

The **Empire State Supervisors and Administrators (ESSAA)** held its monthly Stakeholder Meeting on Tuesday, December 18, 2018 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 (via phone); ESSAA Vice President, Greg Avellino; ESSA Vice President, Andrea Hamilton (via phone); ESSA Vice President – John Rickert; ESSAA Vice President, Dr. Shireen Fasciglione; ESSAA member, Gabe Buono, Oteora Central Schools; and ESSAA Regents Liaison, Paul Scampini.

Topics discussed at this month's meeting included:

1. Mentoring Requirement for School Leaders

Our meeting began with a discussion of a recently approved policy which will require that all newly appointed school leaders receive formal mentoring after being hired to an administrative position. Mrs. Conklin-Spillane asked for some specific information about the expectations.

Commissioner Elia responded that she is pleased the new policy will encompass all new school leaders and not just principals. She went on to state that the specific requirements and expectations have not yet been developed. Mrs. Conklin-Spillane shared that ESSAA is supportive of the concept and that our organization is willing to assist with developing the guidelines.

2. Extension of APPR Moratorium

As was highly publicized in the media, the Board of Regents recently proposed a one year extension to keep the current APPR Teacher/Principal evaluation transition period in place through the 2019-20 school year. Dr. Fasciglione asked the Commissioner if she had a general sense of the direction that APPR is heading. She stated she feels that while APPR has brought about some positive changes, there are still many frustrations and inconsistencies, especially in districts that had an effective evaluation plan in place before APPR was implemented. Dr. Fasciglione also asked the Commissioner if she felt it could be possible for districts that had effective evaluation plans in place prior to APPR to apply for waivers to allow them to use their locally developed plan.

Commissioner Elia responded that she feels it is important to maintain consistency with how teacher and principal evaluations are carried out across the state and would not be in favor of waivers. She asks that districts who did have effective evaluation plans prior to APPR submit their plans for consideration as part of the stakeholder feedback that will be reviewed as the new plan is developed.

Mr. Gonzalez made the suggestion that a value added component be included as part of future principal evaluations. He feels this would be an effective way to reflect the efforts of principals to provide effective professional development and improve student achievement. Commissioner Elia stated that they are exploring the idea.

3. Alternative Graduation Pathways – Capstone Projects

At the December Board of Regents meeting, NYSED staff highlighted the recent progress that has been made in the area of graduation requirement flexibility. Currently, 4+1 diploma options exist in the areas of STEM, the Humanities, the Arts, Languages Other Than English (LOTE), Career and Technical Education (CTE), and Career Development and Occupational Studies (CDOS). As part of future work, the committee would like to implement a capstone project as a requirement for some or all of the areas.

When asked to comment on some of the specifics regarding the concept of capstone projects, Commissioner Elia stated that they are still in the initial stages of working on a framework and that they will be asking for assistance from stakeholders as it is developed. Mrs. Conklin-Spillane emphasized to the Commissioner that the requirements for the capstone projects need to be solid and consistent. She feels it is very important that the projects reflect course rigor, student knowledge, and be locally driven.

4. New Teacher Preparation Requirements

The Commissioner was asked about the newly proposed teacher preparation requirements which would extend student teaching from a minimum of 40 days to a full semester, and also increase the time and scope of the foundational field experience.

Mrs. Conklin-Spillane asked if there is any additional funding to support the new requirements. Commissioner Elia responded that no specific funding has been allocated and recommended districts use Title II funding or Foundation Aid money to cover additional expenses.

Mr. Gonzalez commented that since we are already experiencing a teacher shortage in so many areas, he feels the added requirement could discourage prospective teachers from entering the profession. Commissioner Elia disagreed and stated that the improved student teaching and field experiences will greatly benefit new teachers and significantly improve their chances for initial success in the classroom. This, she feels, will ultimately increase interest in the teaching profession.

Also related to this topic, Mrs. Conklin-Spillane encouraged the Commissioner to continue to look at more flexible paths to certification for areas where it is growing increasingly difficult to find qualified candidates. The Commissioner responded that NYSED is aware of the shortages and has already taken steps to provide flexible pathways and expanded grade level certifications for areas such as CTE and special education. She also mentioned that they are currently looking into additional options in the future for prospective science teachers.

5. 2019-20 Board of Regents Budget Proposal

The Commissioner was asked to comment on the recently approved 2019-20 Board of Regents Budget Proposal that asks for a \$2.1 billion increase over this year. The Commissioner responded that while the increased funding is needed to better support their efforts, she is discouraged with the initial reaction of Governor Cuomo who responded to the proposal by stating that foundation aid is a "ghost of the past" and "part of a political game."

6. Civics Education

Mrs. Conklin-Spillane asked for an update on the status of any efforts to promote additional civics education in schools. Commissioner Elia responded that there is not a project specifically dedicated to civics going on at this time. She did say that she is pleased with the efforts of so many high schools to provide students with the opportunity to register to vote, and encourages more districts to participate.