

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, March 28, 2017.

Present at the meeting representing ESSAA were: ESSAA President, Carol Conklin-Spillane (via phone), Executive Director, Mike Starvaggi, Executive Vice President Albert Skip Voorneveld (via phone), Ryan Schoenfeld, ESSAA Vice President and Paul Scampini, ESSAA Regents Liaison.

The topics discussed included:

### **1. Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA)**

Commissioner Elia was asked for an update on NYSED's progress with the ESSA application. She indicated that the Board of Regents was presented with the information that was gathered during the most recent round of stakeholder meetings. The results will be reviewed and discussed at the April Board of Regents meeting and the draft plan will be updated. Public meetings will then be scheduled across the state in May for another round of discussion and feedback. It is anticipated that the finalized application will be presented for Regents approval at the September Board of Regents meeting and submitted to the U.S. Department of Education shortly thereafter.

### **2. Delay in Smart Schools Bond Plan Approvals**

Concerns were expressed to the Commissioner regarding the delay in the approval of Smart Schools Bond applications. She indicated that she shares our frustration, as many plans have been approved by NYSED but are awaiting final approval by the Division of Budget before funds can be released. A meeting took place with the Division of Budget in February where several plans were approved. No meetings have occurred since that time and there are no meetings scheduled in the near future. Commissioner Elia stated that she would reach out to the Division of Budget about scheduling another meeting in the near future. She also indicated that a change in the structure of the approval process of these bonds would require legislative action.

### **3. Rollout of New Standards and Assessments**

The Commissioner was asked for an update on the timeline for the rollout of the new learning standards and assessments. She is optimistic that the new standards will be adopted by the Board of Regents at their May meeting with an updated implementation timeline being released in the fall. With regard to assessments related to the new standards, she stated that the framework is still being worked on within the department and was not sure when updated information would be shared with the field.

Mrs. Conklin-Spillane shared a concern regarding the rollout of the Next Generation Science standards and how the transition will impact current middle level students who will move through high school during the transition. . She indicated that parents are concerned that students will receive a fragmented or inconsistent science program as the new standards are implemented and

that it is important that we develop guidance for school leaders on developing a transition plan that deals with the issue of acceleration to avoid a repeat of the circumstances we've faced with Math 8 and Algebra . The Commissioner stated that she will organize a discussion within the department in the near future to address this concern.

#### **4. Update on Charter Schools Status and Funding**

The Commissioner was asked if she anticipates any changes in the status and funding of charter schools with recent developments occurring at the federal and state level. Commissioner Elia said that since New York already has an established charter school law in place, she does not see changes forthcoming. Commissioner Elia also does not foresee New York adopting a voucher bill as part of the current budget process, but did indicate that conversations about tax credits and "scholarships" are currently being discussed within the assembly and the senate.

#### **5. Changes in Teacher Certification Requirements**

Mr. Voorneveld commended the Commissioner and her staff for the recently adopted change to the teacher certification process which eliminates the highly criticized Academic Literacy Skills Test (ALST) as a requirement for obtaining teacher certification.

#### **6. Potential Federal Budget Cuts**

Commissioner Elia recently spent time meeting with representatives in Washington to express concerns with the proposed reductions in federal education funding. She came away very encouraged that, in general, our representatives from both parties are in strong disagreement with the proposed education spending cuts and are very critical of the process that was used to develop the federal budget. While confident that they will be advocating on our behalf, the Commissioner is worried that we could still see significant cuts, particularly in the areas of the arts, humanities and library resources.