health Services into Schools

There has recently been a great deal of conversation at Board of Regents meetings about requiring schools to monitor the social/emotional health of students as a school quality indicator. Mrs. Conklin Spillane asked the Commissioner for some guidance on available resources that could assist schools to better support students and staff. Commissioner Elia emphasized that Community Schools Funds are an excellent means to assist with this initiative. The Commissioner also anticipates that we will see an increase in the funds requested by the Board of Regents in their 2018-19 budget to support this effort.

3. Development of New Assessments

The Commissioner was asked for an update on the development of new assessments. She indicated that they are currently focused on making the necessary adjustments to the 3-8 ELA and math tests due to the reduction of testing days from three to two. The Commissioner emphasized that this year's tests will not simply be a condensed version of the three day assessments. The department is working to incorporate as much of the original content into a more unique format so that the standards will still be effectively assessed. Mrs. Conklin-Spillane asked the Commissioner if she would send out a guidance document to the field to clarify the adjustments.

Commissioner Elia went on to say that they will soon begin working on the format for the new assessments which will reflect the content in the new standards. Committees will be formed to gather input and feedback from the field during the development process.

The Commissioner also mentioned that she does not anticipate adding more performance tasks to any of the assessments in the near future.

4. 180 Day School Calendar Guidelines

Deputy Commissioner Ebert is co-chairing the 180 Day School Calendar Committee that is working to establish and clarify school calendar requirements. She was presented with a letter from Mrs. Conklin Spillane which summarized the ideas, concerns, and recommendations of our membership with regards the school calendar requirements.

5. DASA (Dignity for All Students Act)

As part of the NYSED agenda for the meeting, Commissioner Elia updated us on the results of a recent DASA audit that was completed by the Comptroller's Office. The audit reported that upwards of 70% of school personnel across the state are not competent in DASA guidelines and procedures. She stated that NYSED needs to create a set of recommendations for how they will address this issue and improve the awareness and competency of school staff in the future.

6. Substantial Equivalency for Nonpublic Schools

As part of the Commissioner's agenda, we were informed that the department is updating the guidelines which ensure that the rigor of ELA/math curricula and safety procedures in nonpublic schools meet specific standards. The responsibility for adequate support and oversight currently rests with school superintendents.